

## or The Museum of Contemporary Art at Issue

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*Rooms of Friction, or The Museum  
of Contemporary Art at Issue*  
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# **ROOMS OF FRICTION**

or The Museum of Contemporary Art at Issue





# Contents

5	Introduction
11	The autonomy of the wall
21	Institutional Critique as a spatial practice
53	The Ideal Museum
77	Collaboration
101	Pre-existing rooms
115	Painted rooms
129	Aftermath
133	Illustrations
141	Bibliography



# Introduction

For the Documenta 6 in 1977, painter Georg Baselitz projected a temporary construction, entitled *Bilderbude* (Project Booth), which stands as his ideal museum.<sup>1</sup> The pavilion, which was never realised, was conceived to exhibit the paintings of four artists: A.R. Penck, Jörg Immendorf, Markus Lüpertz and Per Kirkeby. The construction was intended by Baselitz to hold “four absolutely identical, but not hierarchical rooms for four artists”.<sup>2</sup> It is from the geometry of the square, equivalent in its sides, that the artist projected in plan and elevation the construction in the form of a cube. The arrangement of the four identical rooms was constructed by symmetry, with four entrances leading to a single hall distributing the rooms through four doors. Behind the facades of the cubic volume is a pyramid-shaped glazed roof, which brings zenithal light to the works. Along the drawings and model Baselitz produced came a text in which he defended that “the best light comes from above, the best room for this purpose has closed high walls, few doors, no side windows, light from above, no partitions, no baseboards, no base moldings, no paneling, no shiny floors, and finally, no color, either”.<sup>3</sup> His work was thus critical of museum architecture, a position he clearly affirmed in a statement on the occasion of the Dortmund Architecture Days in 1979:

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1 Edelbert Köb and Kunsthau Bregenz, eds., *Museum Architecture: Texts and Projects by Artists* (Köln: König, 2000), 10.

2 Edelbert Köb, *Räume Der Kunst = Space for Art*, ed. Adolph Stiller (Salzburg: Pustet, 1998), 14.

3 Ibid, 15.

An architect couldn't possibly still believe the museum to be a prestigious building and still draw up corresponding construction plans. What does a museum represent, what purpose should it serve? No ideological reason for this has existed for a long time.<sup>4</sup>

Baselitz's project and arguments point out the discrepancy between artistic visions of the exhibition space, and projects carried out by architects at the request of the museum institution, which emerged through the second half of the twentieth century. Spurred by this divide, the museum thus became the subject matter of a critical discussion led by artists.<sup>5</sup> Art and architecture of the exhibition space became engaged in a tensed relationship, in which the limits of the work of art and its autonomy were questioned. Conceptual art, which led to the proliferation of artistic mediums, also brought artists to claim the right to define their own exhibition spaces, from choosing materials, to lighting or room proportions.<sup>6</sup> The exhibition room, as spatial framework for the encounter between art and the public, became the contested unit in a discourse that questioned the institutionalised nature of the museum. From the critical discussion of the 1960s and 1970s emerged imaginary conceptions of the museum elaborated by artists, who seized the architect's tools of projection. This essay will discuss how these visions and utopias of museum architecture, formulated by artists, are still relevant today. It will examine the legitimate questions artists raised as part of their critiques, and seek ways in which these

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4 Georg Baselitz, 'Four Walls and Light from Above or Else, No Painting on the Wall', in *Museum Architecture: Texts and Projects by Artists* (Köln: König, 2000), 12.

5 Edelbert Köb, 'The Voice of the Artist', in *Museum Architecture: Texts and Projects by Artists* (Köln: König, 2000), 7.

6 Ibid, 8.

conflicts fostered joint practices that borrow from, and sometimes reunite, both the disciplines of art and architecture.

The first chapter, *The autonomy of the wall*, discusses the evolution of the frame in the nineteenth century, and its abandonment in the early twentieth century as a tipping point in the relationship between the work of art and the exhibition space. The flat, coloured or white frame of the Impressionist paintings questioned the structural limit of the work in relation to the wall by treating it as an adjuvant. The subsequent abandonment of the frame by the Abstract Expressionist artists resulted in the wall becoming a structural component of the work of art, and thus its framework. This rupture engaged the wall to become “the locus of contending ideologies”.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the wall, as an extension of the work of art, claimed its autonomy from being an architectural element.

Given the central role of the museum and gallery in the selection, production, exhibition and reception of art, and the increased importance of the wall as part of the work itself, the museum became an obvious subject of reflection and a target of critique for artists. The second chapter, *Institutional Critique as a spatial practice*, addresses the work of artists, such as Daniel Buren, Michael Asher and Chris Burden, which reassessed the structure and fonction of the institution, by attacking its very substance, architecture. Operating by subtraction, addition or camouflage, these artistic practices, which were defined as Institutional Critique, explored architecture as a vehicle for ideologies. Indeed, architecture was understood as the medium through which the institution was given form to. Artists

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<sup>7</sup> Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 29.

increasingly engaged and conceptualised their work in a spatial frame and, in doing so, adopted the projectual tools of the architect such as the plan and the model. This led artists not only to interrogate the limits of the museum within their work, but also to put forward different ideas for its definition.

The third chapter, *The Ideal Museum*, examines artistic visions and utopias of the museum. It focuses on the conceptual structures developed in artists' miniature museums that were shown at the exhibition "Museums by Artists" at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada in 1983, as well as in projects commissioned for the 1997 exhibition "Le musée imaginé par les artistes" (The museum as imagined by artists) at the Espace de l'Art Concret in Mouans-Sartoux, France. The collected drawings, plans, models and texts put together in the latter exhibition provide a critical discussion from artists on the autonomy of the artwork, its relationship to the architecture of the museum and the ideal arrangement of the rooms within it.

The artists' ideal museums conveyed the idea that the institution should be re-envisioned through its architecture, in order to reduce the friction between contemporary art and the exhibition space. The following three chapters – *Collaboration*, *Pre-existing rooms* and *Painted rooms* – respectively examine possible denouements to the problems raised in the first part of this essay, in which the architect again plays a full role.

*Collaboration* focuses on joint practices by architects and artists. It studies the projects of architects Herzog & de Meuron, which has been marked by repeated collaborations with artists, notably with Rémy Zaugg. The chapter puts Zaugg's published lecture, *The Art*

*Museum of My Dreams or A Place for the Work and the Human Being*, in resonance with his joint proposal with Herzog & de Meuron for the 1992 competition of the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich. The chapter also explores the contribution of painter Helmut Federle to Herzog & de Meuron's Goetz Collection in Munich. The artist fully participated in the project by defining the proportion of the rooms, the lightning arrangement and the texture of the interior walls.

*Pre-existing rooms* explores the use of existing buildings as *found containers* for exhibiting contemporary art, in its relationship to the artist's studio as both a place of production and exhibition. The chapter investigates New York's P.S.1 and its 1976 inaugural exhibition "Rooms", as well as Donald Judd's Marfa project, both of which foreshadow the use of pre-existing structures to host contemporary art museums. The chapter then tackles the one-year long prefiguration of the Kanal Centre Pompidou in Brussels in 2018, prior to the transformation of the Citroën garage into a museum of modern and contemporary art, as a case study for the diverted continuation of these ideas.

*Painted Rooms* focuses on the project method explicitly put forward by OFFICE (Kersten Geers & David Van Severen) and artists Dries Van de Velde and Richard Venlet for their museum project intitled "TO ENTER A MUSEUM ONE MUST OPEN THE DOOR": the transposition of the painting to the architectural plan, in which the work of art thus becomes the foundation of the museum. The chapter examines another correspondence between painting and plan in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa conceived by SANAA (Kazuyo Sejima & Ryue Nishikawa).

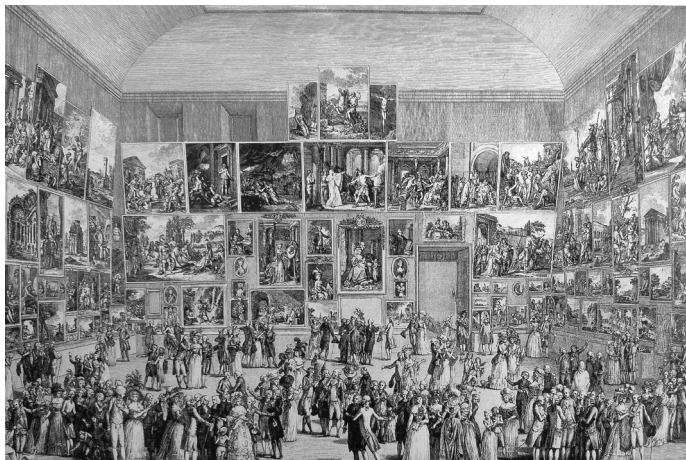




## The autonomy of the wall

Through Renaissance and the definition of perspective it carried, the separation between the painting, as a fictive and stand alone world in itself, and the wall it was mounted on became clear. In one of the founding treatise on perspective, Leon Battista Alberti's *De Pictura*, painting is defined as an "open window through which the *historia* is observed".<sup>8</sup> As such, the artist's primary act is to trace an outline, defining a frame, the inside of which constitutes the picture plane where the represented *historia* will be built. The frame as the outline of the picture plane establishes the boundary between the figurative space and the real world. For the viewer, it defines the inside-outside relation between the projected space and the space in which he is standing. As Brian O'Doherty observes in his influential essay *Notes on the Gallery Space*, "the discovery of perspective coincides with the rise of the easel picture, and the easel picture, in turn, confirms

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<sup>8</sup> Leon Battista Alberti, *Leon Battista Alberti: On Painting, A New Translation and Critical Edition*, trans. Rocco Sinisgalli (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 39.



Pietro Antonio Martini, *Exposition au Salon de 1787, 1787*. Etching, 38.9 x 52.9 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

the promise of illusionism inherent in painting”.<sup>9</sup> With the easel, the painting becomes a portable window, which, when placed on the wall, opens up through it the depth of the figured space. Using a transportable and rigid structure – either a board or a chassis – becomes necessary, in contrast to Antique and Medieval wall paintings.

In addition to its ability to protect, ascribe and contain, the frame also serves as a binder between the painting and the wall on which it is mounted. For this reason, it becomes an important element with the rise of collection and exhibition practices, enhanced by the intellectual revolution of the Enlightenment. The “taxonomic” practice of nineteenth century hangings in rows, based on the hierarchy of genres, made the frame essential.<sup>10</sup> On the walls entirely covered with pictures, the frame gave unity to the painting and physically established its detachment from the adjacent works and the spatial context. Thus, it allowed the painting to be autonomous by affirming its discontinuity with its surroundings.

As the art critic Clement Greenberg points out in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays*, it was the Impressionists who first undermined the essential principles of easel painting “through the consistency with which they applied divided colors; the operation of these colors remained the same throughout the picture, every part of which was treated with the same kind and emphasis of touch”.<sup>11</sup> The uniformly textured surface of

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9 Brian O'Doherty, 'I. Notes on the Gallery Space', in *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 16.

10 Ibid.

11 Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 154



Robert Delaunay, *Les Fenêtres simultanées sur la ville, 1re partie, 2e motif, 1re réplique*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 40 x 46 cm. Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg.

Impressionist paintings constituted the prelude to the reduction of the picture plane into a continuous surface. In their search for a luminous concordance between border and content, artists such as Monet, Pissarro, Degas and Gauguin abandoned the gold, black or dark wooden frames of academicism and experimented the white border for its capacity for enlightening the colour tones.<sup>12</sup> The white frame and its thickness were the subject of variations, seeking to integrate the profile into the continuity of the painted surface to avoid a projected shadow. At the fourth Impressionist exhibition in 1879, Mary Cassatt displayed her works in frames with red or green shades.<sup>13</sup> The colour of the frame was defined according to its complementarity to the dominant colour in the painting's composition, based on the principles set out by Michel-Eugène Chevreul in *De la loi du contraste simultané des couleurs [...]* published in 1839.<sup>14</sup> Through the use of colour, the function of the frame shifted from a simple border to that of an adjuvant, its thickness becoming an extension of the painting. While experimenting the colour interplay between the frame and the painting that it contains, Impressionists also came, in later exhibitions, to rethink the dialogue between their paintings and the wall on which they were presented. In 1880, Pissarro exhibited his paintings with coloured frames on lilac walls with yellow borders and the colour of the rooms varied, as the harmonic composition was defined by the artists participating in the exhibition.

Cubism then initiated the dimensional flattening of the painting by deconstructing objects and figures into

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12 Joris-Karl Huysmans, *L'art Moderne* (Paris: P.V. Stock, 1902), 276.

13 Isabelle Cahn, 'Les Cadres Impressionnistes', *Revue de l'Art* 76, no. 1 (1987): 59.

14 Michel-Eugène Chevreul, *De la loi du contraste simultané des couleurs et de l'assortiment des objets colorés [...]* (Paris: Pitois-Levrault, 1839).



Installation view of the exhibition "Frank Stella", March 24-May 24, 1970. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photograph: James Mathews.

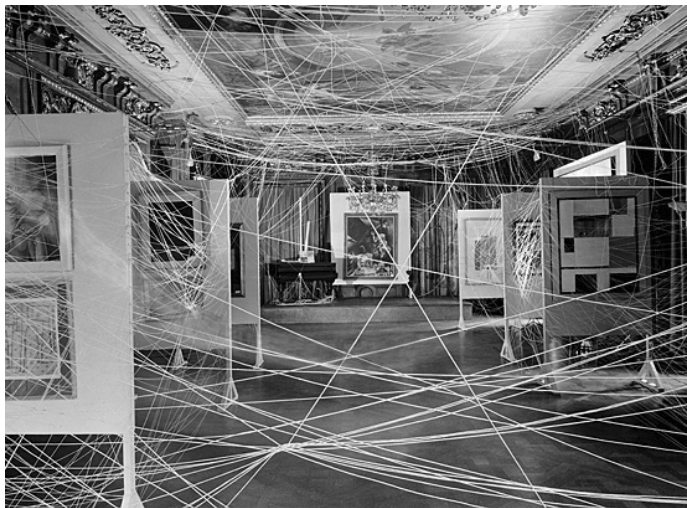
different planes. By showing simultaneous points of view of a subject in space, Cubist artists made use of multiple picture planes, their superposition composing the painting. In doing so, they rejected the illusion of depth.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the simultaneity of the points of view constituted a break with the single, fixed point of view that emerged with Renaissance. In the wake of the Cubist experiments, Robert Delaunay undertook his series *Les fenêtres* between 1912 and 1913, following the publication of Wassily Kandinsky's *Concerning The Spiritual In Art*, which ushered the passage to abstraction. Through his *windows*, Delaunay breaks up the space, light and movement of the city into planes of complementary and contrasting colours. As well as making iterations of the shape of the painting, Delaunay experimented the frame and canvas as continuous surfaces, which merged into a single plane. As a result, the frame of the painting, namely the embrasure of the Albertian window, is dissolved into the pictorial surface.

The subsequent abandonment of the frame by avant-garde artists accompanied the shift from figuration to abstraction in the early twentieth century. As Brian O'Doherty observes in his essay *Notes on the Gallery Space*, Abstract Expressionist artists "gradually began to conceive the edge as a structural unit through which the painting entered into a dialogue with the wall beyond it".<sup>16</sup> Through their experimentations with scale in particular, they modified the relation of their canvas to the walls. In Pollock's work especially, "his mural-scale paintings ceased to become paintings and

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<sup>15</sup> Carl Einstein, 'Notes sur le Cubisme', *Documents*, no. 3 (1929): 153.

<sup>16</sup> O'Doherty, 'I. Notes on the Gallery Space', 27.



Marcel Duchamp, *Mile of String*, installation at the exhibition "First Papers of Surrealism", 1942. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia. Photograph: John Schiff.



became environments".<sup>17</sup>

Further confirming the abandonment of the frame, Frank Stella's shaped canvases broke the traditional rectangle of the picture plane by the shape of their outline as well as the cut-out in their central part. The shape of the painting is reiterated in the painted bands, which give an illusion of depth. Thus, as the art critic Michael Fried noted in 1998, "the boundary between the *framing* bands and the rest of the painting-relates structurally to the shape of the support. But it also establishes an extraordinary, indeed unprecedented, continuity across that boundary".<sup>18</sup> The relationship between the painting and the space in which it exists is therefore profoundly transformed, as the wall itself becomes an extension of the picture plane. The painting is no longer a window, but an object in space. The nature of the wall itself shifts, from a support to a participant, thus becoming a "locus of contending ideologies".<sup>19</sup> The work of art, freed from the spatial limits of the frame, absorbs space in a constitutive manner. Moreover, the autonomy conferred to the work extends to the wall, meaning that artists subtract its substance from architecture itself: "The wall, the context of the art, had become rich in a content it subtly donated to the art".<sup>20</sup>

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17 Allan Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 6.

18 Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 86.

19 O'Doherty, 'I. Notes on the Gallery Space', 29.

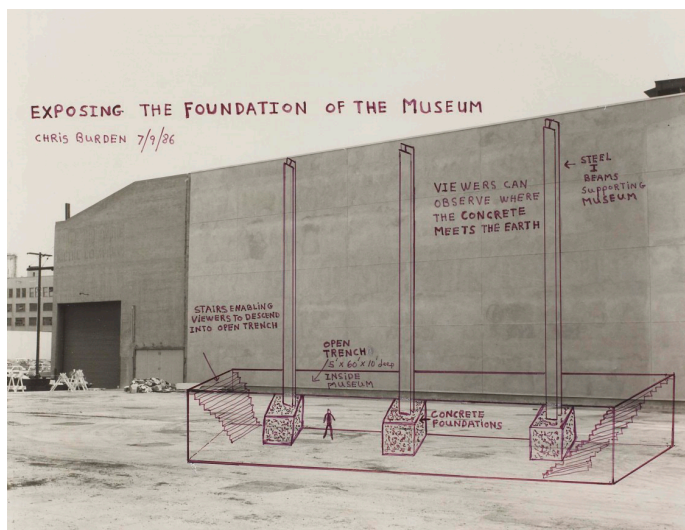
20 Ibid.



Within the framework of the exhibition “Individuals: A Selected History of Contemporary Art, 1945-1986”, the American artist Chris Burden was given *carte blanche* to conceive an intervention at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. Carried out in Frank Gehry’s Temporary Contemporary, Burden’s installation *Exposing the Foundation of the Museum* consisted of a 52 by 16 foot excavation of the concrete floor in the northeast part of the building.<sup>21</sup> Three open trenches, 9 feet deep, were dug in the earth exposed by the removal of the slab, into which stairways leading to the foundations of the museum were inserted. The concrete footings that supported the steel columns structure of the museum became visible through the excavation, along with their connection to the ground. In doing so, the installation referred the visitor to the symbolic limits of the institution by exposing them literally.

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<sup>21</sup> Howard Singerman, ed., *Individuals: A Selected History of Contemporary Art, 1945-1986* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986), 340.



Chris Burden, *Exposing the Foundation of the Museum*, 1986. Marker on black and white photograph, 27 x 35 cm. Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Although Chris Burden is not a figure traditionally associated with Institutional Critique, the controversial performances in his early work reflected a critical view of the definition of the work of art as such. The transition to installations, marking the second part of his practice, explored more deeply the physical relationship between the work of art and the exhibition space. For *Samson* (1985), the artist constructed a horizontal jacking device, which exerted an increasing lateral force on the wall according to the number of visitors entering the room, thus endangering the structure of the gallery room. Burden's gestures have been echoed in more recent interventions, such as Santiago Sierra's *300 Tonnen, 300 Tons* (2004) at the Kunsthauus Bregenz. As the title of the work suggests, the artist placed a load of 300 tons of bricks on the top floor of the museum, corresponding to the theoretical limit load that the building's structure could support. On the last floor, the weight was spread out in fourteen cubic blocks of 3 x 3 x 3 meters, around which the visitors could circulate. The construction of the installation and the added weight of the visitors, limited to 100 people, required the insertion of fifteen vertical supports on each lower floor and the removal of some parts of the museum's false ceiling, turning the building into a "total sculpture".<sup>22</sup> Through the play with and display of the museum's physical limits, "architecture – and by extension first and foremost the art institution housed by it – was tested for its capacity to endure artistic intrusion".<sup>23</sup> As such, Burden and Sierra's gestures resonate with the practice of the protagonists

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<sup>22</sup> Eckhard Schneider, ed., *Santiago Sierra: 300 Tons and Previous Works* (Köln: König, 2004), 167.

<sup>23</sup> Wouter Davidts, *Triple Bond: Essays on Art, Architecture, and Museums* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2017), 36.



Chris Burden, *Exposing the Foundation of the Museum*, 1986. Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.  
Photograph: Squidids and Nunns.

associated with Institutional Critique.

Parallel to the social and political unrest of the late 1960s, the “critique of the institution” emerged from the artists’ questioning of the ideological structures of the museum. The term *Institutional Critique*, coined *a posteriori* by art historians such as Benjamin H.D. Buchloh in his essay *Allegorical Procedures* (1982), refers to an artistic practice which offers a critical discussion on the position and function of art, as well as the ideological, social, political and economic construction of the spaces in which it exists.<sup>24</sup> The museum and the gallery have been the subject-object of the practice associated with this movement, as they play a crucial role in the selection, production, exhibition and reception of art. Furthermore, locations outside the institutional and market field, such as the studio and the public space, along with the literary space in magazines and catalogues, were also used by artists to assert a critical position.<sup>25</sup> Understanding these spaces as the material transposition of the ideology underpinning and put to the fore by the institution, artists created specific interventions, which took shape from existing elements. In this sense, the practice associated with Institutional Critique referred to Marcel Duchamp’s readymade and was built with the tools and techniques carried by Conceptual art.<sup>26</sup> The operative method can be found in the work of Marcel Broodthaers, one of the early protagonists of Institutional Critique. His fictional

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<sup>24</sup> Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, ‘Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art’, *Artforum* 21, no. 1 (1982): 43-56.

<sup>25</sup> Andrea Fraser, ‘From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique’, *Artforum* 44, no. 1 (2005): 281.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander Alberro, ‘Institutions, Critique, and Institutional Critique’, in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists’ Writings*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009), 5.



Santiago Sierra, *300 Tonnen, 300 Tons*,  
2004. Kunsthaus Bregenz, Bregenz.



museum, the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*, created in his house-studio in Brussels in 1968, consisted of twelve sections that appeared in various locations. In his *Section des Figures*, which was put together at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf in 1972, the artist assembled a collection of more than 300 artefacts containing the figurative representation of the eagle, as a symbol of the institution's power. By imitating the museum's conceptual framework, Broodthaers implicitly exposed the institution's procedural logic. Exposing the museum has also been central to Hans Haacke's practice, and notably the entanglement of politics and museum institutions. Through his *MoMa Poll* (1970), in which he had the visitor vote on a political issue in transparent ballot boxes, Haacke exposed the political position of one of the museum's donors, confronting the institution with the origin of its funding.<sup>27</sup> Whereas Broodthaers and Haacke sought to "reveal[...] the material conditions of those institutions as ideological", the operative method of other artists, such as Daniel Buren and Michael Asher, was to subvert its ideological construction through the material in which it took shape.<sup>28</sup>

Within the practice associated to the critique of institutions, the approach took various forms, such as performances, videos, object subversions, fictitious institutional documents, but also direct interventions on the architecture of the museum or the gallery. Indeed, through experimentation from the 1960s onwards, artists came to conceive that the work of art could embrace and make its own the physical delimitation of the institution, that is architecture itself. If architecture became such a field for action, it is precisely because

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<sup>27</sup> Fraser, 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique', 281.

<sup>28</sup> Buchloh, 'Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art', 48.



Santiago Sierra, *300 Tonnen, 300 Tons*,  
2004. Kunsthall Bregenz, Bregenz.

it materially embodies the institution – giving shape to its limits and asserting its nature through spatial organisation.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the architecture of the museum became both a subject to reflect on and a medium of action for artists, transforming the space in which they operated into a work of art situated in an ideological context. The boundary between content and container, as well as the relationship between the inside and the outside of the institution, were fundamental to the practice associated with Institutional Critique.<sup>30</sup> The dividing elements – such as the wall or the slab – and the transition elements – such as the door, the window or the staircase – became the subjects of transgressive operations. Through the subtraction, addition, displacement or camouflage of these elements, the institutional exhibition space and its “conditional nature [...] can be assailed, questioned, and critically addressed”.<sup>31</sup>

Beyond the critique of artists, the museum institution kept on re-articulating itself with the multiplication of museum entities from the 1970s onwards. The competition for the Centre Pompidou in 1970 carried the intention of a new programmatic definition, and marked the beginning of this expansionist boom. The competition program called for the conception of a structure capable of supporting with great flexibility the evolving spatial requirements of contemporary art.<sup>32</sup> To address the demands of the artists’ practice, the institution turned to architecture to provide a framework in which the continuous development of the art could

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29 Davidts, *Triple Bond: Essays on Art, Architecture, and Museums*, 36.

30 Fraser, ‘From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique’, 281.

31 Davidts, *Triple Bond: Essays on Art, Architecture, and Museums*, 37.

32 Max Blumenthal, ed., ‘Centre du Plateau Beaubourg, Concours d’Idées: Programme’, *Techniques et Architecture* 34, no. 3 (1972): 40.



Daniel Buren, *Photo-souvenir*: "Le Musée qui n'existait pas", 2002. Centre Pompidou, Paris.

take place. Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers' realised project certainly offered a radical demonstration for the new definition of the institution's framework, so much so that it was a focal point of discussion among artists and curators. For example, the interior void of the Centre Pompidou was likened, by philosopher Jean Baudrillard, to a semantic vacuum, an image of a "machine to generate emptiness".<sup>33</sup> In this framework, the work becomes its own context, or requires the addition of partition elements to provide it with one. It is on this premise that Daniel Buren positioned his work *Les Couleurs: Sculptures* in 1977, as well as his first solo show at the Centre Pompidou in 2002, explicitly named by the artist *Le Musée qui n'existait pas* (The Museum That Did Not Exist). The title of the exhibition referred to the idea that the Centre Pompidou embodied a new type of museum, while also alluding to the fact that the museum, once created, was never truly allowed to exist. The implications of exhibiting in the intrinsic void of the Centre Pompidou were central to Buren's intervention.<sup>34</sup> As early as 1970, he stated in his text *The Function of the Museum*:

Whether the place in which the work is shown imprints and marks this work, whatever it may be, or whether the work itself is directly – consciously or not – produced for the Museum, any work presented in that framework, if it does not explicitly examine the influence of the framework upon itself, falls into the illusion of self-sufficiency – or idealism.<sup>35</sup>

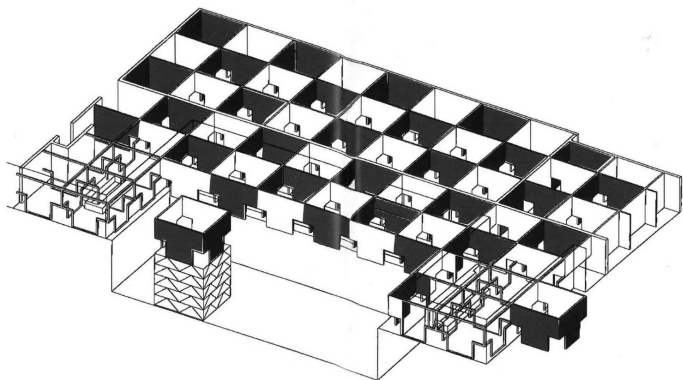
His earlier gallery interventions, such as the sealing of

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<sup>33</sup> Jean Baudrillard, 'The Beaubourg-Effect: Implosion and Deterrence', trans. Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson, *October* 20 (1982): 4.

<sup>34</sup> Daniel Buren, *The Museum That Did Not Exist* (Munich: Prestel, 2010), 15.

<sup>35</sup> A. A. Bronson and Peggy Gale, eds., *Museums by Artists* (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), 59-60.



Daniel Buren, *Arrangement of the room*,  
2002. Centre Pompidou, Paris.

the Galleria Apollinaire in Milan in 1968 or his collage at the Wide White Space Gallery in Antwerp in 1969, in the line of Yves Klein's *Le Vide* (1958) and Arman's *Le Plein* (1960), intersected his vertical strips with the limits of the framework in which they were located.<sup>36</sup>

In his exhibition *Le Musée qui n'existait pas* at the Centre Pompidou, Buren's works were displayed in several parts of the museum: *Ecrans* in the Forum in which he added his *visual tools* on the institution's signalisation, *Le Parking* in the underground level turned the entire floor into a car park, the video *Couleurs* displayed on screens in the escalators and finally *Le Dispositif* with *Les Couleurs: Sculptures* on the sixth level. The scale of his intervention, built up on the entire Centre, "aimed at highlighting the spectacle-in-the-making of the cultural institution and the museum's subordination to the space of which it is a department".<sup>37</sup> By taking possession of the spaces not allocated to art by the institution, Buren returned to the original conception of the building, that is without any predetermined function of the exhibition space.

In Gallery 2 on the sixth floor, Buren introduced a grid ordering the arrangement of 71 identically sized cabins in the open plateau allocated to temporary exhibitions. The grid was deployed to fill the entire space allotted to the artist by the institution, integrating the bookshop and the corridors, and even punctually extending outside onto the terraces. The corners of each cabin-room were pierced by an opening, thus bringing a diagonal circulation inside the rectangular frame of the building. This resulted in the non-determination of the visitor's pathway through the exhibit, going against the

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<sup>36</sup> Anne Rorimer, 'From Painting to Architecture', *Parkett*, no. 66 (2002): 62.

<sup>37</sup> Bernard Blistène, 'Daniel Buren at the Centre Pompidou', in *The Museum That Did Not Exist*, by Daniel Buren (Munich: Prestel, 2010), 50.





Daniel Buren, *Photo-souvenir: "The endless ceiling floor"*, 2002. Centre Pompidou, Paris.



traditionally linear institutional structure. Buren's *Le Dispositif* unfolded in a variety of colours, patterns and materials on the walls, floors and ceilings, producing an optical labyrinth and "shattering the authority of the white cube into a set of deliberately dissonant chromatic variations".<sup>38</sup> While it was expected that Buren would use all the space at his disposal, he decided to leave half of the rooms in the grid empty, as a checkerboard. This choice was possibly based on the one made by architects Piano and Rogers to build the Centre on only half of the available site. As Buren explains, the empty squares of the checkerboard consisted of "solely of four walls covered with deep grey paint and lit by a single central light, making these rooms relatively dark when compared with all the others".<sup>39</sup> By contrast, the artist exhibited both his work and the exhibition space. Buren's intervention was intended to be a direct response to the successive modifications that the building had undergone, notably the fixed arrangement of the permanent galleries by Gao Aulenti in 1985, the closing of the open floor between the Forum and the underground level, as well as the laying out of a crossing corridor in the temporary exhibition spaces, carried out from 1997 to 1999. These changes, undertaken by the institution, substantially altered the promise of flexibility and openness to the city, which "was henceforth rigidified, in the course of time and the pressure of a model against which the Centre Pompidou had been devised by its originator".<sup>40</sup> As a result, Buren took a stand against, not the architecture of the museum, but what the institution had made it become.

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38 Daniel Buren and Bernard Blistène, 'Le Musée qui n'existait pas : A Photographic Tour', in *The Museum That Did Not Exist*, by Daniel Buren (Munich: Prestel, 2010), 102.

39 Ibid, 146.

40 Blistène, 'Daniel Buren at the Centre Pompidou', 16.



Daniel Buren, *Photo-souvenir: "The Colours: sculptures"*, 1977-2002. Centre Pompidou, Paris.

Through his grid of rooms, the artist showed the infinite possibilities that exist in the underlying structure of the building.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the artist had planned the physical destruction of his installation at the end of the exhibition, thus allowing for the continuous evolution of the art in the structure.

On the same level as *Le Dispositif*, the artist reinstalled a work that had been created for the opening of the Centre in 1977. Appearing on the terraces and corridors of the sixth floor, *Les Couleurs: Sculptures* consisted of three telescopes that formed an optical device for viewing fifteen of the artist's striped flags disseminated on the roofs of buildings throughout the city. Given the considerable distance between the museum and the works of art, a viewing device became essential in order to perceive their existence.<sup>42</sup> Buren turned the museum itself into a device for exhibiting his works outside its framework, in the city. He operated "by playing [...] with the place where art is meant to be validated as such (the museum) and intended to face reality (the public space)".<sup>43</sup> The first installation of 1977 was in line with the institution's initial policy of giving free access to the museum's escalators, walkways and terraces, and thus public access to the city's panorama, which was later abandoned.

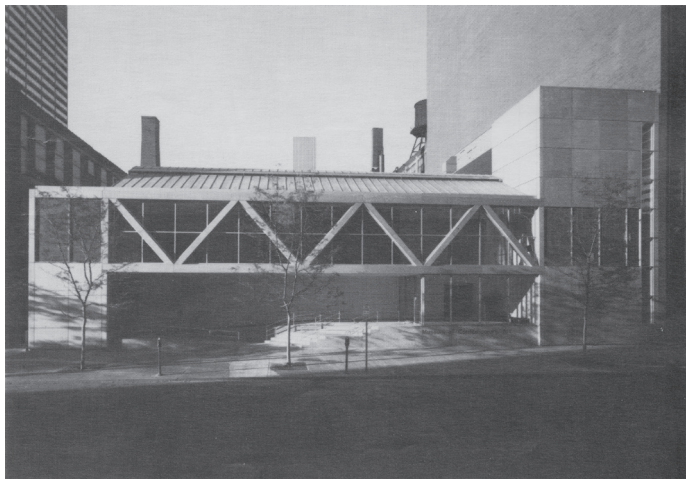
Another case study of artists commenting upon and intervening in the institutional program they were given includes Michael Asher's work at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. In 1978, curator Judith Kirshner invited the artist to create an installation inside the Bergman Gallery, an extension

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41 Blistène, 'Daniel Buren at the Centre Pompidou', 21.

42 Davidts, *Triple Bond: Essays on Art, Architecture, and Museums*, 90.

43 Blistène, 'Daniel Buren at the Centre Pompidou', 56.



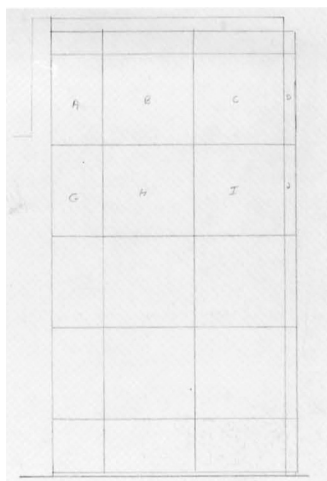
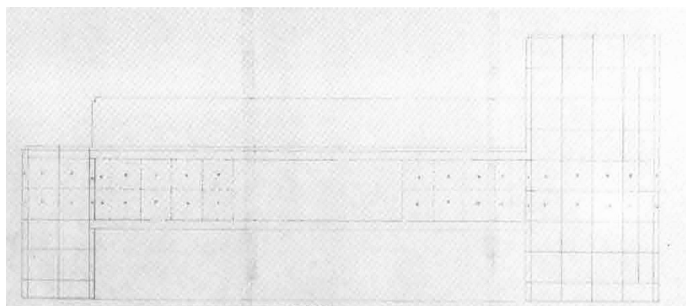
Michael Asher, *The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago* (June 8-August 12), 1979. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

of the museum that was being built at the time. Asher conceived the installation based on plans of the soon-to-be constructed project, which consisted of an expansion of the museum through the incorporation of an adjacent townhouse, the addition of a promenade-gallery and the programmatic re-articulation of the museum. The conception of the gallery by the architectural firm Booth, Nagle, and Hartray was based on the idea of displaying works through a larger pane of glass, referred to by Asher as “a showcase”.<sup>44</sup> Besides the glazed gallery, the volume of the extended museum was projected to be covered by a cladding of aluminum plates, constituting a grid pattern to unify the facades. As a result, the aluminium plates extended over the front walls of the museum’s original building and the former townhouse, disguising their respective cement and brick structure.

In that context, the installation created a year later by Asher consisted in eighteen aluminum plates, extracted from the museum’s new facade. The alignment of the two rows of plates removed from the facade corresponded to the alignment of the windows of the promenade-gallery. Besides subtraction, Asher’s operation consisted of moving the plates inside the gallery on a wall parallel to the plane of the facade, while keeping the same sequence and spacing grid. For the duration of the exhibition, the plates on the wall were visible through the gallery’s windows from the street, as were their absence on the facade, disclosing their decorative function and the construction material of the former buildings. By being exhibited inside the museum, the aluminium panels became autonomous art objects, which, for Asher, “appeared to have a

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<sup>44</sup> Michael Asher, *Writings 1973-1983 on Works 1969-1979*, ed. Benjamin Heinz-Dieter Buchloh (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), 196.



Michael Asher, *North elevation (facade of the Museum of Contemporary Art) designating panels to be removed*, 1979. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

greater importance than the identical panels on the exterior wall, where the aluminium cladding functioned only as a decorative element of architecture".<sup>45</sup> The artist's installation expressly referred to the aesthetics of Minimal art, and thereby revealed its presence in the ornamentation of the building. By simultaneously showing the work of art and its source material, the intervention offered a critical reading of the stylistic cross-reference between Minimal sculpture and architecture: "the outer shell of the new facade billboards itself not only as architecture but also as contemporary sculpture".<sup>46</sup> It also underlined the paradox of Minimal art, which draws elements from the discipline of architecture and at the same time demands the neutrality of the space in which it is displayed.

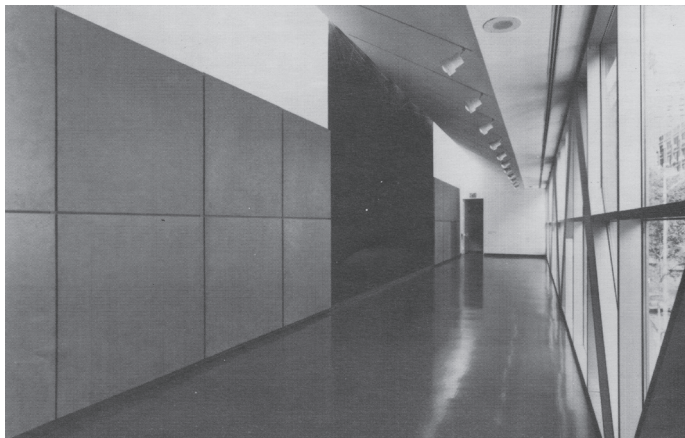
As the installation at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago was intended to become part of the museum's permanent collection, Asher planned for the work to be stored, not in the institution's repositories, but in the substance of the building itself: "The installation [...] can be reinstalled yearly up to the beginning of further building expansion. After each installation the ornamentation is put back to its original space".<sup>47</sup> As a result, the work in storage, which would usually be inaccessible, is constantly visible to the public. Furthermore, the acquisition contract between the artist and the museum specified that the existence of the work of art would end from the moment the architecture of the museum was altered by a future extension. This clause was soon enforced, as the institution evolved from a *Kunsthalle* to a collecting

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45 Christian Kravagna and Kunsthau Bregen, eds., *The Museum as Arena: Artists on Institutional Critique* (Köln: König, 2001), 33.

46 Asher, *Writings 1973-1983 on Works 1969-1979*, 196.

47 Bronson and Gale, *Museums by Artists*, 24.



Michael Asher, *The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago* (June 8-August 12), 1979. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Photograph: Tom Van Eynde.



museum, its permanent collection outgrowing the building. By 1990, the museum had decided to leave its original site and relocate to the Illinois National Guard's Chicago Avenue Armory, thus demolishing the former armory structures and moving into a new building by architect Josef Paul Kleihues.

By subtracting and displacing elements that already existed on the site of intervention, Asher used the exhibition space as a material source and provoked new relationships between the elements that compose it. For the artist, the museum or gallery is not an immaculate and empty container in which the work is contained, but a field of experimentation, a material for creation. Thus, as the art historian Benjamin H.D. Buchloch observes, the artist's practice is characterised by the fact that his works "are constituted first of all within their own spatial, institutional context, the museum, and they become the performative articulation of their actually given historical time, the allocated exhibitions period itself".<sup>48</sup> From the sanding of the white walls and ceilings of the Franco Toselli Gallery in Milan in 1973, to the removal of the ceiling's glass panels at the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum in 1977 and their exhibited reinstallation, Asher's interventions dismantled the architecture of the exhibition space in order to convey a critical stance. In other cases, the artist introduced additional architectural elements, such as in his installation at the Santa Monica Museum in 2008, where he reproduced, through metal and wood frameworks, the precise position of the walls of the temporary exhibitions that have taken place in the history of the

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<sup>48</sup> Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Michael Asher and the Conclusion of Modernist Sculpture (1983)', in *Michael Asher*, ed. Jennifer King (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2016), 69.



Carlo Bavagnoli, *Christo during the installation of Wrapped Kunsthalle*, 1968.  
The LIFE Picture Collection, New York.

While the institution of the museum has been a subject of practice for artists generally working *in situ*, as in the case of Asher, it has also been part of the approach of artists working outside this institutional field, such as Christo and Jeanne-Claude. The artists' approach differed in that they were able to emancipate themselves from the museum in terms of financing, presentation and conservation of their work, thereby achieving autonomy in relation to the institution. Despite their detachment from the institution, the fact remains that the first public buildings enveloped by the two artists were museums. Prefigured by their early works *Project for a packed public building* (1961), *Store Fronts* (1964) and *Show Windows* (1965-66), the public monument became the subject of successive interventions. The artist's works at the Kunsthalle in Bern and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, as well as the unrealised project for the Museum of Modern Art in New York, marked the transition to the wrapping of public buildings, in which their work unfolded at the larger scale of architecture. Furthermore, Christo and Jeanne-Claude's interventions "suggests the artists' ambivalence toward the program of the museum, for in doing so they symbolically shield its very function as a display of objects. The museum itself becomes both object and architectural monument, in addition to a mummified fetish".<sup>50</sup> The *Wrapped Kunsthalle Bern* was the first intervention in which the artists wrapped a public building. For the museum's fiftieth anniversary in 1968, Christo and Jeanne-Claude were among the

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49 Michael Asher, *Public Knowledge: Selected Writings by Michael Asher*, ed. Kirsi Peltomäki (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2019), 199.

50 Molly Donovan, *Christo and Jeanne-Claude in the Vogel Collection* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2002), 25-26.



Christo and Jeanne-Claude, *Wrapped*  
*Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago*,  
1969. Museum of Contemporary Art,  
Chicago. Photograph: Dave Fornell.

twelve artists invited to create an environment work. They covered the entire volume of the Kunsthalle with translucent polyethylene, leaving only an interstice for visitors to enter. In doing so, the temple-like architecture of the museum was concealed and “the only architectural elements that remained visible with any sharpness and clarity were the contours of the roof and cornices”.<sup>51</sup> Christo and Jeanne-Claude did not intervene within the exhibition space, but enclosed the works of the other eleven artists in their own work, thereby wrapping them as well.

A year later in 1969, Christo and Jeanne-Claude wrapped the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, which at that time was housed in its initial building. Formerly a bakery, then the offices of Playboy, the one-story structure had been faced with cement blocks in order to be converted into a museum. According to the artists, the building “looked like a package already, [...] a fake wall covering the original structure”.<sup>52</sup> The museum had no openings on its facades, except for its entrance. This allowed the artists to deploy an opaque brown tarpaulin on the entire front walls of the building. In addition, the artists integrated into their intervention the wrapping of the museum’s signpost, making it illegible under transparent polyethylene. While the wrapping at the Kunsthalle in Bern contained the works of the other artists participating in the event, the wrapped museum in Chicago differed in that it contained another work by the Christos. The *Wrapped Floors and Stairway*, an intervention inside the museum, completed the outer packaging in a reverse gesture. In an emptied underground gallery, which had been painted in white, the artists spread an off-white drop

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51 Dominique Laporte, *Christo*, trans. Abby Pollak (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 81.

52 David Bourdon, *Christo* (New York: Henry N. Abrams, 1970), 41.



Christo, *Project for Museum of Contemporary Art - Chicago, 1968*.  
Collage, 56 x 71 cm. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

cloth of 2,000 square feet on its floor, using the same fabric as the one previously used by the paint workers to protect the floor. The drop cloth was also applied on the main staircase of the museum, leading the viewer to the wrapped gallery floor. As an “*artificial readymade*”, the installation referred the viewer directly to the process inherent in the construction of the White Cube, in its most literal expression.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, by spatially engaging the viewer to walk on the textile surface, the artists turned them from a neutral observer to a participant.

In her essay *From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique*, the artist Andrea Fraser claims that the practices associated with Institutional Critique were gradually internalised by the institution itself.<sup>54</sup> In her opinion, critical practices were exploited by the institution, and transformed into works of art like any other, into commodities that could be valued both symbolically and monetarily. Some artists anticipated this reappropriation of their work, such as Marcel Broodthaers who playfully put his fictional museum up for sale in 1971, thereby mocking the process of institutionalised commodification.

Thus, even the most critical practices, by inscribing themselves in an institutional context, became art objects subjected to the same institutional mechanisms they denounced. Artists, even the most transgressive, did not escape the institutional framework they operated in. Their practices could only be expressed by *playing* the institutional game. As Hans Haacke explicitly stated in his text *All the Art That's Fit to Show* in 1974, “*Artists [...] participate jointly in the maintenance*

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53 Matthias Koddenberg, ‘Beyond Sculpture: Christo’s Store Fronts and Indoor Installation’, in *Christo*, by Christo, ed. Staffan Ahrenberg (Paris: Cahiers d’art, 2020), 35.

54 Fraser, ‘From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique’, 278.



Christo, *Kunsthalle Wrapped*, 1967.  
Model, 59.7 x 71.5 x 92.2 cm. Würth  
Collection, Künzelsau. Photograph:  
André Grossmann.



and/or development of the ideological make-up of their society. They work within that frame, set the frame and are being framed".<sup>55</sup>

Following the practices of Institutional Critique from the 1970s and 1980s, artists continued to explore the relationship between institutional spaces and their work of art throughout the last decade of the twentieth century. They were no longer content to criticise the institution, but strove to rearticulate its definition and its contours. From their imagination emerged several propositions for an ideal museum.

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<sup>55</sup> Hans Haacke, 'All the Art That's Fit to Show', in *Museums by Artists*, ed. A. A. Bronson and Peggy Gale (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), 152.

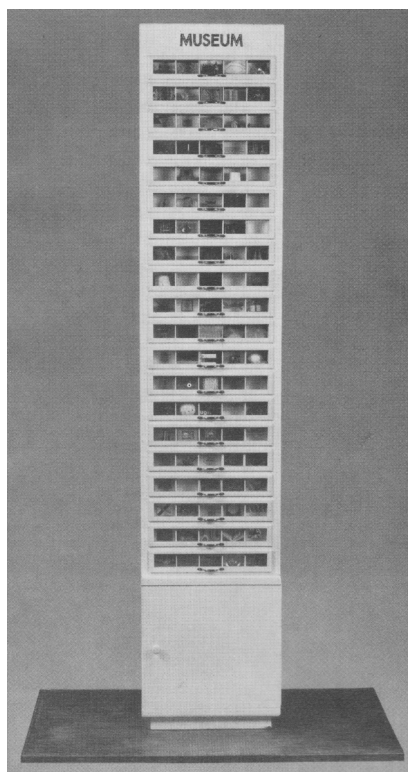


# The Ideal Museum

In 1983, the exhibition “Museums by Artists” was held at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto. It was curated by Art Metropole, an artist-run structure founded in 1974. Opening with artist James Lee Byars’ statement, “I founded a fictitious museum in New York in ‘68 and collected 1,000,000 minutes of attention to show”, the exhibition brought together texts and works “exploring the relationship of the artist to the museum”.<sup>56</sup> In addition to presenting artists associated with Institutional Critique such as Marcel Broodthaers, Hans Haacke, Michael Asher and Daniel Buren, curators AA Bronson and Peggy Gale integrated the practice of artists reproducing the institution’s collectionism at the scale of miniature museums, taking as a starting point Marcel Duchamp’s *La Boîte-en-valise* (1936-41). The reproductions of his works were contained in a portable box, which when opened, unfolded them into a spatial arrangement, just like an exhibition

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<sup>56</sup> A. A. Bronson and Peggy Gale, eds., *Museums by Artists* (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), 2.



Herbert Distel, *Museum of Drawers*,  
1970. Chest of drawers, 183 x 42 x 42 cm.  
Kunsthaus Zürich, Zürich.

space. As such, his portable museum “simulates the horizontals and verticals of a room, reflecting in its spatial construction and arrangement of reproductions the overlaps and cross-references of the artist’s production”.<sup>57</sup> Alongside Duchamp’s work, the curators of the exhibition placed other conceptual structures of museums, such as Robert Filliou’s itinerant *Galerie Légitime* (1962), Les Levine’s *Museum of Mott Art* (1970), Herbert Distel’s *Museum of Drawers* (1970), or Claes Oldenburg’s *Mouse Museum* (1972). With the museum as subject and as structure, the works presented were constructed “metaphorically as both edifice and role model, where irony almost always plays a central part”.<sup>58</sup>

The ambiguous title of the exhibition, “Museums by Artists”, openly suggested that the artist’s appropriation of the museum as a subject matter could extend to its spatial structure.<sup>59</sup> In the conceptual works exhibited, the reduction of the museum to a miniature scale allowed artists to consider it on the scale of their usual artistic medium, thereby integrating it into their field of practice. Thus, in conjunction with the museum boom at the end of the twentieth century, which crystallised its institutional nature, some artists claimed the right to participate in the dialogue between the institution and the architect in the conception of the museum. Such was the case of the American artist Donald Judd who further demanded: “Why are artists and sculptors not asked how to construct this type of building?”.<sup>60</sup>

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57 Victoria Newhouse, *Towards a New Museum* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2006), 104.

58 Peggy Gale, ‘Introduction’, in *Museums by Artists*, ed. A. A. Bronson and Peggy Gale (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), 9.

59 Ibid, 8.

60 Edelbert Köb and Kunsthau Bregenz, eds., *Museum Architecture: Texts and Projects by Artists* (Köln: König, 2000), 7.



Exhibition "Space for Art" at the  
KunsthauB BregenB, 1998. KunsthauB  
BregenB, BregenB.

A direct answer to that question was the exhibition “Le musée imaginé par les artistes” (The museum as imagined by artists), which took place in 1997 at the Espace de l’Art Concret in Mouans-Sartoux in southern France. It featured commissioned contributions from Daniel Buren, Christoph Haerle, Marcia Hafif, Gottfried Honegger, François Morellet, Bernar Venet and Peter Wigglesworth. To these works were added projects by Max Bill (*Project for a Museum in Lausanne*, 1991), Helmut Federle (*The Goetz Collection*, 1989-1993), Donald Judd (*The Marfa Project*, 1979-1994) and Franz Erhard Walther (*The Ritter Art Gallery*, 1989-1992), partly sourced from the Kunsthauus Bregenz art and architecture archive.

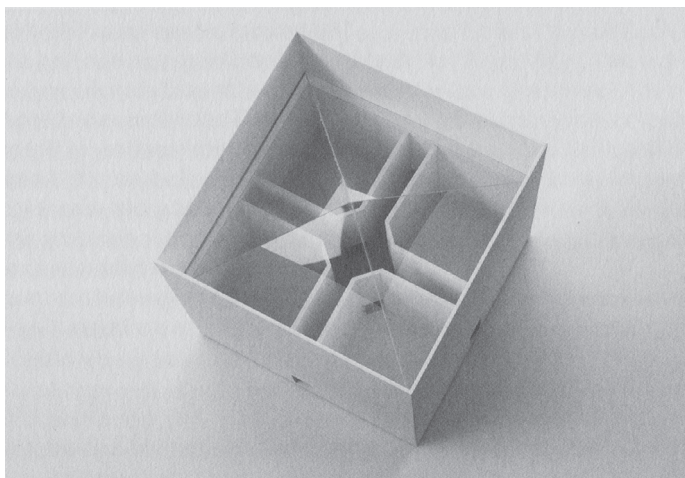
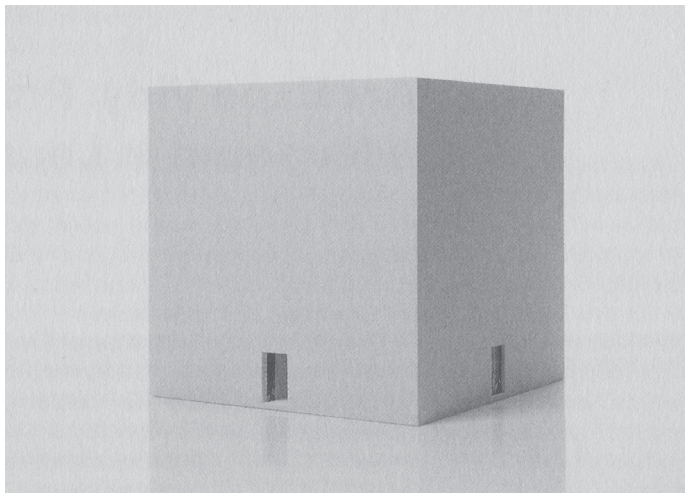
The invitation was issued by the Espace de l’Art Concret and called upon the artists to imagine a museum in which the relationship between art and the exhibition space would be addressed “from their specific reference point as an artist”.<sup>61</sup> They also had to produce a written commentary on their project. In addition, the curators named the Museum for a Small City (1942) by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe as a specific reference to serve as the main guideline for the exhibition. In this project, the walls and columns of the museum were made up of works of art, that is of paintings and sculptures. As such, its “main point was not to contain the art with the architecture but to use the art to create architecture”.<sup>62</sup>

A year after its opening, in 1998, the exhibition at the Espace de l’Art Concret was reproduced at the Kunsthauus Bregenz. Its permanent collection, which

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61 Edelbert Köb and Adolph Stiller, *Räume Der Kunst = Space for Art* (Salzburg: Pustet, 1998), 9.

62 Beatriz Colomina, ‘The Endless Museum: Le Corbusier and Mies van Der Rohe’, *Log*, no. 15 (2009): 64.



Georg Baselitz, *Bilderbude*, 1977.  
Model in varnished wood and perspex.  
Kunsthhaus Bregenz, Bregenz.

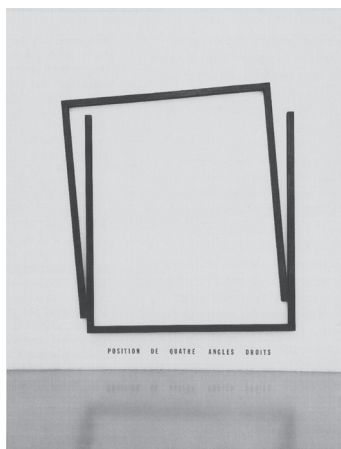
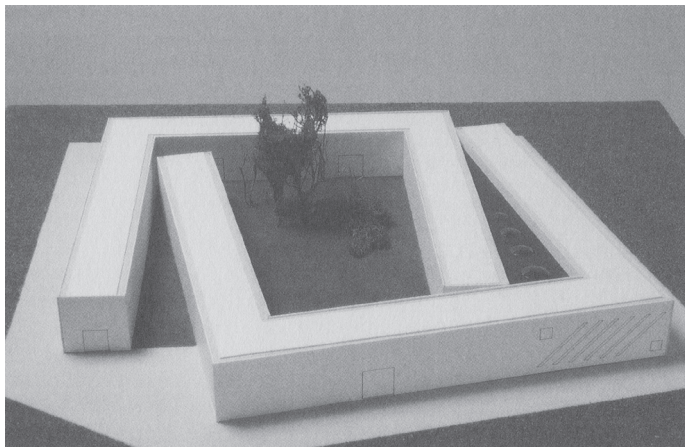


tackled the relationships between art and architecture, offered an invigorating dialogue to the original exhibit, which was thus expanded under the title “Space for Art”. It now included previously omitted or newly completed projects, with contributions from Georg Baselitz (*Picture Booth, project for Documenta 6*, 1977), Heinrich Dunst (*Here and Now*, 1997), Erwin Heerich (*Museum Insel Hombroich*, 1998), Per Kirkeby (*A new art museum in Aarhus*, 1997), Cornelius Kolig (*Paradise*, 1985), Gerhard Merz (*Projects*, 1994-1998), Walter Pichler (*The Estate St. Martin*, 1971-1998) and Ulrich Rückriem (*Halle in Clonegal*, 1997). In the same year, the exhibition was also shown in the Ringturm in Vienna within the second part of the series *Architektur im Ringturm*.

These three subsequent exhibitions brought together the artists' proposals in the form of sketches, drawings, videos, texts, architectural plans and models. Artists used the architect's tools of projection to express their visions and utopias of the museum, while emancipating themselves from the conventions of architectural representation. Architectural drawings and models were essential to the transmission of their ideas as well as for the study of questions relative to light, materials and the proportion of rooms.<sup>63</sup> While projects borrowed from architecture, they did not completely adhere to the technical constraints of the discipline related to public presentation, conservation or security standards. As no specific context or site were mentioned in the invitation brief, most projects also took as a central unit of composition the room.

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63 K&B, *Räume Der Kunst = Space for Art*, 10.



Bernar Venet, *Position de quatre angles droits*, 1997. Model in wood and plastic.  
Kunsthau Bregen, Bregen.

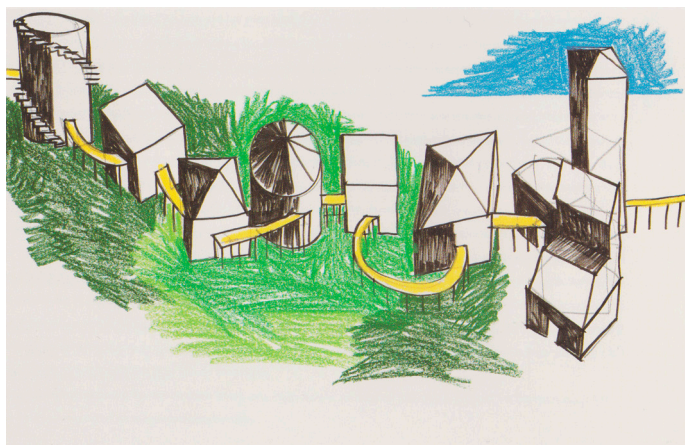
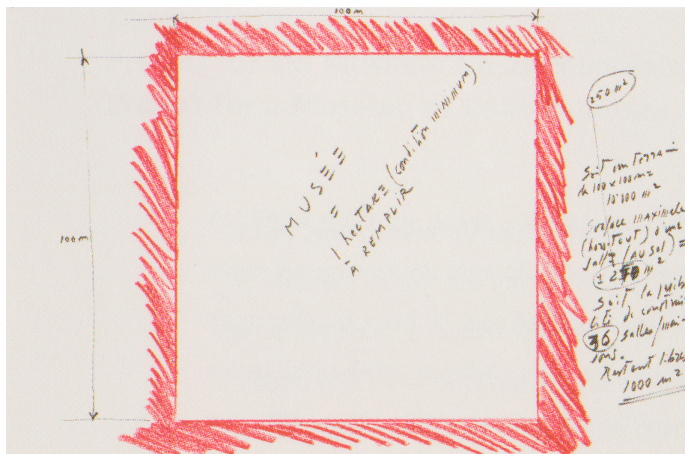
Bernar Venet, *Position de quatre angles droits*, 1979. Wooden relief. Archives  
Bernar Venet, Le Muy.

Among the artists that submitted projects was Bernar Venet, a leading figure of Conceptual art in the 1960s and 1970s, whose work from that period integrated mathematics through the particular study of arcs, lines and angles. For his ideal museum, he reused one of his previous conceptual piece, *Position de quatre angles droits* (Position of four right angles), created in 1979, and transposed it architecturally. In his original work, the mural relief is made up of the layout of two squares, interlocked by the respective subtraction of one of their sides. This geometrical construction served as the basis for the artist's museum. In the project, the lines were thickened to accommodate two distinct linear volumes, which functioned for the artist as an "exhibition wall, [...] a critique on the crazy excesses of many architects".<sup>64</sup> The exterior spaces were shaped by the positioning and slight offset of these two geometries, and presented as outer rooms of the museum, where sculptures could be exhibited. The inner and outer surfaces of the perimeter walls were to be painted white, in order "to distinctly emphasize the interplay of light and shadows".<sup>65</sup> The continuous facades were to be pierced with windows and doors, so that the museum would relate to its external context as well as to itself. This model was presented by the artist as a first project intention, which could potentially be enlarged by adding two right angles in order to integrate a future outgrowth.

In his proposal entitled *Project for a Museum of Contemporary Art* or "*As you make your bed, so*

64 Bernar Venet, 'Position de Quatre Angles Droits, 1979/1997', in *Räume Der Kunst = Space for Art*, by Edelbert Köb, ed. Adolph Stiller (Salzburg: Pustet, 1998), 57.

65 Bernar Venet, 'Position de Quatre Angles Droits, 1979/1997', in *Museum Architecture: Texts and Projects by Artists*, ed. Edelbert Köb and Kunsthau Bregenz (Köln: König, 2000), 104.



Daniel Buren, *Project for a Museum of Contemporary Art or "As you make your bed, so you must lie on it"*, 1997. Coloured pencil on paper, 31.4 x 47.2 cm each. Kunsthau Bregen, Bregen.

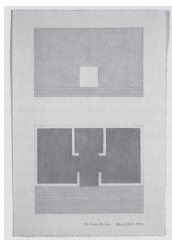
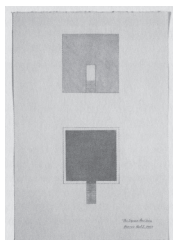
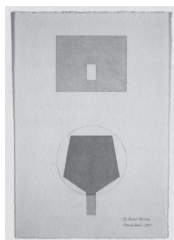
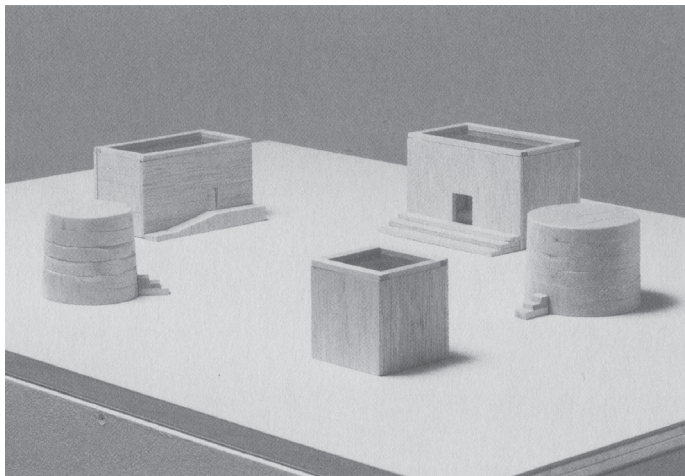
*you must lie on it*", Daniel Buren imagined a precise context in which the construction of the museum would take place. A plot of 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> (1 acre) would be donated by a public authority or a patron, who would commit to financing the museum over a decade. A museum manager, "convinced of the merits of this project", would also agree to the development of the project over the same period.<sup>66</sup> For Buren, as soon as these two conditions were met, the blank plot of land would become a museum. Ten artists would "present a concept for a work yet to be built (or already existing), which should be permanently exhibited, and at the same time a place (the exterior)".<sup>67</sup> They would conceive a building, as an artist's room, according to pre-established rules: the height of the building would be less than 10 metres and its footprint would not exceed 200 m<sup>2</sup>, ensuring each artist has an outdoor exhibition space on the plot. The artists would be free to choose the shape and materials of the building, thus each would model a part of the museum, whose specificity would lie in the "correspondence between work and room".<sup>68</sup> The rooms would be connected by passageways and positioned in a spiral shape, starting at the centre of the plot, which, according to Buren, could allow for the consecutive construction of up to 36 rooms. Although the adoption of the spiral shape recalled Le Corbusier's Musée à croissance illimitée (1939), in his written statement Buren argued that infinite growth would not be a viable option in that particular case. Furthermore, he stated that the museum manager and the architect

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66 Daniel Buren, 'Project for a Museum of Contemporary Art [...]', in *Räume Der Kunst = Space for Art*, by Edelbert Köb, ed. Adolph Stiller (Salzburg: Pustet, 1998), 19.

67 Ibid.

68 Daniel Buren, 'Project for a Museum of Contemporary Art (1997)', in *Museum Architecture: Texts and Projects by Artists*, ed. Edelbert Köb and Kunsthau Bregenz (Köln: König, 2000), 21.



**Marcia Hafif, *A Place Apart*, 1997. Model in wood, clay and perspex. Kunsthau Bregenz, Bregenz.**

**Marcia Hafif, *A Place Apart*, 1997. Pencil and colored pencil on paper, 56.5 x 37.7 each. Kunsthau Bregenz, Bregenz.**

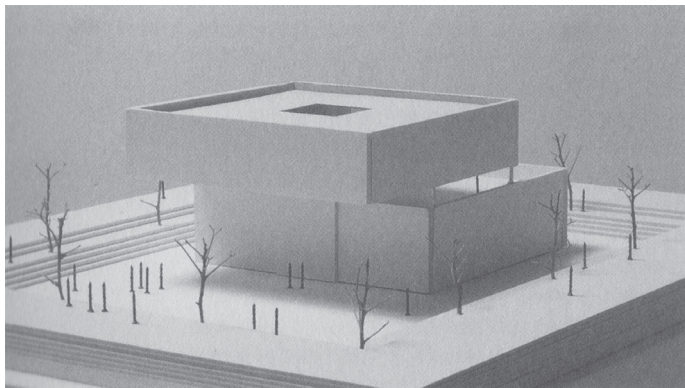
would only intervene in the process to provide technical solutions and to supervise the construction of the museum. Given its layout, Buren's museum contains only one large permanent collection, encompassing the artworks per say as well as their spatial settings, all imagined by the artists.

While Daniel Buren's proposal was made up of autonomous rooms that were connected together to form a museum, Marcia Hafif imagined building rooms in seclusion. In her project called *A Place Apart*, she projected her ideal museum in a clearing isolated from the context of the city. She dedicated it to the contemplation of "installations of Concrete, Constructive or Radical painting or sculpture".<sup>69</sup> As such, her museum contained no other program than the exhibition of works of art. The ensemble planned by Hafif was composed of five pavilions, arranged in a circle with a plan that presented geometric variations of elementary forms. The artist defined the nature of her five constructions in her text as well as through her drawings and models: *The Grand Pavilion* houses three exhibition spaces, *The Ramp Pavilion* is asymmetrically divided into two rooms, *The Round Pavilion* houses a room with a pentagonal plan, *The Square Pavilion* has a cubic volume, while the *The Oval Pavilion* contains an irregular rectangle-shaped room. The variations in the geometry of the exterior and interior contours of each room were intended to produce different spatial conditions for each piece of work on display. Furthermore, the plan and elevation drawings of each pavilion showed a degree of abstraction from the internal geometry of each room as Hafif used different

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69 Marcia Hafif, 'A Place Apart', in *Räume Der Kunst = Space for Art*, by Edelbert Köb, ed. Adolph Stiller (Salzburg: Pustet, 1998), 29.





Gottfried Honegger, *Two Projects for an Ideal Museum*, 1997. Model in cardboard, plastic and metal. Kunsthhaus Bregenz, Bregenz.



colours depending on the material of each element: the stairs, railings and exterior walls in yellow limestone, the floor in terra cotta and the interior walls plastered in white.

Gottfried Honegger and Christoph Haerle each put forward a museum consisting of two overlapping volumes. Honegger's *Ideal Museum* consisted of two variants that he presented using models. The artist, who was a major figure of Concrete Art, introduced his thoughts on the nature of museum architecture in the following statement:

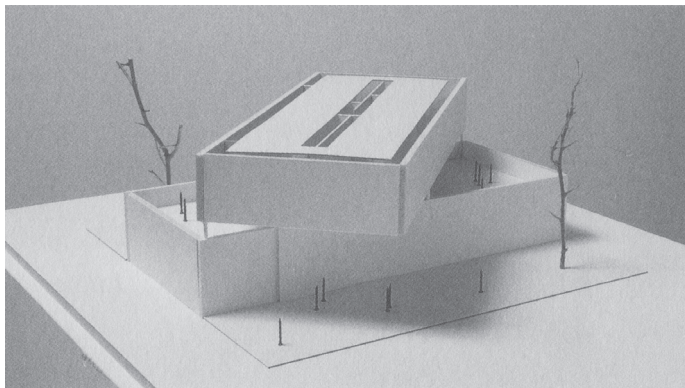
It has to be an architecture without decoration and without any correcting interference. [...] First of all, it should be an architecture that is not subject to fashion or any other personal influence. Despite its plain and simple character, architecture must stand out from the commonplace, it must be a kind of symbol, a signal in the urban environment.<sup>70</sup>

In his first proposal, the two volumes, that were positioned one on top of the other, were square-based and laterally shifted. Their offset allowed for a terrace to be placed on the roof of the lower volume, which served as a sculpture garden. The plan of the lower volume is entirely free, whereas the plan of the upper volume is fixed by a succession of rooms that form a spiral path, the centre of which is sky open. A continuous window strip placed all around the perimeter of the roof brings light to the exhibition rooms. There are no opening in the façade of the two volumes of the museum.

In the second proposal, the top volume was rotated by

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<sup>70</sup> Gottfried Honegger, 'Two Projects for an Ideal Museum (1997)', in *Museum Architecture: Texts and Projects by Artists*, ed. Edelbert Köb and Kunsthau Bregenz (Köln: König, 2000), 47.



Gottfried Honegger, *Two Projects for an Ideal Museum*, 1997. Model in cardboard, plastic and metal. Kunsthau Bregen, Bregen.

45°, which, unlike the first variant, created two terraces. The interior walls in the upper part were positioned to have a series of rooms in a row with niches, forming a looped path. A strip opening followed the perimeter of the walls, and a second one crossed the roof in its centre along its length. In his *Two Projects for an Ideal Museum*, the artist insisted that the “museum is most importantly a meeting place”, both through its outside public space and its sculpture garden within the building.<sup>71</sup> In his written statement, he specified that his *Ideal Museum*, placed in the city centre, includes “a library, a video-tape library, a cinema, a conference room, a book shop and a newspaper stand” on its ground floor.<sup>72</sup>

Christoph Haerle’s contribution to the exhibition remains quite mysterious due to the poor documentation of his work and lack of information given by the artist, who himself stated “I don’t know any more than that”.<sup>73</sup> Haerle chose to present his museum in two different scales: one model at 1:50, and five others at 1:200 which broke down the internal organisation of the plan into layers. The two parallelepiped volumes, which were one storey high, were superimposed at a 90° angle, so that their contact surface was reduced. In doing so, both volumes, which also had openings in their façade, received zenithal light. In contrast to Gottfried Honegger, Haerle supported the idea that the museum should provide a view beyond its framework: “the exhibition room should relate to the outer room”.<sup>74</sup> In his project, rooms were arranged in rows with

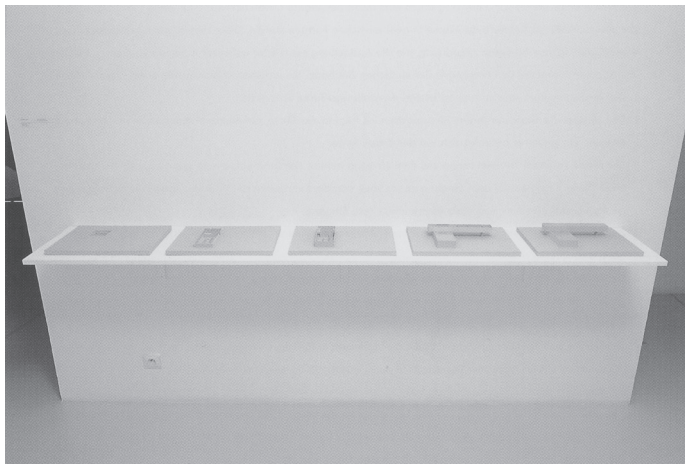
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71 Honegger, ‘Two Projects for an Ideal Museum (1997)’, 47.

72 Ibid.

73 Köb, *Räume Der Kunst = Space for Art*, 26.

74 Köb and Kunsthaus Bregenz, *Museum Architecture: Texts and Projects by Artists*, 38.



Christoph Haerle, *Ideal Project*, 1997.  
Model in five parts in wood, scale 1:200.  
Kunsthau Bregen, Bregen.

Christoph Haerle, *Ideal Project*, 1997.  
Model in concrete, scale 1:50. Kunsthau  
Bregen, Bregen.

white-painted walls, and set out in strips along the length of the two concrete volumes. In the larger scale model, the layout of these rooms and their openings are not visible. The artist instead chose to focus on the volumetric and colour effect of his *Ideal Project*, whose formal language resembles his sculptures. Haerle shared Honegger's opinion on the ambivalence of the role of architecture regarding museums. Inside, architecture must retreat and restrain itself in order to "serve what it accomodates", i.e. art, while its exterior should reflect "an expression of a conservative aspect of society [...] in the sense of conservare, to preserve, to keep".<sup>75</sup>

With the statement "I am (unfortunately) neither architect nor designer", the French artist François Morellet refused to submit a proposal for an ideal museum.<sup>76</sup> It was his correspondence via fax with the Espace de l'Art Concret which constituted his exhibited work, and in which he made explicit his critical stance in regard to the institution of the museum. According to him, the institution's quest for visibility is too often translated into the monumentality of its container, in which "architecture [is] executed by a sculptor-architect", causing "artworks to fall into oblivion".<sup>77</sup> He acknowledged that his own demands on the museum were "totally utopian, just like the architecture that would satisfy them", but nonetheless argued that spaces that were imagined to contain the most ordinary

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75 Christoph Haerle, 'Ideal Project (1997)', in *Museum Architecture: Texts and Projects by Artists*, ed. Edelbert Köb and Kunsthau Bregenz (Köln: König, 2000), 39.

76 François Morellet, 'March 4, 1998', in *Museum Architecture: Texts and Projects by Artists*, ed. Edelbert Köb and Kunsthau Bregenz, trans. Carin Föhr (Köln: König, 2000), 70.

77 François Morellet, 'February 14, 1997: Getting to the "Building" .', in *Museum Architecture: Texts and Projects by Artists*, ed. Edelbert Köb and Kunsthau Bregenz, trans. Carin Föhr (Köln: König, 2000), 69.



François Morellet, *Museum of Concrete Art*, 1998. Model in plastic. Kunsthau  
Bregenz, Bregenz.

activities of human life were the only alternative to the institution.<sup>78</sup> These commonplace rooms, somewhat closer to an artist's studio in spirit, offer the possibility to have "pure white walls that reach from the floor to the ceiling, without base mouldings, and in which nails can be put".<sup>79</sup> His ideas were reflected in the model he submitted as a supplement to his correspondence, when the exhibition was reproduced in 1998 at the Kunsthaus Bregenz. He challenged the exhibition brief by reproducing what he considered to be a common house on which facade was written "MUSEE D'ART CONCRET" (Museum of Concrete Art).

Although Morellet rejected the standpoint of the exhibition, the fact remains that all the invited artists formulated a critical statement "demand[ing] for the observation of a few basic ground rules for art and the rejection of the museum as a space for events and of the staging of art within an architectural framework".<sup>80</sup> The projected *ideal* museums conveyed both the idea that the institution needed to be reaccessed through its architecture, and that artists were more than capable to participate in museum architecture. As such, the exhibition at the Espace de l'Art Concret in which artistic practices protruded into the field of architecture appeared as a possible answer to the friction that characterises the relationship of artists to the exhibition space. Yet, one can also argue that museum architecture can hardly do without the architect, which involvement cannot be fully eluded. In view of this assessment, it seems essential to address the antagonism between contemporary art and museum

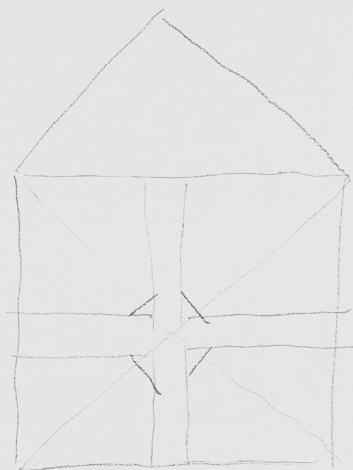
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78 Morellet, 'February 14, 1997: Getting to the "Building"', 69.

79 Ibid.

80 K&B and Kunsthaus Bregenz, *Museum Architecture: Texts and Projects by Artists*, 9.

DERNEBURG



Georg Baselitz, *Bilderbude*, 1977. Pencil  
on stationary. Kunsthau Bregen,  
Bregen.



architecture, through the examination of three possible denouements: the collaboration between the artist and the architect, the conversion of pre-existing rooms as *found containers*, or the translation of painting to the architecture plan as a projectual method.<sup>81</sup>

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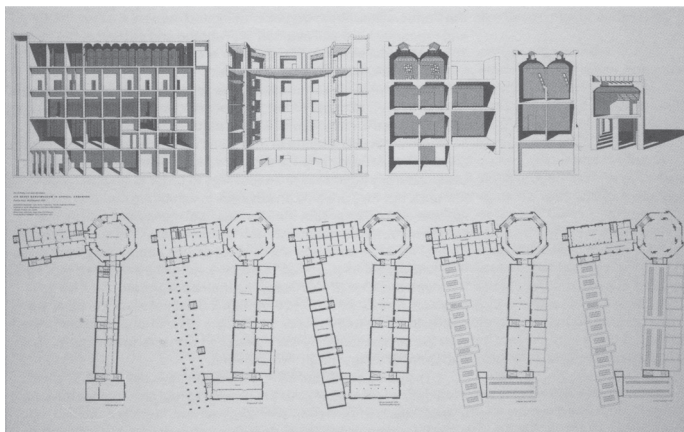
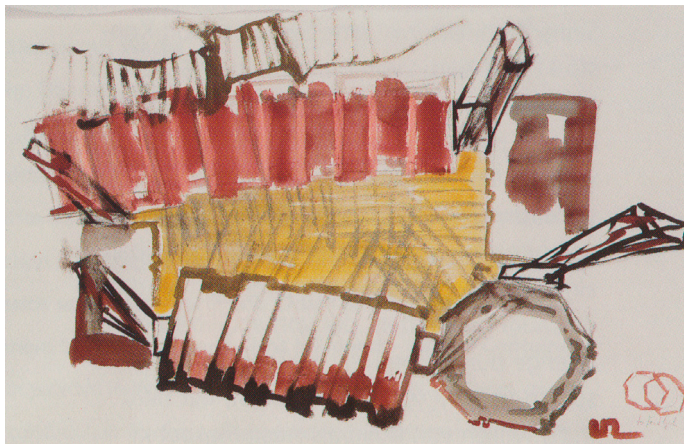
<sup>81</sup> Douglas Davis, *The Museum Transformed: Design and Culture in the Post-Pompidou Age* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1990), 174.



In 1997, artist Per Kirkeby and architect Jens Bertelsen engaged in a multidisciplinary collaboration to participate to the competition for the New Aarhus Art Museum. Their proposal, which was awarded second prize in the competition, consisted in an assembly of five formally distinct volumes enclosing an irregular courtyard. The volumes each contained fragments of the program connected together by distribution towers. Visitors were meant to enter the museum through the octagon-shaped volume, which constituted “a purely spatial construction” intended, according to Kirkeby, to prepare the viewer for the encounter of art.<sup>82</sup> While Kirkeby and Bertelsen presented conventional plans and cross-sections on the competition board, their joint research also included the artist’s watercolours, which simultaneously showed an aerial view and a floor plan of the project. In that regard, the collaborative project of the architect and the artist was developed through

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<sup>82</sup> Per Kirkeby, ‘A New Aarhus Art Museum’, in *Museum Architecture: Texts and Projects by Artists*, ed. Edelbert Köb and Kunsthau Bregenz (Köln: König, 2000), 57.



Per Kirkeby, Floor plan, 1997.  
Watercolour, Indian ink, crayon on paper,  
65.5 x 100 cm. Kunsthau Bregenz,  
Bregenz.

Jens Bertelsen, Per Kirkeby, A New  
Aarhus Art Museum, Competition board,  
1997. Kunsthau Bregenz, Bregenz.

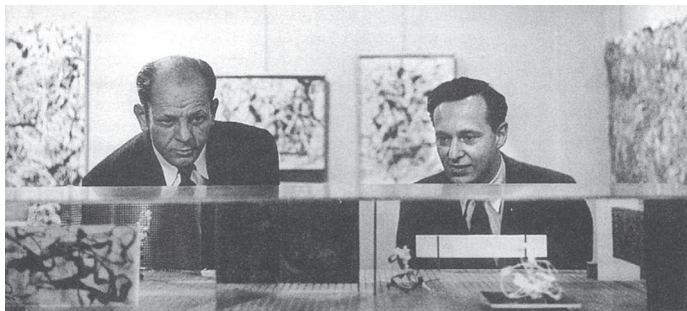
their respective project methods. The architecture of the museum was the clear result of the intertwining of the two disciplines. While the dialogue between art and architecture emerged as an outcome of the critiques made by artists in the second half of the twentieth century, several artists adopted an interdisciplinary posture. Reaching beyond a critical stance, artists such as Erwin Heerich crossed borders between art and architecture to practice as both an artist and an architect for a museum project. For the Museum Insel Hombroich (1986-1993) commissioned by the art collector Karl-Heinrich Mueller, Heerich conceived ten walk-in sculptures as physical entities of the museum, scattered across the landscape of the site. The sculptor experimented the relationship and boundaries between sculpture and architecture, as the “constructions are autonomous buildings developed from sculptures”.<sup>83</sup> In doing so, the buildings are both works of art exhibited in the park and rooms that serve as exhibition spaces.

Another form of collaboration between artists and architects included focusing on the artists’ work as a focal point for architecture. Such practices existed well before the relationships between artists, architects and the institution were at the centre of the debate in the 1970s. This kind of collaboration was developed in the case of the museum imagined by the architect Peter Blake to house the work of Jackson Pollock. For the exhibition “Murals in Modern Architecture” at the Betty Parsons Gallery in 1949, Blake presented the model of the museum, exhibited along with Pollock’s canvases.<sup>84</sup> The architect’s project took Mies van der

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<sup>83</sup> Edelbert Köb and Kunststhaus Bregenz, eds., *Museum Architecture: Texts and Projects by Artists* (Köln: König, 2000), 43.

<sup>84</sup> Eric Lum, ‘Pollock’s Promise: Toward an Abstract Expressionist Architecture’, *Assemblage*, no. 39 (1999): 64.



Jackson Pollock and Peter Blake in front of model at the Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, 1949. Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center, New York. Photograph: Ben Schultz.

Rohe's Museum for a Small City (1942) as a reference to develop an exhibition space in which paintings and sculptures defined its spatial organisation. Blake projected Pollock's works as unframed on glass plates, and arranged them on a rectangular floor surface. Perpendicular to Pollock's paintings, the architect inserted mirrored vertical planes reflecting the artist's works, turning the exhibition space into an *environment* that merged art and architecture. For the making of the model, the architect used reproductions of Pollock's paintings from magazines. He cut and cropped them, with the result that the scale and proportions did not correspond to the original dimensions of the paintings. In order to complement the spatial composition of the museum, Blake asked the artist to conceive sculptures at the scale of the model. As "a kind of three-dimensional interpretation of his drip paintings", Pollock specially created three miniature sculptures made of plaster-dipped and painted wire, thereby participating in the development of the museum.<sup>85</sup> Although the project was never realised due to lack of funding, the model of Pollock's museum remained by his side in his studio, as evidenced by Hans Namuth's series of photographs in 1950 that show the artist at work.

From the beginning of their practice in 1978, the work of Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron has been marked by repeated collaborations with artists, including Helmut Federle, Adrian Schliess, Michael Craig-Martin, Thomas Ruff and Andreas Gursky. From conception to realisation, the *creative* dialogue between the fields of art and architecture is central

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<sup>85</sup> Peter Blake, *No Place Like Utopia: Modern Architecture and the Company We Kept* (New York: Knopf, 1993) in Lum, 'Pollock's Promise: Toward an Abstract Expressionist Architecture', 65.



Herzog & de Meuron, Expansion of the  
Aargauer Kunsthaus, 2002. Photograph:  
Masao Nishikawa.



to the architects' practice, extending as well to the documentation of their completed projects.<sup>86</sup>

The significant place of art in Herzog & de Meuron's projectual approach goes back to the beginning of their practice. In 1978, after graduating, they made a performance at the Basel Carnival with the artist Joseph Beuys, in irony of the media controversy surrounding the acquisition of his work *Feuerstätte I* by the Kunstmuseum Basel.<sup>87</sup> From 1979 to 1986, while the firm received few commissions for projects, Jacques Herzog carried out in parallel a practice as an artist. This period in the art field initiated a phase of research into the possibilities of materials, which would later be revisited in their architecture projects. Coming to the realisation from that moment onwards that "it is impossible to do art and architecture at the same time", Herzog & de Meuron developed forms of collaboration with artists for their projects, as a way of reconciling their interest in both fields.<sup>88</sup> In their collaborative approach, the project is the subject of discussion as a whole. The architects do not give a specific delimitation to the role of the artist. In doing so, Herzog & de Meuron "turned to artists as models for new ways of thinking about architecture", as they contribute from outside its field.<sup>89</sup> When the program of the project in collaboration intersects with the field of art, as in the case of a museum, it implies the positioning of the artist in relation to the nature of the exhibition space. Hence, the several museum and gallery projects conceived in

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86 Philip Ursprung, 'Close Encounters: Herzog & de Meuron en collaboration avec des artistes' (Centre Canadien d'Architecture, Montreal, 17 October 2002), 42:49.

87 Jacques Herzog and Julian Rose, 'Significant Difference: Jacques Herzog Talks with Julian Rose', *Artforum* 56, no. 7 (2018): 195.

88 Rémy Zaugg, Jacques Herzog, and Pierre de Meuron, eds., 'About Collaboration', in *Herzog & de Meuron, an Exhibition* (Stuttgart: Cantz, 1996), 32.

89 Herzog and Rose, 'Significant Difference: Jacques Herzog Talks with Julian Rose', 195.



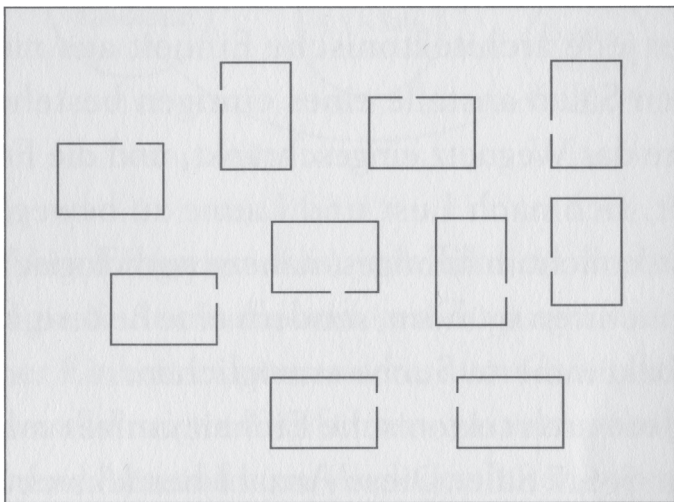
Herzog & de Meuron, Studio Rémy  
Zaugg, 1996. Photograph: Christian  
Richters.

collaboration with artists such as Helmut Federle or Rémy Zaugg, acquire a particular force through their definition of the requirements of art.

Herzog & de Meuron's most intense and productive collaboration occurred with the Swiss artist Rémy Zaugg. From the 1980s until the artist's death in 2005, their joint practice included the conception of numerous projects, such as Antipodes Student Housing (1990-1992), the Roche Laboratory Buildings (1993-2000), the expansion of the Aargauer Kunsthaus (1996-2002) and the artist's Studio (1995-1996) in Mulhouse, which constituted a prototype for the Tate Modern (1994-2000). Prior to their encounter, the artist had already worked with the Swiss architectural firm Atelier 5 on the extension of the Kunstmuseum in Bern (1976-1983). Following this project, Zaugg gave a lecture in 1986, out of which he published a book under the title *Das Kunstmuseum, das ich mir erträume oder der Ort des Werkes und des Menschen* (The Art Museum of My Dreams or A Place for the Work and the Human Being). Described by Herzog & de Meuron as having "opened the eyes of many an architect", Zaugg's text stands as a handbook of his thoughts on an ideal museum, based on an argument constructed in three parts and diagrams.<sup>90</sup> As a prelude to the layout of his dream museum, the artist discusses the relationship between *The work and the human being*, which find themselves, according to him, antagonistic due to their respective autonomy. Subsequently, in *The origin of the problem of the place*, he argues that the tense relationship "seems to stem from the autonomy and mobility" of the work of

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<sup>90</sup> Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, 'Foreword', in *The Art Museum of My Dreams or A Place for the Work and the Human Being*, by Rémy Zaugg, ed. Hinrich Sachs and Eva Schmidt (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 1.



Rémy Zaugg, Plan of scattered rooms,  
*The Art Museum of My Dreams or A Place  
for the Work and the Human Being*, 1986.

art and the viewer in the same spatial framework.<sup>91</sup> For Zaugg, the museum, and thus its architecture, is “the tool of the encounter between the work and the human being, between the human being and the work”, and therefore its construction demands to be addressed.<sup>92</sup>

In the third part, *The construction of the place*, Zaugg articulates the spatial conception of his dream museum through both its argumentative and architectural construction. The planar geometries and materials of the elements – the floor, the wall, the ceiling – are successively defined by the artist, as well as their connection to each other. Zaugg asserts the flatness and horizontality of the floor, as well as the opacity and verticality of the wall, which for him are “the unquestionable and unquestioned founding limit of the space”.<sup>93</sup> Given its spatial relationship to the work, the wall should be white and lightly textured, just as a blank canvas to paint. In contrast to the white walls and ceiling, the floor material should be differentiated by the intrinsic colour of a natural material. Zaugg thereby nuances the image of the White Cube as theorised by Brian O’Doherty in 1976, arguing that such a construction “would generate an unreal, ambiguous and uncertain space”.<sup>94</sup> Through the systematic investigation of the architectural elements, Zaugg’s argumentation converges to the room, examining its proportions, the position of its openings and the arrangement of the rooms as a spatial unit. Defining the room as the connection of four orthogonal walls, the artist suggests a system of proportions based not on the metric system but on the human body. Thus, he

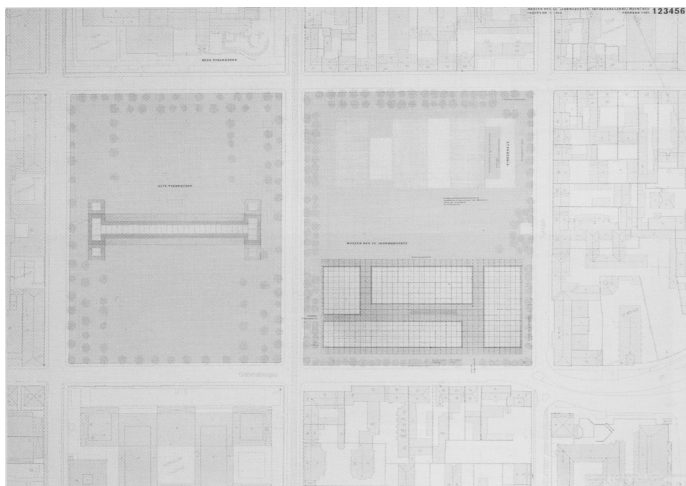
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91 Rémy Zaugg, *The Art Museum of My Dreams or A Place for the Work and the Human Being*, ed. Hinrich Sachs and Eva Schmidt (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 8.

92 Ibid, 9.

93 Ibid, 16.

94 Ibid, 21.



Herzog & de Meuron, Site plan, One Building for Museums of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, 1992.

conceives the minimum length of the wall of the room as “equivalent to three arm spans” and its maximum length as “six arm spans”, while the ceiling height would correspond to the “height of two humans with their arms stretched upwards”.<sup>95</sup>

Rémy Zaugg's *The Art Museum of My Dreams* [...] resonated with the first museum project that he collaborated on with Herzog & de Meuron. In 1992, they participated jointly in the competition of the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich. On a site adjacent to Leo von Klenze's Alte Pinakothek, the competition brief called for the integration of four independent collections – Gallery for the Art of the Twentieth Century, Graphic Collection, Museum of Architecture, Design Museum – into a single entity.<sup>96</sup> Herzog & de Meuron and Zaugg's proposal, distinctly entitled *One Building for Museums of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, presented itself as “a building that consists of a number of volumes forming a conglomerate”.<sup>97</sup> As each collection related to a different discipline with specific requirements, the volumes were addressed by the architects and the artist as separate museums with their own entrance. The top level of each entity contained an exhibition floor consisting entirely of rooms of varying sizes.

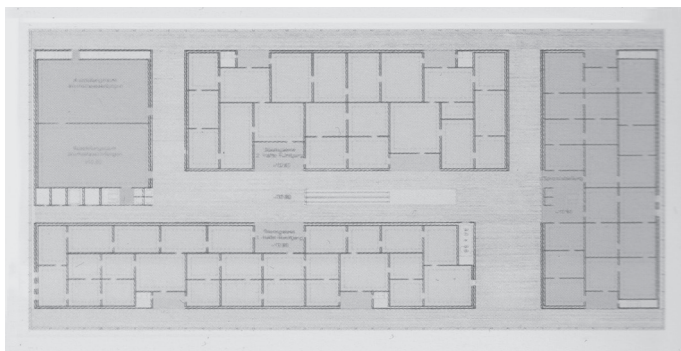
In the sub-chapter “The rooms” of his essay *The Art Museum of My Dreams* [...], Zaugg defined an ideal arrangement of the rooms in relation to one another. Using an empirical method, the artist began his reflection with a strip arrangement of adjoining rooms, which was then turned into an linear arrangement with a distributing corridor. For Zaugg, both spatial

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<sup>95</sup> Zaugg, *The Art Museum of My Dreams or A Place for the Work and the Human Being*, 33.

<sup>96</sup> Gerhard Mack, *Herzog & de Meuron: 1992-1996, The Complete Works*, vol. 3 (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1996), 236.

<sup>97</sup> Richard C. Levene and Fernando Márques Cecilia, eds., *Herzog & de Meuron: 1983-1993*, vol. 60 (Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 1994), 154.



Herzog & de Meuron, Floor plan level 2,  
One Building for Museums of the 20<sup>th</sup>  
Century, 1992.



arrangements had a rigid structure, resembling either a passageway or prison cells. Seeking an “arrangement that respects the absolute architectural integrity of each room”, the artist instead put forward a layout of scattered rooms within a defined perimeter.<sup>98</sup> This arrangement was commented on by the artist as the only way to break away from the linear exhibition chronology of the 19th century: “the dissemination of rooms offers every work, from every period, as it is to the human being, who in turn is free to move about in the architecture”.<sup>99</sup> However, Zaugg also thought that this total dissemination of the rooms implied a confusion of trajectories due to the hazardous nature of the arrangement. This prompted him to further refine his analysis by considering that each room on his diagram could itself contain a set of rooms:

But if each architectural units consists of several rooms rather than a single one, the networks of paths would be limited and the freedom to go wherever we like would lead, not to an almost pathological feverish wandering, but to a serene, almost carefree exploration.<sup>100</sup>

Based on this idea, the artist imagined that his dream museum would be made up of “architecturally significant” entities that would stand out from the museum’s auxiliary programs.<sup>101</sup> As stand-alone buildings, the entities would be the containers of a grouping of rooms. This arrangement was first experimented by Zaugg in collaboration with Atelier 5 for the competition of the New Gallery of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection in 1987, and later on a larger

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98 Zaugg, *The Art Museum of My Dreams or A Place for the Work and the Human Being*, 48.

99 Ibid, 56.

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid, 58.



Herzog & de Meuron, Detail of facade,  
One Building for Museums of the 20<sup>th</sup>  
Century, 1992.

scale in the One Building for Museums of the 20th Century with Herzog & de Meuron. In the latter project, the exhibition floor of each volume is a labyrinth of rooms, which open into one another according to the principles laid out by Zaugg. The entrances to each room are “situated neither in the middle of the wall nor in the corner”.<sup>102</sup> Throughout the site of the museum as a whole, the dispersed volumes are held together by a rectangular glass-shell that circumscribes them. The distance between the glass-shell and the inner brick buildings defines public interstitial spaces between the heterogeneous collections. The enveloppe integrates liquid-crystal monitors on its external surface, “communicating images and letters”.<sup>103</sup> The museum as *one building* allows itself to be penetrated by the city and the surrounding park, while at the same time being a tool for the encounter of art on its façade, as advocated by Zaugg in his text:

The place for the work and the human being cannot evoke a mausoleum by its monumental façade or its shiny black polished stone, or a temple or a refinery or a Disneyland. The place for the work and the human being is an instrument. Its appearance is that of a useful everyday object, simultaneously serious and light, speaking of the eternity of the now.<sup>104</sup>

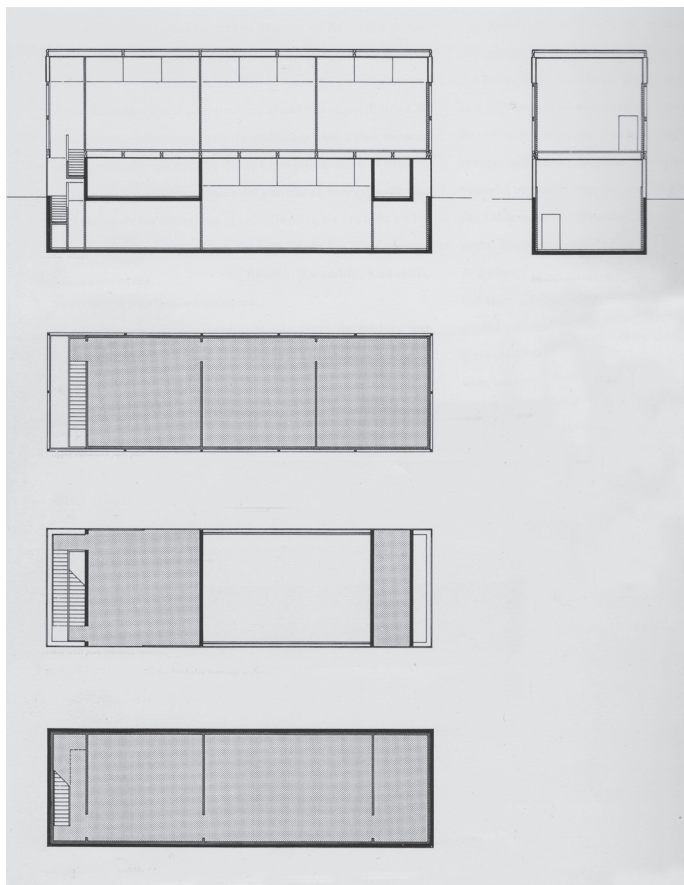
One of Herzog & de Meuron’s earlier projects and first completed exhibition building, The Goetz Collection in Munich, planned in 1989 and opened to the public in 1993, was realised in collaboration with

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<sup>102</sup> Zaugg, *The Art Museum of My Dreams or A Place for the Work and the Human Being*, 42.

<sup>103</sup> Levene and Márques Cecilia, *Herzog & de Meuron: 1983-1993*, 156.

<sup>104</sup> Zaugg, *The Art Museum of My Dreams or A Place for the Work and the Human Being*, 59.



Herzog & de Meuron, Floor plans and sections, The Goetz Collection, 1992.

the painter Helmut Federle, a friend of both architects. The commission from collector Ingvild Goetz was to conceive a gallery to contain her collection, which mainly consisted of art from the 1960s onwards, with a focus on Arte Povera. From the outset of the project, it was intended that the exhibition space could function both as a private entity and as a space open to the public. The project of Herzog & de Meuron inserts a concrete container measuring 8 x 24 x 3 metres into the ground, on which two concrete tubes rest. Within these two structural compartments, the architects integrated the service areas, including the offices and reception, which open up transversely to the garden.<sup>105</sup> The timber structure of the upper floor container is supported by the two concrete tubes, making it possible to insert a translucent band on the free perimeter of the ground level. The band of frosted glass is repeated on the upper edge of the floor container. As a result, the opaque rectangular volume seems to float above the translucent base and, with its birch plywood cover, evokes the image of an art crate that protects the works.<sup>106</sup> The exhibition rooms are integrated into the volume so that there are two exhibition floors with nearly identical qualities, one on the upper level and the second one in the basement. On these two floors, the glass bands - at the ground level and at the top of the building - bring natural light laterally into the exhibition rooms. The bands are placed above the 4 metre high interior walls, with the result that the exhibition rooms have no visual connection to the outside. Although one of the exhibition spaces had to be buried in the ground to comply with the height restrictions, the identical

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105 Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, 'Haus Für Eine Zeitgenössische Kunstsammlung Sammlung Goetz in München', *Werk, Bauen + Wohnen*, no. 12 (1992): 36.

106 Levene and Márques Cecilia, *Herzog & de Meuron: 1983-1993*, 94.



Herzog & de Meuron, The Goetz  
Collection, 1995. Photograph: Christian  
Kerez.

exhibition conditions prevent any hierarchy between the rooms, so that “one can not even sense inside the rooms whether they are above ground level or below”.<sup>107</sup>

Helmut Federle's contribution to the project consisted in defining the proportion of the rooms, the arrangement of the light and the texture of the interior walls.<sup>108</sup> The exhibition space stands as “a spatial hull reduced to architectonically minimal demands of the simplest, but true materiality, as a neutral location for the unfolding of the aura of art”.<sup>109</sup> The three rooms on the upper floor have identical proportions, respectively 7,40 x 7,60 metres with a ceiling height of 5,5 metres. In the underground exhibition floor, a larger room, which is 12,5 metres long and naturally lit by the lower band, opens to a smaller room, proportionally its half, which is embedded under one of the concrete tubes. On both floors, large openings *en enfilade* accompanies the consequent height of the walls, thus aligning the scale of the room with the possible scale of the art. Helmut Federle's reinstatement of the room as a space with precise and significant dimensions, stemmed from his observation that the museum institutional quest for flexibility had endangered the very idea of the room. In a conversation with the architect Otto Kapfinger in 1997, Helmut Federle observed:

No one stands any more. There are no walls any more, either. There are only corridors. Something very terrible happens – in any case for someone like me – that someone just doesn't stop to stand

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107 Gerhard Mack, 'Architecture as Seduction, Reflections on Some Aspects of the Buildings by Herzog & de Meuron', in *Herzog & de Meuron: 1992-1996, The Complete Works*, by Gerhard Mack, vol. 3 (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1996), 10.

108 Helmut Federle, 'On the Collaboration between Artist and Architect', in *Herzog & de Meuron, Sammlung Goetz*, ed. Edelbert Köb and Kunsthaus Bregenz (Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz, 1995), 30.

109 Köb and Kunsthaus Bregenz, *Museum Architecture: Texts and Projects by Artists*, 26.





Herzog & de Meuron, The Goetz Collection, 1995. Photograph: Christian Kerez.



in front of a painting, but that there is only a passageway, in which one passes by.<sup>110</sup>

Herzog & de Meuron also worked with the artist to conceive the lighting arrangement of the exhibition rooms. The two translucent bands provide zenithal light from the side, giving uniform and diffuse light conditions for the exhibition of the works. In addition, the artificial lighting is recessed into the ceiling so that there is a continuous surface without cast shadows. Furthermore, the materials of the exhibition frame are carefully chosen to create an interaction between the room and the works.<sup>111</sup> The parquet floor and the interior brick walls, plastered but unpainted, provide a texture that both captures the incoming light and engages with the works on display. The artist's position conveys both a rejection of the white cube, perceived as "too sterile", and a certain "measure of withdrawal", where the purpose of the accommodation of art takes precedence over everything else.<sup>112</sup> As Gerhard Mack points out, in the Goetz Collection architecture stands in the background of art, "but this serving functionality is, in a sense, business, its self-evidence gains this attitude due to the fact that it creates a perfect container towards the inside that develops object qualities towards the outside that, at times, do not stand behind the art shown at all".<sup>113</sup> In this sense, the building presents itself as a possible denouement of the antagonism between contemporary art and the architecture of the exhibition space.

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110 Herbert Abrell, ed., 'Helmut Federle Talks to Otto Kapfinger, Vienna, March 14, 1997', in *Museum Architecture: Texts and Projects by Artists*, (Köln: König, 2000), 27.

111 Abrell, 'Helmut Federle Talks to Otto Kapfinger, Vienna, March 14, 1997', 28.

112 Ibid.

113 Mack, 'Architecture as Seduction, Reflections on Some Aspects of the Buildings by Herzog & de Meuron', 10.



## Pre-existing rooms

In 1976, P.S.1 (Project Studios One) opened its doors to the public with a first exhibition entitled “Rooms”. Founded by the Institute for Art and Urban Resources, the organisation took up residence in a former public school in Long Island City, New York, which had been abandoned. For the opening exhibition, curator Alanna Heiss invited seventy-eight artists to conceive site-specific works in the *new* contemporary art center, which she referred as an “Experimental Workspace”.<sup>114</sup> Although the number of invitations corresponded precisely to the number of classrooms in the former school, the entire building was taken over by the participating artists, who “were asked to choose a space and work within it as a context”.<sup>115</sup> The resulting interventions of artists, such as Vito Acconci, Daniel Buren, Gordon Matta-Clark, Bruce Nauman, Denis

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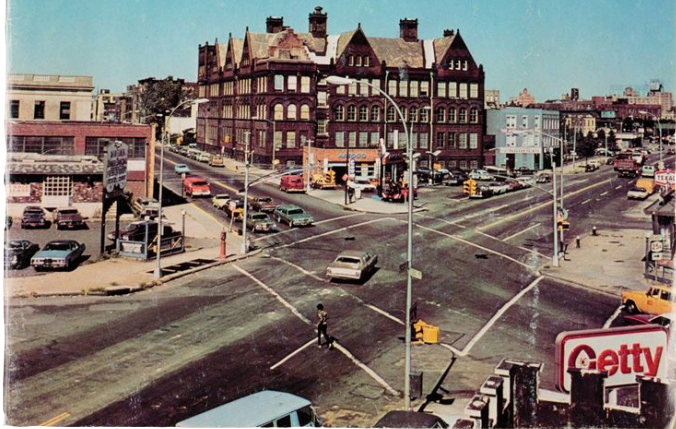
<sup>114</sup> Douglas Davis, *The Museum Transformed: Design and Culture in the Post-Pompidou Age* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1990), 177.

<sup>115</sup> Eugenie Diserio and Stephen Alexander, eds., *Rooms P.S.1: June 9-26, 1976* (New York: The Institute for Art and Urban Resources, 1977), 1.

# ARTFORUM

OCTOBER, 1976 \$3.00

in the rooms 1st floor new wing: GILLETTE RYMAN DE MARIA YASUDA BENSON KIRILI MIRALDA  
STONE BISHOP BLADEN BADER CLARK. in the rooms 2nd floor new wing: GROSVENOR SANDBACK  
SARET OPPENHEIM LEW TANGER GOLDBERG HARRIS KUERNI DOWNSBROUGH. in the rooms 3rd floor  
new wing: HAFIF GORCHOV OHLSON MISS KUBOTA BOOTHE EINS DAVIS SONNEMAN. in the attic  
new wing: SERRA NEUHAUS. in the corridors new wing: ANTONAKOS POZZI ARTSCHWAGER  
BALDESSARI. in the rooms 1st floor old wing: HIGHSTEIN WEIL RIFKA MOCK. in the rooms  
2nd floor old wing: IRELAND FROESE ROSUTH. in the rooms 3rd floor old wing: TIVEY GIROUARD  
WHEELER. in the attic old wing: SMYTH PINDELL COLETT. in the corridors old wing:  
MATTIA-CLARK BEIRNE NONAS RABINOWITCH STUART KIRSCHENBAUM FISHER NORVELL. in the storage  
rooms: MILLER HABER BARK HENRY. in the closets: GIANAKOS BURTON. in the bathroom:  
HERSHMAN. in the boiler rooms: ACCONCI JENSEN. in the coalbin: TUTTLE. in the maintenance  
room: PAIK. in the auditorium: BUREN SHEA BARTLETT. on the roof: SIMONDS MYERS NAUMAN.  
on the building: WEINER. in the schoolyard: STRIDER ANDRE.



Issue of *Artforum* featuring the P.S.1  
exhibition *Rooms*, October 1976. Vol.15,  
no.2, cover. Museum of Modern Art, New  
York.

Oppenheim, Richard Serra, extended beyond the rooms, into the hallways, lavatories, the attic and the facade. With the architecture as context and as material, the works did not need to be intentionally exhibited. As artist Douglas Davis points out, “in this desanctified context the work of art radiated a new set of meanings, particularly its opposition to what was regarded as the bourgeois gentrification of official culture”.<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, the location in itself, as a derelict building, demonstrated that the work of art could do without the institutional museum and its spatial framework. By investing a pre-existing building, as a “*found* container”, P.S.1 also exposed the fact that art can dispense itself from the legitimisation that the spatial framework of the museum provides to a work of art.<sup>117</sup> In that specific context, the architect thus had a very limited role; Shael Shapiro focused on the necessary work for the opening only, such as the removal of partitions, the fixing of the roof and the staircases. In P.S.1 and the alternative spaces that emerged in the trajectory of Conceptual art, “the similarity of such places to the environment in which the art was created lent a connection with the artist’s working conditions that was lacking in museums and conventional galleries”.<sup>118</sup> Indeed, these pre-existing structures resemble the artist’s place of production, the studio.

In his essay “The Function of the Studio” published in 1971, Daniel Buren analyses the functional and spatial characteristics of the artist’s studio. His reflections on the studio were complemented in 1973 by his essays

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<sup>116</sup> Davis, *The Museum Transformed: Design and Culture in the Post-Pompidou Age*, 174.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Victoria Newhouse, *Towards a New Museum* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2006), 110.



Installation view of Patrick Ireland's  
"Rope Drawing No.19" in the exhibition  
*Rooms*, June 9-26 1976. Museum of  
Modern Art, New York.

“The Function of the Museum” and “The Function of the Exhibition”, together forming a triptych vision of the spaces of art. The artist’s studio is defined by Buren as the original place of the work, thus preceding the gallery and the museum, which are by distinction the places of exhibition.<sup>119</sup> In that regard, the place of production of the work “is the first frame, the first limit, upon which all subsequent frames/limits will depend”.<sup>120</sup> The existence of this dual position implies the displacement of the work, *de facto* portable, from its frame of production to its frame of exhibition. Through the transfer of the work between these two places - the studio and the museum/gallery - the differences between these spaces become visible, observed by Buren as an “ever-widening gap between the work and its place (and not its *placement*), an abyss”.<sup>121</sup> From the end of the 1960s onwards, this gap led a number of artists to seek a functional and architectural concordance between the studio and the exhibition space, as exemplified by the P.S.1. Artists such as Donald Judd rejected the space of the institutional museum by merging production and exhibition spaces. By the late 1960s, Judd was among the artists experimenting with New York’s lofts as spaces to live, work and exhibit their work. In parallel, he developed in his essays a critical position on the museum, directed against ever-changing temporary exhibitions held by the institution, which does not give the work a permanent frame.<sup>122</sup> This gave the artist the intention “to give work of contemporary art – not just he’s own work – a fixed place in which it could unfold their effect to the fullest undisturbed in peace and

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119 Daniel Buren, ‘The Function of the Studio’, trans. Thomas Repensek, *October* 10 (1979): 51.

120 Buren, ‘The Function of the Studio’, 51.

121 *Ibid.*, 53.

122 Nicholas Serota, ed., *Donald Judd* (London: Tate Publishing, 2004), 13.



Donald Judd inspecting the new roof of  
the South Artillery Shed, Marfa, Texas, c.  
1984. The Chinati Foundation, Marfa.



under ideal spatial conditions”.<sup>123</sup> When Judd moved to Marfa, a small town in Texas, in 1972, he began a large-scale operation of buying and converting blocks of houses and warehouses into exhibition spaces, forming his ideal museum. In 1979, he integrated in his plan thirty-two buildings of the former military base of Fort D.A Russel, a complex which later served as the location for the Chinati Foundation from 1987 onwards. With his partner, architect and artist Laretta Vinciarelli, Judd renovated and modified the large structures by inserting elements – windows, doors – that he created, and by subtracting others to make room for his works.<sup>124</sup> In the two artillery sheds built in 1938, the artist intervened in a more significant way. He opened up the longitudinal walls by means of square windows and added on the flat roof a corrugated-iron barrel vault, of which the height of the arch corresponded to that of the sheds’ walls. The heterogeneous buildings that form the Chinati complex were bound together by an adobe wall that the artist constructed on the edge of the site. Within this delimitation, each building is a room *en enfilade* part of an axial continuity that constitutes its museum, which the artist recalled as “the largest work I’ve made”.<sup>125</sup>

Judd’s Marfa project, as well as the P.S.1, foreshadowed the development of contemporary art museums being set up in existing structures. The conversion of pre-existing rooms as exhibition rooms was indeed taken up by the museum institution, as in the case of the converted warehouse to host the Los

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123 Edelbert Köb and Kunsthau Bregenz, eds., *Museum Architecture: Texts and Projects by Artists* (Köln: König, 2000), 48.

124 Newhouse, *Towards a New Museum*, 114-115.

125 Donald Judd, ‘Art and Architecture, 1987’, in *Museum Architecture: Texts and Projects by Artists*, ed. Edelbert Köb and Kunsthau Bregenz (Köln: König, 2000), 49-52.



The excavation of the Turbine Hall, 1996.  
Tate Modern, London. Photograph:  
Marcus Leith.

Angeles' Temporary Contemporary in 1983. In 1986, the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art also took up residence in 28 converted mill buildings. The conception of the museum of contemporary art as a workplace erases the functional separation of "the studio as the *unique place* of production and the museum as the *unique place* of exposition", the conversion of existing buildings thus offering itself as a commonplace for artists, its characteristics resembling those of the studio.<sup>126</sup> The institutionalisation of these alternative spaces also extended to artists' organisational structures, as in the case of P.S.1 which was merged with the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 2000.

Under the title "Kanal Brut", the inaugural exhibition of the Kanal Centre Pompidou in Brussels opened on 5 May 2018, one month after the conclusion of the architectural competition.<sup>127</sup> Conceived as a prefiguration of the museum, the exhibition ran for fourteen months, before the start of the transformation of the former Citroën garage-showroom into a museum of modern and contemporary art. The Kanal Foundation and the Centre Pompidou intended the prefiguration phase to be a "*Kanal as found* phase", allowing the future museum program to be tested at real scale.<sup>128</sup> In the garage and showroom more than 300 works were exhibited in order to form a prototype museum open to the public. Created specifically for this exhibition or coming from the collections of the Centre Pompidou, the CIVA, the KANAL Foundation

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126 Buren, 'The Function of the Studio', 51.

127 Bernard Blistène, Centre Pompidou, and Fondation Kanal, eds., *Kanal Brut by Kanal-Centre Pompidou* (Brussels: Fonds Mercator, 2019), 6.

128 Bernard Blistène, Centre Pompidou, and Fondation Kanal, eds., *Kanal - Centre Pompidou: Brut* (Brussels: Fonds Mercator, 2018), 65.



Marcel Duchamp's *In Advance of the Broken Arm* (1915) exhibited at the Kanal Centre Pompidou in Brussels, 2018. Centre Pompidou, Paris. Photograph: Bertrand Prévost.

and the Adam-Brussels Design Museum, the works were arranged in different themes in the empty garage floors. From Duchamp's *In Advance of the Broken Arm* (1915), to Jean Prouvé's *Maison tropicale* (1953), and including Sol LeWitt's *5 Part Piece (Open Cubes) in Form of a Cross* (1966-1969), the exhibition presented a wide selection of works. As referred to by the title of the exhibition, the entire building was left in its raw state, i.e. as *founded*, with only necessary work undertaken on certain elements to allow for the installation of the works, their conservation and the safety of the public. By inserting the works into the raw space of the garage, the exhibition subtracted them from the immaculate space of the white cube and brought them to a spatial framework of production.<sup>129</sup>

Once the conversion works on the building had started, the garage was closed to the public. The winning project by the "Atelier Kanal" group, consisting of the architectural offices Noa, Sergisson Bates and EM2N, aimed to return the Citroën garage to its original state, which was completed in 1935 under the supervision of André Citroën. The architects projected to conserve the existing structure and reintroduce its 21-metre high showroom void by removing the added slabs. The project planned for the showroom to become the entrance of the museum, in which installations and performances would be staged, as in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, which constitutes "the colossal vestibule" of the museum.<sup>130</sup> The project of "Atelier Kanal", which, for the jury, distinguished itself through its economy of means, inserts three volumes,

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129 Nicolas Liucci-Goutnikov, 'L'Art Au Garage', in *Kanal Brut* by Kanal-Centre Pompidou, ed. Bernard Blistène, Centre Pompidou, and Fondation Kanal (Brussels: Fonds Mercator, 2019), 13.

130 Wouter Davidts, *Triple Bond: Essays on Art, Architecture, and Museums* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2017), 229.





Jean Prouvé's *Maison tropicale* (1953)  
exhibited at the Kanal Centre Pompidou  
in Brussels, 2018. Centre Pompidou,  
Paris. Photograph: Bertrand Prévost.

with controlled environment conditions allocated respectively to the CIVA Architecture Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art and an auditorium, into the open space of the garage.<sup>131</sup> The three volumes, as containers, are scattered on the floor surface of the garage and cut vertically through the roof to extend beyond it. The resulting spaces from the position of the building-boxes on each plateau is allocated to the exhibition of works, a configuration aiming to be both a place of production and exhibition.

From the start of the prefigurative exhibition, the “Atelier Kanal” team set up a temporary office on the fifth floor of the garage, in order to continue the development of the project from its own site.<sup>132</sup> Yet, one could wonder why the architecture competition wasn’t held during the prefiguration phase, as it would have allowed the participating architects to experiment on a real scale, giving them the opportunity to further reflect on what form the museum of contemporary art should take. As the construction is currently underway, with a completion scheduled for 2024, one can also ask themselves, as expressed by curator Nicolas Liucci-Goutnikov of the Centre Pompidou, “In what regard will the museum sustain the utopia of its pre-opening?”<sup>133</sup>

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131 Yves Goldstein, ‘Ceci n’est Pas Un Épilogue’, in *Kanal Brut by Kanal-Centre Pompidou*, ed. Bernard Blistène, Centre Pompidou, and Fondation Kanal (Brussels: Fonds Mercator, 2019), 207.

132 Ibid, 206.

133 [Que conservera-t-il de l’utopie de son entrouverture ?], Liucci-Goutnikov, ‘L’Art Au Garage’, 14.



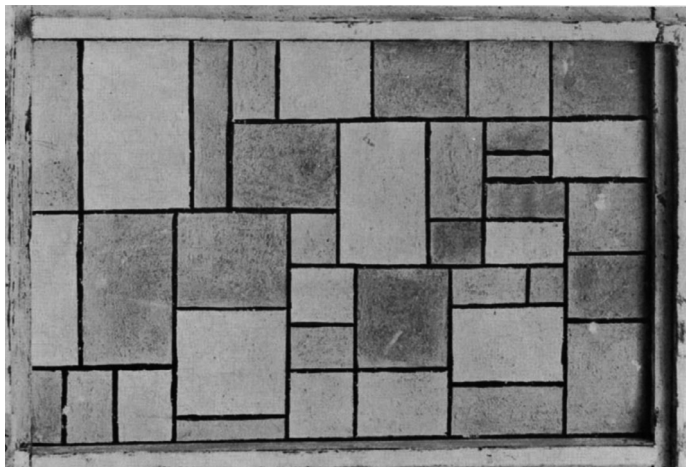


In 2004, a series of lectures was organised by the Museum Het Domein and the Jan van Eyck Academie in the Netherlands, in collaboration with the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning of Ghent University. Entitled “Museum in *¿Motion?*”, the event took for reference the book *Museum in ¿Motion? The modern art museum at issue*, published in 1979, which brought together dialogues of artists, curators and critics who discussed the function of the museum in the age of contemporary art.<sup>134</sup> Delving further into the issues raised by the publication, the series of lectures aimed “to trace the history of the critical correlation between contemporary art and the museum, to chart the various institutional responses, and to frame them within the broader context of socio-political changes”.<sup>135</sup> In lectures given by art historians such as Alan Wallach,

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134 Carel Blotkamp, ed., *Museum in ¿motion? The Modern Art Museum at Issue* (The Hague: Government Publishing Office, 1979).

135 Wouter Davidts et al., eds., *Museum in ¿Motion?: Conference Proceedings [12-13 November 2004]* (Ghent: A&S/books, 2005), 7.



Georges Vantongerloo, *Etude*, 1919.  
Oil on canvas, 28 x 30 cm. Max Bill  
Collection, Zürich. *in OFFICE*, Dries Van  
de Velde, Richard Venlet, *TO ENTER A  
MUSEUM ONE MUST OPEN THE DOOR*,  
2004.

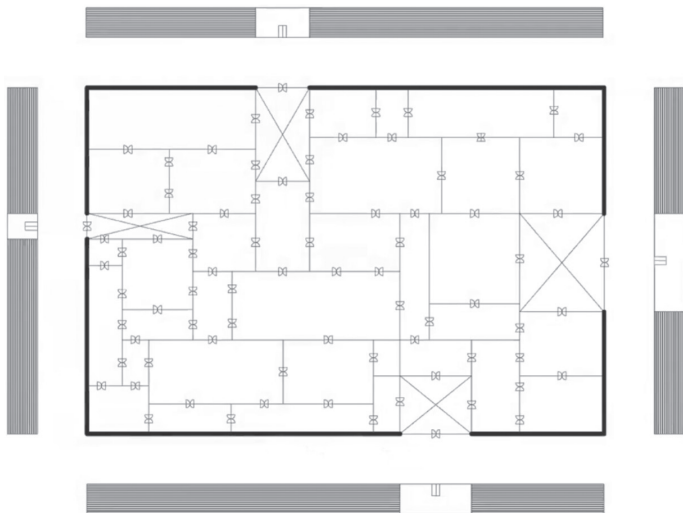
Christian Kravagna, John C. Welchman or Camiel Van Winkel, the relationship of the artist to the museum was re-examined in order to discuss the relevance of the critiques formulated by artists at the end of the 1960s. The event also included a fictitious museum competition in which three groups of architects and artists enrolled. The participating teams were invited to design a museum project addressing “a critical reflection and discussion about the museum as a public institution and as a public building”.<sup>136</sup> In this sense, architecture was to be seen as the construction of the institution’s framework, capable of generating a re-examination of its nature. While Fün Design Consultancy (Johan De Wachter, Cesar Garcia & Paz Martin) with MAMA Showroom and artist Alicia Framis envisioned a future scenario of incorporating museums into existing commercial brand structures, the team of One Architecture (Matthijs Bouw & Donald van Dansik) with artist Berend Strik proposed a mobile tent as a museum that “can escape its own institutionalism”.<sup>137</sup> Out of these outlet visions, the proposal by OFFICE (Kersten Geers & David Van Severen) in collaboration with the artists Dries Van de Velde and Richard Venlet stood out.

Entitled “TO ENTER A MUSEUM ONE MUST OPEN THE DOOR”, the architects’ and artists’ project was presented as “an attempt to re-install space as a

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<sup>136</sup> Wouter Davidts et al., eds., ‘SESSION 3: Design Competition: Our Museum’, in *Museum in ¿Motion?: Conference Proceedings [12-13 November 2004]* (Ghent: A&S/books, 2005), 156.

<sup>137</sup> Wouter Davidts et al., eds., ‘SESSION 3: Design Competition: ONE ARCHITECTURE’, in *Museum in ¿Motion?: Conference Proceedings [12-13 November 2004]* (Ghent: A&S/books, 2005), 193.



OFFICE, Dries Van de Velde, Richard Venlet, *Floor Plan and Elevations, TO ENTER A MUSEUM ONE MUST OPEN THE DOOR*, 2004.

principal part of artistic creation and presentation".<sup>138</sup> The group introduced its project to the jury with a painting by the Belgian neoplastic artist Georges Vantongerloo, who had signed the *De Stijl* manifesto alongside Theo van Doesburg and Piet Mondrian in 1918. OFFICE and the artists Dries Van de Velde and Richard Venlet presented a black and white photograph of Vantongerloo's painting *Etude* (1919) from the catalogue of the 1981 retrospective exhibition at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium.<sup>139</sup> The reproduction was shown in black and white, which meant the colour nuances of the original painting were lost and its polychromatic depth was reduced. As a result, the painting appeared as an *ideogram*, akin to the contrasted representation of mass and void in the architectural plan.<sup>140</sup> From the formal composition of the painting was transposed the geometric construction of the museum plan. The operating method of OFFICE, Van de Velde & Venlet is thus explicitly stated: the work of art is the source of the museum's projection.

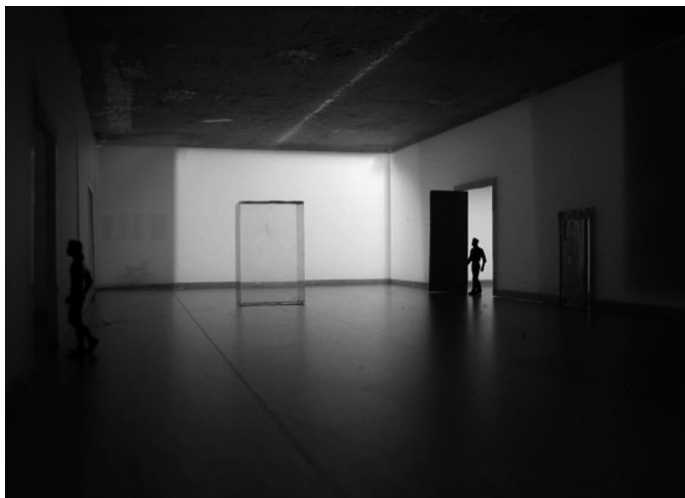
In the transposition of Vantongerloo's painting to the architectural plan, the thickness of the rectangular frame of the painting becomes the enclosure of the museum. The latter consists of four brick walls that form a closed border between the content of the museum, i.e. the art, and the outside world. The museum, windowless, excludes any relationship with the context in which it is located, except a connection through four

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138 Kersten Geers et al., 'TO ENTER A MUSEUM ONE MUST OPEN THE DOOR', in *Museum in 2Motion?: Conference Proceedings [12-13 November 2004]*, ed. Wouter Davidts et al. (Ghent: A&S/books, 2005), 160.

139 Angela Thomas, ed., *Georges Vantongerloo, 1886-1965 (23 Januari-16 Maart 1981)* (Brussels: Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 1981), 46.

140 Roberto Gargiani, 'Visionnaires Éclectiques, Architectures 2000-2018' (Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, 2 March 2022).



OFFICE, Dries Van de Velde, Richard  
Venlet, *Interior Views, TO ENTER A  
MUSEUM ONE MUST OPEN THE DOOR*,  
2004.

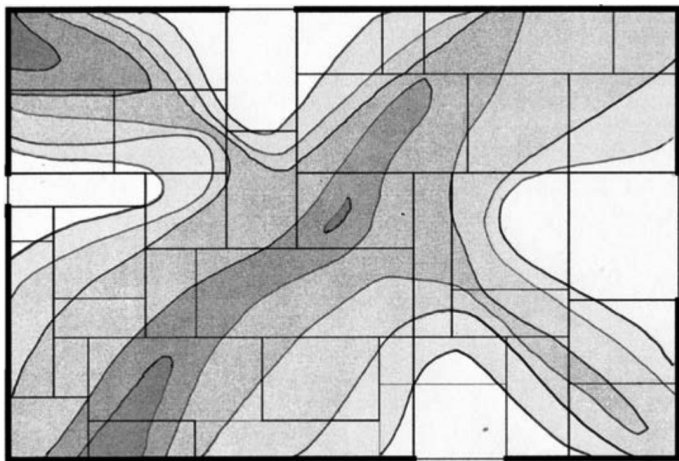
entrances, which interrupt the external walls over their entire height. With its four openings, each of which is positioned on one side of its parallelepiped volume, the museum does not have a frontispiece or a rear façade, but an equivalent relationship with its context. In this sealed enclosure, the proposal by OFFICE, Van de Velde & Venlet “rethinks the classical layout of the Beaux-Arts gallery: a sequence of large rooms”.<sup>141</sup> The composition of the plan, transposed from the painting, is that of a system of irregular rooms, which asserts the reinstatement of the room as the fundamental unit of the museum. With a fixed height, each room has singular proportions, but shares a common length with an adjacent room, so that the resulting arrangement contains concentrations of larger or smaller rooms. As such, the museum’s “typology [...] contains completely differing artistic universes in fundamentally equal – but spatially different – rooms”.<sup>142</sup> The rooms, connected by doors, form a labyrinth, in which there are no corridors or predefined routes. Therefore, “the parcours, traditionally neatly defined by the architect, becomes a crucial part of artistic conception and visitor’s experience”.<sup>143</sup> The opacity of the wall as well as the visual and physical crossing between the rooms specific to the gallery *en enfilade* are reversed: the walls are translucent while the doors, self-closing, and their frames are made of steel. Through this inversion, the door replaces the wall as the fundamental limit of the room, a delimitation that Richard Venlet further explored in his works, such as *Open Room* (2006). In the museum, the translucent walls of each room allow the contents of the adjacent rooms to be seen, “enabl[ing]

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141 Geers et al., ‘TO ENTER A MUSEUM ONE MUST OPEN THE DOOR’, 161.

142 Ibid.

143 Ibid, 162.



OFFICE, Dries Van de Velde, Richard  
Venlet, *Illuminance Plan, TO ENTER A  
MUSEUM ONE MUST OPEN THE DOOR*,  
2004.



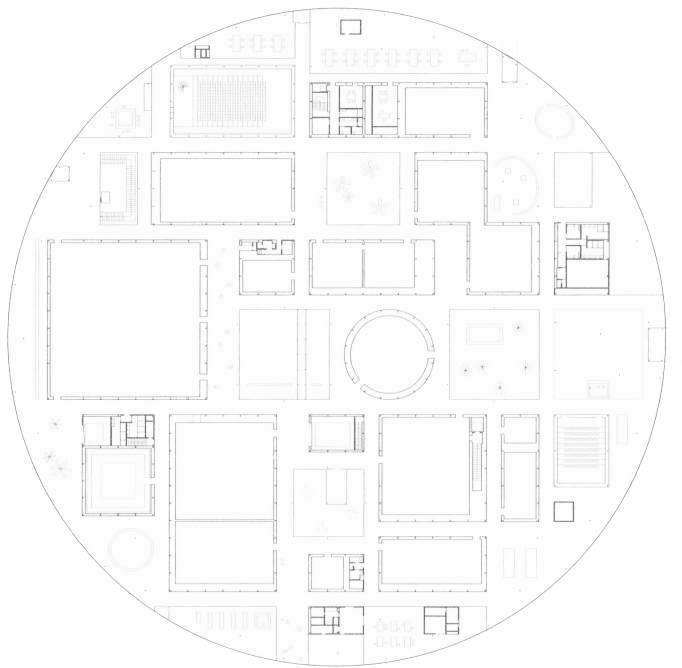
curators and artists to incorporate these doors and neighbouring rooms into artistic presentation or creation".<sup>144</sup> In this regard, the translucency of the walls creates a visual collage of artworks, changing with the viewer's movement through the museum. Natural light, which comes in via the entrance rooms, diffuses and "filters through the translucent walls, losing its intensity over the adjacent rooms up to the point it generates a black box".<sup>145</sup> The penetration of light into the space is then decisive for the positioning of entrances and rooms, which architects and artists studied by means of a luminance plan. The translucent material used by the architects and artists dissolves the walls of the room, which resonates with Mies van der Rohe's Brick Country House project (1923) and his Museum for a Small City (1943). Beyond the well-examined comparison between Mies's Brick Country House and Theo van Doesburg's painting *Rhythm of a Russian Dance* (1918), similar to the projectual operation of OFFICE, Van de Velde & Venlet, the dissolution of the room presents itself differently in each project: with Mies the room is dissolved by the splintering of its planes, whereas in the second the room is preserved as a closed perimeter, but visually dissolved. In that regard, OFFICE's operation stands in opposition to the transparency to which the museum institution aspires:

The boundary between museum and outer world is restored. Public Space has been expelled. The transparency that has blurred the boundaries between the street and the Institute has finally been appropriated and incorporated by the Institute itself. It has been cut loose from its dominating polemic and given to the artists to

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<sup>144</sup> Geers et al., 'TO ENTER A MUSEUM ONE MUST OPEN THE DOOR', 161.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.



**SANAA, *Plan, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, 2004.***

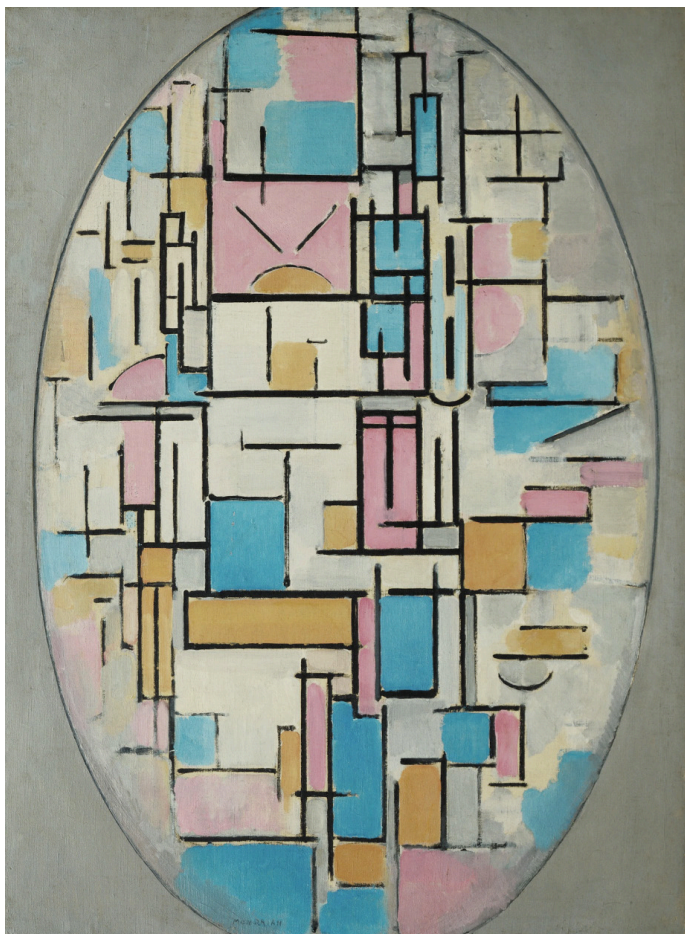
tackle. To enter a museum you must open the door.<sup>146</sup>

The closed stance adopted by the museum of OFFICE, Van de Velde & Venlet, contrasts with that of SANAA's (Kazuyo Sejima & Ryue Nishikawa) 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, which was completed in 2004. In addition to the exhibition of contemporary art, the project also planned for the integration of public programs such as lecture halls, a library, a cafe and a children's workshop. The spatial interrelation of these programs within the institution was central to the project of architects Sejima & Nishikawa. The museum they envisioned stands as a circular glass enclosure 113 metres in diameter, which "with neither front nor back, is accessible from all sides".<sup>147</sup> The curved glass facade of the single-storey cylindrical volume opens up completely to its external context, in contrast to the museum by OFFICE, Van de Velde & Venlet. Within the enclosure are scattered fourteen exhibition rooms, which varied geometries - square, rectangle, circle - and singular proportions in length, width and height.<sup>148</sup> The box-like rooms are freestanding in the cylindrical volume, structurally supported by slender columns, and extend vertically through the roof to bring zenithal light to the artworks. The exhibition rooms with their white, opaque walls differ from the four glass patios, which serve as outdoor exhibition rooms. The interstitial spaces between the exhibition rooms and along the perimeter of the enclosure are

<sup>146</sup> Geers et al., 'TO ENTER A MUSEUM ONE MUST OPEN THE DOOR', 163.

<sup>147</sup> Kazuyo Sejima, Ryue Nishizawa, and Kajijima Momoyo, 'Designing an Open Museum of Contemporary Art', in *Vision and Innovation of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa* (Tokyo: Bijutsu Shuppan-Sha, 2004) in Newhouse, *Towards a New Museum*, 321.

<sup>148</sup> Meruro Washida, ed., *Kazuyo Sejima + Ryue Nishizawa / SANAA: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa*, trans. Setsuko Miura (Kanazawa: 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, 2005), 5.



Piet Mondrian, *Composition in Oval with Color Planes 1*, 1914. Oil on canvas, 107.6 x 78.8 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

dedicated to public programs, which look out to the exterior. The artists' works can be exhibited throughout the building, without any distinction between the exhibition framework of the artworks and the public spaces. As such, "with no designated entranceway or processional route, a dual flexibility is gained: for artists and curators to reconfigure permanent and temporary installations [...]; and for visitors to choose the path they wish to follow".<sup>149</sup>

As architecture historian Victoria Newhouse observes, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum of Contemporary Art bears a close correspondence to Piet Mondrian's paintings such as his series *Composition in Oval with Color Planes* (1914).<sup>150</sup> Although the reference to the painting was never made explicit by the architects, the composition of the scattered rooms of the museum and its resulting interstices blur towards the curved boundary, as in Mondrian's horizontal and vertical lines. Placed in parallel, "both the circular plan of the building and the oval and round compositions of the artworks achieve a new freedom – of movement for the former, of form for the latter".<sup>151</sup>

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149 Victoria Newhouse, *Towards a New Museum* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2006), 323.

150 Newhouse, *Towards a New Museum*, 323.

151 Ibid.



As suggested by Andrea Fraser, the critique of the institution put forward by artists from the end of the 1960s came to be internalised by the institution itself, lessening its impact and diminishing its intensity as “a now-anachronistic artifact”.<sup>152</sup> More than that, discussions brought to the fore by artists, curators and critics shifted focus towards other issues, such as the need for diversity or, in the light of decolonisation, concern regarding the provenance of the works exhibited. Nevertheless, the interrogations introduced by Institutional Critique remain relevant today, and have not all been resolved as museum architecture has been tackled over the last decades only by a small number of architects who are commissioned to reflect on this type of program. As Zaugg stated in 1986, “its up to the architecture of the place and the position of the work in this architectural place to resolve the conflict between

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<sup>152</sup> Andrea Fraser, ‘From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique’, *Artforum* 44, no. 1 (2005): 278.

public and private, the collective and the individual”.<sup>153</sup> It is no coincidence that the artists in the 1997 exhibition at the Espace de l'Art Concret critically reassessed the museum institution through its architecture, as it is “the frame and effective support upon which the work is inscribed/composed”.<sup>154</sup> As such, it remains important to think the exhibition space as an institutional structure, as an area of friction between diverging interests and the different disciplines of art and architecture. Possible denouements to these antagonisms have been exposed in this essay. *Collaboration*, *Pre-existing rooms*, *Painted rooms* – must not be conceived as mutually exclusive, but as complementary methods that serve, not to overcome the conflicts that have been mentioned, but to rearticulate definitions of the institution and to provide ways to think the exhibition space.

*Collaboration* demonstrates that it is possible to have a creative dialogue between the practice of the artist and that of the architect. As underlined by Jacques Herzog, “the art of collaboration is to find a denominator which is not a compromise – but the most powerful and daring concentrate”.<sup>155</sup> For the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich, Rémy Zaugg builds a correspondence between the diagrams found in his dream museum and the plans he puts forward with Herzog & de Meuron. For Zaugg, as for Helmut Federle, the museum is built with the preeminence of the room as a fundamental unit. Both artist's position conveys a rejection of the

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153 Rémy Zaugg, *The Art Museum of My Dreams or A Place for the Work and the Human Being*, ed. Hinrich Sachs and Eva Schmidt (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 11.

154 Daniel Buren, ‘The Function of the Museum’, in *Museums by Artists*, ed. A. A. Bronson and Peggy Gale (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), 57.

155 Jacques Herzog and Julian Rose, ‘Significant Difference: Jacques Herzog Talks with Julian Rose’, *Artforum* 56, no. 7 (2018): 198.



white cube and the fundamental importance of the proportion of the rooms and their given material.

*Pre-existing rooms* shows that alternative spaces that merge art's space of production and reception have been adopted by artists for their studio-like characteristics, allowing them to free themselves from the legitimising process of the institution. However, this approach, when taken up by the institution, necessarily implies for the space to be transformed, even if marginally. In that regard, the process appears more like the insertion of "a conventional museum into an existing building" than the adoption of *as found* structures.<sup>156</sup>

*Painted rooms* examines the translation from painting to the architectural plan as a method that generates singular proposals, which theoretical concepts may nonetheless be distant from one another, or even completely opposed. In contrast to the enclosed transparency of the rooms in OFFICE's proposal, SANAA's scattered rooms, encircled by a glass facade, somewhat appear as an answer to Zaugg's diagram of his dream museum.

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<sup>156</sup> Wouter Davidts, *Triple Bond: Essays on Art, Architecture, and Museums* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2017), 25.



# Illustrations

12

Pietro Antonio Martini, *Exposition au Salon de 1787*, 1787. Etching, 38.9 x 52.9 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris. © Musée du Louvre

22

Chris Burden, *Exposing the Foundation of the Museum*, 1986. Marker on black and white photograph, 27 x 35 cm. Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. © MOCA Los Angeles

14

Robert Delaunay, *Les Fenêtres simultanées sur la ville, 1re partie, 2e motif, 1re réplique*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 40 x 46 cm. Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg. © Hamburger Kunsthalle

24

Chris Burden, *Exposing the Foundation of the Museum*, 1986. Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Photograph: Squidids and Nunns. © Chris Burden

16

Installation view of the exhibition "Frank Stella", March 24-May 24, 1970. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photograph: James Mathews. © MoMA

26

Santiago Sierra, *300 Tonnen, 300 Tons*, 2004. Kunsthhaus Bregenz, Bregenz. © Santiago Sierra

18

Marcel Duchamp, *Mile of String*, installation at the exhibition "First Papers of Surrealism", 1942. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia. Photograph: John Schiff. © Philadelphia Museum of Art

28

Santiago Sierra, *300 Tonnen, 300 Tons*, 2004. Kunsthhaus Bregenz, Bregenz. © Santiago Sierra

30

Daniel Buren, *Photo-souvenir: "Le Musée qui n'existait pas"*, 2002. Centre Pompidou, Paris. © Daniel Buren

38

Michael Asher, *The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (June 8-August 12)*, 1979. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. © MCA Chicago

32

Daniel Buren, *Arrangement of the room*, 2002. Centre Pompidou, Paris. © Daniel Buren

40

Michael Asher, *North elevation (facade of the Museum of Contemporary Art) designating panels to be removed*, 1979. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. © Michael Asher

34

Daniel Buren, *Photo-souvenir: "The endless ceiling floor"*, 2002. Centre Pompidou, Paris. © Daniel Buren

42

Michael Asher, *The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (June 8-August 12)*, 1979. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Photograph: Tom Van Eynde. © MCA Chicago

36

Daniel Buren, *Photo-souvenir: "The Colours: sculptures"*, 1977-2002. Centre Pompidou, Paris. © Daniel Buren

44

Carlo Bavagnoli, *Christo during the installation of Wrapped Kunsthalle*, 1968. The LIFE Picture Collection, New York. © Meredith Corporation

46

Christo and Jeanne-Claude, *Wrapped Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago*, 1969. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Photograph: Dave Fornell. © Christo and Jeanne-Claude Foundation

48

Christo, *Project for Museum of Contemporary Art - Chicago*, 1968. Collage, 56 x 71 cm. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. © Christo and Jeanne-Claude Foundation

50

Christo, *Kunsthalle Wrapped*, 1967. Model, 59.7 x 71.5 x 92.2 cm. Würth Collection, Künzelsau. Photograph: André Grossmann. © Christo and Jeanne-Claude Foundation

54

Herbert Distel, *Museum of Drawers*, 1970. Chest of drawers, 183 x 42 x 42 cm. Kunsthau Zürich, Zürich. © Kunsthau Zürich

56

Exhibition "Space for Art" at the Kunsthau Bregenz, 1998. Kunsthau Bregenz, Bregenz. © Kunsthau Bregenz

58

Georg Baselitz, *Bilderbude*, 1977. Model in varnished wood and perspex. Kunsthau Bregenz, Bregenz. © Kunsthau Bregenz

60

Bernar Venet, *Position de quatre angles droits*, 1997. Model in wood and plastic. Kunsthau Bregenz, Bregenz. © Kunsthau Bregenz  
Bernar Venet, *Position de quatre angles droits*, 1979. Wooden relief. Archives Bernar Venet, Le Muy. © Fondation Bernar Venet

62

Daniel Buren, *Project for a Museum of Contemporary Art or "As you make your bed, so you must lie on it"*, 1997. Coloured pencil on paper, 31.4 x 47.2 cm each. Kunsthau Bregenz, Bregenz. © Kunsthau Bregenz

64

Marcia Hafif, *A Place Apart*, 1997. Model in wood, clay and perspex. Kunsthau Bregen, Bregen. © Kunsthau Bregen  
Marcia Hafif, *A Place Apart*, 1997. Pencil and colored pencil on paper, 56.5 x 37.7 each. Kunsthau Bregen, Bregen. © Kunsthau Bregen

66

Gottfried Honegger, *Two Projects for an Ideal Museum*, 1997. Model in cardboard, plastic and metal. Kunsthau Bregen, Bregen. © Kunsthau Bregen

68

Gottfried Honegger, *Two Projects for an Ideal Museum*, 1997. Model in cardboard, plastic and metal. Kunsthau Bregen, Bregen. © Kunsthau Bregen

70

Christoph Haerle, *Ideal Project*, 1997. Model in five parts in wood, scale 1:200. Kunsthau Bregen, Bregen. © Kunsthau Bregen  
Christoph Haerle, *Ideal Project*, 1997. Model in concrete, scale 1:50. Kunsthau Bregen, Bregen. © Kunsthau Bregen

72

François Morellet, *Museum of Concrete Art*, 1998. Model in plastic. Kunsthau Bregen, Bregen. © Kunsthau Bregen

74

Georg Baselitz, *Bilderbude*, 1977. Pencil on stationary. Kunsthau Bregen, Bregen. © Kunsthau Bregen

78

Per Kirkeby, *Floor plan*, 1997. Watercolour, Indian ink, crayon on paper, 65.5 x 100 cm. Kunsthau Bregen, Bregen. © Kunsthau Bregen  
Jens Bertelsen, Per Kirkeby, A New Aarhus Art Museum, Competition board, 1997. Kunsthau Bregen, Bregen. © Kunsthau Bregen

80

Jackson Pollock and Peter Blake in front of model at the Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, 1949. Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center, New York. Photograph: Ben Schultz. © Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center

82

Herzog & de Meuron, Expansion of the Aargauer Kunsthaus, 2002. Photograph: Masao Nishikawa. © Masao Nishikawa

90

Herzog & de Meuron, Floor plan level 2, One Building for Museums of the 20th Century, 1992. © Herzog & de Meuron

84

Herzog & de Meuron, Studio Rémy Zaugg, 1996. Photograph: Christian Richters. © Christian Richters

92

Herzog & de Meuron, Detail of facade, One Building for Museums of the 20th Century, 1992. © Herzog & de Meuron

86

Rémy Zaugg, Plan of scattered rooms, *The Art Museum of My Dreams or A Place for the Work and the Human Being*, 1986. © Sternberg Press

94

Herzog & de Meuron, Floor plans and sections, The Goetz Collection, 1992. © Herzog & de Meuron

88

Herzog & de Meuron, Site plan, One Building for Museums of the 20th Century, 1992. © Herzog & de Meuron

96

Herzog & de Meuron, The Goetz Collection, 1995. Photograph: Christian Kerez. © Sammlung Goetz

98

Herzog & de Meuron, The Goetz Collection, 1995. Photograph: Christian Kerez. © Sammlung Goetz

108

The excavation of the Turbine Hall, 1996. Tate Modern, London. Photograph: Marcus Leith. © Tate Modern

102

Issue of Artforum featuring the P.S.1 exhibition *Rooms*, October 1976. Vol.15, no.2, cover. Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Artforum

110

Marcel Duchamp's *In Advance of the Broken Arm* (1915) exhibited at the Kanal Centre Pompidou in Brussels, 2018. Centre Pompidou, Paris. Photograph: Bertrand Prévost. © Centre Pompidou

104

Installation view of Patrick Ireland's "Rope Drawing No.19" in the exhibition *Rooms*, June 9-26 1976. Museum of Modern Art, New York. © MoMa

112

Jean Prouvé's *Maison tropicale* (1953) exhibited at the Kanal Centre Pompidou in Brussels, 2018. Centre Pompidou, Paris. Photograph: Bertrand Prévost. © Centre Pompidou

106

Donald Judd inspecting the new roof of the South Artillery Shed, Marfa, Texas, c. 1984. The Chinati Foundation, Marfa. © The Chinati Foundation

116

Georges Vantongerloo, *Etude*, 1919. Oil on canvas, 28 x 30 cm. Max Bill Collection, Zürich. in OFFICE, Dries Van de Velde, Richard Venlet, TO ENTER A MUSEUM ONE MUST OPEN THE DOOR, 2004. © Max Bill Georges Vantongerloo Foundation



118  
OFFICE, Dries Van de Velde,  
Richard Venlet, Floor Plan and  
Elevations, TO ENTER A MUSEUM  
ONE MUST OPEN THE DOOR, 2004.  
© OFFICE

126  
Piet Mondrian, *Composition in Oval  
with Color Planes 1*, 1914. Oil on  
canvas, 107.6 x 78.8 cm. Museum of  
Modern Art, New York. © MoMa

120  
OFFICE, Dries Van de Velde,  
Richard Venlet, Interior Views, TO  
ENTER A MUSEUM ONE MUST  
OPEN THE DOOR, 2004. © OFFICE

Cover  
Herbert Distel, *Museum of Drawers,  
7<sup>th</sup> drawer*, 1970. Chest of drawers,  
183 x 42 x 42 cm. Kunsthau Zürich,  
Zürich. © Herbert Distel

122  
OFFICE, Dries Van de Velde,  
Richard Venlet, Illuminance Plan,  
TO ENTER A MUSEUM ONE MUST  
OPEN THE DOOR, 2004. © OFFICE

Backcover  
Georg Baselitz, *Bilderbude*, 1977.  
Pencil on stationary. Kunsthau  
Bregenz, Bregenz. © Kunsthau  
Bregenz

124  
SANAA, Plan, 21st Century Museum  
of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa,  
2004. © SANAA



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