From the Art Historical Canon to the 'Post-Collection' Museum: Collections as Collectivities in Western European Museums of Modern and Contemporary Art, 2013-20.

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Submitted for Doctor of Philosophy

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August 2021

91,456 words

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ABSTRACT

What are modern and contemporary art? Over the last decade, museums of modern art across Western Europe have answered these questions in entirely new ways. What changed, and why? In museology, attention has focused on what a museum is, or should be. What museums' collections have become remains an untold story and unchallenged. Yet the very concepts of modern and contemporary art have been determined by museums' historicization of them, through their collection displays.

In Western Europe until after 2000, most museums of modern art followed MoMA's linear evolutionary model of successive art movements originating in Paris and Manhattan. Since 2013, these same museums' collections have expanded their concept of art by: incorporating different media and disciplines; extending its geopolitical scope; forwarding different hypotheses about what constitutes the modernity of modern art.

My key finding is that until the last decade, the MoMA model held in equilibrium three different ideals of modernity. Three case studies illuminate how different museums have isolated and exemplified one ideal alone. Tate Modern has valorised modernism's internationalist character; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam has emphasised its interdisciplinarity; Museum Folkwang, Essen has focussed on the ideal of artworks own rather than authors' autonomy.

My conclusion is that by creating new forms of display order to account for the nature and trajectory of art differently, none of their displays now corresponds to the previous conceptualisation of collections in European museology. Each of their governing orders instead corresponds to a different type of human collectivity. The thesis identities these forms of order in relation to a specific collectivity, and specifies their politico-philosophical co-ordinates and governing value scheme. Reconceptualising the very basis of what museum collections are has ramifications

both for their own future, and for every future attempt to rethink the dominant history of modern and contemporary art.

Declaration

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at this or any other University or similar institution. No substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at this or any other University or similar institution. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Christopher Whitehead and Dr Susannah Eckersley for their invaluable support and feedback throughout the development of this thesis. I also want to thank the interviewees for their support, time and candour.

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Chapter 1: Origins of Research: Reimagining the Collections of Museums of Modern Art in North-West Europe 2013-2020

1.0. Purpose and Structure of Thesis

1.0.1. Overall purpose of thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate what has been happening to the collections of three of the most important museums of modern art in North-West Europe, during the research period of 2013-20. The changes made by the directors and curators to their collection displays in several of the longest-established and most significant museums in Europe in this time have, in my view, been unprecedented. That so many museums have, in a short space of time, undertaken diverse and extreme changes to their accounts of twentieth and twenty-first century art requires investigation. The thesis asks how and why these collections have changed, and what the implications of these changes are for how art is understood and for other museums.

In the Contemporary Art Society's words, the last decade, for art curators, can best be characterised as having seen the implementation of "radical strategies that museums around the world are deploying in rethinking the way they display and conceive of their collections" (CAS 2017 n.p.). More importantly still, these strategies can be seen to now constitute new and "alternative models of museum practice" altogether (CAS 2017 n.p.). The landscape of art museums is now defined by multiple distinct alternatives to the previous status quo, where the new 'models' are also distinct from each other.

This thesis initially asks what the problems have been that have caused different museums to shape such strategies. It then asks what the consequences of these strategies have been on collections when seen as a specific type of entity – an idea that interviewees themselves alerted me to. The ultimate goal of the thesis is to outline a *framework* that can explain and cross-compare developments in curatorship across institutions in the last decade. One initial suggestion forwarded by curator Kate Fowle is that these 'radical strategies' all propose "ideas as to how institutions

can operate when not directly burdened with the legacies of 19th and 20th century museum models" (Fowle in Loiseau 2019 n.p.). At the outset of research, the art historian Claire Bishop similarly hypothesised that "a more radical model of the museum is taking shape" (Bishop 2014: 9). This is the starting point of the entire thesis: that the 'legacies of 19th and 20th century museum models' have been transformed or displaced and 'more radical models' instigated.

At The Museum of Modern Art, New York, the research period saw a profound transformation. For MoMA's six most senior curators, the opportunity to rehang the entire collection across the whole of the museum's estate in 2019 allowed for a genuine revision of what the institution stands for and can do. In their eyes at least, the 2019 rehang instigated a greater change that any other of the last half-century: a genuine philosophical change. As these six heads of departments have written, "curatorial assumptions and methodologies at MoMA were generally stable during the latter half of the twentieth century … this [rehang] embodies a significant transformation in the curatorial approach to … the Museum's collection" that goes beyond any other for at least a generation (Bajac et al 2019: 19). The implication is that the decade from 2010-20 saw "fundamental changes in the structure of our [collection] installations" (Bajac et al 2019: 22).

As I outline below, I believe the same type of change, not only degree of change, can be seen in the three institutions I take as case studies. MoMA has paralleled rather than preceded the case studies in many regards. It has even emulated aspects of all three of the case studies – an idea that previous generations of art curators would have thought heretical, given MoMA's status amongst museums. Its original full name was 'The Museum of Modern Art', but the definite article remains in its formal title today, still suggesting that it is the originator of this entire type of art museum.

As I outline below, MoMA's director and senior curators instigated a wholesale "transformation" of the very "organizing principle[s]" and "key categories" underpinning its collection displays (Bajac et al 2019: 19; Raicovich 2019 n.p). It is these ideas that are stake in this thesis. What are the organising principles and key categories that today's art museums are based on? How have they changed? If structural change has happened near-simultaneously across museums of modern art

across continents, how can we explain this? How are they different not to only to their previous incarnations, but to each other, through these changes?

MoMA's Chief Curator Ann Temkin believes that an entire "*type* of presentation [collection display] has passed" – meaning has become antiquated or redundant (Temkin in Raicovich 2019 n.p., my emphasis). In other words, there are entirely new 'types' of collection display emerging that require analysis. The old type, in Temkin's terms, is that of a linear-chronological and evolutionary account of modern art's history, told as a teleological narrative, whose episodes are differentiated through their stylistic progression, and where the 'baton' of progress runs only through European and North American capitals. MoMA's order in the later, though always in the earlier twentieth century was very largely "chronological" (Harrison and Wood 2003: 1183). MoMA's previous account of art's nature and trajectory has been understood as spatialising one highly particular art historical scheme: a specifically "Modernist … account" (Harrison and Wood 2003: 1183). For Temkin and others, the 'modernist' story of modern art that became formalised as 'Paris [/] Manhattan', is anachronistic and antiquated, as well as inaccurate (Wollen 2004: title). Temkin also implies that the types of story told through successive 'movements' and their 'great' individuals is also redundant.

Three case studies exemplify what I take to be the most important directions in curatorial practice over the last decade. Each of these case studies, namely Tate Modern in London, Stedejljk Museum in Amsterdam and Museum Folkwang in Essen, has undertaken a major reordering project of its entire collection displays. This is more than a mere 'rehang'. To reorder a collection takes years, and requires curators and directors to reimagine what the purpose and nature of their collections are. The dividing line differentiates a mere rehang from a reordering project cannot be precisely defined for all institutions. However, I believe that I can identify what kind of undertaking involves rethinking a collection from first principles, and what does not, as I outline below.

My starting assumption is that each of the three case studies has indeed departed substantially from the former order governing its collections until at least 2013. Until the turn of the millennium at the earliest, most Western European art museums had accounted for twentieth and twenty-first century art through systems of taxonomic

classification and broadly chronological hangs of works. Almost all focused on European and North American artists almost to the total exclusion of art made in other territories. None of the three case studies follow these principles wholeheartedly now. Up until recently, it was possible for curators to understandd "museums a[s] an archive of visual art [where] a museum-like way [to order art] is logically and coherently extending a tradition" (Fischer quoted in Jappe 1971: 71). Museums' accounts of modern art were, in other words, structured through the idea of a canon, and a 'logical' and 'coherent' chronological sequence. Today, objects are not classified by a pre-existing art historical periodisation; they are not separated by media; displays are no longer limited to work by Euro-American artists. All three case studies have attempted to distance themselves from those former principles, but in quite different ways. Indeed, what I suggest ultimately is that the three case studies can be taken to exemplify three of the most important directions in curatorial practice in museums in Europe.

To suggest how this is the case, I explore what if differentiates and unites these museums' 'radical models', and indeed how they relate to MoMA's changes, as the latter has long been understood as the leader of the field, or at very least the richest institution of its type. I also examine the medium-term causes behind the emergence of these new models. It has almost become a cliché that "now, permanent collections are in regular if not constant flux. The principle of permanent change allows new narratives, more radical propositions, mixing of media and period and genre and the breaking down of old hierarchies and divisions" (Caiger-Smith 2011 n.p.). 'Permanent collection' displays are themselves staged in far more adventurous ways, contain more varied contents, and have to be seen to be dynamic, according to many curators. The profile of curators in the field of art has been transformed, and 'authorship' of new propositions about what modern art was (or is), and contemporary art is, is fought for.

It is worth introducing at this early stage that both the very idea of 'art', and the idea of art's history, are at stake in what museums do. As I explore below, it is a commonplace of museology since Donald Preziosi's work that Euro-American 'art history' and museum practice have been co-dependent, and co-determinants. What is striking is that in all three case studies, curators have distanced themselves from 'art history' in its older or orthodox forms. Instead, they have emphasised the need

for ‘experimentation’ with collections that departs from the ‘canon’ of modern art. (Here, I use the term ‘canon’ as it is used in relation to both visual art, literature, and other established art forms. It connotes ‘an authorised body of cultural works assumed to have the highest value of any such work, and to have transhistorical value as to be worth preserving through time’, broadly speaking.)

I take the common rejection of ‘art history’ to be a change in disciplinary affiliation amongst certain cohorts of curators. At Stedelijk Museum, similarly, the key imperative was to undertake an “experiment … with our collection” with the collection that could move “further from this traditional art-historical approach and try to do really different things” (Ruf in Ruf et al 2016 n.p ; Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). The ‘art-historical approach’ to museum collections is here the taboo, and to ‘experiment’ is the totemic value that is its opposite. At Museum Folkwang, the director argued that whilst “an art-historical view of the collection is[n’t] wrong … I think there are … more perspectives to be told and we can … [be] more open and experimental”, similarly (Gorschulter pers. corr. 30.01.19). I take this to be more than coincidence, at least. At Tate, Frances Morris has explicitly described Tate’s post-2016 approach as being categorically different to the orthodox “art history [that previously] accounted for the shape and content of our museums and galleries” (Morris 2021 n.p.). This is an explicit renunciation of a certain model of ‘art history’, at least, as it was taught until a generation ago in European universities. What Morris proposes is a shift in ordering categories. Tate Modern’s collection is no longer *ordered* by art historical categories. What Morris has introduced in its stead is that “artists … and their work are intrinsically political”, and that artworks can be seen in categories from other disciplines and fields of activity (Morris 2021 n.p.).

1.0.2. Unanswered questions

A brief introduction to the strangeness of the shape of the three case studies’ collections is instructive. All three prompt new types of questions to visitors. All three may appear unexpected or bewildering to non-specialists. Why is Tate Modern, having organised its displays into art-historical genres in 2000, now creating displays about world historical events like the AIDS crisis? (In 2000, curators wrote that the “collection … takes as its basis the major subject categories, or genres, of art that were established by the French Academy in the seventeenth century, namely landscape, still life, the nude and history painting” (Tate 2000 n.p.).) Why has Tate

begun employing curators living and working in Africa, rather than London? Why has its director specified an exact ratio for displays by women artists? Why has it spent a seven-figure sum buying 12,000 books that are now shown as artworks rather than kept in its library? Why is it only now buying and showing photographs and paintings by artists who were bought by its sister museums in London a quarter century earlier?

In Amsterdam, why has the Stedelijk Museum installed mass-produced Eames chairs almost directly above and immediately adjacent to huge modernist paintings? Why has it tried to seemingly cram 700 objects from across its entire collection into one room? Why are large paintings hung so low they nearly touch the floor? Why is a Picasso placed next to a 1950s radio? Why is the main gallery organised in two contradictory ways at once – one chronological and one mixed into an "amazing … cacophony"? (Martelli pers. corr. 31.01.19). Why are its walls all at such odd angles so that no visitors can orient themselves in the gallery? Why do it need partitions that weigh six tonnes each and can't be moved without a crane?

In Essen, why has Folkwang Museum abandoned what its director calls a "classical" art historical chronology to present artworks that seemingly have nothing in common in its huge galleries? (Goschluter pers. corr. 30.01.19). Why are its 25 rooms titled with the names of artworks, not thematic titles? Why does a seemingly thematic hang avoid telling visitors what those themes are? Why have curators commissioned a new corporate identity that is intentionally illegible? Why is every word is broken up into its syllables? Why are words placed at the opposite end of signage to require enormous effort to read? Why are objects installed so far away from each other? Why do they have no textual interpretation at all? Given Folkwang is widely seen as having been the first museum of modern art in Europe, why are the displays titled as an invitation to "discover the collection" as if for the first time? (Folkwang 2019 n.p.).

Do these three situations have anything in common? My conviction, as outlined below, is that each of the three case studies has attended to a new and different *type* of problem to their previous institutional 'selves' and to each other.

Each has changed their account of what modern and contemporary art were and are in fundamental ways. One idea crucial to the study is that the three case study

institutions should be described as 'representative' institutions: as elite museums understood to have displayed all of the most important extensions of the concept of art within a given spatio-temporal area. All three are amongst the most important museums in the entire sector, and have been the 'governing' actors for the entire fields of twentieth and twenty-first century art. All three have undertaken institutional changes, commissioning new building that have afforded new ways to construct new stories of art. All three have had directors during the research period. All three have introduced major changes to their entire collections displays that provide the objects of analysis here.

To date, the consequences of curators' rethinking of the history of the concept of art, made manifest in their redisplayed collections, have not been subject to extensive research. This thesis therefore contributes to understanding what museums have become as institutions, and how these institutions have reimagined modern and contemporary art. The categories of art and of collection have been intimately intertwined and co-dependent in Europe. The question I ask is how the *forms* of museums' collections can be understood as defining the dominant concept of art by picturing art in its collective state. In turn, what the dominant concept of art is should be understood as a question with broadly political import. I take it that museums are "never apolitical", and that "the museum's special discursive power [is] to configure (a sense of) the real" because the "capacities specific to museum display" allow them to undertake "truth work" (Whitehead 2020: 49, 51). These ideas run through the entire thesis.

My findings are that different forms of collections can exert distinctive types of political agency or at least take on different political implications, because "we have to admit that museums' representations are political, even if only in their choice of belief system" – or *especially* in their choice of belief system (Whitehead 2020: 44). In this regard, the modernity of modern art should be seen as having been a "surrogate … belief" and a "mode of faith" for previous curators – one that has been challenged from almost all positions across the profession simultaneously (Ziolkowksi 2007: title). What the case studies reveal is that prior ideals associated with modern art have remained but been isolated and given prime or sole emphasis. By abstracting a single principle from the previous model of modernist museum enshrined at MoMA, new possibilities and new beliefs have emerged.

What I examine are the different governing orders of art that museums have installed in relation to different philosophies of collections that relate to broader 'belief systems'. One contribution I make is to forward broadly post-Bourdieusian ideas by inverting Arjun Appadurai's idea of "the social lives of objects" (Appadurai 1987: title; see Bourdieu 1980, 1984, 1984a, 1984b, 1984c). Rather than asking what social lives individual objects lead, I ask what type of society artworks live within, in each collection. I take it as a truism that "the [entire] history of art is unintelligible without such a consideration of artworks' public life as hereafter *mediated*" when entering the museum (Myers-Szupinska 2011: 24). Put in other terms: I broadly accept Donald Preziosi's arugment that European art history and its art museums have developed in tandem, to the degree that they have co-determined each other. In Preziosi's account as here, the orders to which individual objects have been subject in art museums have, therefore, shaped at the least the 'public history' of art – its reception and popular understanding, but arguably its academic understanding as well.

Hereafter, I use the term 'collectivity' to describe how artworks 'public life' is mediated by their presence in a collection, because 'society' is one specific concept of a plural-subject group, alongside community, polity, and others. Each implies different types of patterned relationships. Collectivity is the only term that encompasses all of these concepts. It allows for cross-comparison of the different kinds of political implications that different collectives carry. This is key to understanding the form, agency, and value scheme of each collection. To date, both Irit Rogoff and Griselda Pollock have begun to describe displays as themselves "collectivities" (Pollock 2014: 14). Certainly, any museum collection display, in grouping together artworks from across space, time or mode of production is necessarily an "ensemble" that "secure[s] [one kind of] group relations" or another (Sheikh 2012 n.p.; Myers-Szupinska 2017: 20). One finding is that in each case study, collections are entities that "people dream with, or imagine themselves through", requiring them to be understood through human collectives (Sknotnicki 2021 in Gapper 2021:7). Artworks only lead 'social lives' in collections, and it is only in their collective state that they constitute the concept of 'art'. Accordingly, understanding the types of 'society' that artworks live in, is of prime importance to this thesis, because it is of the first importance in understanding what art is, now. If those 'societies' have fundamentally changed shape or structure, then the consequences of those changes merit research.

Museum curators cannot change individual artworks, but they can reframe their meanings. They can also reshape the order that collections of artworks are subject to, by restructuring displays' patterns of relationships, and the subcategories artworks inhabit and share. As MoMA's director describes, "it is through the ordering and presentation of their collections that museums encode their ideas and narratives" about what art is, and what a collection is (Lowry 2019: 16). As the Museum of Contemporary Art Barcelona's Director also says, there is a new type of "museum that invents relationships between individuals, objects and values" (Mari 2009: 1). The operative term here is 'invents relationships', rather than presuming that one form of relationships between artworks is sacrosanct, or intrinsic to their being. Curators now have licence to 'invent' new ways to relate art and artists beyond the inherited conventions of presenting artists in a linear sequence of cause and effect. If collections really are different to their previous 'selves' as Bishop and Fowle suggest, it is extraordinary that they have not been re-theorised in the literature.

Accordingly, the data captured from displays, documents and interviews concern curatorial decisions and their consequences, along with the values they rest on. What can be safely said is that the different types of relations that curators can stage in public museums to organise stories of art cannot be simply value-free, such that it is impossible to "depoliticise museum work" (Whitehead 2020: 44). The final section of the thesis examines how the *forms* of each collection display in the three case studies can be understood in broadly political terms when they are interpreted as collectives.

I outline how collections involve questions of defining 'us' and 'them', by establishing boundaries between what and who is presented and who is not. The case studies have been redressing issues of who has been excluded from the collection, whether artists outside 'the West'; artists of minority groups in Europe; or those undertaking non-traditional forms of art practice. I also outline how collections involve relating individual artworks, in their individuality, to their collective state. This involves relating an 'I' to a 'we' of which they are part. These questions necessarily involve anthropomorphisation and personification, because as above, collections are things 'people … imagine themselves through'. In Tate's most recent Annual Report, "the collection" is personified in precisely this way, as if independent of curators' agency:

“The collection has recently expanded its holdings of modern and contemporary artworks from Africa, Asia Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and South Asia” (Tate 2019 n.p.). The questions, therefore, are not what each institution is but rather what form their collections can take by being reordered in different ways; and what set of values each form implies.

1.0.3. Structure of thesis

The thesis is set into four overall sections outlining the overall problem and the disciplinary framing of it; the details of the methods employed and the institutional objects of study; definitions of key concepts around artworks individually and collectively; and the case study research. The first two chapters outline the overall problem area and its disciplinary framing in relation to the dual disciplines of museology and curatorial studies. The second section outlines the methodology in terms of the type of case study work undertaken, the use of semi-structured interviews, and the conception of display analysis and discourse analysis developed. It ends by introducing the specific problems that each case study has addressed in its reordering project.

The third section specifies the dominant conception of collection in museology, and an operational definition of artworks drawn from curatorial discourse and philosophies of art. The fourth section examines each case study in turn. Each case study merits two chapters that move from the concrete to the abstract, the empirical to the speculative. The first of these undertakes display analysis in relation to curators’ testimonies. The second proposes what value systems these displays instantiate and how they can be understood politically, broadly speaking. In each of three case studies, I conclude that an alternative concept-figure is needed to describe the displays. I argue that all three have departed from the concept of collection as previously understood, and that this term offers no purchase on what displays have become. I conclude, therefore by speculating if curators have generated a ‘post-collection’ situation, in which the established terminology available to describe what art museums are is no longer adequate.

The structure of the thesis is not that the first three sections provide preambles to the case study research, but that each is essential to understanding what that research is and does, in relation to the specific museums. The structure serves the thesis acting as an overarching theorisation of museum curatorship, rather more than plotting the lineaments of specific case studies. This is the important gap lacking in all of the literatures, as I outline. Therefore, the synthesis and elaboration of ideas about curatorship and collections in the first three sections are the essential means to establish and cross-compare the sheer range of new ideas emerging regarding both over the last decade. There is no other source available where this work has been undertaken, as chapter two outlines.

1.1. Self-positioning: Professional Investments in the Field

My professional investments in the field relate directly to the problem field. I am the curator of a new civic art collection, having been the director of a public gallery alongside undertaking research part time. The gallery began collecting artworks in 2010. It is applying for museum accreditation after accumulating an embryonic collection. If the thesis concerns philosophies of collections, rather than dwells on financial or practical problems, collections are not abstract entities to me professionally. If the findings I provide have credibility, it is in part because I have a thorough grounding in the day-to-day practicalities of fundraising, negotiations, partnerships, accessioning, documentation, conservation, storage and display of artworks. Collections *are* problems of resourcing and fundraising, at one level. Moreover, at the time of writing I am a member of the Acquisition Committee of the Arts Council Collection, responsible for deciding which artists and artworks enter a national collection. This is a role that involves careful balancing of ethical imperatives with artistic judgments, financial concerns, and diplomacy. I am acutely conscious of the ethico-political responsibilities of public collections and that “if there are known alternatives to any [museum] display, then we encounter politics” in thinking about them (Whitehead 2020: 48). My understanding is that the museologist Susan Pearce’s remark from a generation ago remains true:

> The study of collections by museum people [curators] and from a museological stance has been comparatively neglected [and this] has been a major weakness, for it is only when practitioners turn their attention to the history and nature of

their own field, and begin a critical historiography proper to it, that the field [of museology] can be said to have come of age. (Pearce 1994c: 193).

Undertaking research part-time meant I continued to be part of a professional community of curators, representing my institution nationally and internationally. My perspective is from within the museum and gallery sector and written from a prior familiarity with curators' protocols. Whilst I have a vested investment in the debates at stake because of my professional responsibilities, the conclusions I draw are not curatorially partisan, but outline the new spectrum of possibilities open to curators. My professional interests prompted me to select interviewees with whom I had not had professional engagements with beforehand, to ensure research could be conducted without conflicts of interest.

The study has a relevance to Britain specifically, where unlike Germany, Holland, France and other continental European countries, there are no museums of modern art outside the capital cities (London and Edinburgh, specifically). Britain's commercial, critical and gallery infrastructures compare favourably to those of these countries. There are no museums of modern art taking this name in any English regional city, and Glasgow's GoMA is a rare exception of an institution dedicated to collecting modern and contemporary art. It does not stand comparison to, for example, the FRAC collections in France, Germany's extraordinary range of art museums, or Holland's innovative museums. Germany's smaller towns and cities like Mönchengladbach and Essen are blessed with museum collections at Museum Abteiberg and Museum Folkwang. Only the collections at Tate and the National Gallery of Scotland would be comparable in the UK. Mönchengladbach and Essen are twinned with North Tyneside and Sunderland respectively, rather than larger metropolitan centres. One reason for undertaking the thesis has been to understand how major museums of modern art are remaking their collections and what principles they base their displays on. If there is one problem with Britain's visual arts sector, it is the lack of collections.

1.2. Specifying the Problem Field

Below, I further outline the overall problem field and its history prior to 2013. I suggest how the research project affects museological thinking and curatorial practice and relates to how the history of modern art can be accounted for.

1.2.1. Problem field: origins of research and approach

At the risk of simplifying the trajectory of museums of modern art, it can be said that, until 2000, across Europe there was a broad dominant consensus about which accounts of modern art were legitimate and desirable. In 2021 that is manifestly untrue. It is difficult to conclude there anything other than that a “profound shift” is ongoing, in Nicholas Serota’s terms (Serota 2016 n.p.). The thesis takes seriously Serota’s recent claim that “this is an important moment for us to consider how museums have changed so far this century” (Serota 2016 n.p.). I do not believe this task has been undertaken fully to date. Reviewing the literatures below, I believe the implications of new philosophies of collections remain unplotted.

Nevertheless, there are pointers as to how this ‘shift’ can be described overall. The art historians Jon Ippolito and Richard Rinehart have suggested that what characterises the last decade is that “when a system of representation breaks down, it provides a picture of the system itself rather than its purported subject … When a system fails … [as] a system of ideas … it offers us a rare opportunity to consider the system [itself] explicitly” (Ippoito and Reinhart 2014: 19). This describes my original hypothesis in 2013. Understood as ‘systems of representation’, collections need to be described as constructions taking an ideological character, but also as entities that necessarily relate to wider ideological formations. I suggested above that MoMA’s former model, once so dominant in the sector, has been rejected even by MoMA curators themselves, in a remarkable *volte-face*. MoMA’s largely taxonomic and chronological order effectively shaped the story of modern art adopted by Europe’s museums of modern art. It provided a historical legitimacy to the idea that its own categories of geography, chronological time and medium were sufficient to account for art’s nature and what was understood by some as a single historical trajectory. Not all collections were taxonomic, nor chronological, but the most authoritative institutions across Europe and North America did largely adhere to these ideals. What I suggest is that these ideals became profoundly associated with

the concept of collection that other forms of order should be described through alternative concepts entirely.

The three case study institutions can be understood to have experimented with what kind of 'system of representation' can exist without these anchors. Prior to that, all were central to the institutionalisation of modern art throughout the twentieth century, through the stories of art they presented, and the taxonomic categories they ordered artworks into. Each has played a crucial role in defining the dominant concept of modern art and constituting both the "canon", and the curatorial "canonical thinking" that sustained it (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18).

1.2.2. Competing definitions of 'museum' but not 'collection'

In 2019, members of the International Council of Museums drafted an alternative definition of 'museum' which has not yet been adopted but which illuminates one area of contestation around what collections are or should be. The concept of 'collection' is clearly implicated but itself goes unspecified as if already a given:

> Museums are democratizing, inclusive, and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artifacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal access to heritage for all people. Museums are not for profit. They are participatory and transparent, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings of the world, aiming to contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality, and planetary well-being. (ICOM in Szanto 2010: 7-8).

This thesis asks why there has been so little debate about the definition of collection, when the debate around redefining museums has been so acrimonious. Asking 'what is a collection?' is a necessary corollary of asking 'what is a museum?'. Yet this question has been very largely absent in museological discourse since the 1990s.

The relevance of the redefinition of museum outlined above is that it encapsulates one, highly particular understanding of what museums' political agency could yet be, and indicates a "wider split in the museum world" between activist positions and more conservative ones (Marshall 2020 n.p.). There is strong evidence that increasing numbers of anglophone curators at least identify with what Maura Reilly calls "curatorial activism" (Reilly 2017: title). The ethico-political imperatives she has described closely correlate with position statements by MoMA curators, for example, and the definition above. One objection to the proposed definition was on ontological grounds that "It doesn't explain what a museum does", but only proposes a single, idealised model of what a museum could ideally be (Mairesse in Marshall 2020 n.p.). This puts aside the possibility that it is *precisely* new ethical drivers that have redefined collections, as much as institutions. Nevertheless, it is not clear, for example, that *all* museums in different geopolitical territories are "democratizing" in and of themselves. What needs research and partly guides the project is what it might mean in practice for collections to be either democratic or democratising, and what curators have agency over to achieve this. The three case studies can, I believe, be seen to have forwarded quite distinct proposals about how collections can embody democratic values. The plural sense is crucial here. Where the proposed definition appears to have taken for granted that institutions (and collections) could be transparently 'democratic', this is a far more complex area in need of close specification. As the research outlines, there is neither a single model of democracy, nor one means by which collections could be legitimately described as embodying a democratic character. What the analyses should do is to render ideas and values "transparent" that have not always been clear or made explicit: the imperative that institutions should now become transparent implies they have not been previously) (ICOM in Szanto 2020: 8). I draw an equation between the forms of collection displays, their curators' logic of practice, and their founding values that attempts to make clear how broad the range of values in collections has become.

1.2.3. Representative museums provide an ontology of art

As Susan Pearce has argued and as I indicated above, "the notion of 'art' is far from self-evident, and its development is bound up with the development of … characteristic institutions … [namely] museums and galleries. The genealogies of 'art'

and ‘museum’ therefore run hand in hand” (Pearce 1995b: 1). This point is fundamental throughout this thesis. It is a museological truism that museum collections in Europe co-constituted the category of ‘art’ itself, as Pearce and fellow museologist Donald Preziosi have argued. In Preziosi’s terms, “the museographic archive” created ‘art’: “art did not precede art history like some phenomenon of nature discovered and then explained” but the reverse (Preziosi 1998: 517). This is to say that the concepts of art and of collection have been mutually determined by art’s governing institutions, and have been inseparable, at least to date. The categories of ‘art’ and ‘collection’ are historically co-dependent, as co-determinants. If the category of collection has changed, then the category of art must logically have, as well.

Also, as introduced above, this is principally the case in ‘representative’ museums. By assembling the characteristic or ‘representative’ art of a specific period and places, such institutions govern the dominant concept of art and its history. The only institutions with the means to represent an area of art production in its entirety, in the words of MoMA’s current director, are those able “to present a synoptic overview” (Lowry 2005: 20). The problem for such museum is what constitutes an alternative form of view beyond a “diachronic transhistorical collection [display] devoted to an encyclopaedic totality”, if this kind of display has decisively ‘passed’ (Hunt 2018: 16). In orthodox art museums this responsibility has been understood as assembling the objects or authors that marked the most important turning points in art’s history by creating new extensions of its concept. This provided the basis of the concept of a museum ‘order’ for museums of modern art, as outlined in museology. This idea is fundamental to this study. The dominant form of collection order, formerly that associated with MoMA and its European emulators, worked to instantiate the dominant concept of art in its canonical extensions at least. In this light, every representative museum collection is, by definition, itself an ontology of art: a proposition about what art was and is. MoMA’s own curators made this plain in 2019, arguing that “when we make a shift like this, it could change the whole way we think about art” (MoMA 2019a n.p.). The change in the politico-philosophical orientation of MoMA staff can be readily located. MoMA has had two major rehangs under its current director Glenn D. Lowry. At the first in 2005, Lowry remarked that MoMA adhered to the “encyclopaedic” model of a museum collection because the idea of a totalising “synoptic overview” was central to “the Enlightenment belief in the universality of human experience” (Lowry 2005: 10). MoMA’s overarching

philosophical commitment was to “extend the Enlightenment notion of the museum as a place of [universal] knowledge” (Lowry 2005: 20). In 2019, all six of its most senior curators published a position statement arguing that “contemporary thinking recognizes [...] the impossibility of a universal perspective or single comprehensive account” of art based on precisely the principles Lowry outlined (Bajac et al 2019: 20). Understanding the shift made by MoMA in these terms, as one of a fundamental philosophical reorientation that has political implications, can start to frame the case studies’ changes in a similar light. The proposed new ICOM definition echoes MoMA curators’ terms when it advocates that collections should now be figuratively “polyphonic” (ICOM in Szanto 2020: 7). Curators’ recourse to new figurative imagery is also central to the study, and to the type of analysis I forward. Two logical problems present themselves. The received and dominant concept of an art collection, as I will outline it, is itself not ‘polyphonic’, whether outlined in museology or practice. Indeed, a polyphonic collection is a contradiction in terms if understood in Preziosi’s definition, a point I elaborate below. The use of ‘polyphonic’ is, in my understanding, made in relation to a plurality of different ‘voices’ being made present, and implicitly harmonised within a collection. This rests upon a theory of difference between people associated with demographic positions, identities and identifications, and protected characteristics. This is fundamentally different to a ‘polysemic’ understanding of a collection, in which individual objects remain the focus, but merely signify in multiple ways.

The second problem is that, if different collections are differentially ‘polyphonic’ then curators only have a single inherited concept of ‘collection’, which is at best increasingly generic, to describe their processes and what they order and organise. Below, I outline how an expansion in the lexicon available to curators is needed. Only this can articulate how their collections might begin to be ‘democratized’ or ‘polyphonic’ in specific instances. The hypothesis here is that facilitating changes in representative museums’ conceptual structure might turn on how the concept of collection is rearticulated, or how it is substituted or supplemented by other concepts of order.

1.2.4. Museums without collections?

The conclusion that I reach below is that the very concept of collection is now partially redundant, based on the evidence provided the three case studies. The term collection carries a set of connotations that simply do not necessarily correspond with those of new orders instituted in the case studies. A distinction is required between the vernacular use of the term collection to mean 'a group of objects that were acquired', and the concept as theorised in museology and by curators. I continue to use the word collection out of necessity. The lack of synonyms for collection in English, for 'sammlung' in German and 'verzameling' in Dutch presents problems of describing what museums are and do. These remain in place at least until alternatives with greater specificity are provided. Secondly, the connection in idiomatic English between the verb collecting and the noun collection, as with 'sammeln' and 'sammlung' in German, and 'verzameling' and 'verzamelen' in Dutch, means that the term collection will always remain a placeholder, or be used in its generic, vernacular senses. There is a further distinction to be made between two senses of collection employed by curators. The first sense normally equates to 'everything that a museum owns', connoting the sum total of every accession ever made. The second is used about collection displays. It customarily signifies 'the tiny fraction of acquisitions displayed as being exemplary of the trajectory of the concept of art and constituting the elite stratum of production'. The term 'display' cannot by itself indicate all of these ideas. Many of the curators interviewed used the term collection interchangeably between these two meanings or avoided the term display. In certain instances, I follow suit when following their logic. What such instances indicate is, as I outlined, the pressing need for a closer-grained lexicon that can articulate what is at stake in curators' processes and what is experienced by museums' publics. Only new names can specify the different sets of ideas and values that different museums' displays now embody.

The need to expand the lexicon can be clarified further, again in relation to the question of museums' and collections' definitions. Frances Morris has reframed the definition of the Tate collection by asking the Bourdieusian question of "who [it is who] holds the authority" to "consecrate" artworks (Morris 2016b n.p.; Bourdieu 1993: 35). By this she means which types of subject position have, until now, had the cultural capital to police the dominant definition of art. More specifically, she means that the narrow range of subject positions who have had the authority to allocate the privileges of authorship have largely done so to an equally narrow range of subject

positions (Morris 2016b n.p.). The correspondences between curators' subject positions and those of elite artists represented in museum collections are not taken to be coincidental, in this account of collections. Nor are the correspondences between the subject positions occupied by privileged, dominant social groups and those represented in collections. Traditionally, "what museums bring into their permanent collections matters because their acquisitions ultimately form the canon. Their collections are how history gets recorded for posterity" (Halperin and Burns 2019 n.p.). New questions have been asked of what history, and whose history, is narrated by museums even since 2013.

One reason for the need to specify the type of order at in each institution is that it is museums that are "the place where bias is most deeply entrenched" in the entire economy of the visual arts, as research has demonstrated during the period (Bedford in Halperin and Burns 2019 n.p.). Longstanding exclusions or disproportionate representation of certain subject positions, demographically and geopolitically, are most pronounced in art collections that have been accumulated across decades or longer. It is very largely only during the research period that curators at major institutions such as MoMA have publicly addressed such issues (see Lowry 2019). Admitting of the idea that the privileges of authorship have long been allocated to dominant subject positions marks a major change of philosophy, if a belated one. Through the thesis I use the term 'author' in the Foucauldian sense of "the author function" that posits individuals as "originating subjects" of concepts and utterances, who are imagined to "penetrate the density of things and endow them with meaning" (Foucault 1969 in Bouchard 1977: 113).

The empirical quantification of structural differentials between authors of different ethnicities, genders and sexual orientations in representative collections has progressed during the research period (see for example East London Fawcett 2012). In the case studies, one example can make the trajectory of change in curatorial practices vivid. Frances Morris has specified that at the time of the first major rehang instigated at Tate during her career, in 1992, the then Tate Gallery had 50 collection galleries. Across all 50 galleries, there was not a single artwork made outside Europe or North America on display; artworks by only two women selected ("Rebecca Horn and Barbara Hepworth"); and no artworks by any members of the African or Indian diasporas (see Morris 2016b n.p.). Put simply, "the whole display of the collection"

excluded entire categories of subject position (Morris 2016b n.p.). As Morris remarks, that “the museum [collection] today” is different is “immediately evident” to anyone careful to read attributions of authorship (Morris 2016b n.p.). The character of “contemporary [curatorial] practice” is categorically different, in her analysis (Morris 2016b n.p.). The change between 1992 and 2021 marks the internalisation of the idea voiced by museologist Sharon Macdonald, that “the museum is an institution of recognition and identity par excellence … It selects certain cultural products for official safe-keeping, for posterity and public display – a process which recognizes and affirms some (identities) and omits to recognize and affirm others” (Macdonald 2006: 4). As Morris has argued, “every museum display is also guided by a set of assumptions determining the layout [and selection] of works of art” (Morris 2014: 24). What she and others have highlighted is how these assumptions have always included who, as well as what, is considered sufficiently valuable and authoritative to merit public display of their labour.

My own strategy is to approach the same problem by asking what type of entity it is in which artworks can be ‘consecrated’, and holds an authority accepted across the field. My hypothesis is that it is the *idea* of an art collection that exerts some form of “magical” authority (Bourdieu 1991: 192). It is not only the idea of art that is understood in quasi-theological terms, but the idea of collection as well. The logical conclusion to draw is that, if as outlined above, it is the dominant concept of collection that installs the dominant concept of art, then it also polices the boundaries of who has the social power associated with the privileges of authorship. One hypothesis entirely absent in the relevant literatures to date is that the very concept of an art collection as it stands acts to forestall change in museum practice. If the concept of collection in the current form is the entity that generates “the production of belief” in the dominant concept of art, then its structural role should logically come under question (Bourdieu 1980: title).

These questions are important to actors far beyond professional curators because, as is well established, art objects are among the most expensive and prestigious category of commodities in European societies. Museums underwrite the economy of art by governing its ‘symbolic economy’. The financial economy of the ‘art world’ rests specifically on museums’ “national collection” acting as “the central bank of symbolic capital” for the field of art (Jessop 2015: 33). What museums acquire and display

underwrite the value of private investments. In art historian Hal Foster's words, when a museum "makes a major move … the entire field shifts with it" (Foster 2019 n.p.). Commercial markets are co-dependent on museums' authoritative independent judgment to underwrite them. If museums pursue other forms of order, then the financial and cultural investments of other actors are affected. This economy "represent[s] … some $7bn" when restricted to the work of living artists, i.e. "contemporary art" alone, but modern and contemporary art constitute the single largest sector of all art sales worldwide at a multiple of this (Adam 2015: 16). Needless to say, the actors with the greatest financial interests and investments in these areas are amongst the wealthiest groups in European, and other societies. How museums perform their "sacralisation" of artworks directly affects how prestige is distributed, and how investments are secured (Buck 2004: 12). The research project matters because if collections take entirely other different natures or undertake different functions, the central role of museums in the art system is structurally altered.

Bourdieu's relevant insight is that this multi-billion dollar business, and museums' participation in it, have been conceptualised in theological rather than expressly political or material terms. The purpose of this framing is, in his account, that it renders them impervious to contestation. Enabling collections to be discussed in more political terms relating to what form of collective they are, or at least less quasi-theological ones, is a prerequisite towards them being 'democratising'. One starting point I take for granted is, as suggested above, that every public art museum's collection *is* a politics, i.e. is an argument both about the nature of art, and the nature of its publicness, as well as an institution's publicness – which is to say universality, as I outline later. The way in which a collection is ordered therefore tells us about what curators imagine to be the purpose of public institutions. The hypothesis I introduce is that the very term 'collection' effectively neutralises contestation by rendering all types of order equivalent or broadly compatible. The case studies demonstrate that they are not either of these. If any of the claims in the proposed redefinition of museums for ICOM can be realised, it can only be by the wholesale reconstruction of museums' conceptual architecture, and by the creation of a lexicon that moves the terms of description of them away from a theological footing towards a more worldly and 'democratizing' one.

The proposed definition above posits that all museums are all, already, definitionally "democratizing [and] inclusive" (ICOM in Szanto 2020: 7). Bourdieu's definition of the structural social function of art museums was that of enacting "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 19-22). Both cannot be true at once; or at least, the changes in what collections are must have been extraordinary for them to have changed from one to the other, if we believe both. Adjudicating between these polarised and universalising claims requires close-grained examination of individual case studies. Only case study work can specify the *type of museum order* particular to each institution, and not only what claims are made about 'museums' generically rather than specifically. Otherwise, the debate rises only to the level that all museums without exception are paragons of ethical virtue, or that all museums are tools of oppression, without consideration of their specificities.

A final proviso is required. Morris has proven that *what* is judged to be 'museum quality' and *who* occupies public space have been in practice inseparable. They can never be absolutely identical questions, and the question of who occupies public space is insufficient to account for what museums of modern art do. What I examine in the chapter below is how ideas well outside of these questions, from for example object-oriented ontology, can enable a sharper understanding of what collections are. These countervailing ideas to curatorial activism, which have been prominent in curatorship and art practice in the 2010s, are therefore addressed here. The two are not wholly incompatible but can start to illuminate what is at stake in the differences between the case study museums' approaches.

As Claire Bishop notes, whilst "ethical criteria have become the norm for judging art" in many curatorial circles, only its own, a "set of moral precepts" is insufficient to order a collection of modern art as it cannot provide any working definition of art (Bishop 2012: 23, 2006: 181). Even the most expressly politicised curatorial approach cannot "ignore … the 'otherness' of art" altogether or treat the character of art as being wholly determined by categories of subject position as curator Andrew Hunt argues (Hunt 2018: 16). I therefore pursue Bishop's demand that "a more complicated imbrication of the social and the aesthetic" is still required by collections curators (Bishop 2004: 78). The approach initially outlined above, which takes collections as themselves types of collectives, is one way in which it is possible to see 'the social and the aesthetic' as inextricably related. Examining the forms that

collections' display orders take, rather than only their 'contents', is the unusual manoeuvre. In conclusion: one key differential between older collection displays and the new ideas put forward by curators in the 2010s has been pinpointed by Frances Morris. Older models were only ever "representing what is political, but [the new are] acting politically" themselves (Morris 2021 n.p.). What this distinction equates to, and how this might be the case, can therefore be seen as the subjects underpinning the research.

Chapter 2: Specifying the Disciplinary Framing of the Research Problem

2.0. Museology and Curatorial Studies as Disciplinary Strangers

This chapter outlines the disciplinary framing of the overall problem, and the literatures that it intervenes in. I understand 'discipline' to connote an established academic area of research and teaching across territories. The first section addresses the twin relevant disciplines of museology and curatorial studies. It is a staple of both museology and curatorial studies that it is only in the last generation that each has gained full recognition in the academy in Europe. In my understanding, each now has something approaching a corpus of foundational texts, a set of canonical authors, a range of dedicated specialist journals.

Curatorial theorist Ben Cranfield's account of both disciplines is that there have been only "thirty years of museum studies and [a little] more than a decade of curatorial discourse" (Cranfield 2017: 118). This dates museology or museum studies as it is otherwise known as having gained its disciplinary maturity in the 1980s, and curatorial studies as having done so only in the 2000s These are both young disciplines that have only recently attained the full scholarly apparatus expected of longer established subjects in the humanities. It should be unsurprising, therefore, that there are clear gaps identifiable in both literatures to be addressed.

The first section of this chapter argues there is also a structural gap *between* curatorial studies, which is predominantly artist-centred or curator-centred, and museology which principally examines institutions as its objects, in their ethical and political dimensions. This provides the space for a novel contribution to both literatures. Both literatures offer essential resources to the study. Curatorial studies has addressed the specificities of modern and contemporary art, and of certain types of curatorship specifically. Museology has addressed the longer trajectory of changes in institutions, and grasped the political character of museums more fully, in my analysis, by establishing that every part of museum labour is broadly 'political', far beyond curators' choice of artists. Geographically speaking, across both literatures the texts referred to are principally anglophone, having originated across Europe and

America, and to some extent wider geopolitical areas; some texts were read in translation. They are almost all, by definition, recent contributions because my prime concern is with recent change in the museum sector.

The second section of the chapter clarifies which resources are employed from disciplines beyond museology and curatorial studies, and how. My contribution is to answer the questions posed above by drawing both on new contributions to ontologies of objects including artworks, and social ontologies that have reimagined the relations between components of collective (human) entities. Curators interviewed did not only refer to the ideas forwarded by their peers, but from critical theory and more speculative or abstract disciplines. The study concerns the intellectual resources that curators draw upon in shaping their displays, as well as providing new frameworks that can illuminate their behaviours from other disciplines beyond ones familiar to them. Both curatorial and museological literatures have their distinct theoretical underpinnings, but with relatively few overlaps, as I outline below. What I understand as being needed in both, now, is a contribution that is able to synthesise an unusually broad range of understandings of art and institutions across both practice and theoretical literatures

2.1. Museology And / Or Curatorial Studies

This section begins by outlining the problem of how literatures in anglophone museology and curatorial studies have developed separate trajectories, at least in academia across Western Europe and North America. This thesis is, to my knowledge, one of the relatively few contributions to date that addresses both literatures equally and can provide a bridge between them just as much as between curatorial practice and theory.

2.1.1. Mutual indifference

Practicing museum curators themselves have, in my understanding, gravitated to either museology, if working in certain kinds of collections, or curatorial literature, if concerned with modern and contemporary art specifically. It is my prior experience,

across a quarter century of professional practice, that few have internalised ideas from both museology and curatorial studies equally. If there is a need for a bridge between these two, then it is in part because contemporary art curators are largely unaware of precepts or landmarks in museology, and because few museologists have sufficient specialist knowledge of contemporary art to make genuinely radical contributions to curatorial literature, as it is concerned with modern and contemporary art alone. As I outline below, the two share few points of references, and rest on different foundational texts. The mutual indifference between the two areas means curators are blind to ideas which are directly relevant to their work. This can be easily proven at least in a UK context. Goldsmiths's Andrew Renton, who established its MA Curating at the turn of the millennium, has made explicit that "curating [literature] has been nearly exclusively connected with the contemporary", but has also indicated that its alignment was at its outset almost exclusively with exhibition making, and collections labour did not feature in its purview (Renton 2010 n.p.).

One key text published at the outset of research, and which I have great sympathy with, was Claire Bishop's *Radical Museology* (see Bishop 2013). This text helped begin reorienting attention in curatorial discourse onto collections, and away from exhibition making and broader forms of curatorship associated with the term 'the curatorial', as I outline below. Bishop's work does not contain a single reference to any prior museological text. The merit of Bishop's work is that she alerts us to the idea that "the newly singularised role of the curator is inseparable from changes in artistic production" – an area requiring specialist knowledge alien to many museologists (Bishop 2007 n.p.). The deficit is that it is scarcely imaginable for any academic to publish a comparable volume about 'radical history' without reference to any single historian. Moreover, Bishop painstakingly refers to a considerable range of literatures across multiple theoretical disciplines, including continental philosophy, political philosophy, and theories of history. Her grasp of interdisciplinary scholarship and range of references are broad, but *Radical Museology* implies the entire discipline of museology does not exist – or is of no consequence. One of the opening remarks in this volume is that "it's remarkable to think that the last polemical text to be written on museums of contemporary art by an art historian was Rosalind Krauss's "The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum" back in 1990" (Bishop 2013: 5). Despite the caveat "by an art historian", her claim is essentially that no

major or distinctive advances in rethinking museums have been made in a quarter-century.

2.1.2. The absent centre: 'the collection as -'

Bishop's work helps identify a lacuna common to both literatures. There are a number of recent volumes titled using the same rhetorical trope of 'the artist as –' and 'the institution as –', but none with 'the collection as – '. These include *The Artist As* (both Burns, Lundh, McDowell 2018: title; Von Bismarck 2007:title) and *As Radical, As Mother, As Salad, As Shelter: What Should Art Institutions Do Now?* (Paper Monument 2019: title). These volumes all ask 'what is' questions about either what art is, or what institutions are. No parallel volume has asked what art collections are, specifically. All of these volumes can be seen to presuppose that new definitions of art and of institutions are needed because each has recently taken on different "ways of being" (Cahill 2018: title). Their commonality is that individual artworks, and institutions occupy different states or 'modes of being'. The idea that collections also inhabit different modes of being is crucial to my entire argument. The changes observed in the case studies have invited the observation that it is necessary to reframe each one through the idea of rethinking them through the idea 'the collection as – '. Refiguring collections 'as' other types of entities is crucial to my thinking, as outlined in the next chapters.

This idea fulfils the demand to expand the lexicon available to describe what curators do, and collections are. The preposition 'as' suggests that this demand can best be met through the work of figuration and metaphor. The means to achieve a more adequate theorisation of what curatorship is, and therefore what collections are, requires "a transaction between contexts", in one key definition of metaphor (Ricoeur 1978: 80). If I can rethink collections through the idea of 'the collection as', it is also because of the nature of curatorship, where "as a discipline, contemporary art is methodologically open; it thrives on imported ideas" (White 2014: 165). It is a truism that "curators … regularly link their projects to the thinking of philosophers and historians, scientists and sociologists, while maintaining their long-running connections with … art history, art criticism" (Smith 2011a: 14). In other words, they

borrow other frames from other disciplines in order to rethink what art is and was, and how its stories can be constructed.

It is worth articulating how recent, and how limited the lexicon of curatorship is. It is worth remembering that even "the verb to 'curate' is a recent addition to the lexicon of the art world", and the noun 'curator' has no direct translation in many non-European languages (Renton 2010 n.p.). The word 'curator' has been long established, being in use by the establishment of the British Museum in the eighteenth-century, but my argument is that its current-day meanings exceed those that accrued up to the millennium (see Balzer 2014). My hypothesis is that for the reasons outlined above, the pressures to expand the professional lexicon have been caused by "*structural* professional change" in Alex Farquharson's words (Farquharson 2003: 7). This is to say that the curatorial profession has been transformed, in my working lifetime. My goal is therefore to exert "pressure … on pre-existing language" available because, as Farquharson argues, a wholesale "shift in the conception of what curators do" is underway, and far from complete (Farquharson 2003: 7,8). As outlined, 'curatorial studies' is a young discipline in process of construction, in which key areas remain under-conceptualised: contributors have "yet really to theorize the actuality of curatorial practice", given how swiftly and comprehensively curatorship has changed as Farquharson argues (Lee 2011: 195).

2.2. Curatorial Studies

This section outlines how this thesis contributes to curatorial studies literature. Curatorial studies has defined the trajectory of the profession through the development of a "new independent curatorial practice" – independent only not from institutions but autonomous from the prior professional standards in at least earlier models of academic art history, as I discussed above (O'Neill 2012: cover).
This autonomy has resulted in new sets of professional protocols and ideals different to those operative for previous generations of curators. In Donald Preziosi's scheme, the disciplines of art history and curatorship have been historically inseparable. In orthodox art museums, we should see "art history … as museology": as parts of a shared enterprise with parallel scholarly protocols (Preziosi 1998: 451). Preziosi's argument is that at its outset, European art museum curatorship created art's 'own'

history as a separate domain and this was co-developed in the academy. The long-term effects of curatorial courses established in the 1990s has been to (partly) separate curatorship from art historical scholarship. At Goldsmiths, Andrew Renton has testified precisely this: that “in the formulation of curatorial programmes … there was a very determined gesture to take art history out of the equation. I do not want curating to be in art history” (Renton 2010 n.p.). My hypothesis is that the case studies demonstrate that, at the least, curators have departed from orthodox art historical standards, and at the most asserted the autonomy of their own professional ideas independent to those within the academy.

The result of curatorial studies understanding “curating as practice”, rather than in purely scholarly terms, is that in collections now as well as exhibitions “the role of the curator [is] foregrounded” in new ways (Renton 2010 n.p; Caiger-Smith 2011 n.p.). These insights from curatorial studies start to explain why the curators at the case study institutions have been able to take new liberties with the collections, and partly explain why they have jettisoned hangs based on the chronological canon of modern art, with its linear sequence of movements. There is a consensus in curatorial studies at least that there is “a huge difference between today's curators and those art historians of the past” formerly in charge of museums (Ratnam 2003 n.p.). The remarks above by the directors of all three case studies underline this. The new curatorial taboo identifiable here has been named by art historian Elizabeth Mansfield: that “for art history … it is [still] the canon that defines its jurisdiction. In this way, the canon can be seen as the central organizing principle of the discipline itself” – in contrast to museum practice (Mansfield 2007a: 11). In Mansfield’s scheme, “the canon” *is* “art history”: her remarks imply that in traditional forms of museum curatorship, the concepts of ‘canon’, ‘art history’, and ‘collection’ were one and the same, excluding anything outside of a narrow conception of art (Mansfield 2007a: 11). The concept of ‘canon’ has become an outright taboo, therefore, but without the necessary rethinking of the concept of collection that it has been connected to.
The problem that I examine in the case studies is, as at MoMA, “how to structure a compelling history” without recourse to the idea of the canon as the key structuring device (Bajac et al 2019: 20).

If there has been a single insight in curatorial studies about what has replaced the canon, it is that an autonomised, authorial curatorship underwrites is the idea

curators' "main task today is … providing a problem-orientated context [for displays which] is carried out intellectually" (Klonk in Maak, Klonk, Demand 2011 n.p.). One type of 'problem' has been introduced into collections by curators "replacing [art] criticism with critical theory" in Frances Morris's words – by replacing the authority of orthodox art history with sociological or political argumentation (Morris 2017 n.p.). One type of curator has restructured collections based on critical and political "concepts that are [not] limited or specific to art" history (Pedrosa in Pedrosa & Szanto 2020: 79). Another type has created problems specific to art 'itself'. Both, however, should be understood ultimately as ontologising claims about the nature of art itself. In both types, the possible forms that collection displays can take has been expanded. In MoMA's director's terms, "we want to look at our own collection with the same intensity that we look at temporary exhibitions … to invest in the collection that capacity to be reimagined in the way we would reimagine an exhibition" (Lowry in Burns 2018 n.p.). This is to say that curators have reshaped collection displays by borrowing display principles and forms from exhibition making. Unlike in collections displays of old, in exhibitions, objects can be presented and related to each other in theoretically limitless ways – ones both politically significant and otherwise. In curator Fiona Bradley's summation of changes in the form of collections, "the sensibility of the exhibition maker [has been transferred on]to the collection" by a new cohort of curators (Bradley quoted in Jones 2016 n.p.).

2.2.2. Authorial curating and 'biennialisation' of collections

Both Morris's and Lowry's insights about the possible forms that displays can now take should be related to another profession-wide change: the "biennialisation" of all forms of curatorship, including collections labour (Gardner and Green 2016: 111). Biennials have made previous models of collection displays appear parochial in their geopolitical scope. In the writer Benoît Loiseau's terms, it is biennials that have "broaden[ed] the scope of and reshap[ed] museums around the world" (Loiseau 2019 n.p.). Frances Morris has echoed this argument, remarking that it was the "proliferation of biennials … across the world … [that meant] it was no longer possible [for collections curators] to think about a single centre, or a single cluster of centres" (Morris 2016 n.p.). That it is biennials which offer curators the greatest scope for experimentation, and for securing the highest profile professional positions

is beyond doubt. As philosopher Peter Osborne argues “art today lives – can there still be any doubt? – in ‘the age of the biennial’” (Osborne 2018: 108). The ‘biennialisation’ of art since the 1990s has underwritten the development of authorial modes of curating, and the autonomy of its standards. The hypothesis here is collections labour has drawn on both the forms of displays pioneered in biennials; their reliance upon theoretical content for their framing; and their adoption of social or political ideas from other disciplines. The politics and poetics of biennials have been the mainstay of curatorial literature since 2000, and the insights drawn about these are essential to understanding change in collections. At the case studies, Folkwang’s curators, as I outline, directly compared their displays to in a biennial. My own analysis is that Tate’s new policies draw directly on biennials, in quite different ways.

2.3. Museology: Philosophy of Collections

If curatorial studies can help frame one component part of the research problem as one of which modes of professional practice have gained ascendancy across the profession, then museology is essential to understanding museums as systems of representation, and their place in epistemic structures. Stephanie Moser has provided a concise ‘canon’ of foundational texts in anglophone museology. Many of these are (if in different ways) predecessors to this study in identifying a “paradigm change” in museum practice that involves the supersession of one set of “epistemic conditions” with another (in Charles Esche’s and curator Joao Ribas’s; terms”: Esche 2016 n.p.; Ribas 2013:98). As Moser notes, the key “scholars [who] laid down the theoretical foundations for exploring how objects are made meaningful in a museum context” include “Ames 1992; Bennett 1995; Hooper-Greenhill 1992; Macdonald 1998; Macdonald and Fyfe 1996; Pearce 1994, 1998; Simpson 1996; Vergo 1990; Walsh 1992” (Moser 2010: 22). The two things in common between these diverse figures is firstly that they have understood museums politically; and second that they have attempted to identify and explain fundamental changes in museum practice. Notably, not one of these volumes merits any mention in Bishop’s *Radical Museology*.

Thus far at least, curatorial studies has had a restricted understanding of how art and its institutions can be understood politically, and what kinds of political agency they

can exert beyond selecting artists from a wider range of subject positions. By contrast, the canon of museological literature above offers a far more rounded and comprehensive conception of the politics of art and the politics of museums. In museology, it is clear that *all* the choices museum professionals make are broadly 'political' – and "museum display [[...]is] a political, public presentation of propositional knowledge intended … to create social effects" (Whitehead 2020: 43). The contribution this thesis makes to museology is to try to return attention to the philosophy of collections as an area of study. More specifically, the contribution to museology is one of expanding the scope of current museological debate by attending to the new philosophies of collections operational in art museums in the 2010s. It is also one of enabling a more precise understanding of them in broadly political terms. In my understanding, the philosophy of collections has become a subsidiary area in museology and needs to be returned to the centre of the discipline in order to address substantive changes in curatorial practice.

2.3.2. 'Pearce 2.0'

There are two figures in anglophone museology whose work provides the most immediate precedents for the research project. The first is Susan Pearce, who described her extended project of the 1990s as "forming a worthwhile definition of what makes a collection", i.e. asking what constituted the concept of collection in philosophical terms (Pearce 1994b: 157). I understand my own project as a broadly parallel one, but one that reviews multiple philosophies of collections emergent over the last decade in response to novel problems in art practice and museum practice. What distinguishes Pearce's overall approach was asking what the "existential-ontological character" of collections is, rather than *only* seeing them as "an epistemological technology" (Osborne 2011: 27; Preziosi 1996: 167). My hypothesis is that these two questions are not incompatible – in fact the reverse. Pearce's body of work certainly addresses ethical and epistemological questions but illuminates these by asking 'what is a collection', and elaborating the philosophical and political co-ordinates of the concept. The challenge that Pearce's work presents for modern and contemporary art collection specifically is that also voiced by philosopher Elisabeth Von Samsonow. It is that whilst it is relatively simple to address artworks in their singular or collective state through ethical or epistemological questions firstly,

actually addressing them as “ontological subjects [in terms of their] being” is a far more problematic, thorny task (Von Samsonow 2017: 102). The language to achieve this is, as I suggested, largely lacking in recent museology. My understanding is that Pearce’s work has become eclipsed in recent museology, despite remaining an unsurpassed resource to think about collections.

What museology has also lacked, in my analysis, is attention upon the speculative idea that “the form of the collection” *itself* can be understood to have a broad significance and relate to macro-social processes and have its own political significance (Boltanski and Esquerre 2014: 5). In the sociologists Luc Boltanski and Arnaud Esquerre’s terms, “the collection” now marks “a new form of capitalism” itself (Boltanski and Esquerre 2014: 5, see also 2016, 2017, 2017a). I do not make such overarching claims, but the hypothesis that “the collection” provides a means of understanding social formations has been instructive. My process is to invert that idea, by proposing that collections themselves can be seen as microcosmic social formations: as collectives that have ‘a life of their own’, *or* which can be representational in orthodox ways.

2.3.3. Bennett’s ‘material turn’: “how to redefine the collectives”?

The second figure in the canon of museology whose more recent work has been of signal significance has been Tony Bennett. Bennett’s work of the last 10-15 years has addressed Pearce’s question in new ways. He has reconsidered the processes by which collections are formed, if not their form directly, and done so in broadly political terms. His work therefore places a new emphasis on the agency of curators. More specifically, he has drawn on developments in ontologies of objects that he has labelled the “material turn” in the humanities and social sciences (Bennett and Healy 2015 n.p.). Bennett is right to believe there is indeed a “certain elective affinity with museums” that can be intuited in “the recent material turn” (Bennett 2018: i). In this light it is unsurprisingly that “the ‘material turn’ in the humanities” has started to prompt “greater attention to collections …” and more specifically “to their complex structures” and what they signify (Fleming and Roay 2016 n.p.). My own hypothesis is that this is because public museum collections can be understood as exemplifying the nature of different forms of collective entity *tout court*. The relevance of Bennett’s

work, in its debt to Bruno Latour specificially, is therefore that the material turn "restarts inquiries into the collectives" (Latour 2013a: 1). Latour's animating question can be seen to be an optimal way of framing my own research question: "how to redefine the collectives"? (Latour 1993: 142). Or rather, how can we properly specify what collections have become if imagined as 'collectives'?

Bennett's work, however, is not concerned with modern and contemporary art and leaves room for further insights.

Broadly speaking, Bennett's recent work has been to internalise Latour's ontology of objects into museology, and to align it with his longstanding concern with governmentality (Bennett and Healy 2015 n.p.). His discussion of how curators can "reassemble" collections into substantially different types of collective entities has been of the first import. His approach has been to rethink what the processes of ordering museum collections are from first principles, and in terms of new categories. Bennett's implication is that collections can all be seen through a single new framework: the case studies do not inspire this confidence. However, I do believe that their projects have created new types of display order, and his analysis that these can have types of political correlates and implications is salutary. This question is what Latour calls part of the "ontological turn" in political thought and the humanities, back towards "classical questions of political philosophy about the definition of the social actor [and] social structure [and our] definition of interaction" between agents (Latour 2013a: 1; 1996: 228-229).

2.4. The 'Material Turn'

The following two sections expand on the ideas immediately above. They introduce both how artworks as objects have been reimagined in the last decade, by curators and thinkers more widely; and how collections can be reimagined as collective entities in the way I describe above. If philosophies of collections have changed, it is because both ideas about individual objects have changed, and ideas about what collectives are have changed at the same time.

2.4.1. "Museums cultivate relations with objects": object-oriented ontology and curatorship

If Latour is the highest profile thinker associated with the 'material turn', and whose work has been influential in museology in the 2010s, there is a counter-figure whose work has been equally influential in curatorial studies and art. Prominent art journals have testified to Graham "Harman's ability to influence artistic and curatorial thinking" (Art Review 2014 n.p.).Latour's ontology of objects and subjects rests on their interconnection and their ontological equality, such that Graham Harman has labelled him the "prince of networks" (Harman 2009: title.) Curators in the 2010s have proposed, in direct response, that museums should forward a "rereading of objects … as *networked realities*" themselves (Colin and Yee in Southbank Centre 2015 n.p.). Harman himself has, in effect, proposed directly opposite ontological hypotheses to Latour's, arguing that "object-oriented philosophy [has an] insistence on the unpopular *thing-in-itself*" (Harman 2016: 116). Addressing 'things in themselves', independent of authors' intentions or identities, has been a provocative manoeuvre and one that curators have themselves attempted to test during the research period. Nevertheless, leading curators have recently argued convincingly that "the meaning, function, and status of things have changed decisively since the beginning of the twenty-first century [because of object-oriented thought]. The way they are presented [in museums now] reflects these changes" (Von Bismarck and Meyer-Krahmer 2019a: 8).

Latour and Harman's projects are useful because they provide two ways of thinking about relationships. They are also useful because they can be made to ask curators what it is that they are setting into relation when designing displays. Are they relating artefacts to each other *qua* their nature as artefacts? Are they relating authors to one another? Or are they relating cultures to each other, where the former are evidenced or made manifest by their artefacts? These ideas are all present in museology, but the case studies suggest that individual museums have disaggregated these ideas in new ways. One museological supposition that Harman's work puts to the test is if "museums cultivate relations with objects" – or if they cultivate relations between entirely different quantities (Klonk in Maak, Klink, Demand 2011 n.p.). The three case studies provide intriguing parallels to the positions drawn by Graham Harman and

Bruno Latour about objects and their relations, i.e. whether entities are defined only in their relations, or are defined in themselves, and mutually autonomous.

My process is to examine how these competing philosophies relate to museums' reordering projects, and what their political correlates are. Central to collections curatorship are questions about the "nature of relationality and mediation" – questions that Nicholas Serota paraphrased as "the dilemma of the museum of modern art", framing this dilemma through the dyad of "experience or interpretation" (A. Benjamin quoted in Fraser 2016 n.p.; Serota 1996 n.p.). Either objects are defined what inheres in them, i.e. their essences, or are defined by their contingent relations. If we believe the latter, then any mediation of objects is "'anoriginal' i.e. [always] already present" (Fraser 2016 n.p.). If we believe objects are defined by their own essential nature, then logically, artworks both can and should be 'unmediated' insofar as this is possible. Museums therefore should emphasise the pure 'experience' of artworks in a way that exemplifies their intrinsic qualities. What has been surprising is how closely curatorial debates have paralleled these philosophical debates. For Maria Lind, echoing Harman, the founding question of curatorship is simply "why mediate art?" at all, with the implication that artworks are ideally experienced without any mediation of any kind (Lind 2013: 99). For Dorothee Richter, echoing Latour, all "curating means to negotiate", with her understanding of objects' relationality paralleling Latour's description of an "object-oriented diplomacy" founded on 'interobjective' and intersubjective 'negotiation' (Richter 2010: 12; Latour 2002:37-8). The later chapters examine how this dynamic has played out across different museums. This work is also undertaken in relation to a range of contributions about the ontology of social and political entities and that are elaborated in those chapters.

Section Two:
Methods and Objects of Study

Chapter 3. Methodology 1/2:
Case Studies, Interviews, Display Analysis

3.0. Purpose and Structure of Chapter

The chapter above indicated that the thesis proceeds from empirical display analysis of the case studies to ask wider, quasi-ontological questions about what art collections have become. I have dedicated two chapters to each of the case study analyses because of this unusual method; and dedicate two chapters to the methods employed in the first and second of those chapters.

This chapter outlines the methods by which qualitative data was accrued about the three case studies, and the processes through which data was analysed. The first section of this chapter outlines the conception of case study research and details the logistics of the data collection processes. The second section sets out the method of conducting semi-structured interviews with curators and directors at the case studies. The third section outlines the nature of display analyses undertaken. The final section provides a prelude to the next chapter, which outlines how modes of discourse analysis are employed.

3.1. Case Study Approach

This section outlines my understanding of what case study research entails and affords. A case study method is adopted here because the research problem incorporates both what Yin identifies as both "a *descriptive* question — 'What is happening or has happened?' — [and] an *explanatory* question — 'How or why did something happen?" (Yin 2012: 5). That is, the question here involves identifying patterns made manifest in individual displays and across entire rehangs, and the reasons for them. The thesis draws upon Yin's description of case study methods: (see Yin 2006, 2009, 2009a, 2011a, 2012).

> Case study research starts from …the desire to derive a(n) (up-)close or otherwise in-depth understanding of a single or small number of cases … resulting in new learning about real-world behavior and its meaning [...] case

study research assumes that examining the context and other complex conditions related to the case(s) being studied are integral to understanding the case(s) (Yin 2012: 1).

Yin's method identifies that "programmatic activity", i.e. a set of strategic policy initiatives, requires a successive "sequence of decisions" across multiple actors, from policy development to implementation to review (Yin 2009: 132). The programmatic activity in each case study has been a comprehensive reordering of the entirety of collection displays, initiated by each institution's director and involving all of their senior curators. In the next chapters, I identify the single problem that each of the three museums has elected to give highest institution priority to. Data about this priority and the intellectual problems it relates to can in turn furnish an understanding of the values and philosophy of collections in play at each institution. The fieldwork undertaken here includes multiple site visits to each institution both before and after these reordering projects to undertake display analyses. It also includes suites of interviews with key individuals involved in these projects. This fieldwork is employed to undertake the work of conceptual specification that is outlined below.

3.2. Data Capture and Analysis: Semi-Structured Interviews

There are three key types of data captured. These are the semi-structured interviews with museum curators and directors outlined in this section; analysis of existing documentation and position statements outlined in the penultimate section; and display analysis of collection galleries made on site visits.

3.2.1. Ethical considerations

A short discussion of the ethical requirements of the interview process is required at this stage. The interview processes were subject to a full approval by Newcastle University's ethical approval committee in summer 2014. The interviews were with curatorial elites in senior institutional roles in major institutions, who are expected to articulate both their own ideas and their institution's position. None of the interviewees were vulnerable subjects. I provided opportunities to amend and correct testimonies and each participant was also invited to discuss concerns as to the

nature of the research or raise objections regarding lines of questioning. Prior to the interviews, each was provided with a list of areas of questioning to define what ideas and areas of practice would be under discussion. Data collection, storage and analysis were addressed openly and in advance, in writing. Interviewees were verbally reminded about what participation involves, what their consent signifies, and how and where data are securely stored. Finally, I gave every interviewee the option to make remarks 'off the record' or remain anonymous.

All interviews were undertaken in English at the museums in question. Interviewees at Folkwang and Stedelijk museums employed English as a second language, such that the opportunity to add, amend and redact information from transcripts was required to ensure modes of expression were satisfactory.

3.2.2. Process: interviews

This sub-section describes the process by which interviews were secured and undertaken. Initial approaches were made to senior staff and directors for the three proposed case studies in a formal letter outlining the purpose of the research and making a request to pursue interviews with an outline of their own specific contribution to the research.

A specific model of interviewing was undertaken consistently across case studies. Semi-structured interviews were believed to be essential to allow interviewees to make connections between problems or address institutional issues I could not foresee. This principle allowed both comparability between case studies *and* allowed interviewees to be able to expand upon areas specific to their work or their institution. Interviews were conducted with individuals on a one to one basis, rather than in groups, to allow candour and confidentiality. I undertook interviews in order of seniority where possible, with directors then with departmental heads or senior curators.

The interviews took place on a face-to-face basis at the institutions in the employees' offices, with only one exception, which was undertaken by phone. This allowed access to displays and documentation. A standard length of one hour was allowed.

Each interview was recorded using a digital recording device accompanied by written notes. All interviews were transcribed verbatim within 28 days. These documents were provided to interviewees for approval. This digital data was subsequently stored on a secure, password protected laptop.

The key areas of questioning were the ideas outlined in the introduction, focussing on problems common to museums of modern art, though each interview was tailored to each institution's own reordering project. These relate to globalisation and the geographical expansion of 'contemporary art'; the historical periodisation of modern and contemporary art; to the expansion of media in collections; to issues of diversity, equality and inclusion; and to the structure of the collection as a totality and how this can be figured.

3.2.3. Limitations / weaknesses

As in the case study model outlined by Yin (2009), I acknowledge how interviews as a form of data source can (potentially) be limited, unreliable, or partial. However, they do provide curators with an opportunity to address issues that have not been otherwise probed and allow access to first-hand accounts of major public projects. I do not take interviews to furnish researchers with forms of data capture that are intrinsically reliable. I conceive of them as being co-constructed between interviewer and interviewee, necessitating positional roles between them. My field position as a curator is important in this negotiation as outlined above. Accordingly, interviews are understood here as *constructed situations* negotiated between parties, rather than providing transparent access to revelatory information. Semi-structured interviews allow an initial framing to shape the course of this negotiation, without predetermining it. Interviewees' utterances necessarily involve the opportunity to shape a narrative about their field position, trajectory and aspirations; they are a form of professional role construction.

3.2.4. Contingencies

One contingency was unable to be overcome. The Stedelijk Museum director Beatrix Ruf was forced to resign in 2017 after I had submitted a request for interview but before I received a reply. Her resignation resulted from allegations in the Dutch media about her professional conflicts of interest, that were contested and later disproven. However, Ruf was not replaced for a full 26 months, from October 2017 until 1 December 2019 and the Stedelijk remaining without a permanent director l during this period (see Stedeiljk Museum 2019c n.p.). During that time many of Stedelijk's senior curatorial staff and director including the project lead Margriet Schavemaker, the Head of Collections Bart Rutten and the Chief Curator Bart van der Heide all left the Stedelijk. Ruf's resignation meant some curators were reluctant to discuss her work even retrospectively because the "museum was in the midst of a media storm […and in] a fragile situation" (Sieburgh 2017: 2). The decision to continue with this case study rested both on the strength and detail of the testimonies secured, and my understanding of the importance of its reordering project to the sector more widely.

3.3. Display Analysis

3.3.1. Representative collection displays as spatialised ontological arguments

I outlined above that concepts of art are shaped to a greater or lesser extent by the exhibition of artworks in public in their collective state. Representative collections constitute what art is, because their displays constitute an exposition of its conceptual scope (and, therefore, its delimitation). What any display of a representative museum collection achieves is that it "makes new modes of [art's] being … evident", or offer a new account of how its modes of being relate (Hoffmann 2014: 67). That is, it is only collections that can outline the novel ways in which the concept of art has been extended and narrate its history or histories.

There are several assumptions about displays as forms of data that need to be outlined. As Jens Hoffmann remarks, displays should be understood as "argument[s] constructed through the physical arrangement of objects" that provide "new intellectual frameworks" to interpret objects, authors, and the concept of art (Hoffmann 2014: 29, 14-15). At the case studies, as Nicholas Serota's puts it, "Tate

aspires to put an argument" (Serota in Wullschlager 2012 n.p.). Whilst not academic treatises, displays can be analysed in terms of the premises of their argument and the logic they embody. This is to say that each display in a "museum or exhibition is 'a theory': a suggested way of seeing the world" that rests on extra-artistic premises as well as suppositions about artistic matters (Macdonald 1996: 14). There is no value-free argument, as suggested. However, as a curator, I fully acknowledge "there are bound to be gaps in the logic from conceptualization to implementation": that displays are not concepts themselves, but thoroughly material, and their contents are often resistant to manipulation (Hoffmann 2014: 29).

3.3.2. Display analysis as spatial

I understand the means to identify which values displays embody as being spatial analysis. The model of display analysis I adopt rests on the idea that "museums order and instantiate knowledge spatially – they are a spatial medium, making spatialized representations of knowledge about the world, or some aspect of the world" (Whitehead 2009: n.p.). I analyse displays in terms of their "ordering and conjugation" of objects, namely their sequencing and spatial distribution (Lidchi 1997: 184). The distribution and disposition of artworks in architectural space is not merely a technical matter, nor a matter of conventions, though it is both of these as well. It is, in my model of display analysis, an index of an institution's ideological correlates in ways that are well established, and in ways that are specific to the analysis. As Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach established, "the values and beliefs [of an institution are] written into the architectural script" – although this requires some qualification, because what is at stake in this project is how curators articulate *new* ideas in architectural space rather than remain subservient to it (Duncan 1980: 451). In Ben Cranfield's terms, what defines any collection display is its "politics of distance and proximity" (Cranfield 2017: 118). This insight is central to the entire thesis. In conventional analysis: galleries are structured as categories; objects that share a gallery occupy a categorical relation; objects that are proximate occupy a particular relationship. The organisation of collections is, traditionally, into individual galleries. To share a gallery is to share a category: in museums, the division of objects into galleries provides the overarching category system by which the concept of art is instantiated. Spatial divisions *are* categorical divisions where walls act as thresholds

that delineate categorical difference, with each room being a spatial envelope identical with one category. These insights rest on the principle that the "co-presence" of objects in particular galleries of museums creates the categories through which their order is spatialised, even if this is through museums' "convention[s]" and visitors' "inference" (Cranfield 2017: 119). As Cranfield argues, categories are only "secured through conventions of proximity and relations of distance", in museum space (Cranfield 2017: 119). This is, of course, an "associative" process that has become conventionalised, requiring sets of inferences between spatial order, concept formation and the hierarchisation of categories (Cranfield 2017: 122).

3.3.3. Representative collection displays as social wholes

If displays are arguments, then I identify the means by which arguments can be conducted as the spatial articulation of objects in architectural space, where the overarching interpretation of objects constitutes a particular type of order. Which type of order, and what values that order correlates to, can only be made visible in its spatialisation. The long-established principle here is that, at least in Western European art museums, "spatial organization" is itself "metaphorical visual and social ordering" (Lyotard 1982: 66). The convention in play is that the spatial order of public space has long been figured as a "representation of the body politic itself", as much as an account of art's 'own' history (Lyotard 1982: 67). What differentiates the case studies is the issue of what it is that curators imagine they are representing and spatialising, as much as how they are able to spatialise it. It is a truism that "the public museum has been recognised as a reflection of the social order [in its very] modes of display": however, new modes of display have not, as yet, been understood in these terms (Artforum 2010: 274).

Drawing "parallel[s] between political and artistic representation[s]" is an operation long established in museology (Kharkhordin 2013: 203). My hypothesis is that new forms of display and of curatorial practice demand equally new forms of parallels to understand them. One of Donald Preziosi's defining ideas of a collection, as I examine later, is that it is a "choreograph[ed] … patterned deployment of objects", whose patterning customarily parallels "the composition … of our collective selves"

(Preziosi 1996: 170, 1). The method I pursue does not take this for granted but enquires how far collections are themselves a 'collective self' that is self-defining, or one that parallels a social 'composition' external to itself. This division reflects curators' own methodological differences. For curators associated with orthodox forms of left-leaning ideals, museum space in Europe remains symbolic of a broad social order. Directors of European museums of modern art including Manuel Borja-Villel at Madrid's Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía have argued that collections should "establish equivalences between the museum [order] and … [the macrocosmic] social and political situation" – i.e. should consciously *model* new types of political relations in architectural space (Borja-Villel in Lopez 2009 n.p.). If Borja-Villel's idea now has a broad currency, the unanswered question that display analysis needs to answer is how new equivalences between the composition of displays and the composition of macrocosmic social formations can be drawn. The potential incompatibilities between these ideas, and those that aim to narrate an autonomous history of the concept of art start to suggest one set of differentials between case studies.

This longstanding idea of the museum as a microcosm or symbol of a social entity is directly connected to the idea of representative museums' 'publicness' and universality. In Peter Osborne's phrase, "the museum – and its paradigmatic type, the art museum was conceived as universal, as such" (Osborne 2018: 93). Seen in this light, it is obvious why throughout the history of European museums, analysts have understood "the museum as [a] microcosm" (Thom 2020 n.p.). This is to argue that museums "were always intended as worlds in miniature" (Thom 2020 n.p.). In this model of display analysis, the political potential of curating can be located in how curators "make proposals on … how subjects and a community … might be re-organised, re-thought" as much as 'reflected' (Richter 2019: 11). The return to the "'museum as mirror' model", in which a collection 'reflects' the composition of a social body quantitatively, as seen in one case study below, is not the only way in which 'the museum is a microcosm" (Whitehead 2020: 49). It is, in my understanding, a model with increasing currency. Seen in these terms, collections need not necessarily reflect a social body, or enact "ways of representing collective life" that 'mirror' a social entity as it stands – but positively "create …[new] ways of living together" (Thompson 1984 quoted in Speed et al 2019: 2257). These curators'

method is to offer counter-models to the dominant social order, by giving other forms of structural relationships exposition to those that currently exist.

3.3.4. Curators' agency: structuring relationships

If collection displays are "environments in which new meanings can be spawned", not only about individual artworks but about the history and concept of art, those meanings are possible only through establishing new relationships, or even new *types* of relationships between collections' constituent components (Hoffmann 2014: 67). Display analysis of these relationships requires the presumption that artworks are "far from independent vessels that hold meaning within them [and instead] the meaning of artworks and objects are highly contingent on when, why, and how they are shown" (Hoffmann 2014: 15). The method I adopt to capture and analyse data registers "the format and mode in which they [artworks] are made available … [because] those things change fundamentally, and curators mediate this", i.e. instigate those changes (Hoffmann 2014: 14). Display analysis is therefore a matter of what types of relationships are spatialised in museum space and relatedly, what kinds of entity are imagined as having been related to each other. This much is not obvious, because the categories being related can include "places, concepts, historical events or personages" just as much as individual objects themselves (Whitehead et al 2012: 48). This is a crucial distinction that runs through the case study chapters.

3.4. Other Sources and Documents

Other sources of data captured have been wider position statements and other interviews by and with curators and directors. Because each case study undertook a high-profile redevelopment or capital project in the research period, many curators forwarded their ideas in print and through media outlets. I cross-reference the interviews undertaken specially with the utterances in these. Sources also include museums' documentation records, including public information about displays and about individual artworks. All Western European institutions require documentation systems to attain museum accreditation and join ICOM or its sibling the International

Council of Museums of Modern Art (CIMAM), of which all case studies are members. Documentation systems are necessarily active in their effects, rather than transparent records of what exists. The ways in which museums have categorised objects often result in objects being allocated to particular departments and treated through particular protocols. Their systems of classification necessarily also rest on a set of suppositions about what artworks' primary, defining properties and secondary characteristics are. In modern and contemporary art, these are not always clear-cut. As part of museums' systematisation of their holdings, documentation can act to solidify longstanding ways of categorising artistic practices. As Tate's Andrew Brighton has noted, "histories of modern art and the hanging policy of museums tend to suggest a view of art as following settled lines of development", which suppresses "contesting values and evaluations" and, indeed, complexity (Brighton 2013: 35).

Policy and strategy documents have also been put under analysis. Annual reports have been especially useful in providing an overview of institutions' strategic directions, as voiced by directors, trustees, and in third-person 'institutional' voices. Finally, public single-volume introductory catalogues have been important sources of data for the same reason. They are explicitly intended to provide a 'synoptic' overview of collections to a broad public. Accordingly, curators are obliged to be both highly selective in which works are included and frame their ordering principles in a clear and accessible way. Each of the case studies produced new editions of these types of publications in the last decade, giving an indication as to their new priorities.

Chapter 4: Methodology 2/2:
Critical Metaphor Analysis and Ontological Method

4.0 Purpose and Structure of Chapter

This chapter outlines the methods employed in the second chapter about each case study, which utilises the empirical findings made to forward more speculative conclusions about the conceptual specification of each display.

This chapter initially outlines what forms of discourse are analysed, namely curators' utterances. It proceeds to specify the particular forms of discourse analysis undertaken. Critical metaphor analysis, and its sister rhetorical political analysis, provide models that I adapt and alight from, methodologically. I relate this to how curators have felt the need to describe their reimagined displays using new metaphors and types of figuration. Curatorial theorist Lucy Steeds has noted curators now "talk about the becoming public of art in relation to … other metaphor[s]" than those previously, to character their new forms of order (Steeds in Steeds, Von Bismarck, Meyer-Krahmer 2019: 317). I take metaphor and discourse analysis to be essential in pursuing a quasi-ontological examination of each collection display, seen as a separate type of entity. Metaphors can articulate alternative principles of structuring relation and overall order in a single, synthetic image. The thesis therefore forwards the idea that the forms of collections can best be described through introducing new concept-figures, i.e. giving them new names.

The second chapter about each case study concludes, as I outline in a later chapter, by shaping a novel concept-figure that has "a relation of internal resemblance and likeness" to "the thing itself", i.e. the order of the collection display in the particular case study (De Beistegui 2012: 61, 60). The "difficulty of figuring" entities, i.e. giving them conceptual specification, lies in finding a proper "analogon" for them in figurative language" (Lindberg 2013: 160). This is essential for "ideas [to] designate beings" with their proper "specification" – to individuate them and classify them (De Beistegui 2012: 59,55). The supposition that I make is that the term 'collection' is now very far from being an 'analogon' for the objects under study. It cannot describe the "other type of life" that each case study has animated its holdings with, through the

new type of order organising it as a collective entity (De Beistegui 2012: 55). This anthropomorphic metaphor is meant to indicate that what at being studied are genuinely new entities which must be identified separately. If the thesis makes a novel and valuable contribution to both museology and curatorial studies, it is in large part by re-reading particular case study collections in terms of emerging ideas in metaphysics.

4.1. Why 'We Need New Names'

I begin this section by outlining why curators' utterances are of importance in the art world, and in disseminating a particular conception of art more broadly. As one commentator has put it: "curator[s are] the most prominent member[s] of the global art world" and their "sentences are undeniably a part of the most authoritative framework for understanding contemporary art. For the past two decades, the most typical characterization[s] of recent visual art have been made by curators" (Rapko 2015 n.p.). This summarises the issue at hand. Curators are typically the only actors in the art world other than historians able to forward propositions about the field in its entirety, and which take a 'synoptic' overview of it.

The supposition of the thesis is that "the curator and her speech have become such a prominent aspect of contemporary art, [such that asking] what effects such speech in particular have" on art's history and concept of art has become a matter of urgency in itself (Rapko 2015 n.p.). Analysing the "manner of public speech and writing of its [the 'art world's] most visible representatives" allows analysts to gain purchase on what art can be said to be, and what museums are for (Rapko 2015 n.p.). What is odd is that "a notable feature of the reception of such language is the difficulty of finding any extended consideration of it" – or at least any critical consideration outside of highly specialist journals (Rapko 2015 n.p.).

The curator Candice Allison is one of many who have argued "we need new names" to describe the new structures of collections of modern and contemporary art (Allison 2018: 1). This is my belief. This belief is that new names are needed because collections, seen as entities, occupy new states of being. As such, they can be understood to be categorically different to their earlier selves, but yet to be properly

named or theorised – i.e. given conceptual specification. One crucial point is that, if the case study chapters risk appearing as a tapestry of quotations, it is because the range of figures to describe collections are drawn from numerous sources that have no logical connection with amassed bodies of artworks *per se*. As I outline below, Most museums of modern art showed their collection *as* a 'timeline' or 'family tree'. The concept of 'family tree' subsumed the concept of collection. There is no necessary correlation between the concepts, however. On the contrary, the research is need because the last decade has proven otherwise. Figuring collections *otherwise* means drawing on diverse other domains not necessarily connected to art, as curators have themselves done in each of the case studies.

Below, I introduce the primary two 'new names' for types of displays that curators have forwarded during the last decade, though an entire host of figures have been forwarded. In Lucy Steeds' terms, "the language for art and around art is being productively tested at the moment" through the diverse range of "metaphor[s]" believed to be needed to describe the various modes of "the becoming public of art" – principally displays (Steeds in Steeds, Von Bismarck, Meyer-Krahmer 2019: 317). In other words, curators are attempting to name what art is and does in its collective state, and feel the need to propose entirely new names for different types of displays by using metaphor.

As I outline in chapter seven, an art collection is necessarily an abstraction: an abstraction of particulars, namely individual artworks. The first principal proposition pursued in this chapter is that such collections can only be given specification through what Mieke Bal calls a "concept-metaphor", which Griselda Pollock simply calls a "figure" (Bal 2013: 142; Pollock 2007: 8). For both, the method of identifying and explaining entities requires the work of figuration. Accordingly, I believe this to provides the means towards a conceptual specification of types of collection.
I proceed from Bruno Latour's insight that "there is no real difference between the literal and the figurative meaning" of many metaphors, particularly those describing abstractions like collections (Latour 2016b: 465). The work of concept construction I undertake, therefore, both rests on identifying the inadequacies of the existing metaphors curators have employed; and on working towards a new, more incisive repertoire of figurative terms that can expand the lexicon available.

Identifying the existing stock of figurative language requires discourse analysis. Moreover, analysing interviewees' language also requires a similar method. In one typology of discourse analysis, there are, broadly speaking, "six key approaches" (Glynos, Howarth, Norval & Speed 2009: 3). Of these, only one is concerned with figurative language: "rhetorical political analysis" (henceforth "RPA") (Glynos, Howarth, Norval & Speed 2009: 3). This model is tailored to political discourse – and is thus directly relevant to task at hand, given the customary equivalencies drawn between collection forms and social formations has been central to how museums' displays have been described throughout their history. More productively, RPA addresses both individuals and institutions as 'speaking entities'. Below, I outline how artworks and collections should indeed be seen as 'speaking entities'. More specifically, RPA assumes "institutions like states or governance networks can be conceptualized as more or less sedimented systems of discourse" that provide "partially fixed systems of rules, norms, resources, practice" (Glynos et al 2009: 8). This sentence contains two insights. The first is that, following Bourdieu, I conceive of public museums, as state-sponsored actors, as being the 'governance network' for the field of art (see Bourdieu 2014). As outlined, museums 'govern' the field by having the monopoly over instantiating the totality of the concept of art, and doing so for the totality of a social body because of their 'national' or representative status. Secondly, the objects of study have un-fixed their 'systems of rules' for displays, and their discourse is very far from settled or 'sedimented', but in flux, as Steeds' observation testifies. RPA's methods therefore allow for identifying keywords and pregnant terms that are novel to each institution, or which index how change is conceived.

RPA also closely resembles Jonathan Charteris-Black's model of "critical metaphor analysis" (henceforth 'CMA') (Charteris-Black 2004: title). CMA rests on analyses of speakers' figurative language as the index of their values and philosophy. One signature process of both RPA and CMA is to identify how speakers' choice of metaphor invokes a chain of association, and rests on an entire value system. In both, for the reasons above, metaphors are seen as needed to conjure an abstraction into being – customarily the social totality of a nation-state or city. Libertarian politicians characteristically use different metaphors to describe the concept of society to classical liberals, socialists, or conservatives, for example. Each has a figural repertoire that describes the relationships between the individual and

the collective, and relations between its constituent groups. This repertoire provides something like a vivid index of speakers' concepts and preoccupations, and thus by working at one remove, they allow analysts to reconstruct their founding philosophies. I follow Mieke Bal's idea that what is needed is "a reading of the figurations [as] the tropes of reasoning" underpinning every collection display (Bal 2000: 6). Figuration, in Bal's scheme, is what can reveal "the structure of the production of [its] reason" – its logic of practice and founding values (Bal 2000: 6). In the second chapter of each case study analysis, I transfer this operation onto thinking about collections.

My analogy is that an art collection, just like a society, can only become conceptualised when it "appears with a shape" as a "a representation of the significant totality" in question (Crow 1987: 5). Both are abstractions that totalise their object; both are only describable in figurative language because both assemble individuals (artworks) into a single legible order. Collections make the 'shape' of the concept of art intelligible; metaphors make the shape of collections intelligible, and thus the shape of the concept of art. As Julian Myers-Szupinska argues, every collection display is a "single space […that] offers an image of … the collective field of the producers" in their totality (Myers-Szupinska 2017: 20). As I outline, this is *one* possible description of a collection, rather than a comprehensive or definitive one. However, because every collection is an 'image' of a 'collective field' of one type or another, and which has been assembled in one 'space', that image can only be verbalised in figurative terms. In Bourdieusian terms, what the thesis rests on is the idea that museums have, if not a fully fledged "monopoly over legitimate naming" of what objects and authors constitute art, considering the contributions to 'art worlds' by every other category of actor from artists to collectors, critics and academics, then the position of prime authority within those worlds (Bourdieu 1989: 21). My hypothesis is that curators' current search for new legitimate names responds directly to the new lack of consensus about the shape of collections able to account for art's history. My further hypothesis is that the current names are not fit for purpose, as I outline in detail below. Accordingly, my method is, in effect, to invert or reverse-engineer the signature procedures of RPA and CMA. The methods associated with RPA and CMA start from a corpus of texts with clearly identifiable metaphors to analyse their description of the world, and how they imply types of relationships that structure it. I too start from a corpus of interviews, which contain various metaphorical

terms. I similarly work towards identifying the values implied by them. However, my goal is to work towards naming the as yet unspoken figure implicit in curators' discourse but which has not been named thus far, rather than examining existing speech alone.

This method allows me to individuate each case study in its value scheme, in ways outlined later. The figures that curators have proposed thus far have almost always been ways to reimagine displays generically – as proposals about the nature of display, rather than different types of collection order. The data I gathered suggested this is inadequate to their diversity: their governing orders cannot be subsumed under one concept alone. To date, contributors have not attempted to cross-compare individual collections as different types of entities, each requiring new names. Yet this is patently what the lack of consensus between institutions implies. Individual institutions may themselves be far from perfectly unified entities, but the data shows that all three case studies' reordering projects had such strong directorial steers. Even if individual curators differ in their views, I believe it is possible to describe particular collection displays through a unifying concept-figure.

4.2. Methodological Assumptions: Figuration Generates Analogons for Entities

Some further methodological assumptions and remarks about the procedures employed in the section chapters must be outlined in relation to the remarks above. I introduced Latour's analysis of an "ontological turn", above (Latour 2013a: 1). The thesis responds to this, having identified a gap in both relevant literatures. This implies adopting what Quentin Meillassoux calls a "correlationist" position about knowledge of the world (Meillassoux in Mackay 2014 n.p.). This broadly describes that knowledge can successfully describe the world external to the mind, and by implication, that the work of concept formation can describe entities adequately. These premises are central to orthodox ontologies. My suppositions are that if we can specify what the world is, it must be through language; that new types of entities must require new terms/concepts; and that these new terms can only be coined in figurative language. This type of language is what offers any definitional precision in the work of conceptual specification, because metaphor fundamentally concerns "the

relation between the world, linguistic forms and underlying mental images" (Charteris-Black 2004: vii).

The wider working assumptions here follow those outlined by Lakoff and Johnson in their belief that "conceptual metaphor" is central to how "our [entire] conceptual system is shaped" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: xii). More specifically, "conceptual metaphor" is "the abstract thought underlying metaphors", i.e. the basis of a concept like 'collection', which is by definition an abstraction (Charteris-Black 2004: xv). Accordingly, it is "metaphor [which] is the main cognitive mechanism through which abstract concepts are comprehended" (Yu 2013: 469). Beyond this, I proceed from the basis that the entire "human conceptual system is metaphorically structured and defined" (Yu 2013: 469). In Lakoff and Johnson's terms, "what we experience" as existing is in fact "very much a matter of metaphor" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 2). These are ideas of the first importance to the thesis and specify how fresh insights are constructed. For curators or analysts to have any political agency, it is through embodying or coining new "counter-figure[s] that open onto a different way of being" of art in its collective state (Pollock 2014: 14). The key idea here is that 'counter-figures' have material effects in the world precisely because they articulate a different 'way of being' in the world, not only of knowing. Answering "the question that begins with 'what is'" requires concept-figures: terms that align "the idea, the image, the *eidos*" of the entity being analysed (Marder 2013: 116). What is crucial here is that a "metaphor… itself does ideological work" (Clark 2016:29). As outlined later, the concept of collections only exists at all because it makes manifest one specific type of relations. If figures are important to curators, it is because they can articulate the character of relations differently. To propose alternative metaphors is therefore to believe that relationships are structured in different ways to those currently assumed; this is what I mean by imagining collections in 'broadly political' terms.

Only one contributor to date has pursued this line of argument and done so in entirely general terms. For the art historian Lane Reylea, it is "figures" themselves that have been "crucial to the recent reorganization of the art world", because they are "keywords" that have concrete "effects" by "affecting … relations among objects" exactly as I describe above (Reylea 2015: 4). Reylea and I both follow Mieke Bal's belief that it is "figurations [that] collaborate to determine [the form of] archival material", namely collections (Bal 2000: 5).

For both myself and Reylea the new “figural repertoire” emerging to describe art consists of “favored metaphors” that act as overall “framing device[s]” (Reylea 2013: vii; 2015: vii). As he has outlined, the majority of these reorient the field and its structuring relationships by picturing a system of representation without “demarcated disciplines [or even] categories” (Reylea 2015: 8). These ideas, forged about contemporary art specifically, outline my own methods of analysis with some precision. What Reylea’s method allowed to date has been a discussion of how “keywords … produce in turn [a] new logic” of institutional practice in its entirety (Reylea 2013: vii). Where I depart from Reylea’s example is to use the methods of RPA and CMA to identify different “keywords” at each case study, rather than to assume one metaphor unites all institutions under more “general forms of organization … [across] the art world” (Reylea 2013: vii; 2015: vii). As outlined, case study work is needed in conjunction with an ontological method precisely because the *particular* ‘forms of organisation’ specific to individual collections are so manifestly different. The hypothesis is that each requires its own conceptual specification.

4.3. The ‘Ontological Turn’: Collections as Totalising Entities

To date, almost no anglophone curators or curatorial theorists have recognised the importance of the “ontological turn” to methods of rethinking displays (Bippus, Huber, Richter 2012 n.p.). The purposes of display and discourse analysis are, then, to furnish a more ambitious “logico-ontological model” of understanding collections, that is able to specify which “figurations … determine [the form of] archival material” (Osborne 2008 n.p.; Bal 2000: 5). The central exemplar for such a method in anglophone philosophies of modern and contemporary art has been Peter Osborne. His methods of plotting a “historical ontology” of art are adapted in the second chapters of case study analyses (Osborne 2014 n.p.). There is one crucial difference in my uses of his method. Osborne’s project has been to articulate an authoritative ontology of modern and contemporary art. I attempt to identify the ontologies of art implicit at each case study, and cross-compare them. The relevance of Osborne’s method lies in Susan Pearce’s argument that the concepts of collection and of art have been co-determinants. Representative museums’ articulation of their collections are ontologies, as I outlined. My proposition is that they are each best understood as

being a "'what is?' question" themselves – but their answers remain implicit, rather than made explicit as in analytic philosophy (Osborne 2007 n.p.).

As Osborne remarks, what is "answered by ontology" is, in principle, what defines "particular beings/entities as the special object" in their "conceptual determination" (Osborne 2007 n.p.; 2008 n.p.). Osborne's ontological method that I adapt is "a process of conceptual elaboration" in which an entity is "articulated in one of its aspects [such that it] is 'explicated' or 'unpacked', hence enriched and clarified" in each specific instance (Marradi 1990:132). As outlined, this is a correlationist position in which "conceptual determination [acts] as a model of the actual", identifying and defining what exists by articulating it through concept formation (Osborne 2008 n.p.). The problem with artworks seen in their collective state, i.e. in collections, is precisely that thus far, "their theorization lacks determinacy" (Osborne 2013 n.p.; f.xv). This is why concept-figures are of prime importance to the entire study. Twenty-first century art collections have not yet been given their due "conceptual or semantic determinacy" in a "process of … particularization" (Osborne 2013 n.p.; f.xv). The only analysis forwarded thus far, by Reylea, has been speculative and generic, rather than rooted in particular collections. The "process of particularization" I undertake, below, therefore asks if what are currently called collections are indeed one class of entity, and whether the term remains apposite.

What should become obvious is that whilst adapting an ontological method to examine collections is counter-intuitive, it affords fresh insights to the oldest of museological questions. The classical questions of museology are epistemological ones: questions about how museums shape knowledge about what art is. Defining what kind of entity a collective of artworks 'is' in itself still requires asking what that entity is ordered *as*: hence the need for concept-figures and the construction of 'the collection as –' in each case study. Chapter eight is dedicated to outlining in detail what the exact processes are by which these figures can be conceptualised. However, these processes can only be outlined after introducing both the case studies, and the definitions of collections and of artworks in chapters five, six and seven.

4.3.1. Political understanding of ontological analysis

It was not only Latour's identification of an "ontological turn" that prompted my adoption of classical philosophical methods; not that the "return to ontology" has barely touched anglophone curators since (Bippus, Huber, Richter 2012 n.p.). The extreme polarisation of politics in the US and UK from 2013-21 has illuminated something basic about politics proper and the politics of collections alike. This is not only that collections labour is not apolitical, which is well established, but that all political positions are claims on what *is*. Curators' claims about art in representative museums are claims about the totality of art, i.e. the concept of art. As outlined, national or representative art museums plot a 'synoptic' overview of the trajectory of the concept of art. Put simply, a representative art collection *totalises* its object to create a 'whole', just as political thought totalises a collective to name a whole group in figurative terms. The operations are parallel ones. My fundamental observation has been voiced in social ontology: that, as domains, "the political cannot be separated from the ontological [...] [because both are] concerned with a being" – with naming and framing what a collective is, as an abstraction (Bielderl 2016: 28). I elaborate this idea in section three where I define artworks and collections more fully.

My method is therefore to frame collections as 'wholes' that curators have shaped, in totalising operations. As I outline below, any artwork in a museum collection is definitionally a "part of a whole" (Pearce 1994b: 157). All collections are questions of "the one and the many" – of individual artworks seen in relation to the history and concept of art (Magun 2013: title). This question is *the* question central to all political thought. This idea starts to explain how an ontological method of analysis is entirely compatible with seeing collections in 'broadly political' terms. These are not two distinct or incompatible approaches, but amount to the same thing.

To date only Dorothee Richter has argued that curators need to now "place ontological and political perspectives … at the centre of [curatorial] debate" by drawing on the "'return' to ontology … observed in authors who stand for a leftist political philosophy" (Bippus, Huber, Richter 2011 :2). Richter has outlined that Alain Badiou's attempt to redefine "the ontology of multiplicity" – namely, the problem of what any group is – should become central to curatorship, without specifying how (Badiou 2012 n.p.). My own work proposes one methodological solution. The publicness of public museums rests both on the character of their accounts of art,

understand as a coherent whole, and upon the universality of their address, where their public constitutes a whole. The ‘whole-ness’ of both is not coincidental. The consequences of this thinking are outlined in chapters six to eight.

4.4. Figuring the Unfigurable: Collections Without Boundaries

The problem that is particular to figuring collections of modern and contemporary art, as distinct to other types of art or museum collection, is its diversity, in my analysis. The problem, as Reylea’s remark above indicated, was that such museums are seemingly becoming system of representations without “demarcated disciplines [or even] categories” (Reylea 2015: 8). Orthodox collections are ordered taxonomically, as I outline in chapter six, through categories of time, space and medium above all. Museums of modern and contemporary art have problematised all three of these categories to the extent that there appears to be no a priori delimitation of what kinds of objects can be displayed; no limits upon where artworks should be collected from; and no longer any governing idea that the temporal category of ‘modernity’ is exemplified only by art made in Western cities. In short, the delimiting boundaries that structured museum displays until the last generation have all come into question.

My somewhat unorthodox combination of methods has been designed to locate a single, synthetic image that can articulate this type of order, or rather how each institution has created a novel order that addresses these issues. In the words of the curator Nicolas Bourriaud, “contemporary art’s motto [is] ‘everything admits figuration’” (Bourriaud 2016: xiii). His intended meaning is that ‘everything can be either represented *in* art and re-presented *as* art’ or that ‘every type of entity can be or be transformed into art’. The latent question in his remark is: if art collections can now include everything, from everywhere, what does it mean to figure ‘everything everywhere’ as a single rule-bound whole?

The novelty of this problem cannot be overstated. The contrast to other types of museums can be readily drawn. London’s National Gallery, for example, contains only paintings made in Europe – with one exception, having “acquired its first major American painting” in 2014 (National Gallery 2014 n.p.). During the research period and the decade immediately beforehand, the prior geopolitical limits of museums of

modern art came under unprecedented ethical and intellectual pressure. At the same time, the media and modes of production represented in these museums was transformed in a completely unprecedented way, where film and video, time-based work, installation, new media art, and performance / participatory works acquired by major museums for the first time (see Horowitz 2011). At the same time, many curators began to publicly acknowledge that authors' identity characteristics were indeed a structural determinant of the shape of their collections (as outlined in the introduction). How can curators figure an entity that seemingly has no geographical (spatial), or medial boundaries? One answer has been to describe art as having become "an interminable avalanche of categories" that can only be described through the figure of the "generality of 'contemporary art'", untethered to any prior constitutive subcategories (Osborne 2009 n.p.; 2018: 163). As I outline below, collections are rule bound wholes defined by their internal unity. If curators are forced to imagine how they can invent a new order without these prior 'rules' of space, time and medium, I ask how we can best describe that order. As the section below illustrates, the existing attempts to describe such orders have major problems. There is no lexicon that is entirely fit for purpose, despite the profusion of new metaphors to describe displays.

4.5. Dominant Figure #1: 'The Collection as Network'?

Theorists of metaphor insist that before proposing any "new metaphor", analysts must identify the dominant "conventional metaphor[s]" and pinpoint if and how they are do not match their objects, i.e. no longer not act as analogons for what they were coined to conceptualise (Yu 2013: 470). This section outlines the two most persuasive and commonly used new figures for display that are identifiable from my review of the literatures described. The ideas of 'the exhibition as network' and 'the exhibition as constellation' have dominated debates in the last decade, as Lucy Steeds' remarks above outline.

Reylea's overarching proposition has been that "over the past twenty years, the network has come to dominate the art world", and the term was used by curators at the case studies (Reylea 2013 n.p.; Morris 2016b n.p.). One characteristic use of this figure has been to describe the relationships structuring displays as themselves

“networked connections” rather than relations *of* something else, for example, time, space or artistic movement (Reylea 2015: 8). Curators have in effect transferred Manuel Castell’s idea of the “network society” onto Appadurai’s idea of “the social life of objects” in order to internalise ‘network theory’ (Castells 1996: title; Appadurai 1987: title). For Castells, a “network society” is “a society whose social structure [itself] is made up of networks”, i.e. where relations are definitionally networked relations (Castells 2004: 3).

Curators have internalised sociologists’ question of “what is society?” and their answer that “ultimately it *is* a network” to provide the same answer to the question ‘what is a collection?’ (Davies 2020: 111; see also Castells 1996: title). Several directors of European museums of modern art both at case studies and beyond have employed these exact terms. At Reina Sofia in Madrid, Manuel Borja-Villel has described the national collection of modern art of Spain as itself a “network” (Borja-Villel 2018a n.p.). Frances Morris has called Tate a “very diverse network structure” (Morris 2017a n.p.). Also at Tate Modern, senior curator Achim Borchardt-Hume has forwarded the idea that both artists and artworks can only be defined by their “connections and networks” (Borchardt-Hume 2019 in Tate 2019 n.p.). As suggested above, these should be understood as novel ontological claims, pursued through the means of metaphor. The three remarks above are testimonies from three of the most progressive as well as highly esteemed curators in Europe, who I have ideological sympathies with, yet I cannot accept their findings. My inference is that the figure of ‘the collection as network’ has become merely the default option for left-leaning European curators, and for those advocating forms of what Maura Reilly calls “curatorial activism” (Reilly 2018: title). The reasons for its unsatisfactory fit to actual displays, and its lack of efficacy as an analogon are outlined below.

4.5.1. Subordinate figure of connectivity

In Reylea’s analysis, new master metaphors, like that of network, “bring with [them] an ensemble of corresponding figures” (Reylea 2013: vii). These subordinate, dependent figures are often more revealing than others. Ben Cranfield argues that across the last decade there has been a “fascination with *connectivity* evident in contemporary curatorial discourse” that rests on the image of “network” (Cranfield

and Owen 2017a n.p; Cranfield 2017: 119). The binary contrast to limitless "connectivity" is categorical "enclosures", in Reylea's analysis (Reylea 2015: 4). This example of a novel binary contrast implied through a choice of metaphor starts to illuminate what is at stake in the method I employ. What Cranfield draws out from the figure of "network" is that it has become central to social ontologies *and* become the "dominant ways of understanding the curatorial as a practice of relationality [and] connectivity" (Cranfield 2017: 119). More specifically, displays themselves instantiate a model of "networked subjectivity", by foregrounding both authors' subject positions and positing connections between them (Cranfield 2017: 119). The reason, I believe, that progressive curators like Borja-Villel, Morris and Borchardt-Hume have embraced "the valorization of connection" is because the "possibility [offered by the idea] of connectivity [is] to create networks … in the gallery" – to install a non-hierarchical image of relations between makers across space, and demographic positions (Cranfield 2017: 119, 122).

4.5.2. Inadequacies

Whilst these are laudable aims, the problems with the figures of 'network' and 'connection' are self-evident. They can be illustrated in curator Maria Lind's remark that, "I imagine the curatorial as a way of thinking in terms of *interconnections*: linking objects, images, processes, people, locations and histories, and discourses in physical space" (Lind 2010: 63). In Lind's idealistic formulation, curators can assimilate *every* type of entity into connections, irrespective of their differentials. This scheme effaces the issues that have dominated museology and heritage studies for a generation, including issues of cross-cultural contact where "miscomprehension", irreconcilability or untranslatability of cultural concepts are unavoidable, and the "need for familiarity with alien concepts" is almost voided (Clifford 1997: 198). Essentially, all the long-established problems of cultural specificity and difference are emptied of their difficulties through the image of a purely generic 'connectivity'. Other analysts have noted that the idea of network only offers "the most generic term to designate links" – and only links, rather than structural relations (Kharkhordin 2013: 208).

My conclusion is that cybernetic metaphors offer an illusory promise of unproblematic universal ‘connectivity’, extending this across all entities and all categories of subject. Again, Reylea is to date the only dissenting voice in curatorial studies to have forwarded objections to this new norm: “the art world mistook this [idea of network] not as an organizational updating … but as a liberation [and an illusory] escape from all the [determining] frames” structuring the field (Reylea 2015: 136). Fredric Jameson, no expert on contemporary art, has noticed that in the “new intellectual space” of the museum “everything is [merely] subsumed under it” seemingly without categorical differentiation (Jameson 2015: 107, 110).

My position is that “this term – ‘relation’ – should not be taken lightly, as a seemingly non-problematic … concept” in museology, or rather, it cannot (Kharkhordin 2013: 208). The use of network distinguishes those curators identifying with curatorial studies against museology, to a high degree. What the figure of network “loses [is all] intermediary levels of reference” between the concept of art as a whole and the individual artwork (Magun 2013a: xiii). It removes the conceptual scaffolding that traditional museum collections erected to mediate between macro and micro levels, to leave only the “one with the totality of the world” as structuring categories (Magun 2013a: xiii). Put in these terms, the image of “networks threaten [the] conditions … required for determining collectivities, or ‘wholes’” because it prohibits or inhibits structural analyses of certain kinds (Reylea 2015: 4).

The causes of the origin and the utility of the figure of network for curators are clear enough. The understanding of art production since 2000 as having undergone a globalisation of its own – articulated by Osborne as “the de-bordering of the previously national social spaces of art [understood as an] historical process” – requires new understandings of art and its art world as a totality (Osborne 2010: 10). Nevertheless, what the idea of network cannot directly address is how “colonial legacies … are deeply baked into their [museums] structures” (Szanto in Pedrosa and Szanto 2020: 79). The negative implication is that collections can transcend power differentials, rather than represent them. The validity of the figure of displays as networks turns on whether it underwrites genuinely “radical changes in … the institutional structure of museums” towards a “non-hierarchical and egalitarian … “progressiv[e]” new order – or if it provides only a “diagram or model [of] the

emergence and exercising of power" and internalises "the values of a globalized, neoliberal economy" (Reylea 2013 n.p.; 2015: 171).

4.6. Dominant Figure #2: 'The Collection as Constellation'

Redescribing displays as constellations is similarly a commonplace in recent curatorial literature, being favoured by contributors including O'Neill (2011, 2012, 2012a); Von Bismarck and Meyer-Krahmer (2019: 12); Seijdel, Ten Thije, Aikens and Lange (all 2015); and Byrne, Morgan, Paynter, Sanchez de Serdio, and Zelenik (2018). Despite curators treating the term as normative, there are almost no critical responses to this. Alice Labor is unexceptional in believing that it is an idea that has decisively "reshap[ed] … museum collections … in the XXI century", and which itself "transforms the role of the museum" (Labor 2020: title, 118). In curatorial literature, the history of the concept has gone largely unmentioned, with geneaologies that can illuminate it only being offered elsewhere (see Friesen 2013 n.p.; Zuidervaart 2008 n.p.).

Nevertheless, curators have given the idea a verb form to describe "constellating" collections (Lange 2015a: 16). This describes is a speculative process of pattern identification and conceptualisation, where curators undertake the work of ordering quantities that lack in any intrinsic relations, but which require figuration to become legible. One utility of the idea is that it starts to admit what curatorship involves: the creation of new *figures* for a whole that "transfigure" their components (Cranfield and Owen 2017: 4). A further sense is that a collection exists both on display and in storage: that it is an infinite variety of objects, most of which remain necessarily beyond our immediate horizon. The curators who reimagine the museum through this figure do so because it places the imaginative and "semi-autonomous" intellectual labour of curators at the museum's centre (O'Neill 2011 n.p). Put positively, the idea of a constellation shows that curators *necessarily* "invent relationships between individuals [and] objects": it de-naturalises prior orders as well as allows for new ones to be proposed (Mari 2009: 1). It underscores the idea that every "relationship is *generated in* the constellation" alone, rather than necessarily preceding it, and that the imperative is identifying "unexpected affinities" rather than taxonomic similarities (Cranfield & Owen: 2017 60). This is a significant shift of philosophy.

If thinking of displays as networks is a response to the globalisation of art, then thinking of them as constellations is largely a response to the diversification of art practices now entering the museum. It should be understood as "a thesis on the connection between … heterogeneous groups of objects" in any display; and as a way of justifying objects' co-presence in galleries "regardless of the works' … [prior] classification [or] medium" (Meyer-Krahmer 2019: 61; Labor 2020: 118, 130). Philosophically, a 'constellated' collection "resist[s] reduction to a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle", proposing a purely contingent unity and order (Jay 1984: 14-15). The ideal it is associated with is of a collection that, "instead of [being defined by] partitions and classifications", is 'open' rather than bound to inherited category structures that no longer account for art's material and disciplinary diversity (Labor 2020: 118).

4.6.1. Inadequacies

In curator Maria Lind's term, the idea of displays as constellations answers the need "for … difference [between artforms] without hierarchy" (Lind in Lind and Motta 2008 n.p). Similarly, in Labor's view, it is the idea of "constellations that [can describe how museums] recompose a collective and non-hierarchical" entity (Labor 2020: 118). Accordingly, left-leaning and progressive museum directors like Charles Esche at Vanabbe Museum Eindhoven have described their collection displays as "a constellation" for these reasons. In Esche's terms, this "astrological metaphor [is a figure] I find more attractive" than its alternatives (Esche in Ruyters 2013 n.p.). Esche is, like Borja-Villel and Morris, amongst the most important advocates for politically engaged museum curatorship in Europe, whose ideas are again sympathetic.

I identify the popularity of the idea of constellation as resting on the appeal that it undoes the "totalizing and monolithic classification systems" of conventional museum practice (Kozicka and Trzeciak 2017: 32). This is to imagine that it grants new forms of political agency to curators or underwrites them *ex post facto*. Indeed, some curators have advocated understanding collections as constellations articulates that they are "collectively structured" entities, rather than subject solely to curators'

systematisation (Von Bismarck & Meyer-Krahmer 2019a: 11). This is also to argue that artworks have “multidimensional entanglements” beyond any taxonomic relations or ones based in their properties alone (Kozicka and Trzeciak 2017: 32). What the figure of a display as constellation cannot imply is, again, any recourse to structural explanations of artists’ relations, or differentials of power and resources across space. The idea of collections and displays as constellations has no grounding in actual social relations. As an “astrological metaphor”, it cannot articulate artworks’ relations to the social formations that they address or originate from. I remain unconvinced that the metaphor moves the definition of art from a theological plane to a more material, politically conscious one.

Chapter 5. Introducing Case Studies: Identifying Primary Problematics

5.0. Purpose and Structure of Chapter

This chapter initially lays out the rationale for the selection of each case study. One necessity was identifying 'live' projects in major museums that were genuinely transformational. A second need was to identify three distinct models that could offer an overview across different developments in curatorial practice. A third need was to find institutions addressing categorically different problems that could exemplify the diversification of museum practice in the 2010s.

I do not rehearse the existing literatures about each of the case study institutions' histories which are already well established and in the public domain. There are single volume histories dedicated to each. Respectively, these are the contributions by Spalding (1999) for the history of Tate; Van Adrichem et al (2012) outlining that of Stedelijk's institutional history and collecting history; and Vogt (1965) and more recently Fischer & Scneede (2010) for Folkwang's institutional history and collection development. This chapter accounts for 'what happened' during the research period: it names the type of problems that each institution addressed and establishes what led up to their transformation. Identifying the particular type of problem that each institution addressed through its reordering project is central to all of my analyses. Naming what curators addressed provides the basis by which a display's structuring relationships can be understood. This allows me to describe what each collection has become. As outlined later, if curators have addressed entirely different types of problem to each other, and instituted different logics of curatorial practice, then logically the results will be entirely different collection orders. The hypothesis is precisely that these are so different as to be different entities that each require their own conceptual specification.

The institutions selected as case studies were all originally created in the late-nineteenth or early-twentieth centuries, though they have all added to their estates very recently, either during the research period or immediately before. They all have generous estates providing sufficient space to present expansive and authoritative

accounts of modern and contemporary art through a sequence of gallery displays. Given their longevity, they all have accumulated major collections of modern art across decades. They have all developed their own division of labour between curatorial staff to administer collections of great scale and complexity.

5.1 Principles of Selecting Case Studies

5.1.1. Minimal requirements for inclusion on longlist of case studies

As the museologist J.Pedro Lorente notes, whilst "the concept and history of museums of contemporary art" was unarguably developed across the Americas, Europe, and parts of Asia, it is still understood as having been dominated by institutions in North America and Western Europe through the first two-thirds of the twentieth century (see Lorente 2011). It is the institutions that were founded in those years that defined the sector at its outset by forging the canon of modern art that others adopted or attempted to counter. Accordingly, the geographical scope of the study was delimited to long-established institutions in North-Western Europe. Whatever their individual funding models and specificities, they are comparable on multiple grounds.

I based the selection process on Walford's model of site selection in comparative case study research (see Walford 2001, 2001a). This involved creating a longlist of possible institutions. There were three key criteria for inclusion onto this longlist. First, they need all to be long-established museums of modern art based in North-West Europe, understood as being a representative institution with an international remit. Second, they all have to be dealing with problems of integrating twenty-first century art into these collections rather than be focussed on modern or contemporary art alone. Third, they have to not be markedly associated with single collectors or patrons. This ruled out institutions such as the Ludwig Museum in Cologne.

5.1.2. Longlist of candidates for case studies established

I began with a longlist of 20 museums, based in nine countries. These were Tate, London: Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh;: Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; Musée National d'Art Moderne at Centre Pompidou, Paris; Kunstmuseum Bonn; Germany: Museum Folkwang Essen;: Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich;: Stedelijk, Amsterdam;: Musée Modern Museum, Brussels; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Fredensborg-Humlebaek; Moderna Museet, Stockholm: Moderna Museet, Malmo; Kunsthaus Zurich; Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Geneva; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid. To narrow this to three, I established a set of five further criteria outlined below, that could allow them to be analysed as partly commensurable and sufficiently diverse as to illuminate what I identify as a diversification of curatorial practice.

5.1.3. 1st selection criterion: remit of modern and contemporary art (C20th & C21st)

In Frances Morris's terms, the "principal challenge [now] faced by museums of modern and contemporary art everywhere [is] how to be a museum of modern art, whilst embracing the contemporary" (Morris 2016b n.p.). The concepts of modern art and contemporary art do not have clear temporal demarcations, being qualitative rather than strictly chronological terms. Nevertheless, all such museums collect what they believe to be the most important, representative art of the twentieth century. Peter Osborne and Alexander Alberro have provided summaries of these debates around the periodisation of modern and contemporary art, outlining that competing definitions of the latter begin in 1945, the 1960s or 1989 (Osborne 2013; Alberro 2009). The criterion of selection is that institutions understand their responsibilities as for both of these areas, as museums of contemporary art specifically have highly specific problems. It is long established museums of modern art that, have the "challenge" of ordering "a huge range and diversity of material" into relation, and explaining those relations (Morris 2016: n.p.).

5.1.4. 2nd selection criterion: commensurable representational scope and status

The second criterion of selection was that there should be some "institutional isomorphism" between all three, to use the sociologist Olav Velthuis's term (Velthuis 2003: 182). This is to say they all need to have sufficient commonalities and broadly commensurate status positions, as elite institutions, to be broadly comparable. As minimal requirements all had to be members of CIMAM and have acquired large numbers of artworks for their permanent collections by artists resident outside their own nation-state as evidenced in collections records. As above, "internationality" has been a threshold to elite status right "since the early twentieth century, like a mark of quality" designating which institutions can account for the history of modern art (Schmidt 2005: 236). What I take forward is that modern art has been understood through its 'internationality'.

All three institutions had to be viewed as owning representative collections in terms of the quantity and value of assets they have accumulated, as measured through peer esteem and museological analyses. In other words, all three had to have played key roles in institutionalising modern art in their respective territories. All three had to be recognisable as "institutions that are structurally central to the art world … the kinds of institutions that are arguably most able to determine the definition and reach of categories in Art History, and the artists and art works of most significance" in art historian Hillary Robinson's words (Robinson 2016: 132). As Robinson's capitalisation of "Art History" indicates, the three institutions need to have been central in shaping the dominant canonical account of modern art's history.

The basis of comparability is therefore that each has played a crucial role in defining the concept of modern art through their institutionalisation of it, i.e. both defining the concept of modern art, and the idea of the museum of modern art. The institutions chosen have exemplified, at different points, how the concepts of art and collection have been historically co-dependent and institutionally co-determined, as outlined above. Institutions were judged in relation to this criterion through collections records, policy documents, capital projects, and the literature review. To take one example that I elaborate in this chapter, Museum Folkwang is widely agreed to have been the inspiration for the collection displays at The Museum of Modern Art at its outset, and therefore to have been the prototype of the museum of modern art before the name was formalised.

5.1.5. 3rd selection criterion: major change in progress during research period

The third criterion of selection was that each institution chosen was reordering of their collection displays in their entirety. This is a rare enterprise rather than an annual event. One of the three institutions chosen, Tate Modern, opened an entirely new building named the Switch House, renamed the Blavatnik Building, in 2016. The second, Stedelijk, undertook a multi-million Euro capital project in 2015-7 to create an entirely new display system for the collection and moved it into new galleries. Folkwang opened a new building in 2010, but not taken the opportunity to reorder the collection until a new director was appointed in 2018. Cycles of capital investment in infrastructure are commonly intertwined with re-conceptualising collections' core values and representational ambitions. Staff at each case study testified to this directly. At Tate, "the imperative for that idea of rethinking everything that we had done was first of all [borne of] the opportunity [that a new building provided] – museums rarely get the opportunity to reinvent themselves but we had a complete *tabula rasa* with a new building" (Morris 2016b: n.p.). At Folkwang and Stedelijk, new directors utilised the opportunities that the construction of large new galleries in 2010 and 2012 facilitated to comprehensively reorder their collections.

One related factor that could not have been anticipated, but which drove change in each institution was that each appointed a new director during the period, which led directly to major changes. At Tate Modern, Frances Morris became director in 2016 and Maria Balshaw overall Director of Tate the year after. In 2014 Beatrix Ruf was appointed Director at Stedelijk, though resigned in 2017 and her successor Rein Wolfs not put in place until December 2019. At Folkwang Peter Goschulter was appointed in spring 2018. Such appointments afforded a once in a generation reformation of collections, in each institution.

5.1.6. 4th selection criterion: institutions in clear need for research

The fourth criterion was to locate gaps in existing literature in order to study institutions whose trajectories had not been analysed in museological or curatorial literatures. There are no major critical contributions at all about the redevelopments

at Stedelijk and Folkwang. The absence of commentary is remarkable given the contributions that these institutions have made to rethinking models of collections practice. The Stedelijk's new collection display is as "unorthodox […] bold [and as] experimental" as that undertaken by any museum of modern art in the world, yet has not attracted extended analyses (Copping 2017 n.p.). There are existing publications about Tate Modern, and several PhDs have been undertaken (Donnellan 2013; Dean 2014). However, there has been no major study since the Swtich House opened in 2016 and its new directors were appointed.

All the institutions chosen have undertaken comprehensive projects to reform their collections that are worthy of academic research, that is, that have intellectual agendas. Their reordering projects may also serve driving footfall and income generation, and respond to situational pressures, but none were purely practical exercises. All involved introducing new curatorial theses about the nature and trajectory of modern and contemporary art, and what collections can be and do to redefine them. One journalist's perceptive impression of Stedelijk's display is that it aimed to "redefine […] the museum model" wholesale by "undo[ing] this tradition" of post-2000 displays by forwarding an alternative "notion of display" (Copping 2017 n.p.). Tate's claims for the impact of the Switch House were equally epochal: it will embody curators' "new thinking" that "will redefine [the] museum … for the twenty-first century" (Tate 2019d: 3, 41). As Stedelijk's project involved spending €3m during budget cuts and closing a new building, it was far from an exercise in pragmatism (Copping 2017 n.p.). The overspend constructing Tate Modern's Switch House risked the institution burdened with an eight-figure overdraft and gained it the nickname "Serota's Afghanistan" (Higgins 2016 n.p.). The three projects are able to be analysed in intellectual terms, in relation to the philosophies of collections they present or allow.

5.1.7. 5th selection criterion: geographical, demographic and financial diversity

The final criterion of selection is diversity. I chose institutions in different countries; in different sized cities; and which have different institutional histories, resource bases, governance and funding models, and visitor bases. The cities that the three institutions are sited in are sharply different in scale, demographic profiles, and in the

types of audiences they provide for each. The urban area of greater London has a population of 8.8m (greater London); greater Amsterdam has 1.1m; greater Essen has 580,000 (ONS 2018 n.p.; City Population 2018 n.p.; Population Stat 2019 n.p.). Tate is a registered charity funded directly by the UK national government through the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (Tate 2019 n.p.). Stedelijk Museum is funded by the City of Amsterdam as a registered foundation (Coelewij pers. corr 24.01.19). Museum Folkwang has a more unusual model. Since 1922 its collection has been co-owned jointly by the City of Essen and the independent Folkwang-Museumsverein (Goschulter pers. corr. 30.01.19). In terms of financial models, at one extreme, Tate's grant-in-aid is only 30% of "operating income" with 70% of income "self-generated" (Tate 2019: 141). This is anomalous amongst continental museums which have a much higher proportion of subsidy overall. The Stedelijk Museum's "subsidy" in 2018 was 61% of income across the last two financial years; Folkwang's proportion is higher (Stedelijk Museum 2018: 10; 2017: 87).

Some basic facts are essential to outline about the three institutions and their collections. In 2018, Tate Modern received 5,800,000 visits, Stedelijk Museum 700,000; Museum Folkwang 106,000 (Tate 2019 n.p., Stedelijk Museum 2018a: n.p.; Museum Folkwang 2011 n.p.). Tate does not provide specific numbers of works of modern and contemporary art collected but its entire holdings are "nearly 70,000 artworks" (Tate 2021 n.p.). The Stedelijk Museum has a collection of "almost 90,000 objects and artworks" (Stedelijk Museum 2021 n.p.). Museum Folkwang holds roughly "80,000" art objects, though hosts the German Poster Museum's "350,000" artefacts (Museum Folkwang 2021a n.p.)

This provides the introduction to each subsequent chapter about the three. These problems define the character of their reordering projects.

5.2. Case Study Institutions' Principal Problematics: #1 Tate Modern, London

5.2.1. #1 Tate Modern, London: Unprecedented scale affords new order

In the following sections I outline the problem areas that I identify as the single highest institutional priority for each museum. Whilst every museum addresses

multiple problems simultaneously, the purpose of the section is to establish what each institution's single highest priority was.

I initially identify one factor distinguishing Tate Modern's approach to the history of modern and contemporary art as the sheer scale of its estate and the number of generous galleries curators can programme. Tate Modern is Europe's largest museum of modern art, and its most visited, providing an unusually high-income stream. In fact, there are only two larger museums of modern art in the world: MoMA and San Francisco MoMA (the latter having "145,000 square feet of gallery space" (Wilson 2017 n.p.). The Boiler House contains "gallery suites … of 7,827 sq m (84,250 sq ft)", four out of six of which are dedicated to collection displays (Tate 2012 n.p.). The opening of the Switch House "enlarge[d] the … [total] floor area by 60% [and cost] £260m" (Moore 2016 n.p.). Overall, upwards of 80,000 square feet of space is available for collection displays, across nearly 70 galleries.

5.2.2. Unprecedented representational scope

My conviction is that the scale and scope of Tate Modern's estate should be seen as connected to its representational scope. This is to say that the scale of the estate has become central to what kind of collection it can plausibly shape. Across all of Tate's policy documents, the simplest expression of this priority is "Tate's aim is to build the [modern] collection from as wide a geographical reach as possible" (Tate 2012 n.p.). The single most public index of Tate Modern's remit is its 'strapline' facing the Thames and central London on its largest façade: "see great art from around the world" (see figure 5.1.). This encapsulates the mission of collection curators. At the launch of the Switch House, the key media messages concerned the display's expanded geographical scope, being framed as a "rehang that includes work by artists from 57 countries" (Larios and Sherlock 2018 n.p.). As I outline below, curators' emphasis upon expanding the collection's geographical reach has been accelerated since 2016.

Figure 5.1.: Tate Modern: north façade, 2018 (Headline: “See great art from around the world”; author’s photo).

The 2019 Annual Report articulates the institution’s self-image: that “Tate is a leading “global institution” (Tate 2019d: 3). This imagined ‘globality’ rests on the collection: Tate was amongst “the first international art museums to pursue a global collecting strategy” (Tate 2019d: 15). Elsewhere, Tate curators have only employed the term “transnational” since 2018 in place of ‘global’, in recognition of the difficulties of using the term accurately rather than loosely (Tate 2018 n.p.). A more accurate term is Claire Bishop’s descriptor “transgeographical”, which I take as equivalent to ‘transnational’ (Bishop 2014: 24).

The goal of ‘globalizing’ the collection by acquiring artworks “from as wide a geographical reach as possible” cannot be wholly extricated from other objectives. It is structurally interconnected with what I identify as other representational goals, including becoming the first major museum to achieve gender parity in its collection displays. However, the director’s language has often indicated the order of priorities: “if you start chipping away at the core, in geographical terms, then I think gender has a better chance of getting in as well” (Morris in Elderton 2013 n.p.). The precise turn of phrase and the order of priorities it describes confirms what I identified above.

‘Geographical’ representation has afforded other opportunities to be acted upon ‘as well’, either subsequently or secondarily.

5.2.3. Institutional transformation

In interview, Tate Modern’s Head of Displays Matthew Gale outlined that the collection’s ‘expanded reach’ was achieved through four main means. These were the creation of new Acquisition Committees specifically created to acquire work from different geopolitical regions; new institutional partnerships; new appointments of dedicated curators for specific geographical regions based outside the UK; and in 2018 the creation of the ‘Hyundai Research Centre: Transnational’ that acts as a central agency co-ordinating these efforts (Gale pers. corr. 20.12.18). In 2019 Tate hired its first curators tasked with acquiring work for the collection from “Africa & African Diaspora, First Nation and Indigenous Art” who will “remain … within Africa”, extending the curatoriate across continents for the first time (Tate 2019 n.p.). If Tate has begun describing itself as a “global institution”, this provides evidence of what this idea now means in practice.

The Acquisition Committees were created to acquire work from specific geopolitical regions specifically, with only one exception. They are named the “North American Acquisitions Committee and Latin American Acquisitions Committee …the Asia-Pacific Acquisitions Committee, Middle East and North Africa Acquisitions Committee, Photography Acquisitions Committee, Africa Acquisitions Committee, Russia and Eastern Europe Acquisitions Committee, and the South Asia Acquisitions Committee” (Tate 2015 n.p.). They are expressly organised as representing the production of each major geopolitical region on the planet. The inclusion of Photography on the list illustrates how they could be organised otherwise, by media. In Gale’s words, this extends a model that was originated by MoMA, who established a Latin American acquisitions committee in the mid-twentieth century. Tate was the first institution to extend this idea across a global scope in his understanding, though others like the Centre Pompidou have followed suit (Gale pers. corr. 20.12.18). In his words, “there’s an almost separate micro-history to … our acquisition committees”, indicating that their development has been transformative for the entire collection (Gale pers. corr. 20.12.18).

What Gale's remark also indicates is that the Acquisition Committees are part of a complete institutional change where private support is of prime import. If Tate Modern is of interest in the history of museums of modern art, it is because it has in effect reoriented the US model of private patronage towards entirely new ends. Frances Morris has described the highest-level change as being one where "Tate is transitioning from being a publicly funded organisation to being increasingly a self-enterprising, self-driven museum [...] we [have] developed a funding strategy that brought together groups of interested people … who would support the Tate in building regional initiatives" (Morris 2017d n.p.). The means to realise these initiatives has been what Morris describes a new "extraordinary funding base, entirely independent of government funds, entirely reliant upon philanthropy, to build a collection that truly connects art across the world" (Morris 2016b n.p.). In Gale's and in my analysis, the creation of a cohort or "network of patrons who buy the Tate's art" is the most significant change in the institution's recent history (see Harris & Forwood 2016 n.p.). It is this "network" that has afforded the "huge diversification of the collection in a very short space of time" in Morris's view (Morris 2016b n.p.). What is key to the analyses that follow is that the index of 'diversification' is the geopolitical origins of artworks. I do not examine the members of the committees here, but many have financial or figurative investments in the cultures of different geopolitical regions, such that Tate Modern's model is specific to a "world city" like London (Massey 2007: title). What is significant is that Tate's self-description has been as an actor able to assemble "the most extensive network of global patrons of any museum" of modern art worldwide, constituting "almost 300 patrons support[ing] the acquisition committees" (Tate 2012 n.p.). It is this change that has afforded the 'diversification', or globalisation of the collection whose consequences are analysed below. As Morris also notes, it is a matter of record that "you can see how we've acquired these works [how artworks were paid for] – not with our dwindling government funds, but with the funds provided by our patrons" (Morris 2016b n.p.).

To date, no analyst has quantified the added value of acquisitions from across the "57 countries" represented in the 2016 rehang. In one of the two years immediate before the rehang in, "the financial year 2014-15 … Tate has added works of art valued at £76,981,000 to the Collection" (Tate 2017 n.p.). From its core budgets,

Tate itself "spen[t] around £1 million of its general funds each year on acquisitions and their related costs" together (Tate 2017 n.p.). Tate has an acquisition protocol for curators outlining that purchase costs are at most half of overall costs of adding a work to the collection including storage, handling and conservation. If acquisition costs from core budgets were roughly £½m, and the value of artworks entering the collection was nearly £77m, the ratio of private to public expenditure on acquisitions costs was around 140:1 in 2014/5. In the longer term, this contrasts with the situation where central government allocated an acquisitions budget specifically, and when it was £1.25m in 1981, as the bulk of all spend (see Spalding 1999: 54).

5.2.4. Curators contest account of change

My conviction is that existing literature has not plotted the trajectory of change in Tate Modern's collection accurately. Tate's curators, past and present, have contested the dominant accounts of Tate's trajectory without this being reflected in the literature. The dominant account of the main change Tate Modern instigated was that it "transformed the way we see art … [back] in 2000, when its inaugural hang controversially abandoned chronology for a thematic presentation" (Wullschlager 2016 n.p.). The past tense in this claim is what is significant. The implication is that the shift to a 'thematic' order in 2000 was Tate Modern's contribution to curatorial thinking.

My view, based on the testimonies of interviewees and recent contributions, is that the opposite is the case, and that this story needs urgent revision. In 2000, Tate Modern's collection order was based on inherited European art historical categories – in its curators' own description, "tak[ing] as its basis the major subject categories, or genres, of art that were established by the French Academy in the seventeenth century, namely landscape, still life, the nude and history painting" (Tate 2000 n.p.).

Its curators have described this as having been conservative in the extreme: as being that "(Morris 2016b: n.p.). This counter-history has as yet been unwritten. The then Head of Exhibitions, Iwona Blazwick, has similarly recently noted that the "jettisoning [of] chronology" resulted only in entirely "conventional" displays, whose

radicalism was overplayed by critics but whose conservatism was fully understood by curators themselves (Blazwick in Blazwick and Singh Jonah 2019 n.p.).By contrast, it is only in the research period that Tate Modern has exceeded telling a “very narrow NATO story about art history … of Western Europe and North America” because “in 2000… it was [still] all about art from Europe and North America. So, it was about that conventional history, [merely] put into new boxes” but “the kinds of stories we can tell now are very different” since c.2016 (Morris 2018a n.p.; Morris 2016d: n.p.). Morris’s significant point is that entirely different *types* of accounts of modern and contemporary art now thinkable. For the Head of Collections Gregor Muir, Tate Modern can only now begin “to “acknowledge how the story that’s being told *thus far* [was] centred on the European-American canon” (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18). His operative words are ‘thus far’, spoken in the present tense, indicating that right up until the research period, Tate’s model had been largely centred on art made in countries associated with Western Europe and North America.

5.2.5. Turning point of 2016/7: towards an “emphatically political” order

All interviewees’ testimonies indicated a clear shift of direction and emphasis since the appointments of Morris and Balshaw as directors in 2016 and 2017. In one senior curator’s words, “there is a sense that there is a [categorical] shift in direction, and objectives are changing under the new leadership” to focus if not exclusively, then principally on non-Western centres of art production (Nakamori pers. corr. 29.06.19). Interviewees’ testimonies were that the overall goal of “dismantl[ing the] … old hierarchies of art, gender and geography” that Morris has advocated across her career has only become fully internalised across all staff and supplanted other priorities since her appointment as director in 2016 (Morris 2014: 24). Senior curators described this as a “very strong” change of direction (Nakamori pers. corr. 29 06.19). The character of this change has not been explored in depth, although critic Laura Cumming has interpreted as being that Tate Modern’s displays and projects since 2016 as becoming “emphatically political” (Cumming 2021: 30). To date, no analyst has given any genuine specification to how the collection order can be seen as ‘emphatically political’.

One example of the post-2016 shifts in policy is a brand new commitment to "take [work by first nations peoples] into the Tate collection" (Bullen in Ure-Smith 2021: 12). This monumental shift marks an acknowledgement that "indigenous Australian art" occupies an equal *modernity* to that of European modern art. Tate Modern is the first museum of modern art in Europe to undertake such a policy, "framing [art by first nations peoples] emphatically as contemporary rather than folk art or [as if requiring] an ethnographic display" (Ure-Smith 2021: 12). My understanding from interviewees is that this much would have been unthinkable a decade earlier. In pragmatic terms, this change has resulted from the initiation of a "joint acquisitions programme" between the Museum for Contemporary Art Sydney and Tate through which art from the antipodes can be seen in London and co-owned by institutions on opposite sides of the planet (Ure-Smith 2021: 12). These relationships have begun to transform what the modernity of modern art is imagined as being – an insight I elaborate in the later chapters.

5.3. Case Study Institution #2: Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

There has been a handful of analyses of changes to Tate Modern as an institution, though fewer about its collection. By contrast, there are no analyses of the changes at the Stedelijk Museum in 2014-7 in anglophone literature. This thesis therefore allows this story to be put under analysis for the first time. Even short-form journalistic commentaries were largely confined to Holland and to specialist architectural press. No museological appraisal has been undertaken. In the years from 2014-7, Beatrix Ruf initiated what she saw, and I see as the first "post-medium" collection display in any European museum of modern art (in the words of Stedelijk's Curator of Contemporary Art Leontine Coelewij: Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19).

5.3.1. Before 2014

The Stedelijk's official information claims it is

> widely acknowledged as one of the most important collections of modern and contemporary art and design in the world [as] the Stedelijk's holdings encompass more than 90,000 objects dating from the 1870s to the present

> and include painting, sculpture, film and video, installations, works on paper, artists' books, photographs, graphic design, applied arts and industrial design" (Stedelijlk Museum 2016 n.p.).

I have recounted this passage as it is crucial to understanding the character of the reordering project overall. The range of disciplines and media collected by the Stedelijk is closer to that assembled by MoMA than that at Tate. This illuminates two different lines of historical development in the concept of the museum of modern art. In one line, collections consisted exclusively of 'fine art', which remained almost exclusively associated with painting, sculpture and graphic arts. In the other line, whilst fine art was always given first priority, sister disciplines of design, film, and architecture, were represented in parallel, as being components of the visual arts. In MoMA as at Stedelijk, until the research period, displays of objects from these disciplines were always separate, and organised by different departments. Both Stedelijk and MoMA departed from this scheme for the first time in 2017 and 2019 respectively. In fact, MoMA's curators testified to being directly influenced by the Stedelijk's new model (having closely "studied [the] disjunctive, cross-media approach [at] Stedelijk Museum") (Farago 2019 n.p.). Stedelijk is central to having institutionalised one line of development amongst European museums. In the Stedelijk Bureau curator Jelle Bouwhuis's observation: "the Stedelijk serves as a perfect example of the institutionalization of modern art [that…] subsequently dominated the canon of art" and whose collection relates to the dominant "narrative of modern art history" – and the dominant narrative of modern design (Bouwhuis and Vesters 2014 n.p.).

The pre-history to the 2014-17 redevelopment requires clarification. As early as 1989, a plan was begun to extend the museum's estate, in order to display the collection adequately. This plan was only completed in 2012, some 23 years later, after eight full years of complete closure, multiple controversies, and five different directors. Some initial exposition of the key events immediately before 2014 are required to understand what was at stake in Ruf's project. I was fortunate enough to secure an interview with one of only two curators who had remained employed at the Stedelijk across the 1990s 2000s and 2010s, Leontine Coelewij. She was able to contextualise and explain why Ruf, on arriving in 2014, immediately believed another capital project and period of partial closure were essential, only two years after

reopening: "we [curators] had [just finished] a collection presentation when we reopened in September 2012" when they were directed by Ruf to close the galleries and reorder all displays (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19).

When the Stedelijk finally opened in 2012, the entire site had been transformed by Benthem Crouwel Architects, with the addition of a flagship "1,340 square meter" [14,423sq/ft] exhibition gallery located underground, and its older collection galleries above ground upgraded (Bava 2018 n.p.). The basement is one of the largest single galleries in any European museum of modern art, and certainly "the largest underground open-plan [gallery] space in Europe" (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). It was designed in the early 2000s and "built to do big installations and video art (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). Moving the exhibition programme underground allowed "the first [ever] comprehensive installation of the museum's renowned permanent collection" upstairs (Stedelijk Museum 2016 n.p.). This was the "main goal" of the 2004-12 rebuild: to create "a permanent or semi-permanent presentation of the collection" – to resolve the problem of the collection once and for all (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19).

In 2014, when Ruf joined, she immediately overturned the principle of having multiple suites of collection galleries spread across the estate, tailored to the needs of different disciplines, encountering resistance from curators at the prospect of a further capital project. From interviewees' testimonies, it is clear that Ruf personally drove the project and overrode objections from staff. Her "first idea was that everything from the whole collection from 1880s to now should be in the [new] basement … [making] this [a single] large space for collection displays" (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). The Stedelijk's project lead Margriet Schavemaker remarked that Ruf's idea was intentionally "countering the idea that the new wing should be used to show new work", and that galleries for older painting should be top-lit or even differentiated by medium (Schavemaker in Siegal 2017 n.p.). Critics have described the 2014-7 project as an "effort to radically invert" both the building's 2021 layout and the collection order (Bava 2018 n.p.). Ruf's proposal, in other words, was to only employ one gallery alone, the 14,423sq/ft basement, for the entire collection display. Within this, highlights from every discipline, period, medium and geography could be seen together in one place. In 2016, it was conceded that some first-floor main

galleries would be required alongside, providing additional space if complicating the plan, but these were not included in the main project.

5.3.2. The question of "what this museum is"

As Hans-Ulrich Obrist has argued in his history of twentieth-century curatorship, the Stedelijk's reputation rests specifically on both its association with post-war artistic experimentation, and on the relationship between design and art emphasised by director Willem Sandberg. It was "Sandberg who, during his directorship between 1945 and 1963, put the Stedelijk on the map as an institution as attentive to design as it was to modern art [and who personally designed and] created 380 posters and more than 250 catalogues for the museum, and helped to build a world-class collection" spanning fine art and design (Twemlow 2018 n.p.). Sandberg's signature curatorial idea can be described as subsuming individual artefacts, exhibition design and graphic design into a curator-led *gesamtkunstwerk* that Obrist describes as pioneering "the idea of the museum as a laboratory" (Obrist 2008: 89). Participants described intentionally "channelling" this idea, and its image of displays as a 'total work of art', to recreate the Stedelijk's heyday (Koolhaas in Siegal 2017 n.p.). For interviewees, "the [Stedelijk's] institutional history is at the core" of Ruf's new approach, in a kind of 'greatest hits' compendium of curatorial motifs as much as a 'highlights'-style display of collection objects (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). This relates to the idea that was discussed "in all our conversations" during the project (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). The central question for curators was one of "'what this museum *is*'" (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). The reordering project prompted reflection upon how the museum's core identity lay in what is distinctive about what it brought to the history of museums.

5.3.3. Interdisciplinarity

Interviewees were unanimous about what one quality that defines the Stedelijk: "interdisciplinarity" (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). In the Curator of Contemporary Art's words, "a very important aspect [of the redevelopment] is the interdisciplinary approach, because that was done *really for the first time*, for us, at the Stedelijk, in a

permanent presentation" (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). Interdisciplinarity is a "radical way to approach" the collection, in Schavemaker's words (Schavemaker in Siegal 2017 n.p.). The founding idea was to overcome the categorical separation between disciplines and departments. In 2014, "curatorially [the prime question was] how to relate the different collections of the museum in a single exhibition": the solution was "focussing on the relation between art and design" in a single interdisciplinary display (Martelli in Twemlow 2018 n.p.; Martelli pers. corr. 23.01.19). The weakness of the 2012 order, for Ruf, was that collection displays were separated across the estate into balkanised areas, each 'owned' by different departments. In Coelewij's words, "in the past – between 2012 until 17 – we had very different collections displays in different parts of the museum [each] with their own [logic], where the different disciplines could tell, let's say, their 'own' story. And not so many connections were made between these different collections" (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). The key word here is the unintentional designator 'collections', in the plural. In the official literature accompanying the 2017 reopening, Stedelijk curator Sophie Tates felt the need to argue that "the Stedelijk Museum considers the collection as a single entity", precisely because the intuitive description of its prior order even for curators had been in the plural (Tates 2017: 5). For Ruf, the categorical separation between subcollections ran against the interdisciplinarity that is "in the Stedelijk's DNA", i.e. central to its history and identity (Ruf 2016 n.p.).

The transformation of the collection displays was initially conceived by Ruf with architect Rem Koolhaas; the latter delegated much of the conceptualisation as well as the entire delivery of the project to Federico Martelli. Whilst Koolhaas was unavailable for interview, Martelli has provided the first full account of the entire process here. In critics' understanding, "Koolhaas and Martelli developed a concept" together (Copping 2017 n.p.). One usually authoritative journal misattributed the "curators" of the display as being "Rem Koolhaas and Federico Martelli … and Margriet Schavemaker" in that order (Mascolo 2017 n.p.). This might be described as a Freudian slip: I give weight to Federico Martelli's testimony because curators themselves argued that he "had a bigger, more important role than just being an architect [extending to] a curatorial role … combining the idea of the architecture with the concept and hanging going together" (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19).

Martelli's "more important role" than that of an architect is central to my analysis: at Stedelijk Base, what is unusual and requires research is how the curatorial concept and architectural installation are inseparable. As Martelli testified, "we [architects and curators] had to work so closely together, that our roles were really intertwined, because in order to tell those stories, the architecture and the space had to really" be unified (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). This is to say that "those [particular architectural] spaces are really generated according to those stories" specified by curators: the display should be seen a set of highly unorthodox spatialised narratives (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). The solution to forging a new interdisciplinary order was specifically architectural in nature and requires an architectural framework of analysis as much as a curatorial one.

Stedelijk Base contains 700 objects in which "almost 40 per cent of the works are design" objects (Twemlow 2018 n.p.). In Schavemaker's words, "all media are considered equally important" in this display – at least in theory (Twemlow 2018 n.p.; Schavemaker in Twemlow 2018 n.p). What is notable is that interviewees directly contradicted this claim. The curator of contemporary art believed that "the design collection – graphic design, industrial design, applied arts, which are very important parts of the whole collection" remained subsidiary to the art collection such that "at the moment [Stedelijk Base] is the [mainstream] visual arts – painting, sculpture, video, with a few design objects connected to it" alone (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). One problem explored later is what form of relation art and design have in this new order, and whether it implies they are equals.

5.3.4. At a tangent: unorthodox working process

The curatorial process itself was an extraordinary feat of negotiation, or of conflict management, between seven departments competing for space in one gallery. Margriet Schavemaker and Federico Martelli were jointly tasked with mediating between representatives of each department to create what could be described micro-displays. Many micro-displays deliberately incorporate objects from as many of the departments as possible. In Martelli's words, "the real collaboration between the architect and the curators happened" when the project team "create[d] the clusters and relationships between" different *types* of objects (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19).

The process was that having solicited proposals for which artworks from different departments might sit together, "we exposed [curators' choices to] a lot of questions", by asking, is "'this' [really] the same as 'that'? Does it *automatically* mean there is a conceptual connection" between works placed adjacent to each other? (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). As the basement remained "open-plan", the micro-displays were differentiated through a custom process of designing and installing 43 solid steel "partitions" that required the collaboration of Tata steel (Martelii pers. corr. 24.01.19). The partitions demarcate 25 'zones'.

The lack of 'solid' walls and of orthogonal angles means none of the units of display are read as discrete 'rooms', forming clearly defined spatial envelopes tied to discrete categories. My hypothesis is that the spatial order represents an alternative method of categorising the entire history of modern art. The interviewees noted that this new method needed new figures to be adequately described: the key "terms we were using were 'clusters'", rather than displays or other orthodox terms indicating regular, repeated or predictable patterning (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). Instead of a clear sequence of rooms, visitors encounter an array of unconventional spatial units, each of which has an unorthodox set of objects not necessarily grouped on obvious lines. Each of the 'clusters' allows sightlines to several other clusters rather than having a single linear relation to one alone. There are several 'pathways' for visitors to traverse so that different zones can be connected in multiple ways, with competing imaginative chains of association to pursue (see figures 5.2 and 5.3). The process of negotiation between seven curators from seven departments guaranteed that key works curators identified as "'highlights' [...] would [always] be connected to two [others] clusters" or zones (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19).

This may sound a minor differential, but it immediately forecloses the possibility that there is a single determining causal chain of connection structuring the display. This change multiplies what Michael Baxandall calls artworks' implied "causal field" in ways that play out in dramatic ways (Baxandall 1987: 55). The new spatial order therefore "allows objects and artworks to call our attention from afar and near", by overturning the convention that visitors' visual field is commanded by one gallery, containing one category of artwork (Martelli in Twemlow 2018 n.p.). The key differential is that the "multiplicity of the stories in the collection" are always visible

simultaneously, rather remaining isolated and experienced discretely, or placed into a linear sequence (Schavemaker in Ruf et al 2016 n.p.).

5.3.5. Spatialising relations across media, time, space

For Ruf, dissolving the categorical separation between 'old' and 'new' types of art was also central to the reordering project. As she described, one imperative was to move curators from "thinking in periods or categories" towards identifying "what lines [connections] we can draw from … early [i.e. modern] to contemporary art" (Ruf in Ruf et al 2016 n.p.). This is to see the collection 'as a single entity' in a way that privileges the principle of 'connection' both across discipline and across time. The change at Stedelijk was summarised by Martelli as being that, because Ruf wanted to "explore the collection differently", the only way to do that was to "look at relations *between* things … differently" (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19).

Martelli articulated that the process of "working with the curators [was that] we started helping them to develop a diagram of the collection" to think about "what were the relations" between things (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). The final display was a kind of collective 'mind map' in Martelli's description. He described the custom working process as a way of realising "how they [curators] saw the collection" as a single entity, taking it from how it was "mapped in their brain[s]" into spatial form (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). The final display acts to "represent that map" by "creat[ing] these lines of connections … visual, graphic … lines of connections" across disciplines, and across space and time (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19).

Interviewees forwarded the argument that Stedelijk Base's spatial order is necessarily symbolic, as the means to realise a new proposition about the nature and history of modern art. As the curator of contemporary art reported, "the real purpose was [to have] no traditional division of the space into rooms, but to create [a single] open floorplan" in which the collection order was 'open', or a kind of 'open society' (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). This marks a categorical change in the museum's governing order from being organised into discrete periods and disciplines into an entity admitting of multiple possible types of relation.

As Leontine Coelewij remarked, up until 2017, the collection was organised by spatialising time, and spatialising disciplinary difference. Time was spatialised in the most legible way possible to facilitate visitor orientation across the whole estate: "on the ground floor we had the more historical modernism; we had [one side for art and] one side for the design department. And on the first floor [we had the] more contemporary movements" (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). Broadly speaking, galleries for fine art were arranged with the earliest works on the ground floor and later works higher up: time was spatialised vertically. Disciplinary difference was spatialised horizontally so that art and design sat in parallel zones, across space. This scheme signposted to first-time visitors what they could expect to encounter in each gallery, across the building. The new scheme undertakes the exact opposite. It offers "a really new way of experiencing the space" of Stedelijlk Base, and indeed the estate (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). Visitors cannot know what to expect around each partition because Ruf explicitly "didn't want to organise the [displays] according to chronology. We wanted to avoid that … chronological lens" entirely (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). It was only at the "last" iteration of the design stage that the display structure even "implied a rough chronology" (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). The new order instead allows for "jumps inbetween … themes" and across time so that "influence[s]" across media, and across time become legible (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19).

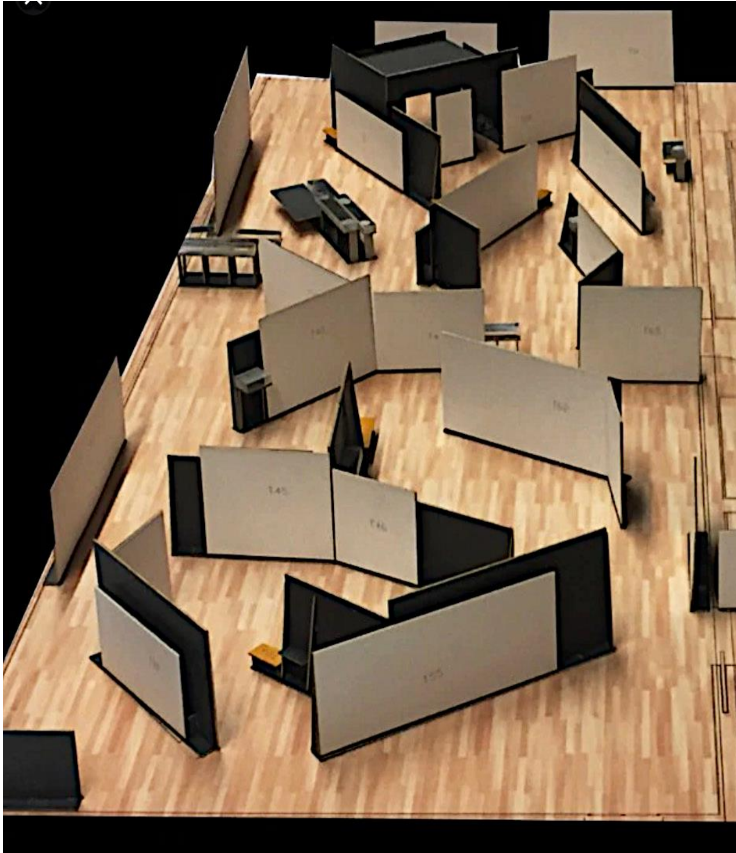


Figure 5.2: Architect's cardboard model of Stedelijk Base, © Federico Martelli

In Martelli's words, both he and Ruf "wanted to see the collection not through … a very historical lens. We really wanted [a contemporary lens]" on older artworks (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). Martelli figured this process as one of a 'desegregation' between categories that was "about giving a new opportunity to historical art" to become 'relevant' to contemporary concerns rather than have a historicist hang (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). The principle was one of shifting "how they [the curators formerly] wanted to historicise the collection" towards an unpredictable, a-systematic scheme. It is difficult to overstate how different this spatial-curatorial order is to sectoral norms and Stedelijk's previous incarnation. Its geometries, its density, its principles of categorisation and interdisciplinarity bear little resemblance to those of sister museums (see figures 5.2 and 5.3.). Within the basement gallery in which Stedelijk Base is sited, the 43 partitions only ever contingently divide the open-plan space, so that "the [25] different sections flow into each other", rather than remaining discrete or self-contained (Mascolo 2017 n.p.). Instead of dividing space and dividing art into stable constituent subcategories, the screens privilege connections *between* categories, contingent relations, and relations not normally given precedence. This has not merited extended analysis. Critics have

thus far only observed that a “fluid space” implies “equally fluid” relations between objects (Bava 2018 n.p.). The partitions intentionally fail to act as proper “walls” but only “like screens”, as Koolhaas put it (Koolhaas in Kunsmann 2018 n.p.). Being only “15 millimetres” thick means that they occupy a minimal footprint, allowing nearly 700 works to be shown (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). In symbolic terms, their blade-like forms foreclose the possibility of each zone being enclosed and self-contained as a category. Non-structural “screens” do not perform the same work of categorical structuration of the collection that spatial envelopes do (Koolhaas in Kunsmann 2018 n.p.). As outlined, the convention of museum space is that spatial division *is* categorical division, and co-presence in shared space is categorical relation. In one undivided gallery, all objects share the same space.

In the Head of Collections’ terms, the individual “clusters” include every possible type of display type (Rutten in Ruf 2016 n.p.). The 25 zones include “monographic [rooms and a] focus on a regional or historical context (geographic or historic); or [those based on] a genre (formal category) or [a] movement within modern and contemporary art” alike (Rutten in Ruf 2016 n.p.). This is a display-of-all-displays. The two working models that Martelli produced (as seen below in figures 5.2 and 5.3.) begin to demonstrate exactly how unorthodox every aspect of Stedelijk’s order. Figure 5.3. is populated with reproductions of the ‘clusters’; figure 5.2. illustrates the irregular geometry of the screen layout. It is intentional that there can be no single pattern abstracted from the layout, as each space is shaped differently as well as irregularly. The layout avoids any geometric figure, which could correlate to an existing type of pattern formation. The layout is intentionally “highly dense” so that the space becomes “crammed with surprising connections and associations” (Rutten in Ruf et al 2016 n.p.; Schavemaker in Copping 2017 n.p.). The ‘cramming’ of artworks into proximity works to implicitly generate ‘connections’ or ‘encounters’ through a new proximity between authors occupying separate categories.

For Martelli, the collection should be seen as an entire “landscape” in and of itself, with a maze-like character that requires active orientation by visitors and prompts a sense of exploration and unfamiliarity (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). This idea starts to figure what the collection is as a new kind of totality. For Martelli, the entire purpose of the display structure was to be produce new relations – and to prevent visitors believing objects were constituted by their prior relations. As he remarked,

“what has to happen is that the curators get their hands really dirty playing with it”, to test how other alternative types of relation can now become spatialised (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19).

Figure 5.3.: Architect’s cardboard model of Stedelijk Base, © Federico Martelli.

5.3.6. A “post-medium” collection

Above, I introduced the idea that the entire basis of the reordering project was to create what the director Beatrix Ruf “called ‘post-medium’ displays (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). Schavemaker emphasised that “we [curators] need [to] look beyond the confines of medium” to begiun thinking of the collection as a whole (Schavemaker in Twemlow 2018 n.p.). The phrase “the post-medium condition” was coined by academic Rosalind Krauss in 2000 Krauss 2000: title). It is customarily misappropriated against Krauss’s original meaning to describe the idea artists can work in any medium or even discipline, and that none have any special status. This describes one ontology of art. At Stedelijk, the idea of “post-medium displays” was that only “interdisciplinary displays with works on paper, painting, sculpture, textiles – *everything* together” should exist accordingly (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). My understanding is that the new display is an *ontologising* claim about the concept of modern and contemporary art in its entirety, where representative art collections account for ‘the post-medium condition’ in the very form of their displays.

5.3.7. Institutional and ontological problems aligned

Interviewees agreed that Stedelijk’s strengths was its unusual model of collecting art and design in tandem. They suggested that the ontologising claim above was also a problem of institutional ways of working. In Martelli’s testimony, the Stedelijk “was a very compartmentalised institution when she [Ruf] arrived … this compartmentalisation of areas [wa]s not good at all [...] we all knew how the museum was [not] working; it was a difficult institution” (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). The reordering project combined instigating an entirely new way of working installing a novel ontology of art where the two were inseparable. In the Chief Curator’s Bart Van Der Heide terms, the need was for a single and comprehensive “integrated vision applying to the way in which we deal with our collection [as one entity] but also within the structure of the organization” at the same time (Van Der Heide in Ruf et al 2016 n.p.). The need to conceive of the “collection as a single entity” necessitated not only “presenting different disciplines alongside each other” but curators co-ordinating ‘mixed’ displays (Tates 2017: 5). Nevertheless, Ruf’s solution of institutional ‘silos’

divided interviewees. In Martelli's words, "it was a brilliant idea [that] really shook the institution itself" (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). Others observed that it the extraordinary turnover of staff in 2016-8 resulted from the "special" time where staff disagreements were pointed (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). What Ruf intended was that literal dialogues across her team would generate figurative 'dialogues' between objects in displays. Stedelijk staff's lack of interdepartmental collaboration was identified by Ruf as an institutional failing; the segregation of the collection was understood to be an ontological failing that misrepresented the nature of modern art. The two were understood as inseparable.

My understanding is that the Stedelijk is the first museum of modern art to have reordered its collection under what Peter Osborne identifies as "a *transcategorial* ontology" of art that does not rest on ideas of discipline or medium (Osborne 2014 n.p.). The change is one from a taxonomic logic of disaggregating objects into sub-categories to one in which relationships are built *across* those very subcategories. By definition, the existence of those inherited categories is taken for granted, because the object is precisely to transgress them.

5.4. Case Study Institution #3: Museum Folkwang, Essen

5.4.1. Institutional pioneer: "Europe's oldest contemporary arts museum"

Museum Folkwang's reordering project was led by the new Director, Peter Gorschlüter, immediately after his arrival in Essen in 2017. The project was given a title such that it was presented as if a temporary exhibition or time-specific event: "New Worlds: Discovering the Collection". The subtitle is startling and counter-intuitive because, as above, Folkwang is "Europe's oldest contemporary arts museum… perhaps the first museum dedicated solely to contemporary or "Modern" art in Europe" (Museyon 2010 n.p.). Museologists are in agreement that Museum Folkwang is foundational to the development of the entire sector, i.e. to "the concept and history of museums of contemporary art" (Lorente 2011: cover).

Folkwang's director and curators positioned the ideas of its founder and director Karl Ernst Osthaus, who was associated with the museum from 1902-21, as fundamental

to their own vision of a twenty-first century museum. That a museum model from 100 years earlier is "more modern" than that at Folkwang of the 2010s is a counter-intuitive claim worthy of research (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19.) Interviewees described a clear "Folkwang ideal" associated with its status as "the first museum of contemporary art in Germany", and by the set of radical curatorial principles it enshrined at its opening, which were invisible by 2010 (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19). For the director, the goal of the reordering project was "to go back to where it all started from" – to the ideas and ideals of the 1900s and 1910s (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19). In Essen, "the Folkwang Idea" has had a career of its own independent of the museum alone: at Folkwang University it articulates "the unity of the arts and the idea of interdisciplinary cooperation" **(**Folkwang University 2016 n.p.). The curators' have returned to what they describe as the "visionary" ideal of "the unity of the arts and life" proposed by Osthaus (Gorschlüter 30.01.19). Osthaus was compared by the new director to "an avant-garde art historian because he had the [then unorthodox] idea of collecting different media, and also bringing together works from different times and contexts" in individual displays – "that [wa]s the [very] idea of the museum as it was when it was first founded in 1902" and became the governing idea again in 2019 (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19).

For the curator of contemporary art Anna Fricke's, "the idea of the museum as it was when it was first founded in 1902 [is what] we [will] go back to" in 2019 (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19). If true, this is a remarkable proposition: it is unthinkable that Tate's curators would rework its display order from 1902 without it being seen as retrogressive or mere pastiche. However, Osthaus's founding vision remains enshrined in the museum's organisational arrangements today. The collection is co-owned 50/50% by the independent foundation Folkwang-Museumsverein and the City of Essen. This arrangement, instigated in 1922 to preserve the collection's autonomy when the Folkwang Museum relocated from Hagen to Essen, remains in place (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19).

The arrival of a young new director was followed by the retirement or movement of several members of staff. In 2017, the curator of the nineteenth and twentieth-century collections, Mario von Luttinhow, was replaced by Nadine Engel; and the Head of the Photography Collection, Florian Ebner, was replaced by Thomas Seelig (see Artforum 2017 n.p.). What all interviewees also agreed upon was that the change in

personnel afforded a wholesale rethinking of the collection order. It allowed the small senior team to forge a new shared vision of what the shape of the collection should be. The wholesale change wrought in 2019 can be explained partly through this: in the curator of contemporary art's words, "we are making *everything* new" in every collection gallery such that the former order would "completely disappear" (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19). The director committed to "completely redesign[ing] the presentation of the permanent collection" across all 24 galleries (Gorschlüter in Pressportal 2018 n.p.).

The display model of the 2010s immediately preceding the change was a "very typical [extremely orthodox] narration of art history" in a way that allowed little innovation or experimentation (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19). As the Folkwang's leading historian wrote in 2013, "the Essen Folkwang['s] …origins in the Hagen Folkwang … are [now] difficult to discern. Chronological arrangements have replaced experimental, synchronic displays of art from different geographical regions and historical periods" (Kuenzli 2013: 524). The director's confirmed that "it has [only] been over the course of the last few years or decades that the museum turned [its] direction … to narrate recent art history in terms of [a] chronological [approach] … in principle, it all started very differently" (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19). Osthaus's collection of non-Western artefacts was central to the original collection displays, though in 2013 "the most recent version of the Folkwang Museum" saw its "remarkable collection of non-Western and premodern art currently slumber[ing] in the storage spaces" (Kuenzli 2013: 524). Since 2018, this has all changed. In place of its original cross-cultural representation of art and its interdisciplinary radicalism, in the 2010s the collection was presented as a linear sequence of art historical movements.

The contrast I identify as implied is between the idea of 'the museum as laboratory' and 'the museum as static archive', where recent curators have departed from the institution's core ideas and ideals, and chronological hangs were a temporary aberration. Folkwang's name makes no reference to its location, indicating its unusual place in museum history. It is drawn from the Edda in "Old Norse mythology", where "'Folkwang' is the hall of Freya, who is the goddess of love and beauty" (Folkwang University 2016 n.p.). The unusual designation signals that Osthaus's idea was for the museum to constitute an entirely new *type* of museum.

The name was adopted to symbolise a place within “the industrial region [that] was to be a meeting place for townspeople of every class […and] that would educate people”, of all classes and about all artforms (Folkwang University 2016 n.p.).

5.4.2. Modernism’s moral authority

Folkwang’s earliest ethos and philosophy of collections is widely understood to have underpinned MoMA’s subsequent trajectory. MoMA’s founding director’s “travel throughout Europe in 1929 led Paul Sachs and Alfred Barr to recognize Germany, and specifically the Folkwang, as the birthplace of the modernist museum” such that “the Museum of Modern Art’s origins lie in the Hagen Folkwang” (Kuenzli 2013: 524, 514). Two quantities need disaggregating. Museum Folkwang’s first 30 years up until 1933 mark the earliest institutionalisation of artworks that became known as ‘modern art’ in any European museum. What is also significant is that it marked “the birth of the modernist art museum”: an entirely new type of museum based on the idea that modern art was so different to its predecessors that it needed a wholesale rethinking of art’s history and museum display principles (Kuenzli 2013: 524). This is to distinguish new artistic and curatorial ideals, though to note that the latter were reimagined in direct response to the former at Folkwang, and this is what makes it of prime historical importance. What MoMA curators took away was that “The Museum of Modern Art [as] a modernist museum [was one] that would extend itself over the whole of contemporary visual culture in ways that followed directly from the Folkwang Museum” in its “totalizing ambitions” to represent the plastic arts (Kuenzli 2013: 524). Folkwang’s new director has returned to “the Folkwang Idea” because it was imagined as a “universal collection” in the way MoMA’s became (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19).

It is a long-established idea that in German art museums, modern art held and holds a unique moral authority because of its association with liberal democracy, in contrast to the cultural policies of 1933-45 and in East Germany thereafter (see Sheehan 2000). Beyond this, there is a totemic moral authority attached to “the Folkwang idea”, because “during the Third Reich, the Museum Folkwang became a target of National Socialist culture policies [being] at the time indisputably a center of Modernism in Germany” (Museum Folkwang 2016 n.p.). It is beyond doubt that the

cultural politics of German art museums since that juncture have, to a high degree even now, remained determined by the *values* associated with modernism. It is also beyond doubt that Folkwang's position, as in effect the first museum of modern art, has coloured its trajectory thereafter. The rejection of the prior art historical model was necessary "to go back to where it all started from [because it] was in a way [a] much more *modern*" idea than the essentially nineteenth-century model of national schools set into chronological sequences that was instituted in the late twentieth century and remained in place until 2019 (Gorschlüter pers. corr 30.01.19). To summarise: all the interviewees understood an earlier model associated with the Folkwang's high watermark as its most "modern" incarnation, and the version of the institution that was most 'true to itself' and true to modernist artists' radical visions for art (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19). This is to say that all interviewees saw what they called the Folkwang "ideal" itself as being as "avant-garde" as the individual artworks constituting the collection (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19). The correlation between the values of artworks and curatorial scheme extends to Folkwang's buildings. The David Chipperfield buildings of 2010 complement 1960s pavilions designed by architects Werner Kreutzberger, Erich Hösterey and Horst Loy (Museum Folkwang 2017 n.p.). Their "ancestry is Mies van der Rohe"'s mid-century modernist pavilions, but Chipperfield's new buildings deliberately resemble "the well-balanced, well-made modernism that West Germany sponsored in the 1950s and '60s" (Moore 2010 n.p.). It is no accident that the architectural style directs attention to what might be described as the high watermark of modernism's moral authority in West Germany, and indeed in the West. Folkwang's ethos of "becoming more modern" runs throughout every part of the institution – but did not apply to the collection until 2019.

If Tate's collection is becoming 'political' in character by design, then Folkwang's is 'political' both by default as well as by design. Folkwang's history requires some exposition in this regard. Osthaus's collection was moved to Essen in 1921/2 from Hagen to Essen, a "heavily industrial town" rather than a metropolitan cultural centre (Museum Folkwang 2016 n.p.). The strategy of bringing modern art to an industrial labour force was paraphrased by interviewees as an *emancipatory* ideal. In Fricke's words, the "Folkwang idea" is closely related to the fact that "we are here in Essen" as a "special region" with an industrial character (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19). The founding purpose and ethos of the museum was "to elevate the industrial region

through culture, via culture, to give something back to the people" (Gorschlüter 30.01.19). In Gorschlüter's most concise terms, his vision is of a "museum for all", across every socio-demographic group, paralleling Osthaus's founding mission (Gorschlüter in Artforum 2017 n.p.). What is of relevance to the analyses below is that Folkwang is almost unique amongst German art museums in not charging for entry to its collection galleries: "Museum Folkwang [is] the first large German art museum with such a permanent, sustainable offer [[...] of making] entrance to the Museum Folkwang collection permanently free" (Museum Folkwang 2021 n.p.).

5.4.3. Institutional change

In the 2010s, the collection was presented in a way allowing visitors to get "straight to the art, without any preamble" with absolutely minimal mediation (Chipperfield quoted in Moore 2010 n.p.). In the critic Rowan Moore's assessment, "the art itself … is [so] spectacular [that] it is almost, but not quite, as if [even] the architecture is ideally absent" as well as orthodox forms of mediation (Moore 2021 n.p.). Under the directorship of Hartwig Fischer from 2006-11 the Folkwang never included *any* text. As one interviewee testified, "the former director, Hartwig Fischer, and the former curator[s ensured] there were no texts at all in the collection" (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01. 19). In 2019, each room has a single 100-200 word text panel introducing the display, but there are still no texts about individual artworks. The rationale for this and related decisions are central to the subsequent analyses. The 2010s ideal exemplifies Nicholas Serota's ideal of "experience" (purportedly) unmediated by curators, where objects 'speak for themselves' (Serota 1996: title). The "sense of [the collection galleries as] a place apart, in which the art can shine" has not been abandoned, but modified (Moore 2010 n.p.). In Jacques Rancière's terms, this model privileges the "mystery" and 'theatre' of the individual "object encounter" above all other criteria (Rancière in Rancière, Papastergiadis and Esche 2014: 38). My conviction is that both this type of order and Folkwang's post-2019 one both have distinctive political correlates, in ways that have not been yet articulated. At this stage, I introduce the idea that curators see the collection through an "open" and "universal" conception of art (Seelig pers. corr. 13.03.01). I understand 'open' to mean both 'inclusive of many different types of art' or interdisciplinary; and 'open-ended', allowing of multiple personal, subjective interpretations.

5.4.4. An anti-thematic thematic hang

The means of transforming the collection displays were to create what the director called very broadly "thematic rooms" (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19). My own analysis is that many of these galleries bear little correspondence to what are understood as 'thematic' hangs in other museums. Indeed, those types of collection displays are no longer unusual at least in museums of contemporary art, where "thematic clusters have become the norm" (Bishop 2013: 69). By contrast, Folkwang's hang pushes at the limits of what 'thematic' might mean. The most immediate obvious departure from precedent and sectoral norms is, as outlined, that the titles of rooms are drawn from individual artworks, rather than announcing 'themes' or concepts.

5.4.5. The shock of the formerly new

The title "New Worlds: Discovering the Collection" requires analysis, as it provides the key to my entire line of argument. As introduced above, the challenge curators set themselves was precisely to "make everything new" in the oldest museum of modern art (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19). This apparent contradiction in terms should be seen as defining their enterprise. The goal was, then, to revivify the museum's modernist masterpieces, by regaining their initial strangeness and novelty, by repositioning Folkwang as central to the history of modern art and its museums. The curators' problem can be described as being one of generating excitement and a sense of 'discovery' with canonised works. In the 2000s, Folkwang's displays seldom changed substantially. What the collection display lacked in its previous incarnation was "the shock of the new" that defined modernism throughout its history (Hughes 1981: title). My hypothesis is that the reordering project marks a systematic attempt to recapture a sense of 'the shock of the new', at both the level of the encounter with an individual artworks, and that of the form of the collection.

The means to achieve this change was making "things come together" in new and unexpected ways (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19). As at Stedelijk, this involved a novel

inter-departmental working process where multiple curators working on each gallery. In the Director's terms, "we are working in a [single] team with all the curators […as] a big group of people" to incorporate works from across the entire collection in individual rooms (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19). Interviewees contrasted how individual displays had always been distinct workstreams, allocated to individual departments. This novel model of collaborative cross-working, however, has had profoundly different ramifications to that at Stedelijk.

As at Tate Modern, the size and character of the museum's estate itself is significant in understanding what the collection can be: in its entirety it occupies a million sq/ft (Museum Folkwang 2017 n.p.). Whilst both the individual pavilions vary in size, the 2010 buildings offer curators "huge rooms, where anything can happen" with ceiling heights of between five and seven metres (Chipperfield in Moore 2010 n.p.). These galleries provide volumes that invite curators to distribute artworks sparsely: both before and after 2019, Folkwang curators allocated unusually generous spaces around each individual artwork. This spatial order has had unusual effects when 'things come together'. In the 2010s, a fifty-foot square gallery populated by a handful of paintings would present no problems of description. Such a hang merely underlines the status of those artworks by being sparsely hung. A fifty-foot square gallery containing a small number of "wild[ly]" different artworks is a different proposition (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19). This is because when objects have no obvious common denominator across media, form, genre or theme, and no theme is announced, curatorial intention becomes opaque (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19). My hypothesis is that, *contra* Stedelijk, Folkwang's strategy sets artworks apart categorically because of their lack of proximity. The lack of an obvious common denominator purposefully requires far more of visitors' imaginative resources: it is this that guarantees the sense of 'discovering' the collection. The ideal of displays where "things come together from [all] the departments … really come together more than they have ever in the [whole] history of the museum" has had remarkable consequences for the very idea of a collection (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19).

5.4.6. Language of display: broken into its smallest component parts

I conclude this overview of Museum Folkwang's new collection order by naming the type of problem that curators have tackled. As I have suggested, the new "dialogue [between] art forms" that the 2019 collection order has installed is intended to revivify the 'original' institutional ideal (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19.). In 2010, critics described the collection display as "calm" and "poise[d]" (Moore 2010 n.p.). The new order is as far from 'calm' or orderly as can be imagined in Folkwang's own terms. It is through individual details that the character of this 'revivification' of the collection and its artworks can come into focus. There is one detail that symbolises of the trajectory of the collection displays. This is the corporate rebranding exercise that announced the launch of "Discovering the Collection" and which was overseen directly by the director.

Figure 5.4. Entrance to Museum Folkwang, June 2019. © Museum Folkwang.

Figure 5.5. Poster advertising “Discovering the Collection”, June 2019. © Museum Folkwang

The first encounter that any visitor has with the rehang is through the new bespoke signage system created to announce it, as seen in figure 5.4 and figure 5.5. In figure 5.4, the two words of the main title “New Worlds” [“Neue Welten”] are at opposite ends of the space available, separated on both vertical and horizontal axes. They are spatially separated as far as possible. It is no coincidence in many of the galleries, artworks are displayed to maximise the spatial distance between them.
The single most revealing remark from any interviewees was that their entire curatorial experiment was “a moment to test out how far or how close together you can bring very different things” (Seelig pers. corr. 13.03.19). “Discovering the Collection” can be understood in terms of the conventions of proximity and distance in gallery space that Ben Cranfield has described, and which articulate the relations between artefacts. As figures 5.4. and 5.5. show, words are not only ‘far apart’, but symbolically disjointed in a disjunctive typographic order.

The reason for attending to this apparently minor detail at an early stage is because it symbolises the new collection order. The reason for the disjunctive text needs explanation because signage is intended to be legible above all else. The visual language of Folkwang's new signage purposefully defers recognition by undermining conventions of legibility. In my analysis, the collection display similarly requires imaginative effort to become legible. The signage primes visitors for the displays that follow and how they overturn expectations. Folkwang's signage renders the conventions of language opaque, when the job of signage is to be transparent. By contrast, modernist poetry and concrete poetry are the domains where language is customarily abstracted and poeticised. The 'language' of the collection is now equally poeticised, and similarly draws attention to itself. The function of this curatorial strategy is to render individual artworks 'opaque' again and allow them to be seen anew – or at least as if new. What the Folkwang collection does in 2021 is to reintroduce the 'difficulty' of 'hearing' modernist artworks 'speak' in an unfamiliar visual language. This is how the collection has been 'rediscovered' and made 'more modern' as the director argued.

5.4.7. "Discovery" as 'defamiliarisation'

A closer-grained analysis can yield further insights. Figures 5.4 and 5.5. require visitors to attend to each individual constituent component in each phrase and within each word. The subtitle "The Discovery of the Collection" ["Die Entdeckung de Sammlung"] is broken down not only into four words, but into its smallest constituent components of syllables or syntagma. Accordingly, "Entdeckung" reads "ent / deck / ung", across three lines. The signage, like the collection, has been disaggregated into its smallest constituent elements, as I outline below. This is to say that the collection order is one in which individual artworks have been disaggregated from their taxonomic categories, as at Stedelijk, in order for visitors to assemble them imaginatively into a new type of whole. The signage system reading it in terms of a 'gestalt'-type whole, to use the German term that signals 'that which is "more than the total of all its parts"' (Cambridge Dictionary 2021 n.p.). I outline in chapter seven how collections are emergent entities that are precisely 'more than the sum of their parts' (see Pearce 1994b). What the signage does, as visitors' first point of orientation to the new order of the collection, is to signal the new difficulty of this, under a more

‘poetic’ curatorial model. Artworks are ‘defamiliarised’ through this. This defamiliarization works to ‘make strange’ artworks, an idea codified in Shklovsky’s concept of “ostranenie”, usually translated as ‘estrangement’ (Shkolvksy 1917 in Leon and Reis 1965: 3). In Shklovsky’s idea, the purpose of specifically “poetic speech”, as a form of speech granted a special place in language, is that it can temporarily revivify listeners’ experience of the world by estranging listeners from their received images of it (Shkolvksy 1917 in Leon and Reis 1965: 3). In this sense, the Folkwang collection display has become ‘poetic speech’. If we take adjust the single word ‘creating’ to ‘curating’ in Shklovsky’s definition of ‘ostanenie’, the shape of Folkwang’s project comes into focus:

> the purpose of [curating] art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of [curating] art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult [to decipher and] to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. (Shklovsky 1917 pers. corr. 30.01.19).

This describes Folkwang’s new philosophy of the collection with precision: one of encouraging a protracted imaginative encounter with artworks by organising the collection by returning to the ethos of early modernist curators and artists. The ‘post-medium condition’ and the globalisation of art have made Osthaus’s “experimental, synchronic displays of art from different geographical regions and historical periods” newly relevant in the twenty first century (Kuenzli 2013: 524).

5.4.8 Strangers to ourselves

If these ideas are indeed the case, then Folkwang’s curators have created an authentically modernist collection by partly ‘estranging’ it from its former ‘self’. One term can, I believe, begin to articulate the difference between Tate Modern and Folkwang’s very different projects. Tate Modern has sought above all to address geopolitical and demographic “alterity”, in Spivak’s sense of ‘Who Claims Alterity?’ (Spivak 1989: 169). This is to say that those categories of subject formerly excluded from the collection have become the prime focal points of displays, as part of a politics of representation. By contrast, Museum Folkwang has focused on what might be called “a different alterity” – the alterity of the collection from its itself (Watkins

2007: 54). Folkwang's former art historical "collective self" is what has been rendered 'other' (Holmes 2011: 209). The post-2019 Folkwang collection, anthropomorphised in this way as a "collective self", can "articulate [a different] kind of collective … speech" to that pre-2019 (Holmes 2011: 2209-10). This extended metaphor, of artworks as speaking subjects, and collections as entities capable of 'collective speech', are precisely what put under analysis in the chapter that follows.

Section Three:

What Are Collections of Modern Art?

Chapter 6. Artworks as a Type of Entity

6.0. Purpose of Chapter

Having introduced the projects undertaken at the case studies, this third section specifies what I take to be a workable definition of an artwork when it is shown in museum space. I then go on to outline what an art collection can be imagined to be, when understood as a type of entity. The job of these definitions, across the next two chapters, are to allow a discussion of what differentiates the logics and values of displays in each institution.

I have been a professional curator for nearly a quarter-century. The reason this chapter is needed is because I have yet to encounter any adequate account of the assumptions and conventions about display that collection curators working in museums of modern art share. It is my conviction that the raft of assumptions underpinning curatorial practice in European museums of modern art have never been plotted in aggregate, nor in detail. These three chapters undertake that work. Their job, put in other terms is to make those assumptions explicit: to make the profession's “doxa” plain (Bourdieu 1977: 169). That can allow cross-comparison because it will reveal how each case study has departed from it. “Doxa” about display is that which "goes without saying because it comes without saying” and constitutes “the universe of possible discourse” (Bourdieu 1977: 167). These chapters therefore start to provide bridges between theory and practice, and between the dual literatures described to address the gap I identified above. This explains why there is such a range of contributors called upon, from these different areas. In effect, this chapter provides a theory of the dominant ways curators conceive of artworks in the singular. The subsequent chapter undertakes the same process for artworks in their collective state.

6.0.1. Structure of chapter

The chapter forwards four fundamental propositions that underpin the case study analyses. These are:

- artworks are granted a state of exception and this relates to a governing rule of individuation;
- their exceptionality and individuation requires their anthropomorphisation as singularities and as ‘quasi-subjects’;
- these ideas furnish the metaphor of artists or artworks’ ‘voices’ being put into ‘dialogue’ by curators;
- all are forms of object fetishism that are characteristically understood in quasi-theological terms.

These propositions are amongst “the metaphor[s] we [curators] live by” and use to individuate artworks (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: title). Understanding artworks in terms of the theological metaphors they live through, and what political metaphors they are entering into, is the idea that animates this chapter.

6.1. Symbolic Objects: Anthropomorphised Singularities

My initial starting point is that all museums treat artworks as “symbolic objects” (Bourdieu 1980: title). Artworks are therefore always symbolic for a particular “imagined community”, for whom they have a particular symbolic efficiency (Anderson 1983: title). Put in other terms, the answer to the question ‘what are artworks symbolic of?*’* is the question of which community they are imagined to be symbolic *for* whether a city, nation, or world.

These questions are not unrelated to Peter Osborne’s idea that what defines works of modern art is that they occupy “structures of subjectivity” (Osborne 2017 n.p.). This insight is key. Osborne’s work leads up to the question, but has not yet answered it, of how they achieve this. Do they have their ‘own’ subjectivities, or borrow those of their authors? The differences between them must, if they are “structure[d]”, be those that differentiate a collectivity or imagined community: again, a society, nation, or world. The only logical alternative is that artworks constitute an alternative universe of their own, with its own system of subjectivities.

6.1.1. State of exception

It is truism of museology, sociology and material culture studies that all participants in the field of art have an “insistence on conferring upon the work of art … this status of exception” (Bourdieu 1996: xvi). Even amongst left-leaning, politically-minded directors of leading European museums of modern art, MACBA’s director Bartolomeo Mari argues that “art [is] like no other human activity” – occupying a category of production that is defined by its exceptionality (Mari 2009: 3). In the artist Tom O’Sullivan’s formulation of this, “art is apart from the world and this apartness is what constitutes art’s importance” (O’Sullivan 2013: 9). It is also a museological and anthoropological truism that it is only in the museum that “the artwork separates itself from other commodities” (Smith 2016: 70; see Appadurai 1987). The artwork and the museum are, in other words, co-dependent for their definition, and it is the art museum that underwrites artworks’ state of exception. This statement of exception is figured in highly particular ways that effect the definition of collections.

6.1.2. Artworks as quasi-subjects / personae

The differentials in the ways in which this state of exceptional status is conceived of are central to the entire thesis. The foundation of the dominant concept of artworks has been expressed by Luc Boltanksi and Arnaud Esquerre: that “nonhuman beings or objects … [paradigmatically] works of art – could only be protected [in museums] by categorization of them as quasi-persons” (Boltanski and Esquerre 2016: 75). This is an idea expressed in various ways – that artworks are ‘quasi-persons’, ‘quasi-subjects’, and ‘personae’ in themselves, but all are related. All of the ways in which art can be described as exceptional are ultimately underpinned, in my analysis, by the “idea of the artwork as a ‘quasi-subject’” (Osborne 2017 n.p.). The term ‘quasi-subject’ is inherited from Theodor Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory* but has regained a particular currency in the last decade, being employed about artworks by curators including Beatrice von Bismarck, art historians like Isabelle Graw, philosophers Peter Osborne and Juliane Rebentisch, and material culture specialists by David Smith amongst many others (see Adorno 1984; Von Bismarck 2019a: 8; Graw 2003: 24; Osborne 2017 n.p.; Rebentisch 2011: 55; Smith 2016: 17). My hypothesis analysis here is that there is a new “tendency today to treat images and objects as though

they were alive, even human" that I am attentive to in relation to the case studies (Foster 2012: 14). This 'tendency', related to the 'material turn' introduced above, has been a key movement in curatorship during the research period, and affected the case studies in different ways.

My conclusion is that artworks' state of exception requires them to be figured by curators as quasi-subjects, and this *constitutes their being,* because it functions to individuate artworks as unique. This process of individuation produces a reality effect described by historian W.J.T. Mitchell. In his words, artworks are recognisable as artworks through their "vital signs", being "not merely signs *for* living but signs *as* living things … we assume [artworks] are something like life-forms" (Mitchell 2005:6). These include different "varieties of animation or vitality that are attributed to [them], the[ir] agency, motivation, autonomy, aura, fecundity" (Mitchell 2005:6). The data suggest this anthropomorphisation which is closely related to, or at least the genealogical predecessor of the tendency Foster identifies, is present in every case study – albeit in different modes. I outline below how what is novel to the research period are how different forms of anthropomorphism curators have come to differential museums. Amongst Mitchell's anthropomorphising metaphors is that of 'autonomy'. This metaphor is fundamental to what Serota called "the dilemma of the museum of modern art": that of curators choosing between "experience and interpretation", or autonomy and instrumentalization in crude terms (Serota 1996: title). What is definitional of artworks seen in museum displays can be said to be that "the art object … [occupies the] semi-autonomous subjectivity of a persona" in its "quasi-subjectivity" (Smith 2016: 70).

6.1.3. Artworks as singularities

If what constitutes their being of artworks is that they occupy structures of subjectivity and become 'personae', then the logical question is of how they can be described in more detail. In the curator Daniel Birnbaum's description, art's "ontological distinctiveness" is that artworks occupy a state of "ontological individuality" (Birnbaum 2014 n.p.). Put in simple terms, each museum quality work of art is definitionally unique, being *sui generis*. This is to say that art museums are governed by a "principle of *individuation*" even despite their taxonomic basis (Osborne 2012: 84).

The ‘doxa’ is that artworks exist by being individuated in museums, and that individuation constitutes their existence thereafter. Using a philosophical lexicon, each is a “singularity” (Osborne in Birnbaum 2014 n.p.) This is to argue that the museum exists precisely to “put the artwork in a category of its own” because each artwork logically occupies “a category of its own”, i.e. *constitutes* its own category without remainder as an unique entity (Lütticken 2019: 287).

This is not only a philosophical claim about the nature of art, but one that can be readily interpreted to have obvious political ramifications. Seen in this light, the distinction between “experience and interpretation” is not a curatorial or aesthetic choice, but a politico-philosophical difference about ‘what is’ (Serota 1996: title). This requires unpacking, and this work is undertaken in the next two chapters. However, as a placeholder, the differential is that ‘experience’ privileges artwork *qua* art and individual artists as unique subjects before picturing the field of production; ‘interpretation’ starts from the field and works towards the individual author.

Put in terms borrowed from social ontology, any collection of artworks in a museum is therefore defined by *both* “the irreducibility of the relational links” between its society of objects, and “the irreducibility of individuals”, or rather quasi-subjects in their singular status (Bedorf 2010: 5). The curatorial ideals of “Experience and interpretation” therefore correlate, very broadly, to the different traditions of collectivist and individualist European political thought that begin from the nature of community and that of the sovereign, autonomous individual (Serota 1996: title). In this light, it should not be surprising that it is a further museological truism that artworks are where the bourgeois European subject of a liberal political order finds their idealised self-image. In the canon of museology from Carol Duncan onwards, it is in the art museum that spectators meet their idealised surrogate self: an imaginary individual with unlimited “agency, motivation [and] autonomy” (Mitchell 2005:6; see Duncan 1999 and Osborne 2013). What I examine in the case study analysis is how far this image holds when the forms of collections have been radically reordered in ways that have political consequences, and which refigure the relation between the individual artwork and the collective it is part of.

6.2. Artworks as ‘Things That Talk’

This section extrapolates the ideas above to propose that the only appropriate terms with which to address artworks understood as quasi-subjects are as 'speaking subjects', which merit being addressed by pronouns.

6.2.1. Artworks as speaking subjects: 'I'

I proceed from the basis that artworks are understood to occupy "structures of subjectivity" as "quasi-subject[s]" who occupy a state of ontological individuality" (Osborne 2017 n.p.; Birnbaum 2014 n.p.). Osborne's own conclusion is that "subjectivity" is constituted by, and exists only through "the verbal categories of tense, person and pronoun", as Emile Benveniste has outlined (Osborne 2017 n.p.; see Benveniste 1971). The first logical conclusion that I draw is that individual artworks should be customarily conceptualised as an individual speaking subjects that can be addressed through the pronoun 'I'.

This is not a novel understanding *per se*, though the ways in which artworks 'speak' where "art [i]s speech" has been the subject of fresh thinking during the research period that has impacted on this thesis, as well as the case studies (Dixon 2018:1; see Dixon 2018 for a survey of these positions). The figure of art as speech dates back to Richard Wollheim's "concept of art as a form of life" akin to speech (Wollheim 1968: 46). However, even Wollheim did not pursue this idea to its logical conclusion; more recent contributors have only begun to exert pressure on the idea in relation to curatorship. In curatorial discourse, the idea has only been employed very loosely and without gaining purchase on artworks as entities, being described by Bruce Freguson as "the central speaking subjects in the stories about art which institutions and curators tell" (Ferguson 1996: 76). Instead, I draw on J.L. Austin's concept of "speech acts" to pursue the idea that for curators, "artworks are [now a type of] being equated with persons, not by their looks but by their [speech] actions" (Austin 1962: 14; Smith 2016: 70). This distinction makes manifest the consequence of the 'post-medium condition' in which art is no longer defined not by a particular range of inherited materials.

My own contribution begins with the idea that a group of subjects, or "quasi-subject[s]" with a unified collective identity is, by definition, a 'we': a 'plural subject' entity. A small number of contributors including Sven Lütticken have argued precisely that what curators do is "to forge a "group subject" – without specifying what kind of group, or what kind of subject (Lütticken 2019: 304). There are obvious consequences of this mode of figuration: any collective that is an 'us' definitionally produces a 'them' external to it, through an in-group / out-group distinction. If an artwork is an 'I', then logically a collection is a 'we'. The terms of engagement with artworks and collections below are therefore through familiar pronouns: 'I' and 'we', and 'them' and 'us'.

I take it as read that, since medieval times, the idea of a 'legal person' has existed in European law. The clearest example of a non-human entity (and a collective entity) being classed as a 'speaking subject' is in US law, where it is a principle that "corporate persons freely 'speak'" in their 'own' voice, independent of the owners and employers that constitute them (Falguires 2017 n.p.). Both individual artworks and collectives of artworks understood can readily be seen as 'speaking subjects' as an extension of this concept, though no scholar has as yet analysed art collections in light of the idea that they occupy a "corporate personhood" that 'speaks' (Siraganian 2020 n.p.). What I suggest is that artworks that are quasi-subjects must be understood as a "collective self" or 'plural subject entity', structured by "collective organizational forms" that render them able to "articulate some kind of collective … speech" (Holmes 2011: 209, 220). My further contribution is to take these figures as having legal and ontological status, as they do in the example above. They are not 'figures of speech', but are ontological claims about art. I draw on Lorraine Dalston's idea of "things that talk" associated with the 'material turn' to articulate how artworks as speaking subjects is an extended metaphor with subordinate figures (Dalston 2004: title).

6.2.2. Figuring individuation: 'voices'

Understanding "art as speech" as an extended metaphor explains why curators' individuate artworks by describing their "voice" (Dixon 2018: 1). The single most prominent means to figure artworks' individuality has been through the metaphor of

‘voice’. Curators of all positions, including Frances Morris and Jessica Morgan at Tate Modern have employed this figure (Morris 2016b n.p.; Morgan 2013: 25). More specifically, Morgan has described the difficulties of harmonising artists’ ‘voices’ with “the curatorial voice”, at Tate Modern (Morgan 2013: 26). The metaphor of ‘voice’ is employed in multiple ways that are seldom if ever disaggregated. For Frances Morris what visitors “encounter” in museum space is ideally “the artist’s voice” (Morris 2016b n.p.). This is one conception of “art as speech”, where the agent who speaks is the author, rather than the artwork itself. This rests on a “chain of equivalence” between inanimate objects and subjects (Richter 2019: 13). In other curators’ and thinkers’ formulations, it is objects themselves that have their ‘own’ independent voice as a material entity. Tate Modern’s curators have framed the problem of curatorship as being how an “artist’s voice [is heard] through all the constraints or narratives that the curator lays on top” and which can “constrain” an artwork (Morris 2016a n.p.; Morgan 2013: 26). The implication is that curatorship, as mediation, can distort the clarity, or impede the resonance of an ‘artist’s voice’ in architectural space.

6.2.3. Displays as dialogues / conversations

As also introduced above, the figure of ‘voice’ authorises a chain of subordinate metaphors in curating specifically. Contemporary curatorial discourse is unthinkable without the figures of “dialogue” and “conversation”, and “encounter” all of which art historian Griselda Pollock has adopted when ‘curating’ an ideal, imaginary museum (Pollock 2007: 10). As illustrated above, the discursive convention that was solidified during the research period has been that curators place objects into proximity, or objects’ co-presence allows them to “enter into a dialogue” (Obrist 2015a: 1). This figure describes the idea that objects will “enter into … a relationship” if placed in sufficiently close proximity (Von Bismarck and Meyer-Krahmer 2019a: 8). Accordingly, a display “presents an opportunity to put many voices in conversation” because “the current [curatorial] imperative is to put things in conversation with each other”, rather than structure them taxonomically, in curator Jens Hoffman’s terms (Hoffman 2014: 22, 12). These figures most commonly describe the curatorial “territory [of] creating novel combinations” of artworks (Hoffman 2014: 22).

What these figures outline is that a display of artworks is an inter-subjective "encounter" between quasi-subjects where curators allow artworks to 'speak' about what is "between each other", in Pollock's anthropomorphic phrase (Pollock 2007: 10). Artworks are therefore able to themselves generate new problems, stories or sets of inferences through the spatial dynamics curators establish between them. ce, from allowing artworks to 'talk about' The question of what lies *between* artworks is to be understood both literally and figuratively – i.e. how their staging dramatises objects in space whilst specifying or implying a relationship between two categorically different individuals. As I outline below, if art museums' displays were traditionally based on what was shared between objects taxonomically, "creating novel combinations" of *types* of artworks in space should logically generate entirely new types of relationships (Hoffmann 2014: 22).

6.3. From The 'Social Lives of Objects' to 'What is Society?'

I pursue the extended metaphor established above further in relation to Arjun Appadurai's celebrated idea that artefacts have 'social lives", adopted by Susan Pearce in museology, that museums exhibit "social objects" (Appadurai 1987: title; Pearce 1994a: 2). I approach artworks not only through their 'object biographies', as Appadurai's idea implies, but by questioning the types of societies that they can form or be made to occupy. In the subsequent chapters, I examine individual objects' social trajectories in order to specify what the character of the 'society' is that objects inhabit. As suggested, the question can then become one of 'what type of collectivity do objects live in, in each case study?' Again, if we can adapt Appadurai's idea by taking 'society' as providing one collective noun alone rather than a generic designation for all large groups, then it should be possible to also talk about objects in an imagined polity, community, or other type of plural-subject entity; and about the political lives of objects, or the communitarian lives of objects. My belief is that rethinking these terms can specify exactly what is at stake in the case studies' restructuring of their collections, because they describe what artworks are and do with greater precision.

My project is not one of "thinking through the sociality of art objects" therefore, but of thinking through the type of collective or totality shaped by curators (Maihoub 2015

n.p.). Artworks are subject to museums' "convening power": their agency to 'convene' objects from across space, across time and across artforms or disciplines (Kennedy in Wilby 2017 n.p.). If it is productive to retain the metaphor of 'the social lives of objects' at all, then the specific types of group-subject convened must be specified, and/or the multiple senses of 'society' disaggregated.

6.3.1. Mixing outside our social circles

If Pearce could understand artworks as "social objects" in 1994, then retrospectively they can be seen as having very limited 'social lives' for much of museums' histories. Indeed, in orthodox museums whose display orders were defined on taxonomic grounds, it can be said that their societies were as hierarchically stratified as the societies that produced them, in a way that was scarcely coincidental. In orthodox displays ordered on quasi-scientific or taxonomic lines, the net effect is that objects were segregated into their 'own' social stratum. The metaphor was all too accurate. The speculative hypothesis forwarded below is that these former principles of segregation were hardly unconnected to the delimitation of which subject positions were granted privileges of authorship.

The character of change in collection displays during the research period can be measured by returning to Pearce's idea "social objects … are only meaningful in relation to each other in groups or sets" that "bear an intrinsic relation to each other" (Pearce 1994a: 2; 1995: 20). Quite simply, none of the case studies organise their holdings in a way that matches this description, where artworks' material properties define their 'intrinsic relation' to each other. In Folkwang and Stedelijk and Tate to a large extent, artworks are never shown in orthodox taxonomically ordered 'groups or sets'. Alternative principles have come into play that require analysis. Where I continue Pearce's analysis is that artworks do enter what she calls "another order (of life)" when entering a museum, paraphrased by Osborne as alternative "modalities of existence" (Pearce 1995: 24; Osborne 2011: 114). These are claims about states of being where artworks 'talk' in different ways.

6.3.2. Alternative socialities

These insights reflect the growing tendency to reassess “curating [through] its sociabilities, collectivities and convivialities” – though these are usually applied to human subjects instead of quasi-subjects as here (Martinon and Rogoff 2013: viii). It is now a curatorial commonplace that new forms of displays have created what should be understood as “alternative socialities” (Hansen 2012: title). The case study chapters examine whether collections of artworks are a different kind of society to their predecessors or need another name than ‘society’ alone. This idea again starts to explain why the concept of collection is not necessarily fully fit for purpose. It is tied to an earlier ‘social order’ of objects able to be seen as an *ancien régime*. Admittedly, objects in museums do ‘enter into society’ in several figurative senses. One is the archaic use of ‘entering into society’ in the eighteenth-century sense of entering into an elite. Another is the similarly archaic sense of sociability: of joining an assembled company to converse in ‘dialogue’. Both still apply, in their own ways. Even in 2021, art museums still have “very high stakes” because they divide “what counts and doesn’t count”: what and who joins an artistic elite (Appadurai 2019: 224, 223).

6.3.3. Governing through “magical powers”

My conclusion is that all of the variants of the dominant concept of art embraced by curators rely upon one kind of anthropomorphisation or another: what differentiates them is which kind. The historian Ivan Gaskell has asked “what … museums might be” if understood as occupied by “things with life” (Gaskell 2015: n.p.). My understanding is that this is already the definition of artworks in museums:
I have specified that across all curatorial positions, “art objects are considered live social beings” – and now more than by previous generations thanks to the ‘material turn’ and its effects as referred to by Foster above (Maihoiub 2015 n.p.).

All of these insights about artworks relate back to the terms drawn by Susan Pearce and Arjun Appadurai about museum culture. In Pearce’s terms, artworks in museums become “sacred” artefacts, exempted from the profane world of commodities to be granted exceptionality (Pearce 1995: 24). I take Pearce’s and Appadurai’s similar insight to mean that a quasi-theological understanding of artworks remains in place, not even in, but especially in museums of modern art (Appadurai 1987). For artworks

to be understood as singular speaking subjects endowed with subjectivity, they must be subject to a “magic of transformation” in museum display, and for their visitors to “all believe in image-magic” (Gombrich 1972: 179, Gombrich 1977: 5). This is more the case rather than less in museums of modern art, because their contents are so profoundly varied.

What I take forward from these ideas is precisely that Bourdieu was right to identify that artworks in art museums are subject to a “magical power of transubstantiation” (Bourdieu 1986: 242). His insight that a belief in the power of art is a form of “magical fetishism” is not common in curatorial literature, but I take it as definitional of what artworks are (Martin 2007:22). If this is accepted as “doxa” within the dominant museum culture, then the remaining question is only what institutions’ public or political uses of their “magical powers” are (Bourdieu 1986: 242). What differentiates the case studies is how they structure and organise their quasi-subjects in a manner befitting a governing institution for the field. If curators organise artworks as “live social beings” or ‘quasi-subjects’ who inhabit “structures of subjectivity”, as I indicated, the question becomes what kind of collective they organise them into (Maihoiub 2015 n.p.; Osborne 2017 n.p.). In the next chapter I suggest that art collections are a particular type of ‘plural-subject’ entity. This insight can illuminate what institutions’ political uses of magic are.

Chapter 7. Collections as a Type of Entity

7.0. Purpose and Structure of Chapter

> "There is no doubt", Daniel says. You really are you."
> "Yes," Hannah says, "I really am me. And you really are you … What does that all make?"
> "What? What does it all make?" Daniel says.
> "It makes you and I more than just you or I", Hannah says, "It makes us us.".
> (Smith 2020 quoted in Schama 2020: 6)

Ali Smith's imaginary conversation dramatises both one of the oldest of philosophical problems, and the very basis of politics in its broadest sense. It alights on the relationship between individual and collective identities, and the interdependencies of the latter and the independence of the former. For Smith's protagonist, a 'we' is an entity that has its own distinctive separate identity to the individual 'I's that constitute it. That is, a 'we' is a separate 'emergent' entity of its own, with its own agency, just as a 'legal person' is.

I understand collections and their displays as being by definition answers to "questions of [what] collective identity" is, in spatial form (Schmidt 2010: 518). Every collection display forwards a proposition about what I describe as 'I/we' questions, and 'us/them' question, that involve relating the individual to their collective, and defining the boundaries of that collective. My hypothesis is that each case study "offer[s] us an analogy" for ways of thinking about "the one and the many" in political thought, such that naming it is to see that name as an 'analogon' for a particular type of collective entity (Magun 2013b: 34; Magun 2013: title). I do not argue there is a simple or direct correspondence between curatorial practices and political thought, but that display forms each have their own founding set of values, and each is associated with different intellectual traditions that are themselves never apolitical.

7.1. Collections as Forms of Order

7.1.1. Lack of category system to account for different "collection form[s]"

The crucial insight underpinning this chapter is that introduced above: that "the development …[of] the "notion of 'art' is far from self-evident, and its development is bound up with the development of … museums and galleries [such that] the genealogies of 'art' and 'museum' therefore run hand in hand" (Pearce 1995b: 1). What this idea implies is that if the case studies have undertaken experiments with the "structure of the collection form" they should afford different concepts of art entirely (Boltanski and Esquerre 2014a n.p.). These experiments may reform the concept of collection, or even exceed it. The data from case studies suggests that the "conceptual [schema] that underline contemporary descriptions" of collective entities are inadequate to their "form" (Boltanski and Esquerre 2016: 32). What I take from this insight is that more precise discriminations between different types of displays, understood as types of entity, are needed by examining each in its different determinations. The chapter outlines how collections are definitionally 'wholes', as entities that totalise their fields. It therefore also elaborates how the basis of the entire thesis is that "we lack a *category system* [for] the totalizations [at stake] that would enable us to elucidate the specific dynamics involved" in both the macrocosmic social order, just as in representative collections (Boltanski and Esquerre 2016: 32). This chapter examines how collections are always ways of 'collectivising' artworks, and their work of totalisation is governed both by their mode of anthropomorphisation and their need for a "regulative conceptual unity" (Osborne 2013: 47).

7.1.2. Collections as abstractions

My starting point is that the concept of a collection is a "social abstraction" or "real abstraction" (Osborne 2019: 6; Soth-Rethel 1970: 69). A collection is a concept that is agreed upon as real by a given community and which therefore comes to exist in the world: an "abstraction … [that] lies not in the thought of the sociologist, but in society itself" (Adorno 1999: 31-2). Collections are therefore entities that are created through the work of "concept construction" undertaken by the museum (Osborne

2019: 6). This concept has material effects, because representative collections act to govern how material culture is hierarchised and organised, as suggested.

The second premise I work from is that ‘collection’ is a highly specific concept that has been elaborated clearly in museology by contributors by Pearce and Preziosi, whose work I take as exemplary. It is not examined as a generic description of all accumulated bodies of art. Even though “distinguishing it from other kinds of [mere] accumulation is difficult”, the museological consensus has been this is possible and necessary (Pearce 1994b: 157). A collection cannot be an aggregation of diverse quantities. What can be readily established is that if a ‘heap’, a ‘set’ and a ‘series’ are “the most ontologically basic [forms of] collectivity” imaginable, then a ‘collection’ is their opposite: a complex collective governed by a unifying governing order (Osborne 2010 n.p.). As above, my procedure is to re-read Pearce’s and Preziosi’s work through the Heideggerian question of whether there are specific forms of ‘collection-being’, as this form of analysis is foreign to museology.

7.1.3. Order as “systematic logic” spatialised

If a state of ‘collection-being’ exists, it is only through systematisation: for Pearce, “the distinctions between possession and collecting [are] that the latter implies, order, system” (Pearce 1994b: 159). Collections are ‘rule-bound’ entities and these rules govern selection and classification, by abstracting principles of similarity and difference from objects’ material properties and life-histories. In Preziosi’s definition, museums’ existence rests on “the systematic logic of the collection”: a collection is a “system” with a particular logic, rules, and internal order (Preziosi 1996: 169). The basis of modern European museums from the nineteenth century through to MoMA, was, in Preziosi’s understanding, the “systematic logic” of taxonomy (Preziosi 1996: 169). I outlined how this underpinned MoMA’s order specifically in the next chapter.

For Pearce, Preziosi and many others, a systematic logic guarantees that collections exist under a governing “order” (Wollheim 1968: 46). I take it as axiomatic that no museum exists without an ‘order’ of one form. For Preziosi’s, museum curators must create order by subsuming all of their objects under the “grid of a common table or spreadsheet” – uniting them into a single framework so that they share a “common

ground" (Preziosi 1998a: 514). Only this allows a systematic order to be elaborated, and relations between objects to be delineated logically, through a scientific method. What defines the three case studies is that their curators have "install[ed] a new order", or rather a new type of order that governs objects' relations (Pollock 2014: 9). The common denominator between them has been a search for "various possibilities … for framing relations among artworks outside of the [dominant] museal categories of nation, style, period, movement, master, oeuvre, so that artworks can speak something more than [merely these]" (Pollock 2007: 10). The problems of the case studies are: what "systematic logic" could adequately replace 'nation, style, period, movement, master'? How do objects "speak" to each other under an entirely new order? What kinds of 'speaking subjects' do artworks become under different orders? What kind of collective speaking subject – what 'we' – do they become? To adapt Adorno's terms, a collection should be understood as akin to an artwork in this regard: it is "a process essentially [defined] in the relation of its whole and parts" that any curator "seeks to unify" into a single whole (Adorno 2002: 177, 178).

7.1.4. Regulative conceptual unity as defining condition

The third defining characteristic of the concept of collection I take as salient is that it can only exist when a particular form of unity is secured through the systematisation of its contents. In Pearce's key remark above, collection objects "bear an intrinsic relation to each other" (Pearce 1995: 20). The differential between twentieth century art collections and the case studies is, in essence, what 'intrinsic' is taken to mean. Contemporary art is produced across geocultural space and created in a near-infinite range of media and modes. New research is suggesting the history of modern art is far more complex than was ever believed to be the case. The forms of unity available to a collection containing all possible media and even disciplinary objects is, as above, a problem of representing the unrepresentable, or figuring the unfigurable. The challenge for its curators in attempting to represent the totality of production is avoiding the Scylla of unmediated "experience" and the Charybdis of the apparent impossibility of authoritative or systematic "interpretation" (Serota 1996: title). The hazards are of either presenting an interpretation-free idea of a heterogeneous "generality of 'contemporary art'" without decisive ordering concepts that can account for its character and trajectory; or of presenting "the individuality of particular works"

without any systematic “concept construction” (Osborne 2018: 163; Osborne 2019: 6). Neither option secures the “regulative conceptual unity” that a collection definitionally requires (Osborne 2013: 47). This requires ordering all of a museum’s displays into a coherent whole. As Claire Bishop argues, a collection display must be presented “as a series of interconnected displays rather [only] than as a concatenation of individual” rooms lacking an overarching governing logic (Bishop 2014: 30). The danger is what the artist Hiro Steyerl notes: that “the contemporary museum is more like a cacophony” than a systematised, rule-bound order, because of the hyperdiversity of its contents and their inability to be ordered (Steyerl 2009 n.p.).

The term ‘unity’ has nearly disappeared from most practising curators’ lexicon at least in anglophone contexts. My understanding is that the vernacular uses of this philosophical term have gained associations with what a Whitney Museum curator calls “neocon” ideals that valorise conservative social formations and conservative forms of art (Rothkopf in Kennedy 2012 n.p.). What the term ‘unity’ has become connected to is the idea that museum’s prior art historical unity was also an “identitary mode of closure” of the field, defined by its “exclusion[s]” of demographic groups (Raunig 2013: 132). Again, to borrow terms from social ontology that are of immediate relevance to how collections have been reimagined: what once seemed to be “a well-ordered harmonious unity” now “seem[s] like a system of borders that separate social groups” and always excluded groups from the privileges of authorship (Magun 2013a: xii).

However, in the case study where nationalistic conservatism may be the strongest taboo, Museum Folkwang, “unity” was the key term employed by all curators (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19). The synonym ‘coherence’, whilst not identical, has been largely substituted for ‘unity’ in curatorial discourse. For Maria Lind a display must be a “coherent entity”; Penelope Curtis’s reordering of Tate Britain rested on “mak[ing] it cohere … so that the whole collection looks like it is one collection” (Lind 2019: 39; Curtis quoted in Brown 2013 n.p.;. For Curtis, a collection “is coherence” (see Curtis 2013 n.p.). No curator at the case studies contradicted these ideas; however, they proposed new criteria upon which coherence could be secured.

This relates closely to the differentiation between modern art and contemporary art in museums. One key problem common to the case studies is that they all have to negotiate the difference and similarity between the two, and to picture them in a state or relation, as chronological successors and as historical or art historical periods, as qualitative states of being or 'conditions' under which all artists operate. In European and North American collections, acquisitions made up to the 1990s at the earliest conformed to the patterns Frances Morris outlined above, being restricted to particular geographies, identity positions, media and ways of working. For all the case studies, the inherited MoMA model of unifying artworks under a *single* art historical genealogy cannot accommodate artworks from outside NATO territories, alternative concepts of art, or demands for representation. Other forms of unity are required. I proceed from the basis that one form of unity or another *must* therefore be presupposed to exist, even whilst the term has been avoided by curators. The question is of which form, in each instance. In the last instance, concepts themselves can only be understood as "functions of unity" by definition; and no collection display of any kind can be shaped without structuring concepts (Kant 1999: 105). This is to say that "the work of curating, then, is to assemble [objects] … into an order [and] some *united* meaning" (Myers-Szupinska 2017: 22-3). It is also to argue that this work "must thus mediate … the work of art['s] … ontological individuality with the collective" it is part of (Osborne 2013: 85). In the anthropomorphic terms introduced above, curating the art museum is to mediate between the "individuality [of artworks] and [the] social forms" in which they can 'live' and 'socialise' (Levine 1971: title). Collections of modern and contemporary art must collectivise and socialise works with entirely different frames of reference, which have entirely different display requirements – and which embody entirely different concepts of art. Creating the 'governance' for such a collective is profoundly problematic. To govern is to unify an 'imagined community' of artworks that exist in states of enormous and unprecedented diversity; it is to subject this community to a governing order. If artworks are definitionally quasi-subjects, then the metaphor of museums' governance of the field has a far more pointed set of resonances than has been understood thus far. What museums do to works of art seen as quasi-subjects can be legitimately redescribed as itself a process of "subjectivation" in two senses: of subjecting them to a governing order, *and* realising "the process of production of [an artwork as] a subject" (Osborne 2011 n.p.).

7.1.5. Collections as emergent entities

Ali Smith's dialogue outlined the idea that a 'we' is *not* only multiple 'I's but possesses its own agency, just as in a collection display "things begin to read as a single entity and make a case larger than their discrete parts" (Hoffmann 2014: 20). As Pearce has phrased it, "objects … contribute to and derive extraordinary meaning from the entity (the collection). The significant point [is] that the collection is somehow more than the sum of its parts" (Pearce 1995: 21,20). These insights articulate the Aristotelian idea now described as "emergence" to provide "a way of characterising relationships between complex entities and their parts" – whether human subjects or inanimate quasi-subjects (Gibb, Findlay Handry, Lancaster 2019: 2; Pearce 1995: 21; see Aristotle 1989). In one definition, "emergence involves something 'new' arising out of something else, [a new whole] showing some degree of independence or autonomy" from its component parts (Gibb, Findlay Handley, Lancaster 2019: 4). Collections are, by definition, emergent entities. The importance for the case studies is that, if they are new *types* of whole, they will offer distinctive types of emergent properties. The idea of emergence describes how the concept of collection is thinkable, just as the concepts of a society or a polity are. What is almost entirely absent from curatorial discourse is that whilst a new 'whole' requires "the construction of functional structures in complex systems", it also necessarily "constrain[s] the behaviour of [its] individual components" (Protevi 2006: 19). I outlined above that even curators admit it is "the curatorial voice" that "constrain[s]" artworks (Morgan 2013: 26). The scope for conflict between curatorial imperatives, or the needs of a collection as a 'we', and the need for recognising artworks as singularities, is a permanent state of affairs. Just as in the governance of any polity, the liberty of any "individual subject" is both guaranteed by the state and constrained by its rule-bound laws, the same problem applies in collections (Protevi 2006: 19). An individual artwork only gains its quasi-subject status in the art museum but must be subject to the rule-bound order of the collection, or rather, become a 'subject'.

7.2. 'Collections That Talk'

7.2.1. Speaking subjects, singular and plural

I indicated above artworks are quasi-subjects individuated through the figure of their 'voice': that this is the metaphor curators 'live by'. Collections are therefore by definition a "plural subject" entity: a collective 'speaking subject' akin to Smith's 'us' (Gilbert 1989: 18). This idea requires some elaboration. A generation ago, Pearce identified that the precise choice of "collective noun" was crucial to analysing collections: since then, museologists have not pursued this idea (Pearce 1994a: 9). As I do, she described "collective[s]" of artefacts, without pursuing the consequences of this anthropomorphising figure as fully as followers of the 'material turn' have since (Pearce 1994a: 9). Chapter 4 outlined why collective nouns remain important: they are ontological claims, and as Reylea argues, the logic they install has material effects. Identifying the specific *type* of collective noun able to describe a collection, when it is understood as a 'plural subject' entity, is crucial. The most apt word effectively names the type of agency each institution exerts in the world, and alerts us to the concept of art it instantiates.

As I suggested above, in curatorial literature, the idea that displays act to "form collectivities [that are themselves] ontological communities" has been introduced by Irit Rogoff – without being given any specificity thus far (Rogoff 2008 n.p.). This stands in contradistinction to the concept that collections exist to adequately *represent* extant communities, where "the museum is an institution of recognition and identity par excellence" as articulated by Macdonald above (Macdonald 2006: 4). In curatorial studies, the idea that collections should exist "beyond representation" has dominated one strand of thinking, associated with Goldsmiths in the UK, and underwritten by an appeal to continental philosophy (O'Sullivan 2013: 9). Rogoff and Macdonald's propositions are not compatible, but both have been playing out in the case studies. This leads me to the conclusion that "the speed of these developments [in collections] has often outstripped our understanding … what sort of assumptions about community, historicity, and universality" are now operative (Weiner 2015 n.p.). The question in the forthcoming chapter is: what kind of collectivity do artworks constitute in both representational or 'post-representational' collections?

7.2.2. Collections as paradoxical collectives of singularities

Above I outlined how at least modernist artworks are, by definition, treated as singularities in museum collections. Every collection display therefore "organizes the individual manifestations [of art] into an aggregated effect [where] this aggregation represents [or] serves as… a contradictory collectivity-in-individuation" (Myers-Szupinska 2017: 18). This is a crucial insight that informs the analysis of each case study. A collection of modern art is always a *collective of singularities*: it exists as a paradox or in a state of permanent self-contradiction. In Julian Myers-Szupinska's terms, collections can only exist in a permanent state of "internal tension between part and whole" because of this (Myers-Szupinska 2017: 18). This applies the case studies directly. Myers-Szupinska's key observation is there can be no collection in which there are no "theories of collectivity and sovereignty" implicit (Myers 2013 n.p.). The chapters below explore how it is specifically new "spatial formations [that] may allow for different ways of 'being singular plural'" – for rethinking the collectivity and sovereignty of artworks (Cranfield and Owen 2017: 3). It is through new forms of spatial relation that alternative ways to negotiate this paradox can be forwarded, and new forms of collective constructed. The coinage "being singular plural" is Jean-Luc Nancy's description of the paradox that humans only exist in communities, just as the concept of art only exists because of the museum as an institution, but we necessarily imagine both ourselves as singular, and artworks as singularities. Again, my hypothesis is that it is social ontology which can furnish a framework for understanding the functions of museum collections, and the possibilities of rethinking their orders that curators have realised. The case studies explore the highest-level options available to curators of rethinking the relations "between part and whole", i.e. between individual artwork and the collection as a totalising object (Myers-Szupinska 2017: 18). This involves building new forms of unity by changing what that totality is imagined to be; by instituting alternative sets of meso-scale mediating subcategories; and by polarising the parts and the whole without mediation. In the chapters below, how artworks become part of a 'we' is an existential-ontological question about the being of artworks and of collections, as much as it an epistemological one. Nevertheless, it is also a question of how "curators [are agents in] the imposition of a world view" because their "vision of the art world" affects "the production of … value" and the governance of the value of material culture in its entirety, as Bourdieu observed (Bourdieu 1993: 161). No form of collective is without its political correlates:

any “ontology of [the] institution” of the art museum requires “a political imaginary of community” to specify its institutional character (Wilson 2017:114).

Chapter 8. Specifying Types of Change in Art Collections: MoMA as 'control experiment'

8.0 Purpose and Structure of Chapter

The art historians Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook have argued "curators need to be clear about their categories because they need to know what kind of [collection] they are putting together" (Graham and Cook 2013: 4). This chapter assesses how change can be measured in museums of modern art, by taking The Museum of Modern Art as a 'control experiment'. In 2019, MoMA comprehensively restructured its collections, and its director and curator provided position statements that clarified what the previous order had always been. These statements illuminate the case studies in the next six chapters through comparison and contrast.

This chapter outlines how I structure the next six. It synthesises the insights about artworks and collections in chapters six and seven to ask nine related questions. The first four questions are empirical, whose answers are provided from the methods of display analysis and discourse analysis outlined in chapter three. The final five questions are speculative ones, based on the methods outlined in chapter four.
The first chapter in each analysis identifies the particular "systematic logic" characterising a collection (Preziosi 1996: 196). The second chapter extrapolates from that to ask what values are being instituted and why. Accordingly, each case study is put under examination across two chapters that move from the concrete to the conceptual.

The nine questions addressing each case study and MoMA are:

First chapter:
1: What is the principal problem addressed by curators in each case study?
2: Which type of structuring relation between artworks, artists, or cultures does each type of problem create?
3: How are artworks individuated within these structuring relations?
4: How do these structuring relations unify the collection?

Second chapter:

5: What model of collectivity correlates to these sets of answers?

6: What ideological tradition does each type of collectivity draw on?

7: What value is privileged in each ideological tradition?

8: What figure can best describe each collection?

9: What other figures are related?

8.1. MoMA as Exemplar: Then and Now

Taking MoMA as a 'control experiment' rests on the idea that European museums of modern art took it as having hegemonic authority. This is agreed upon by museologists and museum directors. The dynamic of the entire sector was that "New York's Museum of Modern Art [w]as a universal role model that found [only] emulators or 'contramodels' in the rest of the Western world during the twentieth century" (Lorente 2011: cover). Accordingly, MoMA was "the most emulated / disputed reference [and] set the canon to be imitated / contested", such that the three case studies all accepted its authority and adapted its model (Lorente 2011: 1). In the art historians Charles Harrison and Jason Wood's terms, "the sheer authority of MoMA's collection remained unquestioned" until the late twentieth century at the earliest (Harrison and Wood 2003: 1183). For Lars Nittve, "the big role model [for all other museums was] for a long time, and probably in many ways, is still the Museum of Modern Art in New York" (Nittve in Culture Trip 2016 n.p.). The keyword here is 'model', just as Lorente argues. If the case studies have departed from their previous incarnations, then they have departed from versions of MoMA's model, by definition. This was the "normative position" in the sector (Bourdieu 1996: 337).

8.1.1. MoMA's former order "untenable"

Curators' articulation of their position in 2019 now makes clear what the basis of its previous model was, retrospectively. The remarkable claim by MoMA's director is that "we [curators] are only just beginning to grasp" the nature of modern art because "the very idea of a single … narrative of modern art [has now] became increasingly

untenable [such that] a new curatorial conviction emerged" about how a collection can account for that 'new reality' (Lowry 2019: 16).

8.2. Identifying Collections' Governing Orders

8.2.1. Question 1: The principal problems

1: What is the principal problem addressed by curators in each case study?

The first question I ask of the three case studies is which principal problematic they have addressed. This was established in chapter five but recapped in light of chapters six-eight. In this regard, MoMA is comparable but remains a special case, having historically acted as the exemplar for all sister institutions. The prime problem MoMA curators faced was simple. This was shaping "a single coherent story … about the history of modern art" able to establish its legitimacy as the representative art of the twentieth century (Lowry 2005: 15). As the testimonies above suggest, MoMA did become "the museum of record" for all others (Schubert 2000: 91).

8.2.2. Question 2: The dominant form of relation

2: Which type of structuring relation between artworks, artists, or cultures does each type of problem create?

The second question implies that a particular type of problem elicits a particular type of answer: that different *types* of problem generate different types of structuring relation, or systems of representation. What is unarguable is that "The Museum of Modern Art in New York has since the 1930s been associated with the chronological account of modern art, and with that form of the account that has been identified as specifically Modernist" (Harrison and Wood 2003: 1183). The equation between 'Modernist' and chronology is not accidental but structural: the former should be understood as a "politics of time" both within the field and connected to wider theories of historical time under cold-war politics (Osborne 1995: title). In such modernist accounts, the dominant form of relation is therefore artworks' position in relation to

what Pearce calls “time’s arrow, articulating “the notion of history as progress, project, and telos” (Pearce 1994: 64). This dominant model of collection is, as Preziosi has theorised an evolutionary concept of time, spatialised. MoMA’s curators have described its previous model as one of exclusively “progressive evolution” (Bajac et al 2019: 20). My hypothesis is that Preziosi is right: that the model of a linear evolutionary chronology was and is central to the dominant concept of collection: it cannot be jettisoned from that concept because it was integral to it. To depart from it is to abandon the founding “logic of museum collecting” altogether because “museum collect[ions are] governed, in modernity [by] the idea of historical representation”: that objects signify by indexing moments in art historical time (Groys 2014: 27). In this order, “typically, the first job… is to slot a work of art into its proper place in time … in the context of the world that informed its making”, because each object functions “as the index of the artist and the[ir] period” (Foster 2012 n.p.). The keyword here is ‘index’, as explored below. It is therefore only in chronological orders that in the most literal sense “art history becomes [realised] *in and of* museological space” (Preziosi 1998a: 509).

Until 2019, MoMA retained a completely chronological display; even in 2021 it is largely chronological. The same is true for most European museums of modern art. Collections *are* timelines, in all but name. There have been dissenters: Serota figured collections where objects remained locked into position in a single overall sequence as “the conveyor belt of history” or a “textbook on the wall” (Serota 1996: 55; Serota in Wullschlager 2016 n.p.). This critique has been belatedly accepted by MoMA, whose director now acknowledges that its former “linear … path” necessarily “simplifies relationships among works of art” into a “teleological construction” (Lowry 2019: 14). Whilst MoMA’s former position has often been caricatured and distorted, Pollock’s description of this form of relation between objects remains exemplary: MoMA shaped “the discipline of Art History [to] manufacture … a specific, separate history for art as a formal succession of styles and self-defining movements” (Pollock 2014: 10). MoMA’s “systematic logic” was that art could “find the principle of change within itself, as though history were internal to the system” (Preziosi 1996: 196; Brown 2019: 25). This is not true at MoMA since 2019, nor at the case studies.

8.2.3. Question 3: How artworks are individuated

3: How are artworks individuated within these structuring relations?

The third question draws upon the idea above that in museums artworks are customarily subject to a governing "principle of *individuation*" (Osborne 2012: 84). This question asks how curators make manifest artworks' individuality, by identifying "the main forms of mediation of the individuality of works of contemporary art" they employ (Osborne 2013: 85). MoMA is exemplary in this regard in having explicitly positioned artists, rather than artworks, as 'species'. The relationship between Linneaus's scheme of botanical taxonomy and the canonical order of modern art has been outlined by MoMA's director himself, as the internalisation into art history of a "fundamentally taxonomic approach" (Lowry 2019: 14). In figure 8.2., the first director of MoMA, Alfred H. Barr, created a Linnean system of classification in which individual artists are unique 'species'; each is grouped within "movements" as their 'genus'; then into "currents" akin to Linneaus's 'families'; these exist in wider "traditions" that are Linneaus's 'class' of artworks (see figure 8.2.; Barr 1936a: 9; Barr 1936b: 11; Barr 1936c: 19). The nature and origin of MoMA's system of representation is beyond doubt, due to recent archival work.

8.2.4. Question 4: How is each collection unified?

4: How do these structuring relations unify the collection?

As outlined above, one defining characteristic of a collection as with other type of formal collective entity is it must possess a necessary "regulative conceptual unity" (Osborne 2013: 47). In MoMA curators' words, the former governing form of unity was "the organizing principle of a canon" where a single elite stratum of objects constituted "a self-contained force" by exemplifying modernity more fully than any others (Bajac et al 2019: 20). By definition this system of representation could only accommodate "a linear history" (Bajac et al 2019: 20). For MoMA's director, "what we used to call the canon" no longer "represent[s]" what MoMA stands for since "the rethinking of the collection" in 2019 (Lowry 2019: 15,16). It is a 'post-canon' collection.

Up until the last generation, MoMA's account of modern art through the concept of a canon occupied a discrete, fictive "art-historical time" (Curtis 2013 n.p.). More importantly, a canonical order was a genealogy, "in which art movements and -isms were shown to have begotten other movements and -isms" (Higgins 2019 n.p.). This is to say that the unification of the collection was through relations of cause and effect alone: the entire display order was a chain of causal relations laid out in space. MoMA's director has rejected this: the "thing we've done [in 2019] is move away from thinking that our galleries are purely sequential. Now, each gallery is a self-contained unit" or "one chapter" akin to a "modular unit" instead of a unified sequence (Lowry in Goldstein 2019a n.p.). This parallels Frances Morris 's description of galleries as "chapterised" rather than constituting a single, totalising narrative form (Lowry in Goldstein 2019a n.p.; Morris 2016b n.p.). MoMA's change acknowledges the critique that it "substitute[d] chronology for history", or a model of art historical change for historical analysis (Pollock 2012: 13).

8.3. Identifying Collections' Value Schemes / Ideological Co-ordinates

The fifth through to ninth questions undertake more speculative forms of enquiry that are answered in the second chapter about each case study.

8.3.1. Question 5: Models of collectivity corresponding to case studies

5: What model of collectivity correlates to these sets of answers?

The fifth question asks what kind of collective entities correspond to the organising principles and structural relations in each case study. The MoMA model can be redescribed as having created a highly particular form of collective. It is a model of "museum [display that] extracts artifacts from their former social lives and creates new relations among them *qua* artworks" alone (Lutticken 2019: 284). Creating an evolutionary-geneaological account involves assembling a "trans-historical" community of elite artists connected by an endless chain of causality – precisely by virtue of being assembled in one place (Curtis 2012 n.p.). Seen in this light, the 'imagined community' that MoMA institutionalised was a disparate but geographically

coherent Euro-American elite ultimately constituted by its co-presence in the museum and within its 'art-historical time'.

The subdivision of this time into "middle-ground entities" exemplified by a concatenation of 'movements' has been similarly jettisoned by MoMA (Reylea 2015: 8). Movements are now no longer named at "MoMA … in its labels" (Higgins 2019 n.p.). At the same time, displays are no longer "segregated" into "separate … discipline-specific galleries", because curators have undertaken a "de-hierarchization … of disciplines" such that these meso-scale taxonomic categories no longer structure displays as discrete communities of practice. (Bajac et al 2019: 24,22). A community ordered by taxonomic categories of chronology, movement, and discipline, is, I believe, categorically different to a 'de-hierarchised' and 'de-segregated'. The director assesses the "change this brings in terms of … the institution's [concept of] art" as one that "cannot be underestimated" (Lowry 2019: 15-6). This is to say that the concept of art and the concept of collection at MoMA are fundamentally different to before 2019, if one can take its curators' claims seriously. The same is true at the case studies.

8.3.2. Question 6: Ideological co-ordinates

6: What ideological tradition does each type of collectivity draw on?

The sixth question asked of each case study is what set of ideological co-ordinates that each type of collectivity is associated with. It rests on the idea that every conceptualisation of an abstraction, and particularly of a collection, is an imaginative process grounded in one or other ideological traditions, as the ICOM controversy illustrated. There is no tradition of political thought that does not provide answers to the questions of how the individual and collective are related, and what defines in-group / out-group relations. There is no collection that does not answer these questions. Andrew Hunt is one of the few contributors to date to have asked anything resembling a parallel question explicitly: "what [is it that] a new collecting institution might look like [and] how might a museum of this kind embody a new ideological model?" (Hunt 2018: 14).

However, even MoMA's curators have argued their ideological position has shifted fundamentally by remarking that their predecessors "systematic bias" is now "plainly apparent" (Bajac et al 2019: 20). Similarly, Frances Morris has labelled predecessors of "institutional bias, unconscious bias" towards female artists and non-European artists (Morris in Neudendorf 2016 n.p.). For MoMA's senior curatoriate, speaking collectively, "in 2019 it is absolutely urgent to populate our galleries with works of art that reflect … the demographic profile [of the US and the wider world] … regarding gender, ethnicity and geography" (Bajac et al 2019: 24, 26). It may not be possible to disaggregate the "political and aesthetic pressures" on curators, but MoMA's 2019 rehang explicitly "diversif[ied] [its] Eurocentric holdings in terms of gender, race and region" (Foster 2019: 13). MoMA curators have accepted that "the modernist vision" of predecessors underwrote an "reliable indifference to … artists who happened to be women, or not white … [such that their actions] reinforced societal inequities" (Bajac et al 2019: 20). A collective with an "inclusive position" is categorically different to a canonical one (Bajac et al 2019: 20).

There are two key insights here. First, MoMA's curators have made explicit its former order had an *unacknowledged* political character. Second, in their view it is possible for a group of "works of art [to] reflect" a "demographic profile", despite being inanimate objects. This idea rests on a strategic slippage between 'works of art' as objects, and authors as subjects that configures artworks as one particular kind of quasi-subjects. This is, undoubtedly, an "account is both more [historically] accurate and more [ethically] attractive" than its modernist predecessor (Foster 2019: 13). It rests on a different model of anthropomorphisation to its predecessor. Curators' metaphors have changed accordingly. In MoMA's director's words, "museums [no longer] feel like [hermetically] sealed boxes" but have become "populated … with a more diverse cohort" of acquisitions (Lowry quoted in The Nation 2019a n.p.; Lowry 2019: 15). This form of anthropomorphisation is one in which artworks "reflect" their authors. It also rests on two ontological claims, about the social order outside the museum, and the collection order within. This has always been true. To paraphrase Jon Ippolito above, these ideas have only become visible because of the speed of change in museums' systems of representation.

8.3.3. Question 7: Central values

7: What value is privileged in each ideological tradition?

The seventh question identifies which value is privileged above all others in the ideological tradition identified. All major reordering projects must institute alternative values to those of their predecessors to be worth pursuing. None are value free. Some curators have made the change of values explicit. Frances Morris has explicitly argued that "it's [changing] the value scheme [of the institution] that I'm interested in" and that Tate's reordering project "involves a rethinking of the purpose of the museum" wholesale to achieve this (Morris 2018 n.p.; Morris in Charlesworth 2017 n.p.). MoMA curators have made clear that this is similarly the case. This question draws on museological literature from Brian O'Doherty to Serge Guilbaut to Susan Stewart that has identified the prime value underpinning museums of modern art, and in particular MoMA, understanding it as embodying liberal ideals of personal liberty (see O'Doherty 1976; Guilbaut 1983; Stewart 1984).

8.3.4. Question 8: New names

8: What figure can best describe each collection?

The eighth question synthesises the answers from the first seven to offer a name for a particular type of order. To recap why this is needed: MoMA's director has argued it is now essential to "insist on … changing the way people speak about … the collection", because the lexicon to describe it is outmoded and "feels so wrong" (Lowry in Higgins 2019 n.p.). If the director of the world's richest and most powerful museum of modern art "insist[s]" that the dominant language people use to "speak about" collections "feels so wrong", it is worth taking heed.

My hypothesis is that it is no accident that the most important curators in modern art's history have rendered its history graphic or coined new figures to describe it. As suggested, it is MoMA's own curators and directors who have coined the dominant metaphors through which the history of modern art became conceptualised in the twentieth century. Alfred H. Barr famously described MoMA's collection both as a "torpedo" moving through time, and as a genealogical "family tree of -isms" (Lowry

2012 n.p.; Jones 2006 n.p.). Figures 8.1. and 8.3. show how these figures were rendered graphic and vivid. For MoMA's director, these images were "an inherent and crucial part of the development of modern art [itself]" (Lowry 2012 n.p.). What the images cannot convey is their importance in structuring collections across the sector. In MoMA's director's words, "the chart has two principal axes: on the vertical, time, and on the horizontal, styles or movements, with both leading inexorably to the creation of abstract art") Lowry 2012 n.p.). The figure of a family tree or timeline vivified the idea that a museum should do is represent art's 'own' genealogical order. It is difficult to overstate the overwhelming importance of these figures in conceptualising art and its history. Frances Morris has testified that Tate, and all other museums of modern art followed MoMA's image of "a history of art as a route map that could be followed" (Morris 2016b n.p.). In her words, "that *image* underpinned the subsequent development of [all] American and European museums and indeed Tate Modern's own", because "this timeline [is what ordered] the collection … in space" (Morris 2016b n.p.). Morris is the director of the largest museum of modern art in Europe: her testimony must be accorded weight. She argues that collections *were* timelines. Accordingly, if they are no longer, then the figure of 'the collection as –' is essential to understand how 'plastic' collections can be. For Morris, what was decisive in determining the entire nature of collections across European museums of modern art was the dominant image of it: how it was described through metaphor.

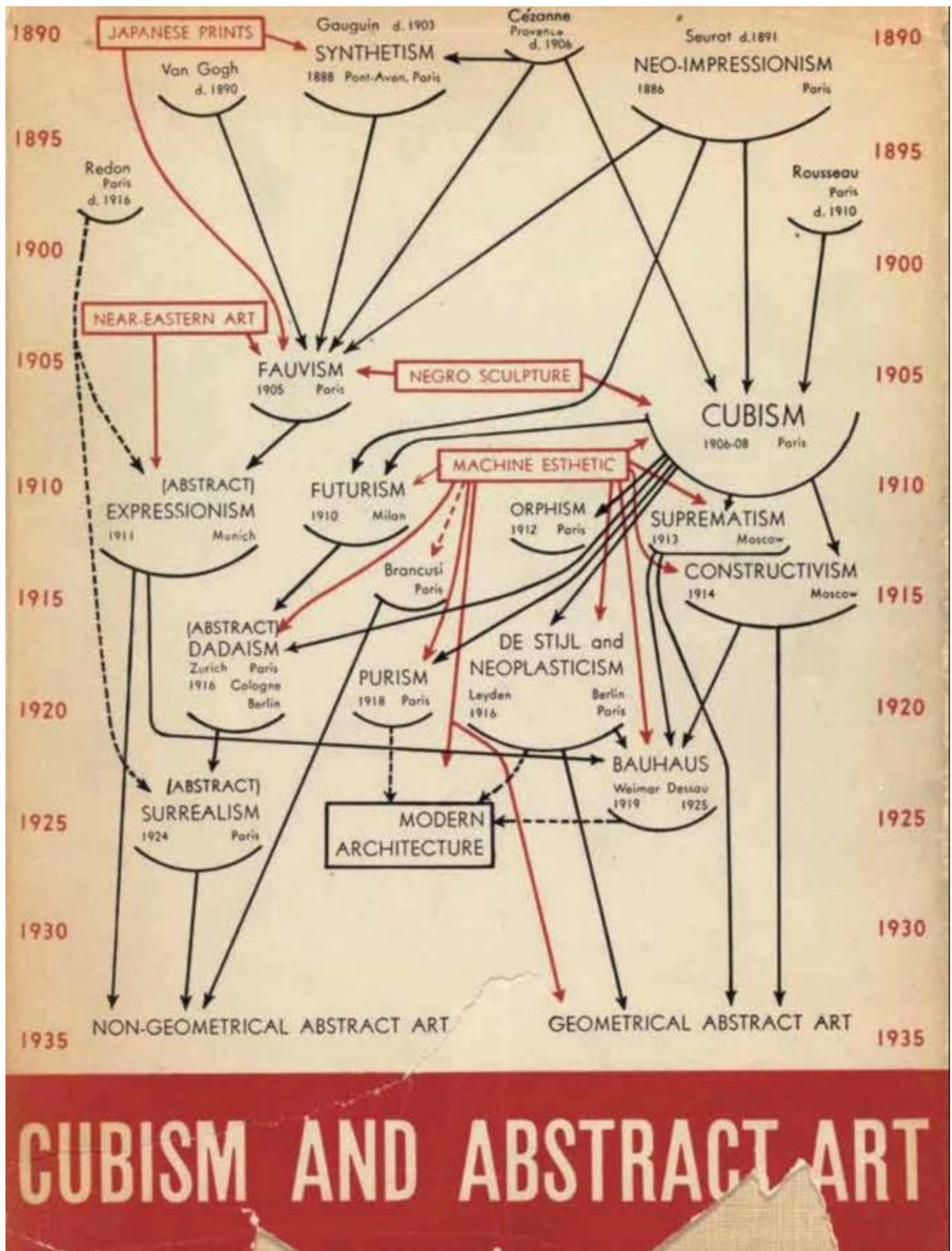


Figure 8.1. Cover of *Cubism and Abstract Art* catalogue, 1936: diagram designed by Alfred H. Barr Jr © MoMA

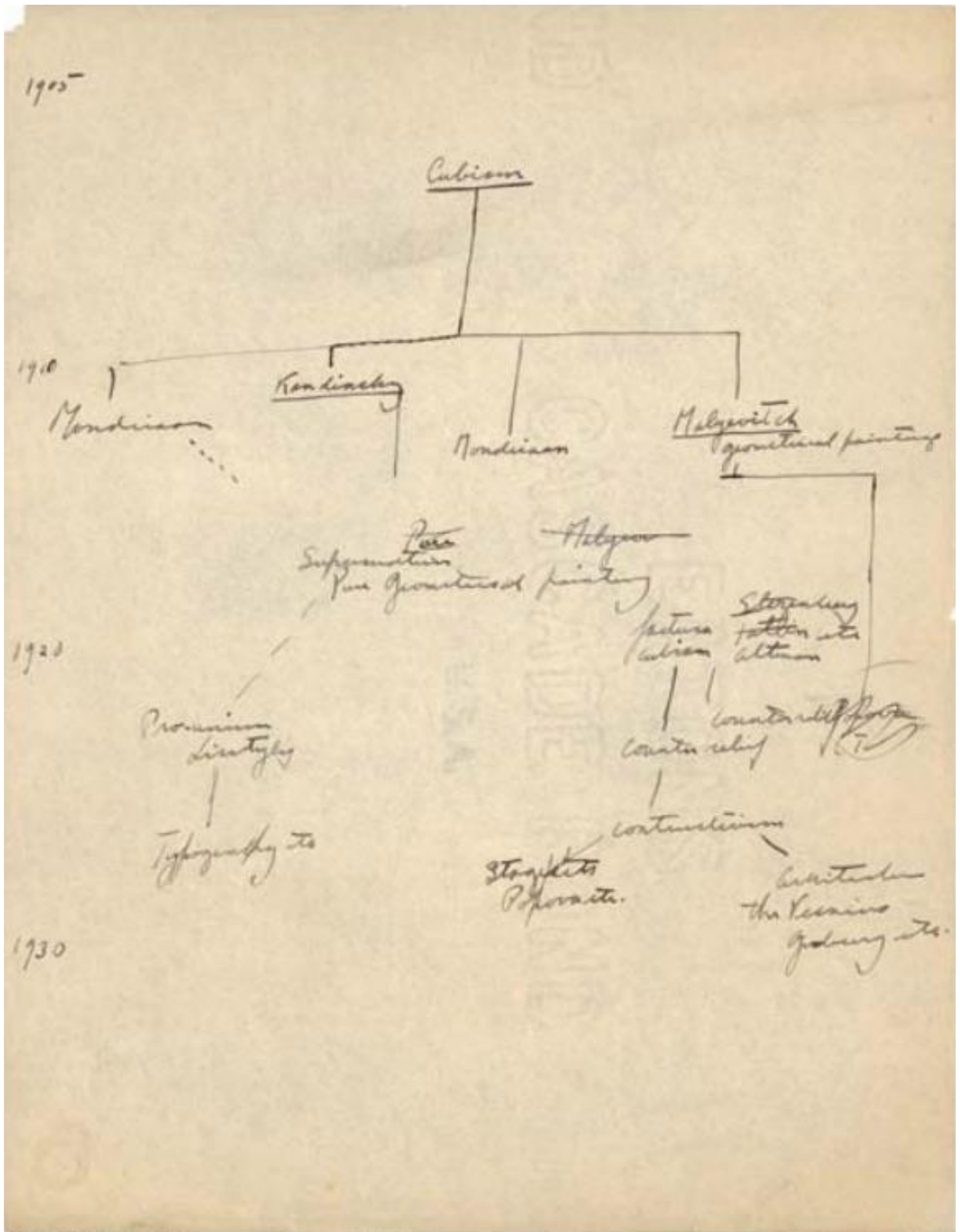
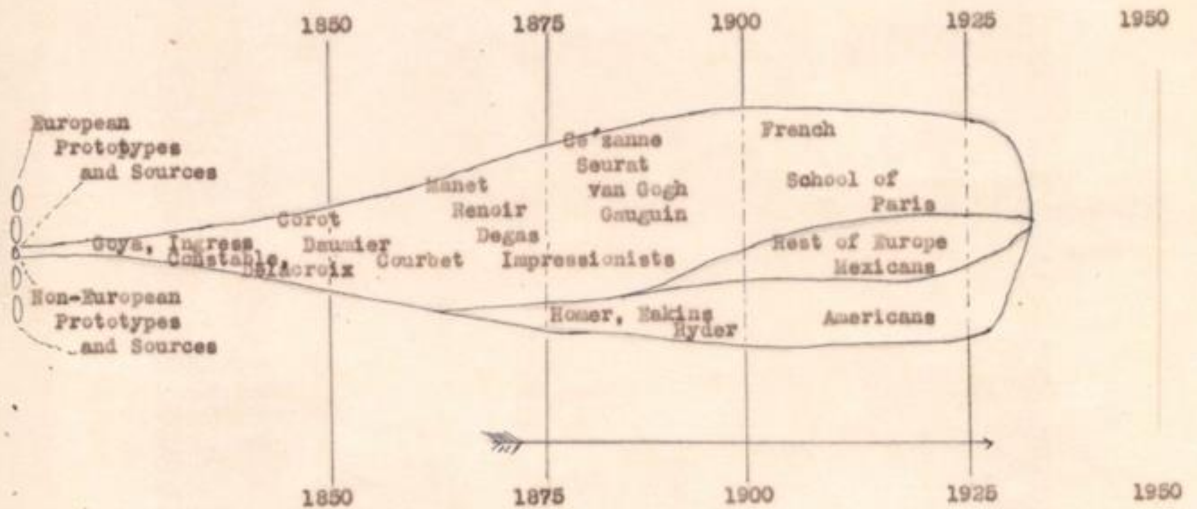


Figure 8.2. Alfred H. Barr's sketch of a genealogical 'family tree' for the cover of *Cubism and Abstract Art*, 1936, from the MoMA archive © MoMA.

- 3 a -

DIAGRAM I



"TORPEDO" DIAGRAM OF IDEAL PERMANENT COLLECTION

Figure 8.3: Alfred H. Barr's drawing titled as ""Torpedo" diagram of [an] ideal permanent collection" in MoMA's archive, 1933, © MoMA

The eighth question therefore asks which other forms of figure beyond a timeline, road map or family tree, or a network or constellation, are adequate to each case study. All three case studies echo MoMA curators in now believing “modern art is resistant to simplification and [ready] organization”, and that alternative forms of understanding collections are required to account for it (Lowry 2005: 14).

In the introductory chapter, I outlined the idea that collections needed to be refigured: to lose their theological figuration and be understood through more worldly metaphors. In 2019 MoMA’s director described his predecessors as seeing the collection as the “Book of Genesis”: the single authoritative account of the entirety of twentieth century art (Lowry Higgins 2019 n.p.). I could hardly have asked for a better illustration of this argument from a more authoritative figure in the field. In fact, MoMA’s curators offered an array of figures to describe the collection anew. Their diversity shows the difficulty of doing this. In the Chief Curator’s term, the differential between the collection in 2005 and 2019 is that “now it’s a ‘pluriverse’, not a *universe*” (Temkin in Stapley-Brown 2019 n.p.). In the Curator of Film’s terms, the collection is no longer “a straight line” but “a larger net, hoping to capture a lot more of what’s in that beautiful sea of modern and contemporary art”: a figure adapted from Kant’s understanding of how concepts are a net that ‘captures’ experience (Roy in Luke, Kenny, Carrigan et al 2019 n.p.). In MoMA’s director’s terms, its “multitudinous nature” reflects that “we live in a plurality” that requires “multiple histories” told simultaneously (Lowry 2019: 14; Lowry in Burns 2018 n.p.). This has clear political correlates. As Latour puts it, the language of plurality and multiplicity is “a new space of political representation” because “to speak about plural practices is to already remove oneself from the dangerous hegemony implied by the notion of a singular system” (Latour 2020 n.p.). Lowry’s is an ontological claim about who occupies modernity, and a political claim about the nature of museums’ authority, and their system of representation.

8.3.5. Question 9: Related figures

9: What other figures are related?

The final question asks what other figures can describe the case study collection displays, as collocates or subordinate metaphors. In MoMA's case, as many feminist art historians have argued, Barr's 'family tree' can be reimagined in political terms. It is a patrilineal way of narrating modern art's history as an "almost exclusive parade of white male superstars" (Reilly 2019 n.p.). In 2019, the director drew attention to the fact that "twenty-eight per cent of works now on view at MoMA are by women … five times as high as the proportion in the galleries at the beginning of the century" (at 5%) (Lowry cited in Higgins 2019 n.p.). This demonstrates curators' acknowledgment of such critiques, and of Tate Modern's prior example.

8.4. Questions Tabulated

For simplicity, at the end of each case study I will present the set of nine questions as a summary diagram. Each case study will be compared to MoMA's model outlined below.

Figure 8.1. Tabulation of key questions and speculative conclusions: late twentieth century MoMA

	Question	MoMA 20C
1	Problematic	Creating modern art's history
2	Type of relations	Sequential cause and effect
3	Mode of individuation	Chronological
4	Mode of unity	Genealogical
5	Model of collectivity	Transhistorical elite
6	Political correlate	Liberalism
7	Prime value	Universality
8	Figure	Family Tree
9	Collocates	Patrilineage

The left column of the table summarises the chain of questions required to specify how any art museum displays its holdings. The right column tabulates how The Museum of Modern Art can best be described as having ordered its collections – through the testimonies of its seven most senior staff in collective statements. It therefore cannot be taken as entirely arbitrary, even if their interests are not irrelevant. Lowry has been director since 1995, rather than joining the institution in

2019. For the director of the world's richest and most powerful museum of modern art, and who is in charge of what is all but unarguably the greatest collection of modern art worldwide to describe MoMA's position throughout the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s in such extraordinary terms deserves attention. For a longstanding director to make public statements outlining a wholesale change in the institution's philosophy, after 24 years of tenure, means his terms must be taken seriously. The chapters below examine just how far the three case studies' redevelopments diverge from MoMA's genealogical, patrilineal, universalising model of collection.

Section Four:
Case Study Analyses

Chapter 9. Tate Modern:
Convening Actors Across Geopolitical Space

9.0. Purpose and Structure of Chapter

The following six chapters undertake case study analyses through the idea voiced above that art is 'methodologically open' and 'thrives on imported ideas'. The job of three of these chapters is to 'import' new ideas that can most accurately describe how curators have reordered their collection displays. These ideas relate directly to interviewees' own remarks and displays analyses. As also outlined, this requires extensive use of quotations to test how collections should now be redescribed. These sources all offer alternative conceptions of the individual and the collective, providing new ways of 'rethinking the collectives'. The residual image of a collection display is as a timeline or family tree, spatialised in time: as Frances Morris outlined, it was this *image* that determined collections' forms and the concept of modern art. My hypothesis is that the three displays correlate to categorically different images and are in need of other names. This involves calling on a whole host of voices to test which 'fit' most accurately: which provide a successful analogon for the new relationships created. This purpose of this 'openness to imported ideas' is not to flatten these voices nor render them equivalent. The 'openness' is necessary to test which *form* of image can describe each case study; these images have different disciplinary affiliations – and are themselves "travelling concepts" in Mieke Bal's sense (Bal 2002: title). The project therefore rests on bringing together insights from sources that have no internal relation – in a way that intentionally parallels the curators' own methods.

This chapter examines the transformation of the Tate Modern collection displays since 2016, since the opening of the Switch House in June that year. It starts from the understanding that it has only been during the research period that "Tate Modern's displays are now able to emphasise the global scope of contemporary art practice" and that this constitutes a fundamental change in what it is and does (Tate 2019d: 7). As outlined this chapter is structured into by the four questions:
1: What is the principal problem addressed by curators in each case study?

2: Which type of structuring relation between artworks, artists, or cultures does each type of problem create?
3: How are artworks individuated within these structuring relations?
4: How do these structuring relations unify the collection?

9.1. Geopolitical-Ethical Problems

1: What is the principal problem addressed by curators in each case study?

As suggested, the principal problem addressed by Tate Modern has been summarised as being presenting a "more global" collection (Tate 2016d n.p.). The scale and scope of this shift and its import for the wider sector can scarcely be overstated. The aim has been to realise "a fundamental shift in the [model of the] museum", in its director's words: to create a different type of collection to all those before it (Morris 2016b n.p.). The directors' image of the institution is as a "global institution" whose collection spans "as wide a geographical reach as possible" (Tate 2019: 3; Tate 2012 n.p.). Interviewees argued that the appointment of Frances Morris and Maria Balshaw in 2016 and 2017 should be seen as a tipping point in pursuing this agenda. In 2017 when joining the organisation, Balshaw still identified "an overdominance of white European work at the Tate", even after the 2016 rehang (Balshaw in Williams 2017 n.p.). Her aspiration has been to create "the most … culturally inclusive gallery in the world" by "addressing imbalances in … representation … in the collection" and ensuring "the debate surrounding post-colonialism is at the fore of concerns" (Balshaw in Williams 2017 n.p.; Tate 2019d: 13, 7). The trajectory of the collection, in summary, is to look "beyond Euramerica" (Tate 2019a n.p.). What has required research has been how these changes have played out, and what effects they have had on the dynamics of displays.

9.1.1. Geopolitical-ethical problems as ones of representation

Tate's problem is a representational one in dual senses. First is the vernacular sense that its directors identify the single most urgent problem for curators as that "it really

just comes down to … who gets represented" in collections (Opie in Jobey 2021: 35). This is to say that collection displays have been increasingly structured on the geopolitical affiliations and "protected characteristics" of authors (HM Govt 2010 n.p.). The second sense of representation Stuart Hall's: that "representation" is a complete "system … [that] consists of … organizing, clustering, arranging and classifying concepts, and of establishing complex relations between them" (Hall 1997: 17). In part, this relates to art museums' traditional mission of elaborating the full range of the extensions of the concept of art. The two can, I believe, be readily reconciled. This would involve aligning or equating the diversity of those extensions with their geopolitical distribution, such that different cultures' concepts of art constitute its diversity. In the most senior curator's terms, the single biggest "challenge" for Tate Modern is ensuring that "we [really do] have enough works from other parts of the world that would make [each display] a truly global representation" of a movement, event or problem (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18).

9.1.2. Representing the "painting and sculpture of all countries"

Tate Modern's internationalist outlook in 2021 can be compared to that of its former 'selves' over the long term. The Tate Gallery's 1947 guidebook was titled *Modern Foreign Pictures* – both excluding sculpture and dividing 'native' from 'foreign' production (Rothenstein 1947: title). A generation later, this collection was classified as 'international modern art' and the director Norman Reid asserted in the guidebook of 1969 that Tate['s] collection of painting and sculpture [is] of all countries" (Reid 1969: 6). On my understanding, this meant 12-15 countries at most in practice (there were 191 nation-states recognised by the United Nations at that point). Reid's internationalism was genuine: he was "involved in the Delhi Biennale" (Gale pers. corr. 21.12.18). The point is simple: what 'all countries' was taken to mean in 1969 and 2021 are categorically different. The geographical determinations of what 'modern art' is, in the accounts provided by European museums, have expanded with each decade. What is important, however, is that the concept of 'modern art' was firmly associated with an *ideal* of internationalism that has remained in place. In 1947, the modern collection was of "pictures"; in 1969 it was a "collection of painting and sculpture". In 2021 its conceptual-medial limits are far less clear.

Tate's approach to these dual changes can be clarified at the outset, though evidence through display analyses. One account of changes in institutions' ability to amend their concept of art identifies their "capacity to synthesise the impact of new geopolitical realities on art practices [as key] – which includes the transformation of the ontology of art" (Trahair 2015 n.p.). This claim subsumes the transformation of the concept of art as itself internal to its globalisation – rather than the other way around, as other thinkers specify (see Osborne 2013). Globalisation is the cause, and changes in the concept of art the effect, in Lisa Trahair's account.

Frances Morris has articulated the key change to Tate's collection through cartographic means. I do not see it as accidental that Stuart Hall argued that "culture is … defined in terms of … shared conceptual maps", defining the politics of culture through cartographic imagery (Hall 1997: 18). Tate's representation of art has been increasingly forwarded through these terms, discursively and through displays. When she has described the changes to the collection, Morris has shown interlocutors three related maps: one of the geopolitical regions Tate Modern represented "c.2000", one of the cities artworks were acquired from in the 2010s; and one of the Acquisition Committees that funded those acquisitions (figures 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3.). The maps show the collection as a system of representation conceived of on a planetary scale since 2010 and restricted to "Euramerica" in 2000 (Tate 2019a n.p.). The Tate collection is therefore equated with 'the world' in its totality, rather than with European modernist art history. Interviewees argued it was only during the research period of 2013-20 that a tipping point in achieving this goal was realised: that "it's [only] now that we go on to tell other stories that may not always look back to that [canonical] path" (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18).

The organisation of Morris's maps in terms of geopolitical regions and cities is significant. As one critic has noted, "the art community is increasingly moving away from discussions of nationality in favour of two parallel models: firstly, by looking at regions rather than nations; and secondly, at cities as art centers independent of the countries they're in" (Trezzi 2016 n.p.). This describes Morris's approach precisely: a conclusion borne out by display analysis. Figure 9.2. identifies individual cities; figure 9.3. shows geographical regions schematically related. Nations are not identified in either. Acquisitions Committees are structured by region. Displays, as I outlined

below, position cities as ‘centres’ – or more accurately, ‘nodes’ of production and communication.

In Morris’s words about figure 9.2, “this map looks like the conquest of the world – [but we should] think of it the other way around – that the world is conquering the Tate” (Morris 2016b n.p.). The only way that this construction can make sense is if the artworks cumulatively signify ‘the world’ in their totality; and they do so by speaking ‘of, or ‘from’ particular territories that can together add up to ‘the world’. It is only this that affords what Andrew Hunt has described as a “collection display” that is not only “global and diverse” but based on “non-identification with existing canons” where those canons are specific to “Euramerica” (Hunt 2018: 16; Tate 2019a n.p.). This is to say that Tate Modern’s new order has challenged the existing concept and dominant hierarchy of art production by forwarding a fully formed “contramodel” designed to stand in distinction to MoMA’s, as Morris has strongly implied (Lorente 2011: cover; see Morris 2016b n.p.).

Figure 9.1. Cartographic description of the geopolitical regions artworks were acquired from up to 2000, according to Frances Morris. © Tate. The image underlines how the majority of the globe was positively excluded.

Figure 9.2. “Areas of collections activity”: cities where artworks have been acquired from by Tate or acquisition partners operate from. Created for the reordering of the entire collection accompanying the opening of the Switch House in 2016. © Tate.

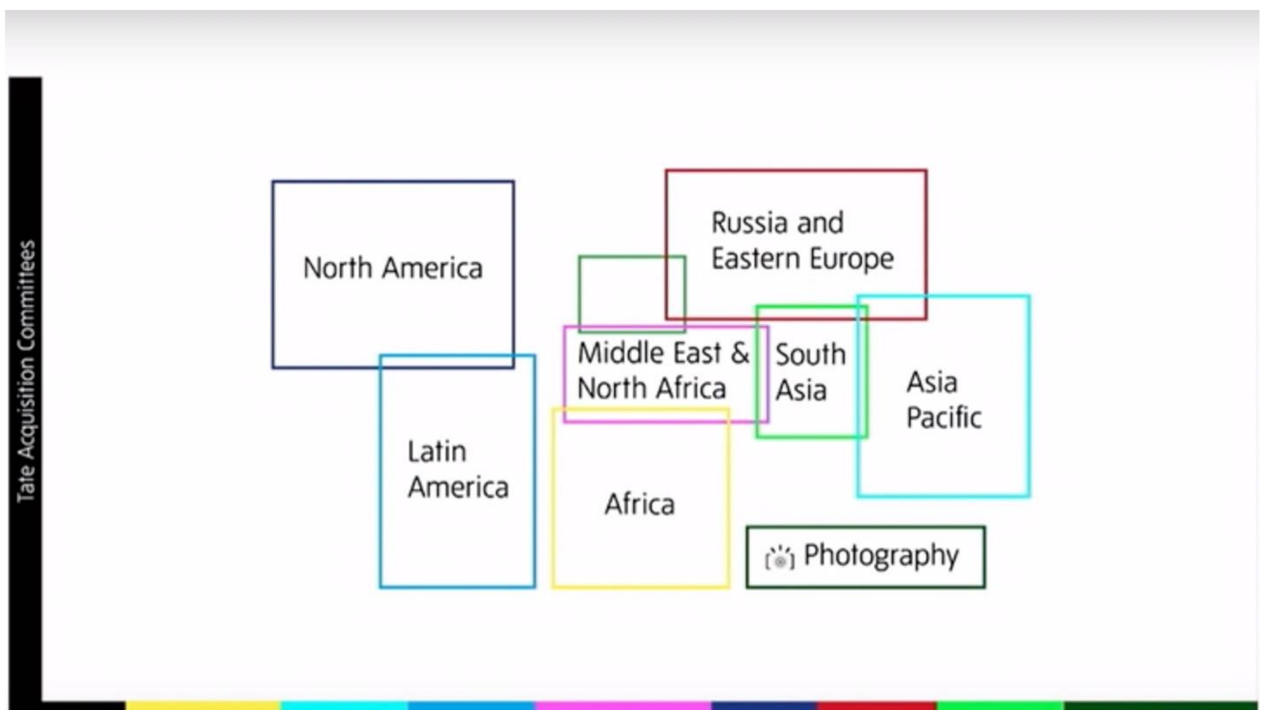


Figure 9.3. Schematic cartographic diagram of the remits of Tate's Acquisition Committees. Note that 'Western Europe' is a blank rectangle indicating the area is already attended to; and that "photography" currently occupies the place of Australasia, although the Asia-Pacific Acquisitions Committee actually covers this subregion. © Tate.

Morris's contrast visible between figures 9.1. and 9.2. is polemical, because the Head of Displays noted that in previous Tate strategy documents "how often the position has been aware of what's been lacking [geographically] … What I find interesting as a historian is how we get into these cycles of awareness, disappearance, rediscovery – and who gets lost in the tumble, and who then comes back in that. And we're all dogged by those frailties and oversights" (Gale pers. corr. 20.12.18). He testified that the 2016 rehang included researching previous acquisitions made by artists based in non-Western countries, and which had subsequently remained in storage after being initially shown.

9.2. Identitarian Relations in 'Chapterised' Galleries

2: Which type of structuring relation between artworks, artists, or cultures does each type of problem create?

9.2.1. Three novel types of collection display

Interviewees described three distinct models of display that have been introduced into galleries during the research period. Each is structured on what are broadly identitarian principles, where at least to a high degree, the geopolitical location of the producer and their "protected characteristics" differentiate artworks (HM Govt 2010 n.p.). As I outlined above, individual displays are now understood as semi-autonomous modular units which are "chapterised" (Morris 2016b n.p.). I interpret this metaphor to signal how chapters in an academic volume are structured rather than those in a novel: as contributing to a greater whole through the accumulation of

diverse ‘voices’ assembled, rather than their logical connection in an Aristotelian argument (Morgan 2013: 26).

The first type of display, which the Director of Collections discussed, was that curators have extended understandings of canonical art movements such as ‘pop art’, ‘land art’ or ‘minimalism’ that had previously been exemplified by exclusively Euro-American artists. This principal spans both exhibitions and collection displays. The 2015 Tate Modern exhibition *The World Goes Pop* was, for example, followed by the 2019 collection display *Beyond Pop* organised by the same curator Flavia Frigeri (Morgan & Frigeri 2015 n.p.). Both reinterpreted these movements by assembling “artists from across the world” whose artworks could be seen as being forms of ‘pop art’ (Frigeri 2019 n.p.). Previous displays conventionally prioritised artists who had “been validated in the art market” (Nakamori pers. corr. 29.06.19). In short, they prioritised individual figures perceived as having initially introduced a new style into that market and been ‘validated’ for doing so, rather than giving exposition to how ideas have both distributed origins and distributed effects.

A second model of display has, as outlined below, to create portraits of particular cities outside “Euramerica” at key junctures (Tate 2019a n.p.).. As the Head of Displays remarked, an entire genre of new displays all titled with the prefix as “A View From” were introduced across all wings of the Boiler House during the research period (Gale pers. corr. 21.12.19). A third set of displays explored immediately below were based on world historical events or socio-political issues, often in relation to particular identity positions.

9.2.2. Display Type 1: LGBTQ+ histories across space: ‘Intimacy, Activism and AIDS’

The first display I examine as exemplifying Tate Modern’s new post-2016 order was titled ‘Intimacy, Activism and AIDS’. This was the sole display in 2018 or 2019 curated by the most senior collection curator in the institution, the Director of Collections (International Art) Gregor Muir, in tandem with Kerryn Greenberg. Muir’s testimony was that this display was intended to exemplify and summarise the changes to the collection taking place. One critic has paraphrased Muir’s description

of the goal of the display as being that it could narrate “a worldwide, inclusive perspective of the [HIV] epidemic” through artworks made in response to it (Grando 2019 n.p.).

One observation made by Muir was that “the majority of the studies of the impact of AIDS on art and culture have focused on white male artists working in New York” (Muir and Greenberg 2018 n.p.) The curatorial approaches to a subject that has had a global impact had been dominated by one centre, mostly by artists of one ethnicity, and of one gender. The key observation that Muir elaborated was that this is precisely how the dominant history of modern art seen in most museums has always been told. In this regard, the subject of the AIDS pandemic in the 1980s and 1990s provided an ideal means to ‘speak about’ what Tate Modern’s new vision of the collection as reaching “beyond Euramerica” is (Tate 2019a n.p.). A global ‘event’ that artists responded to directly and which therefore can be seen to have altered the course of art provided one “subject” through which an equally global or “transnational” display could work (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18). In Muir’s terms, this particular “display was premised on the thought that if we were to be a transnational museum, with a transnational collection that we might be able to look at subjects through a transnational lens” (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18). This chain of ideas is key to the analyses that follow.

The display was able to highlight the gap between the parochial geopolitical horizons of curatorial projects to date about the pandemic and its global effects. The ethical and artistic imperatives were “to acknowledge that whilst AIDS had a profound effect in America and certainly in New York, and certainly in Manhattan in a particular period of time, the story was not to be left there” – given, as the display panel relates, there are “more than 35 million people who have died of AIDS-related illnesses”, disproportionately affecting Africa rather than North America (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18; Muir and Greenberg 2018 n.p). What the opening of the Switch House in 2016 afforded, for Muir, was “a moment for us to say ‘let’s go into our own collection and see if we can tell this story from a global point of view’” “acknowledge and appreciate” the “global” scope of the event and of the artistic responses to it (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18). The display was expressly designed as one means of assembling work in one place by artists either who were born in or who lived in Europe, the Americas, Australia, Asia, and Africa.

In Muir's testimony, the founding "idea [for the display] was to acknowledge and appreciate just how much work has been coming into this area, but you saw, dare I say, 'canonistic' thinking applied to the pandemic" – to connect the 'subject' to a curatorial mode of thinking in order to highlight the limitations of existing contributions (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18). The unorthodox figure of "canonistic thinking" is key to Tate's approach.

I take the idea of "canonistic thinking" to describe the default or dominant approach to narrating the history of art in museums, which finds its echo in histories of the pandemic. 'Stories' that are global in scope are reduced to being stories are told both about and 'from' the richest Euro-American centres. The net effect is that only the 'voices' of the relatively privileged demographic groups and ones in Western centres are heard. These narratives thereafter come to define what constitutes public discourse. Perspectives forwarded from other territories and from subject positions of alterity become 'inaudible', and their art production invisible. 'Intimacy, Activism and AIDS' could provincialise the 'Euramerican' stock of stories about art production connected to what was undeniably a 'world historical event. In this respect, Tate's displays have internalised Dipesh Chakrabarty's imperative of "provincializing Europe" – and America – and can be identified as being explicitly based on this principle (Chakrabarty 2007: title).

The pandemic has affected every category of subject, though in the 1980s and early 1990s, many creative responses to it were produced largely by artists identifying as LGBTQ+. As the three-part title of 'Intimacy, Activism and AIDS' indicates, the 'subject' is directly related to artists' approaches to art making and to shaping new purposes for and concepts of art. The display is an unusually powerful curatorial thesis because both the 'form' and 'content' of the artworks *and* the form and content of the display are as inseparable. Muir argued that the pandemic has a special relationship to concepts of art practice, and vice versa: that "artists around the world were at the forefront of the response to the AIDS pandemic because many artists felt compelled to act" (Muir and Greenberg 2018 n.p.). The display profiles a particular shared conception of the nature and function of art, as it evolved across space, at one particular historical juncture. It also outlines how worldly events affected artists' concept of art, and drove changes in it. The curatorial thesis is that the AIDS

pandemic prompted many artists to adopt more expressly politicised models of art production. It is implicitly also that it has prompted the museum to represent these politicised conceptions of art practice. The subtlety of the curatorial thesis is not that it 'depicts' a world historical event, but that this event is seen as catalysing the development of one novel extension of the concept of art shared across territories.

Given the majority of artists in the display identify or identified as LGBTQ+, the display has three functions at one. It is (a) a counter-history of a world historical event as seen through artists' eyes'; (b) a counter-history of a moment in contemporary art history from "the 1980s and 1990s"; and (c) a story about how the importance of LGBTQ+ artists in expanding the concept of art (Muir and Greenberg 2018 n.p.). The success of the display, in my view, is in intertwining these three as to be inseparable. It also rests on how LGBTQ+ artists are not treated as a unified entity, but rather the diversity of their creative approaches are squarely emphasised. Most of the artists displayed can broadly be associated with activist conceptions of art, but almost all of them work in manifestly different media and with extraordinarily different approaches. One of Tate Modern's imperatives is to exhibit a panoramic range of ways of making art. This display achieves that whilst being unified in the three ways named above. 'Intimacy, Activism and AIDS' includes media and modes of expression from paintings by Juan Davila and Bhupen Khakhar), to photography by Robert Mapplethorpe, Rotimi Fani-Kayode, and Helen Chadwick, to a wall-scale installation by Canadian collective General Idea, to film, seen in documentation by Derek Jarman, and sculpture by Robert Indiana, Pepe Espaliù, and Jose Leonilson Bezzera Dias. In Muir's apt, condensed phrase, shaping new types of display is "not just telling many different histories, but [telling] those histories through their modes of experimentation, and that in turn leads us to the idea of the sense of collecting the uncollectible" – of including experimental practices or types of objects beyond of painting and sculpture (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18). I explore this latter idea in the discussion of another display, immediately below. What Muir's phrase connotes can be described as an equal attentiveness to both the 'poetics' and 'politics' of display. This meets dual objectives of expanding the public understanding of the concept of art in response to changes in practice; and reframing the concept of art in more worldly, and less theological ways. 'Intimacy, Activism and AIDS' achieves both objectives, not least by pursuing a distinctive curatorial thesis in which artists who had not been exhibited together before were set into new relationships.

The differentials between "the works assembled" in the display are therefore twofold. The works span a range of media, and were also created from an array of geopolitical positions which are signalled in labels as one of the structuring criteria of inclusion. Theoretically, a 'global' display could host artworks similar in appearance but different in point of origin; 'Intimacy, Activism and AIDS' meets multiple curatorial objectives, including profiling highly diverse media and types of practice, and expanding Tate's geopolitical representation. This marks a fundamental change from "tak[ing] as its basis the major subject categories, or genres, of art that were established by the French Academy in the seventeenth century, namely landscape, still life, the nude and history painting" as in 2000 (Tate 2000 n.p.). Strictly speaking, these terms derived from the French Royal Academy's genres, although Tate curators' point is that the concept of 'genre' was central to the development of subsequent art education and museum display alike. The change in policy that it marks is in what legitimate 'subjects' or which type of "story" displays can be structured around: from art historical themes or subjects to what can best be described as world historical ones (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18).

ARTIST AND SOCIETY 12

INTIMACY, ACTIVISM AND AIDS

Artists around the world were at the forefront of the response to the AIDS pandemic in the 1980s and 1990s.

In 1981 doctors reported seeing instances of rare infections and diseases in gay men in New York and California. Initially called gay-related immune deficiency (or GRID), it was soon renamed AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) as other groups were affected. Within a few years, HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) had spread around the world.

As doctors struggled to treat HIV-related infections, governments failed to acknowledge the severity of the situation. Myths and misinformation about the transmission of HIV meant those who tested positive experienced stigmatisation and discrimination as they faced their own mortality. Many artists felt compelled to act. They devised means of disseminating information, countering prejudice and demanding action.

The majority of studies on the impact of AIDS on art and culture have focused on white male artists working in New York. This display brings into conversation a wider range of artistic practices and lived experiences from the 1980s and 1990s and includes works about desire, love, loss, sexuality, memory and fear. These themes took on a particular urgency as HIV spread globally.

This display cannot represent the more than 35 million people who have died of AIDS-related illnesses or the 36.7 million people living with HIV globally today. However, we hope that the works assembled here shine a light on the brilliance, beauty and bravery of those whose lives were cut short prematurely.

Curated by Gregor Muir and Kerryn Greenberg The Bryant Gallery

Figure 9.4. Display panel 'Intimacy, Activism and Aids', curated by Gregor Muir and Kerryn Greenberg, part of 'Artist and Society' suite of displays, Boiler House Level 2 West, Tate Modern, November 2018.

Figure 9.5. Installation of ‘Intimacy, Activism and AIDS’, Boiler House Level 2 West, November 2018. Main: General Idea (1988) *AIDS (Wallpaper),* screenprint on wallpaper, overall dimensions variable, acquired in 2015; centre: Robert Mapplethorpe (1988) *Self Portrait*, acquired 2008; vitrine: Derek Jarman (1993) studies towards *Blue* (acquired 2014). © Tate.

In Frances Morris’s terms, the Tate collection now “present[s] a perspective on history through the lens of art” such that it tells a “global history (Morris 2018a n.p.). For her, this idea marks “a fundamental shift in the museum” overall (Morris 2016a n.p.). More specificially, in new types of displays, “key artists were [and are understood as] flagbearers of history” rather than differentiated aesthetically (Morris 2016a n.p.). My own analysis is that this marks a partial return to the ideal articulated by Preziosi: that “museographic space … is [where] objects become protagonists or surrogate agents in historical events” (Preziosi 1998: 523). However, as I outline, they do not *only* perform this function, and are not instrumentalised. Instead, the categorical differences between types of media allow each artwork to be individuated, so that objects exemplify artists’ identities, and so that the diversity of LGBTQ+ artists is similarly made tangible. The display corresponds to Claire

Bishop's description of a model of curatorship in which poetics and politics are aligned, and avoids "subordinat[ing] art to history in general, but … mobilize[s] the world of visual production" such that debates about what art is inform wider "debate[s] about ideas and values" (Bishop 2013: 6; Serota 2014: 12).

As Morris has also outlined, one of the goals since 2016 has been to increasingly address "particular issue[s]" that affect multiple geopolitical zones, through a curatorial methodology that is "more representative" of the global scope of production (Morris 2017 n.p.). In Muir's terms, shaping such an ambitious display "is on the one hand that simple, *and* on the other that complicated: because it begins to question as well the [range of] *themes* that you could do that with – and *how* you do that" (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18.). Events or historical processes that have affected multiple geopolitical regions simultaneously are potentially few in number. Displays that exhibit "a wider range of artistic practices and lived experiences" alike are equally few (Muir and Greenberg 2018 n.p.). What interviewees acknowledged was the relatively finite range of possible problems, themes or events that could achieve these goals.

9.2.3. Contingencies

This display illuminates the timescale of Tate Modern's trajectory of change overall, which is very much an ongoing matter. As Muir also noted, "we could [already] show various American artists [whose work concerned the pandemic]; we could have done that [already] but that wasn't the challenge. The challenge was to say – 'no … if we're going to move away from the canon, then how do you do that with *this* particular issue?' – when the dominant accounts to date had [only] been shaped from "the [Western] centres [which] are very good about talking about their own position" (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18). Muir asserted that the realisation of ambitious displays from conception to opening always depends on opportunities and contingencies, and in particular on the support of funders, collectors and artists, and committees internally. In his assessment of why support was forthcoming internally and externally, "timing is all I suspect" and "there was … [a] set of coincidences" enabling new acquisitions to be approved by the competitive forums of the Acquisitions Committees (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18). Alongside, donations were both solicited and unexpected gifts were forthcoming that helped realise the display. In Muir's words, "you have to just risk

[proposing] a display even if, at the outset, you aren't sure you have all the works you need – and this *was* a real example of that, because there were real moments of tension where we were wondering whether we did have the right [or enough] works" to achieve the goal of a genuinely "transnational" display (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18). In other words, shaping the display was a complex process rather than a *fait accompli* that only drew on existing works within the collection. Displays can therefore be understood better as means to expand the collection rather than only ways to exhibit what is already owned. For example, in the case of Chilean-Australian "Juan Davila […] we actually acquired another work […] out of the blue: this gift emerged which couldn't have been more relevant [when at the same time] I was [already] in discussions with people about Robert Indiana['s] 'LOVE'" (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18). Indiana's sculpture spelling out the four letters of 'love' was installed at the edges of the Turbine Hall as the first work in the collection that visitors would encounter in their visit, alerting them to 'Intimacy, Activism and AIDS', and to Tate Modern's new direction overall.

More broadly, Tate curators have been candid about the contingencies of developing a 'more global' collection. In Morris's words, curators are "really pragmatic about this: it's not just about where the great art is but where we could network; where we could find the funds; where we had connections and [existing] relationships" (Morris 2016b n.p..). As interviewees' testimonies confirmed, this process involves co-ordination of both initiatives led at the highest strategic level by Directors, and curators conceiving individual displays.

9.3. Individuating Objects: Subjectivities / Protected Characteristics

3: How are artworks individuated within these structuring relations?

9.3.1. Framing artists' identifications

In my analysis, 'Intimacy, Activism and AIDS' does place some new interpretive emphasis upon artists' subject positions, i.e. identity characteristics and their places of work of origin. The display included a painting by Indian artist Bhupen Khakhar,

‘You Can’t Please All’ (1981). What was immediately notable is that the work was created prior to public consciousness of the existence of HIV (see figure 9.6.). In the curators’ terms, Kharkar’s prominence in Indian art, as an openly gay man in which male homosexuality remained illegal until 2018, was decisive in its inclusion. In Muir’s terms:

> Bhupen Khakhar’s … particular work precedes works that he made later on, that were directly related [to the AIDS crisis] … we didn’t have the later works, but we had this in the collection. The great thing about collections displays is that you don’t have to be so *literal*; you [could] include it because it always felt to me like […a] landscape with this sense of impending doom on the horizon; there’s a storm it feels like to me. It *felt* absolutely apt. (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18).

In this regard, Khakhar’s work was included not because it related directly to the rubric, but both because his wider body of work connected to it, and because his work expanded the geographical scope of the display. Tate has described Khakhar’s work as “a turning point in Indian art” for its unprecedently “open display of sexuality” in art (Heald 2014 n.p.; Tate 2003 n.p.). Put simple, his work transformed the range of subjectivities able to be made public in museum space. The work was, in effect, individuated through Khakhar’s own identifications as an openly gay Indian man, and how this has been made manifest in his artistic persona.

Figure 9.6. Bhupen Khakhar *You Can’t Please All*, (1981) © the artist / Tate

One reason for the selection of ‘Intimacy, Activism and AIDS’ was that several artists represented in the display also have works in sister London museums. Curators at the department of Prints, Drawings and Paintings at the Victoria & Albert Museum bought a comparable painting by Bhupen Khakhar, *Death in the Family* (1978) as early as 1979 from a London-based art dealer. Tate only acquired Khakhar’s work in 1996, some 17 years later, and have a work from the same early to middle part of his career (1981). What I take from interviewees’ remarks is, as suggested above, that Tate’s focus throughout the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s was on how artists fared under the market assessment of their works, in the Euro-American commercial art market specifically. The important point that the V&A’s acquisition raises is that a “more global” remit was already being pursued by a sister institution only two miles away,

nearly a quarter of a century earlier (Tate 2016d n.p.). The differential between the V&A and Tate Modern is not necessarily one of who was acquired or from where, but of how collections are framed in displays, then.

A second set of artworks included in the 'Intimacy, Activism and AIDS' were by Rotimi Fani-Kayode, who was similarly acquired by the V&A several decades earlier. Fani-Kayode was a founder member of Autograph: the Association of Black Photographers (ABP) in London. He died in 1989, aged 34, having only produced work during the mid to late 1980s during the AIDS crisis, and which was made in direct response to it. Tate's support of Fani-Kayode's work appears to have had significant effects: Tate's acquisition of his work coincided with his work being bought by the Guggenheim Museum (see Guggenheim 2017a n.p.). The unusual event here is that an artist who died nearly 30 years became the posthumous subject of attention on both sides of the Atlantic, in a remarkable reassessment of his achievements.

In the Tate's collection description, Fani-Kayode's work exemplifies the turn towards an activist conception of art "explor[ing] issues of racial, sexual and cultural identity" (Tate 2015a n.p.). In the Director of Collection's testimony, "what spurred [curators] on" to acquiring works by Fani-Kayode "was this display" in particular, where his work could speak fully about all three ideas of "racial, sexual and cultural identity" (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18.). The process by which Kayode's work came to be included is indicative of changed institutional priorities. In Muir's words, the "Kayode photographs … are now in the collection [being] collection-bound through the African Acquisitions [Committee]" specifically (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18.). This requires some clarification. Fani-Kayode was born in and lived in Nigeria under 12, but was educated and worked as an artist in the USA and UK, and lived primarily in London throughout his adult life. On the one hand, in the words of Mark Sealy, ABP's current director, Fani-Kayode "was not an afro-essentialist and spent most of his life in the West" (Sealy in Tate 2018g n.p.). On the other, Fani-Kayode's conception of his work was in activist and identitarian terms, as "Black, African homosexual photography", and "as a weapon" to secure "existence on my own terms (Fani-Kayode quoted at Tate 2015a n.p.). His work directly relates to the display where Khakhar's work relates more poetically or tangentially for Muir, evoking a 'portent' on the temporal horizon.

To my knowledge, no other London-based artist has been acquired through the African Acquisitions Committee at Tate. 'Intimacy, Activism and AIDS' positions Kayode's work "in terms of the African diaspora" on the text panel, rather than specifically as a London-based artist (Tate 2018g n.p.). In the gallery caption Fani-Kayode is also described as a "Nigerian-born photographer" rather than referred to through his Anglo-American education and residence (Muir and Greenberg 2018 n.p.). Slightly differently, the V&A's description of Fani-Kayode's work in their collection in terms of its "place of origin" is "Great Britain" (V&A 2019 n.p.). These classification systems, or cues to interpretation, provide significantly different readings of his work – both of which are valid on their own terms. Figure 9.7. reproduces one of the works included in 'Intimacy, Activism and AIDS', *Sonponnoi*, whose title references the African Yoruba 'god' of smallpox, both making reference to Fani-Kayode's cultural origins and ethnicity, and to the HIV virus through allegorical suggestion. At Tate and the V&A, curators have described Fani-Kayode's work as having combined myths and stories from African and Euro-American cultures in new ways, and having been an exploration of the gaps and dialogues between the two. At Tate, the work signifies by visitors being alerted to his membership of the African diaspora to a much more marked degree than at when the V&A has exhibited his work. (When the V&A's work by the artist was first exhibited shortly after acquisition, I was employed as a Curatorial Assistant in the Photography department, so have first-hand knowledge of its journey through that institution).

In the context of 'Intimacy, Activism and AIDS', Fani-Kayode's work addresses two institutional agendas. The first is that voiced by Frances Morris that Tate should be "surfacing" work made by both demographic positions other than the dominant ones including by LGBTQ+ artists (Morris 2018d n.p.). The second is to represent the distinctive contributions of artists associated with "the African diaspora" to international art worlds – a specific institutional priority set by the new directors since 2016/7 according to interviewees (Nakamori pers. corr. 29.06.19). What deserves attention is the contrast between Morris's region and city-based scheme above to describe 'the world' taking over the institution, and curators' use of nationalities as cues and points of orientation in interpretive texts. Fani-Kayode was described as "Nigerian-born" as above, and Khahkar as a "key figure in modern Indian art" (Tate 2016e n.p.). The implied framework of comparison between their works in one

gallery is, clearly, that of different creative responses to the HIV crisis made from different *national* cultural contexts. This differential should be borne in mind in the next chapter.

The display should therefore be understood as being structured on a different principle to museums' traditional taxonomic basis. However, it can be described as relying upon categories of time, space and media in new ways. The display individuates objects by assembling objects that 'cut across' geopolitical space, and are diverse forms of art production, but all made at the same historical *and* art historical moment. The display focuses on a small window of time in which the widest variety of objects classed by geographical space and media can be assembled. As Fani-Kayode and Khakhar's examples illustrate, whilst the *locus* of meaning of each work is not only its place of origin, the overall framework implies comparison between artists' different positions towards 'global' problems, as seen from different geopolitical regions.

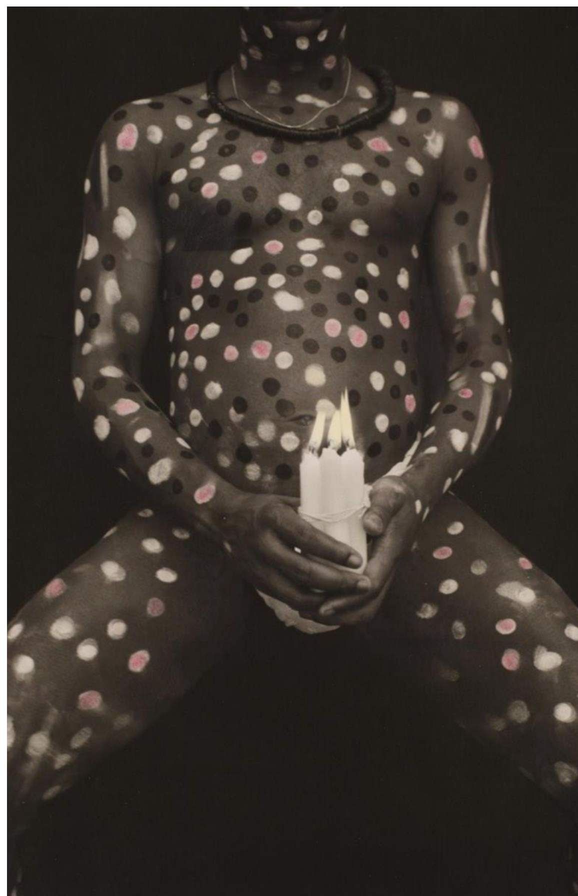


Figure 9.7. Rotimi Fani-Kayode *Sonponnoi*, (1987) © the artist / Autograph ABP

9.4. Unity: Multiple Modernities across Geopolitical Space

4: How do these structuring relations unify the collection?

This section asks what mode of unity has been employed to make both individual displays, and the entire suite of displays, cohere as single entities.

9.4.1. Display Type 2 – photobooks: witnesses to history

In this section, I examine a second display that I take to be indicative of Tate's change of direction. The display is one of an entire series in the newest gallery created in Tate Modern in 2018, being located in Level 4 of the West wing of the Boiler House, It has been carved out from existing gallery spaces. It is unusually proportioned, accordingly, being a corridor-like 40ft long by 8ft wide. In my analysis, this relatively small space is nevertheless able to articulate the type of changes underway across the collection (see figure 9.6.). This space is dedicated to displays of photobooks and was specifically created to show one acquisition alone. It was designed to accommodate one of the single largest acquisitions ever made by Tate, of "the greatest [photobook collection] in the world" (Tate 2017b n.p.). This 12,000 strong collection was sold to Tate by Martin Parr. Its "acquisition places Tate as an institutional world leader in the representation of photobooks", indicating how it is understood to be transformative of what the collection can be and do (Tate 2017b n.p.). Whilst this gallery only shows photobooks, curators have said that they will oversee the books' "integration" into displays more widely alongside other kinds of object (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18). The importance of this is that photobooks are now being treated as independent art objects for the first time in Tate Modern's history. Up until 2018, any photobooks owned by the institution were confined to Tate's archive. Moreover, Tate only appointed a Curator, Contemporary Art (Photography) in 2009, such that the medium had no institutional champion until the previous decade, which coincided with the creation of the Photography Acquisitions Committee.

The significance of the gallery for this thesis is that there is no other category of art object that has had a new dedicated gallery created for it since the opening of The Tanks in 2010. These spaces are dedicated to performance, live art, and cross-media installation. Although the mechanics of acquisitions are not the central subject here, the anomalous nature of its acquisition needs comment. In an unprecedented act of co-ordination, the photobooks were acquired with finances provided by all of the Acquisitions Committees in tandem, and with an external partnership with the Luma Foundation, and further support from Art Fund. This indicates how high a priority it was for the institution as a whole. Interviewees were clear that "a collection of that magnitude" will become transformative for the entire collection in ways that need analysis (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18).

Whilst photobooks are the latest inclusion into the galleries of a particular type of art object, alongside performance, new media, installation, film and video and other forms of time-based art, photography was also the medium that began to disrupt museums' definition of art through 'painting and sculpture' alone. As Muir has astutely noted, in the nineteenth century, photographs provided "the first" new medium employed by artists that undermined the conflation of the concepts of 'art' with the categories of 'painting and sculpture' (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18).

The first display in the new gallery was titled '1968: Protest and the Photobook', curated by Sarah Allen. Again, the display was framed through a world historical event, rather than in terms of an art historical category. As with 'Intimacy, Activism and AIDS', it attends to macrosocial "general socio-political questions", as biennials have done since c.2000 (Esche in Osborne 2016: 179). Morris has explicitly argued that 'subject'-led displays are important because "it's incredibly important that those [socio-political] subjects that are difficult to discuss are discussed … in the galleries, and from all viewpoints" (Morris 2017c n.p.). Her remark indicates that subjects that are contentious, and therefore "difficult to discuss" are precisely what should be 'spoken about' through artists' 'voices'.

The mode of unity for this display is one where a single category of objects (photobooks) made at a single moment in time (1968) are assembled from points distributed across space. Two of the three traditional taxonomic unifying categories of medium, time and space are intact in this new kind of display. Only the

representation of a near-global scope of production provides the novelty. In both ‘1968: Protest and the Photobook’ and ‘Intimacy, Activism and AIDS’, “what it [the new collection order] allows us is to show … Australian artists *alongside* great artists from Brazil, or from India, or from Korea [such that] it really is a *global presence* of art” contained in one display (Morris 2016b n.p). The purpose of ‘1968: Protest and the Photobook’ was, in large part, that popular protests were documented by artists and photographers across multiple geopolitical regions at the same time in 1968. Instead of range of objects being associated with a particular geopolitical unity (‘the West’, for example), the horizon of spatial unity is the entire globe.

Figure 9.8. Installation of display ‘1968: Protest and the Photobook’, curated by Sarah Allen, Boiler House Level 2 West, Tate Modern, November 2018. Photo author’s own.

9.4.2. Photography as a ‘lingua universalis’

Parr’s photobooks undoubtedly “cover an unprecedented range of subjects, geographies and types of photographic practice”, including artists’ books and documentary practices (Tate 2017b n.p.). To date, no curators has outlined how photobooks have been transformative at Tate, nor why, though the “unprecedented range of … geographies” they *index* are clear enough. As Muir’s remarks above indicate, there is a relatively narrow range of ‘global’ art historical or socio-political problems. In his revealing figurative terms, the Parr collection is “a world of possibility”: that is, it provides the possibility of picturing ‘the regions of the world’ indexically for the first time in displays, in cross-comparison (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18).

Orthodox modernist art objects seldom *picture* their place of production, let alone do so indexically. Photobooks, as small objects, can be included in ‘group’ displays of almost every kind. They can reveal historical events from photographers’ and artists’ viewpoints, across space. Their history spans several territories across the twentieth and twenty first centuries such that they can be included in displays of modern and contemporary art in multiple ways, as well as on their own terms. This is the reason that the senior curator of photography remarked, for him, “photography [i]s an engine” of change for the whole collection because they can be “consistently present” in every other type of display, as “a fluid, almost bipolar presence in the collection” – as artwork and historical document (Nakamori pers. corr. 29.06.19).

Both of the first two displays in the new photobook gallery positioned their makers as witnesses to historical events and to processes, and prioritised documentary practice. ‘1968: Protest and the Photobook’ was followed by ‘The Diaristic Photobook’. In the first, artists’ and photographers’ responses to related political events provided the unifying theme. In the second, artists’ personal responses to the social changes during the 1980s and 1990s were foregrounded. Richard Billingham

was one key contributor to the second display. His work is associated with the creation of a post-industrial underclass in the 1980s and 1990s. Vinca Petersen's work was the 'anchor' of the 'The Diaristic Photobook', documenting an anti-establishment counterculture across Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the transformation of the European Union. In both displays, the indexical, *evidentiary* status of photobooks was key. The two displays were signals of programmatic intent: to foreground short-term political events, and long-term social changes as framing devices.

Muir's insights into this are remarkable. He emphasised the possibilities to throw light on world-historical events in non-Western geographies that the photobooks provided for curators. In his words, "when we want to turn to the Iranian revolution what will we have? If we go to [represent] the Iranian revolution, we can pull out the Iranian photobooks […] there will just not be evidence of photography in that field, in that region, at that time, any other way, or in the same way […] that's what's exciting about it." (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18). "The Iranian revolution" is not an event internal to 'art history' in any orthodox sense, but is central to modern political history: it is therefore central to competing ideas of world historical modernity, if not to artistic modernism. This distinction gets to the heart of the ideas unifying both individual displays and the entire collection at Tate Modern. The sentence "when we want to turn to the Iranian revolution what will we have?" begs its own questions. It is not obvious that any European museum of modern art would want to 'turn to the Iranian revolution'. Moreover, Muir's keyword is 'when' rather than 'if'. His statement implies that a museum of modern art should account for the macrosocial or political history of modernity, or of "multiple modernities" distributed across space and as evidenced in art and visual culture (Eisenstadt 2000: title). Indeed, Eisenstadt's concept of "multiple modernities" is one that Morris has explicitly referenced (Morris 2016b n.p.). This model of modernity, or modernities, is in profound distinction to Tate's own and MoMA's earlier model of a discrete, autonomous art history confined to 'Euramerica'. In Nicholas Serota's terms, Tate Modern's account of art rests on the image of "modernities [in the plural] rather than through separate regional histories" (Serota 2014: 4).

In Hans Belting's terms, this model of collection presents its artworks in aggregate as "a kind of replica of the world … [providing] a means of taking possession of the world" in its totality (Belting 2014: 144, 145). The overarching form of unity rests on a particular conception of modern art's relation to modernity at large where photography can act as a kind of 'lingua universalis'. As a 'universal' visual language, or rather one able to be seen as such, it can appear to index different modernities, each seen in its 'own' processes of change and contestation. This starts to explain why the entire order is "chapterised" where each display constitutes a semi-autonomous "episode" or "moment" (Morris in Boddington 2019 n.p.; Morris 2016b n.p.). Framing displays in terms of historical events or processes requires separate "'dossier' presentations grouped together", which are not assimilable into a strictly chronological account (Serota 1996: 5).

9.4.3. New figure of global unity

In Serota's terms, the problem was "to build an integrated collection" in which multiple practices were set into relation rather than categorically divided (Serota 2014: 4). In 2013 Chris Dercon clarified that "we're not going to create an atlas", similarly (Dercon in Fullerton 2013 n.p.). The Head of Displays contrasted this with the V&A's prior model of allocating works to displays ordered by region: "one of the things we spent a long time [when] preparing for the opening of the Blavatnik building [was] rethinking how we might respond to the development of the collection, and think about how a *more international* collection could be articulated in a way that was intelligible without saying 'well this is the South American wing', or 'the South East Asian room'" (Gale pers. corr. 21.12.18).

Each of the six 'wings' at Tate Modern across the Boiler House, Switch House and Tanks are structured through contrasts between artists' locations, overall. Tate Modern is the closest museum to Osborne's speculative description of a new "universal museum [that] might be conceived as a radically open and contemporary one, as almost futuristic in fact: that is to say, as pertaining to a *new form of universality* beyond the restricted horizons of the 19th century European idea, a universality that is historically actualizable for the first time, in some new way" (Osborne 2018: 93). Put simply, Tate Modern's remit implies a 'new universality'.

9.4.4. Display Type 3 – 'A View From –': "dialogue means explanation"

A third type of display is based on the principle of exchange or 'dialogue' across geopolitical regions. In Morris's words, "the new displays" titled 'A View From –' each illuminate an "incredible moment of cosmopolitan" exchange across geopolitical regions by exhibiting artists 'from' "Latin America, Germany, from Taiwan, from Spain, from France, from Rio" in one gallery (Morris 2016b n.p.).

The Head of Displays outlined that this new type of display was developed from "about 2015 [when] we started introducing those as part of the new scheme building up to the 2016 Blavatnik Building" (Gale pers. corr. 21.12.18). In other words, the displays resulted from the need to signal the reorientation of the collection towards non-Western artistic centres. This type of display is based on particular historical junctures where non-Western "centres [amassed] a set of people or an institutional structure that was at that time self-consciously international" (Gale pers. corr. 21.12.18). As the Head of Displays continued, "we've self-consciously chosen not [to look] from what we might call NATO countries, we've actively decided not to go for Paris and New York, but to think about Zagreb and Buenos Aires" (Gale pers. corr. 21.12.18). Displays have included 'A View from Tokyo' in 2016, and 'A View From Buenos Aires', 2018. In each, one city is figured as the centre of an international, "cosmopolitan" network: as a centre rather than peripheral to Euro-American art history. As in figure 9.9, each display has included archival materials including exhibition catalogues to underscore exactly the scope of artists' intercontinental networks prior to the development of digital communications.

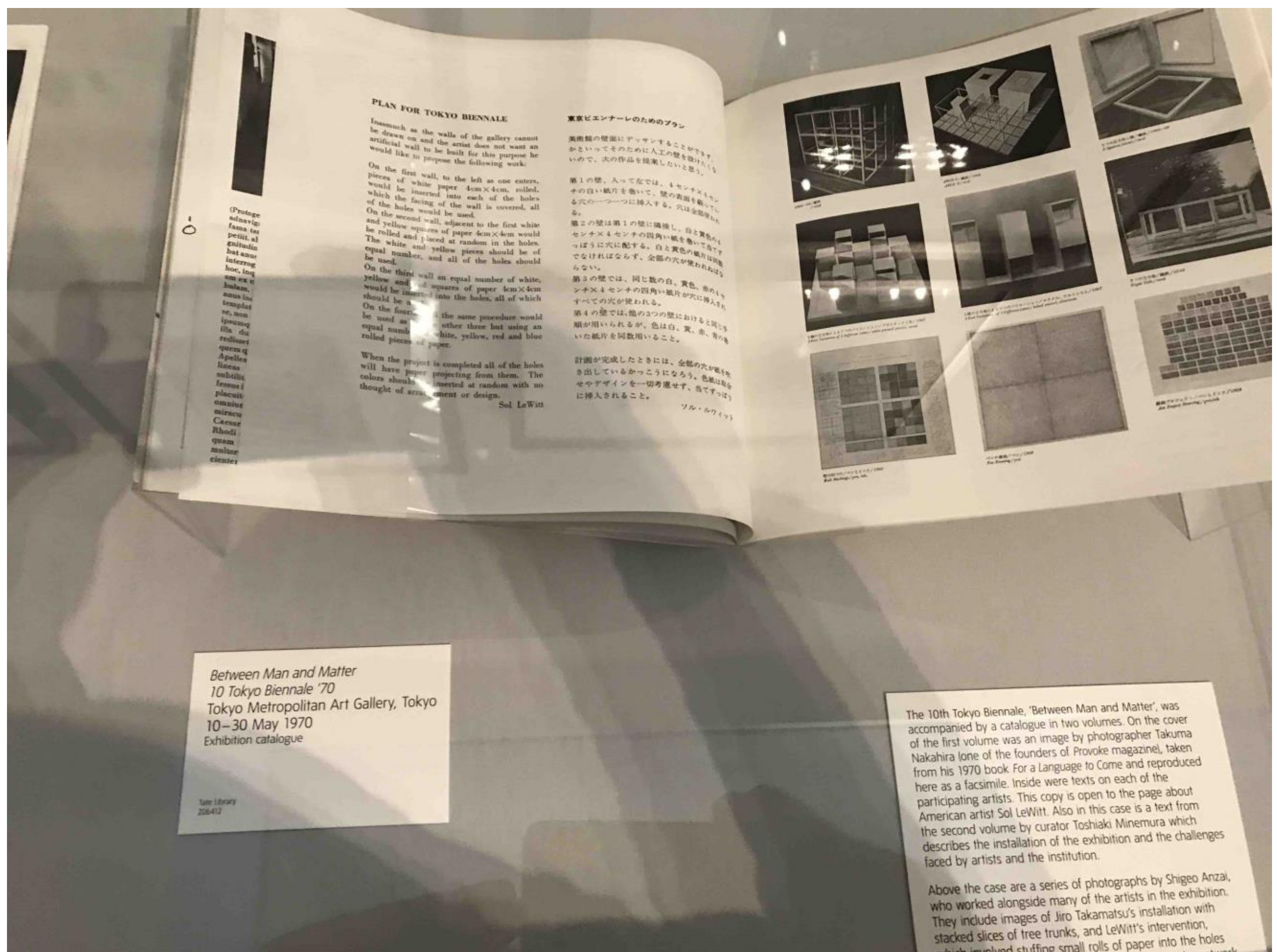


Figure 9.9. Installation view of 'A View from Tokyo: Between Man and Matter', 2016. Photo author's own.

As earlier, the aim is one of 'provincialising Europe' by exposing how thoroughly un-provincial different artistic centres were, throughout the history of modern art. contemporary art. In Morris's terms, the "view from" displays were developed specifically to "demonstrat[e] very vividly how [especially] from the 60s onwards, artists were in dialogue… really were very connected across the world" (Morris 2016b n.p.). The crucial point she makes is: "dialogue means *explanation*" (Morris 2016b n.p.). This is far from obvious. It signals that Tate Modern's collection order is one in which events and entities are *explained* through "interconnection, exchange and [the] flow [...] of ideas" (Morris 2016b n.p.). This is a wholesale change in what is taken to be the causal field of art's nature and trajectory. Implicitly, actors are hierarchised by the breadth of their 'connections' across geopolitical space, not within nations or 'the west'. This scheme internalises ideas from network theory to an extraordinary degree, where artists *are* a 'distributed network'.

This should be seen as a novel ontological claim. As Morris has outlined: “I can’t think of many artists of the last hundred years – great artists – whose greatness has not derived from the fact that they have transgressed borders … there are very few practices that have changed the way we think about the world that have not come about without crossing borders” (Morris 2017b n.p.). Just as Morris has argued that “dialogue is *explanation*”, other thinkers have begun to believe that “what is common to all” are “the sum total of exchanges … [where] the general [i]s [only] the operation of connection” (Chukhrov 2013: 53, 57). The differential between pre- and post-2016 is that Tate Modern portrays “world art [as a category that] constitutes an object of study distinct from the aggregation of national art worlds” (Bull 2011: 180). The priority given to ‘network effects’ makes sense only insofar as the “history of art” asks “what networks do they [artworks] traverse?” (Balsom 2017: 6). In this alternative causal field, it is “encounters [that] define [artists] status” *and* their meanings (Balsom 2017: 6). This is an account of art that “(transfiguratively) reflect[s] the transnational spaces […] that ‘constitute’” art itself (Birnbaum 2014 n.p.). It is an account of art defined by art’s ‘own’ universality, and by the principle of ‘dialogue’ between continents and regions, in short.

9.4.5. Indivisibility of modern and contemporary

This scheme underwrites one idea specific to Tate Modern. As Morris outlines, “one of the most distinctive things that Tate Modern has brought [to] the museum narrative is that we don’t make that division [between ‘modern’ and ‘contemporary’ as separable historical periods]. You go to Pompidou or MoMA, they treat modern and contemporary as two different things. You have to change floors [they are spatially and categorically separate]. We’ve never subscribed to that divide here, because they’re indivisible” at Tate Modern (Morris 2017 n.p.). This stands against *and* reflects the periodising orthodoxy that “modernist art now looks more continuous with the 19th century [and] the salient break … comes later, in the 1960s, and that is when ‘contemporary art’ is often said to begin (Foster 2016: 28). It reflects it because the Blavatnik Building shows artwork from “since 1960” whilst the Boiler House shows work from 1900 to the present, such there are overlaps throughout. Tate does not directly endorse the idea that ‘the contemporary’ marks a “new period” in which “the interrelated categories of art, history [and] geo-politics” have been transformed

(Alberro 2009: 68). Curators still distinguish "'contemporary art' in the [gallery] spaces in the broadest possible sense – Eva Hesse is 'contemporary' in her ethos rather than in chronology", such that her work could appear in either building (Gale pers. corr. 21.12.18). If for many thinkers, 'contemporary' is opposed to 'modern', at Tate it functions effectively as a sub-set of it. What this idea relies upon, ultimately, is that "'modernity' is the concept through which a secular form of global historical comparison becomes possible": Tate Modern's scheme is above all one of 'global comparison' under multiple modernities (Osborne 2005: 5).

Chapter 10. Collections as Collectivities:
Tate Modern as a Global Representative Assembly

10.0. Purpose and Structure of Chapter

This chapter poses five questions that provide a means of specifying Tate Modern's ideological co-ordinates and value scheme since 2016:
5: What model of collectivity correlates to these sets of answers?
6: What ideological tradition does each type of collectivity draw on?
7: What value is privileged in each ideological tradition?
8: What figure can best describe each collection?
9: What other figures are related?

10.1. 'We, the peoples': a Global Collective

5: What model of collectivity correlates to these sets of answers?

The first question specifies the type of collective that the answers above describe. In Morris's terms, the collection has a "completely different framework" from the time curators understood their collection as "representative" – which only begged the question "representative *of what?*" (Morris 2017 n.p.). For her, the collection is becoming a "democratic open space" and only in this can it "move towards becoming …much more representative … for [and of] all the public" (Morris 2017a n.p.; Morris 2018a n.p.). These remarks indicate, as I outline below, that what Tate represents is 'all' art production; and that it represents it 'democratically'. Indeed Tate's 2019 Annual Report makes explicit that "the collection will reflect art in […] the world today, encompassing a more representative range of histories" about 'the world' in its totality (Tate 2019d: 43). The term "more representative" is equated directly with "the diversification of the collection" from "Euramerica" alone to 'the world' (Tate 2019d: 36; Tate 2019 n.p.). Morris has been explicit that "we [want to] move towards becoming … much more representative" to "reflect the [diversity of the] people" who produce art, focussing on "artists whose race, ethnicity or geographical location meant they had been denied national and international recognition" to date, and who

each constitute distinct “constituencies” (Morris 2018a n.p.; Morris 2017 n.p.; Morris in Razaq 2017 n.p.). In her summation, curators “create visibility” for “constituencies”, because “you cannot *be* what you can’t *see*”: (Morris in Elderton 2013 n.p.; Morris 2017 n.p.; Morris 2018 n.p.). ‘Representative museums’ reveal which subject positions are authorised to create ‘legitimate’ culture in Bourdieusian terms, i.e. are granted the privileges of authorship.

This scheme corresponds closely to Rancière’s idea that the ‘politics of aesthetics’ is contesting which groups gain representation in public space to control the “distribution of the sensible” (Rancière 2011: title). For Rancière, “the ‘distribution of the sensible’ is tied … to the very concept of democracy” (Birrell 2008 n.p.). A democratic museum is one that adjudicates “what is visible or not in a common [public] space”, on democratic principles (Rancière 2011: 12). Tate Modern’s order rests on apportioning visibility and resources to different ‘constituencies’ in a newly democratic fashion. Its curators maximise their “ability […] to take charge of what is common to the community” by making constituencies visible (Rancière 2011: 13). This is a problem of universality, as suggested. Put in other terms, the *problem* of the universality of museums remains “even after the general and the universal have been emptied of their imperialistic, authoritarian, and colonial connotations, [because] the question still remains of how to understand the mode of *what is common to all*” (Chukhrov 2013: 53, 57). At Tate Modern, ‘all’ is literalised. As I outline below, one conception of democracy is a proportionate, quantifiable allocation of resources to each ‘constituency’.

Tate Modern invites taking the idea seriously that “the museum … and the works of art it contains are part of a collective biography” – the life-story of a ‘we’, understood through its regional constituencies (Ammann 2005: 18). My analysis is that Tate Modern’s new order rests on the convention that artworks have a “special bond” to their author in museum space (Gover 2018: 28). Its “political possibilities” rest on this ‘special bond’ and on the convention that museum objects exemplify the collective life of geopolitical entities (Cranfield and Owen 2017: 3). Tate Modern now exemplifies the idea that “the act of curating at its most basic is simply about connecting cultures, bringing their elements into proximity with each other” (Obrist 2015a: 1). Curating is in this analysis “connecting cultures” *themselves* through objects’ co-presence. In Julian Myers-Szupinska’s terms, this model of curatorship

“recover[s] … the essential collectivity” of art practice as distributed across space *and* across identity positions (Myers-Szupinska 2017: 22).

This conception of collections is one of “the representation of a social field”, in microcosm (Myers-Szupinska 2017: 22). More specifically, this conception of curatorship rests on the idea that “what exhibitions may demand of curatorial thought and labor [is] to bring the present’s collective and social forms into view” (Myers-Szupinska 2017: 22). This is to say that objects are *proxies* for wider entities in museums. What collections do is therefore to assemble a ‘social form’ in microcosm through the different positions of subjectivity that artefacts give a ‘voice’ to. Morris’s description of the collection as “a place where you don’t’ need a visa to walk between Beijing and Berlin” invokes a chain of equivalence here is between an artwork and the cultural identity of a city as a totalised entity (Morris in Evans 2017 n.p.). My hypothesis is that what underpins this figure is that the Tate collection speaks as ‘we, the peoples’, at least in the first instance. My understanding of this model of collection as a ‘we’ is as the *totality of the categories of legitimate producers* legitimately able to ‘speak’, in their social and geopolitical heteronomy. That is, a collection that speaks as ‘we, the peoples’ assembles artworks from every demographic or geopolitical group able to furnish *candidates* for elite status. The risk of such a policy is that art museums resemble ethnographic institutions, where “the character of [artworks is] now closer to the notion of ‘specimen’ than to the notion of ‘work of art’” as formerly conceived in prior “modernist museum displays” (De Rooij in Lütticken 2019: 295; Lütticken 2019: 296).

This is one mode of anthropomorphising objects as quasi-subjects, where artefacts signify metonymically: as delegates assembled from geopolitical regions to become ‘we, the peoples’, in the plural. Tate Modern’s scheme can be described as resting on a concept not of “representation as ‘depiction’ [but] ‘representation as ‘speaking for’” (Bishop 2020: 5). Her distinction is apposite because objects are made to ‘speak for’ a community or collective. Tate Modern has assembled artworks as ‘voices *from* communities’, to conjoin Lütticken’s and Bishop’s insights. To adapt Lütticken’s reasoning, Tate Modern is a type of “museum …[that] collect[s] and curate social relations”, rather than objects *qua* objects (Lütticken 2019: 302,303). Collection displays are based on “following artifacts’ indexical traces”, where “the index in question” is ‘a people’ as “people are living indexes” (Lütticken 2019: 302).

Objects' indexicality is accentuated "when the distance between point of departure and current position … is greate[st]", i.e. the geocultural difference between the place of display and place of creation can be imagined as great (Lütticken 2019: 303). If artworks are quasi-subjects at Tate Modern, they are ones distinguished by their authors' subjectivities; artworks' 'structure of subjectivities' 'reflect' that of the wider world in its entirety. The collection functions by drawing attention to objects' "former social lives" in their 'original' places of production – or rather, by invoking their authors' own social lives (Lütticken 2019: 284).

As I suggested above, Tate Modern's display instantiates an entirely alternative ontology of art: the "real art history" as yet untold: (Morris in Boddington 2019 n.p.). This is only possible by tracing "networks-within-networks": an image that is "the paradigm for the whole institution" (Morris 2017 n.p.). This is both a new principle of hierarchisation, and an ontology of art that as suggested above valorises connectivity across geopolitical space. It is fundamental to what Morris calls a new "*networked* history of art across the world from the earliest years of the twentieth century", rather than one specific to the twenty first (Morris 2018a n.p.). This new ontology is based on the idea that "contemporary art is defined neither by craft, material, nor … aesthetic concerns. Instead, what is at stake is [its] global distribution network" – that its distribution and exchange is its definition (Cruz 2015: 5).

10.2. 'No Them, Only Us'

6: What ideological tradition does each type of collectivity draw on?

The tradition of philosophical / political thought that Tate Modern extends is one querying 'us/them' questions, i.e. in-group / out-group boundaries. This is a collection in which there is, to a higher degree than ever before, "no them, only [an] us", to use a politician's coinage: an impossible, universalising collective without categorical exclusions (Bill Clinton in New York Times 1992 n.p.). Curators' language is key here: their restructuring, and refiguring of the collection as a "representation" of– "constituencies [who were] largely absent from … the modern collection" should be taken seriously. (Morris 2014: 24). This is the language of representative democracy, where individuals 'represent' wider constituencies from whom they are customarily

drawn and where their ‘voices’ are taken to speak ‘for’ and ‘on behalf of’ others, through shared interests and shared subjectivities. Tate’s collection is therefore structured through ethical obligations to represent multiple “constituents” in a way consistent with principles of democratic representation (Halperin and Burns 2018 n.p.). These ideas tally with curators’ belief that “the museum is, in essence, a giant composition” of these different ‘constituencies’ (Dercon 2014: 7). Curators have made explicit that their displays are “not just a matter of assembling art objects, but assembling *stories*” ‘of’ and ‘from’ subject positions, as outlined above (Dercon in Dercon and Laseca 2015 n.p.). This distinction is crucial. In curatorial theory, one speculative mode of a “radical[ly] democratic” collection is one that is “a space of assembly, in which people, via objects and stories” would be convened (Sternfeld et al 2020: 34; Sternfeld 2018: title, 58). As suggested, this involves a particular mode of anthropomorphisation.

10.2.1. “Constituencies” as “a community of margins”

If Tate Modern can be described as a “contramodel” to MoMA’s, it is also because it has realigned its collection objectives with those of the left-leaning L’internationale group of museums who have also focusing on ‘constituencies’ that had previously been marginal to museum collections in European centres (Tate 2019d: 36). Morris has described Tate Modern’s new philosophy as building a collection of “a community of margins that [can] demonstrate a more cosmopolitan, global network” (Morris in Charlesworth 2017 n.p.). The keyword is ‘margins’: as in ‘The View From’ displays, Tate Modern’s operation is to reposition ‘margins’ as having always been ‘centres’. At Reina Sofia in Madrid, Manuel Borja-Villel has pursued a parallel logic arguing that the need “to reorder the entire collection” is to instantiate “the idea of multiple minorities” that collectively “constitute a very complex and heterogeneous” whole (Borja-Villel in Molina 2017 n.p.). This order stands against the MoMA model of “works … ordered by techniques or necessarily authors” (Borja-Villel in Molina 2017 n.p.). Only this type of order can “ways of understanding the world and history” that the concept of art is a part *of*, rather than *apart* from (Borja-Villel in Molina 2017 n.p.). This distinction is also crucial to my analyses.

10.2.2. A cosmopolitan, 'democratic' unity

What a 'democratic' collection might look like is a question investigated by many progressive curators. Tate Modern exemplifies the question posed by Andrew Hunt of how "museums of contemporary art [and] … large collecting institutions" can "consider, given a fundamental liberal desire for democracy and equality, what a … politically relevant museology might be" (Hunt 2018: 12). Hunt's question pinpoints the change in values at Tate Modern, towards questioning what 'democracy' and 'equality' might be in a museum collection. As museologists have observed over the last decade, "the need to explore current usages of words such as democracy and democratization is … pressing", because whilst curators may believe "curation is [inherently] a democratic enterprise", how this can be made manifest is far from obvious (Griffin 2010: 319; Hicks 2020: 3; see Baeza Ruiz 2019). Tate Modern's problem is, then, imagining how a 'global' collection can be democratic, given democracy has been principally tied to nation-states: "the reason for this urgency is because the globalisation of long-established collections [that] is now customarily figured through the rhetorical tropes that 'diversifying' or 'globalising' them is [paraphrased as being] to 'democratise them'" (Griffin 2010: 319). This "is the language most commonly used to describe the unprecedented expansion of [the] field", and one that Tate curators have employed extensively (Griffin 2010: 319).

If it makes sense to see Tate Modern as 'more democratic' since 2016, it is because 'constituencies' have been directly quantified since then, and quotas imposed for certain subject positions. In 2017, the directors enforced a 50%/50% quotas for monographic displays of female artists for the first time, and Morris noted that some curators objected to this vociferously. The proportion of female artists on display from 2000 to 2016 rose from 17% to 36%; the proportion of solo displays is now precisely half (see Chan 2016 n.p.). The commitment to ensuring "justice between groups", i.e. "form[s] of collective entity", is one definition of the liberal, democratic strand of "political thought" itself (Rosen and Wolf 1999: 255).

As Tate director, Maria Balshaw has also described its change of philosophy. For her, "the public art museum['s] … essential role [is] to hold open an open space for dissenting experiences of art [where] disagreement is possible and useful and is part of a public conversation about how we would like society to be" (Balshaw 2019 n.p.).

The key phrase here is ‘how we would like society to be’; not ‘what art is’, nor ‘what society is’ presently. Tate’s new 2019 Research Strategy renders these ideals more explicit, saying that Tate should “function […by contributing to] debates on identity, representation, power and the at times problematic legacy of history” (Tate 2019e: n.p.). The role of “the institution [is to] productively and collaboratively ‘stay with the trouble’” – to enter into wider socio-political debates rather than remain locked into an “18th-century academic model” of aesthetic discourse (Tate 2019e: n.p.; Morris 2017 n.p.). In all of these position statements, Tate has moved close to that outlined in the ICOM proposed definition of museum above. All of the indices suggest its approach is indeed “emphatically political” (Cumming 2021: 30).

10.3. Core Value: Equality

7: What value is privileged in each ideological tradition?

As suggested above, Tate Modern’s project is representing artists ‘from’ the largest possible ‘community’ imaginable: ‘the world’. The intellectual tradition that Tate Modern’s extends is undoubtedly “cosmopolitan[ism]”, in Morris’s words (Morris 2016b n.p.). A cosmopolitan collection is precisely one that, is “able to show the world to” itself and in its totality (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18). Tate Modern’s function is to provide “a global” account of art and that has “really become profound in terms of its role, [because] where else would you go” to understand art from “across the world?” (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18). In other words, there is no comparable European art museum able to undertake the same function on the same scale, at present. Moreover, as Muir argues, Tate Modern’s cosmopolitan ethos has been thrown into relief by the ascendancy of nationalist politics in continental Europe and America, and the UK. The collection’s “ability to communicate positive exchange between individuals, regions, and artists, has never looked so valuable” in the light of “what is understood to be the rise of nationalism around the world” (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18). These statements start to make a value scheme clear.

For Morris, Tate Modern’s new policies mark an institutional ‘corrective’ to what she totalises as “centuries of discrimination” under a colonial and patriarchal value scheme (Morris 2017 n.p.). This is a remarkable claim. She has explicitly cast

predecessors as working to ensure that "people like me and many other people […] were excluded [...] It's been a struggle over many centuries for those who were excluded from those institutions to find representation" (Morris 2017 n.p.). The new imperative is to 'represent' 'constituencies' disadvantaged by "educational structures or the structures of bias and privilege", and who were excluded by "institutional bias" before the twenty first century (Morris in Boddington 2019 n.p.; Morris in Neuendorf 2016 n.p.). These are terms that no previous Tate director has ever employed in public. Her most explicit claim is that the collection has a longstanding historical "deficit" (Morris in Dieckvoss 2016 n.p.).

What all of these statements have in common is that they invoke a horizon of *equality* as newly possible, through "a particular effort to privilege" constituencies (Morris in Dieckvoss 2016 n.p.). For Morris, the contrast between Tate Modern and sister institutions in continental Europe is clear: "the history of art that you [still] find in most museums of modern art in North America and Western Europe" is one where "diverse communities [a]re *excluded*" (Morris 2018 n.p.). Tate's collection is an imagined community in which "democracy [i]s an organon of social integration" – an ideal through which communication between constituencies is secured (Magun 2013a: xx). The attempt to forge an 'integrated collection' implies this. My finding is that Tate Modern's trajectory can be described through the prediction made by Charles Saumarez-Smith: that "museums may end up being unexpectedly the same after all: symbols of the cosmopolis" (Saumarez-Smith 2020a n.p.). Indeed, the collection has already been figured as a "cosmopolis" by one art historian for whom Tate Modern's curators have been "curating the Cosmopolis" (Singh Johal in Blazwick and Singh Johal 2019 n.p.). The collection is a 'cosmopolitical democracy' in miniature that exemplifies Rancière's dictum that "democracy means equality" (Rancière 1997 n.p.). As the other case studies outline, democracy has, thus far, rested on other values than equality.

10.3.1. Figurative 'borderlessness'

Tate curators' new figural repertoire is markedly different to that at the other case studies. Its novelty merits analysis. In Morris's terms, the new ideal of an 'integrated collection' is described through the figure of "borderlessness" (Morris 2017a n.p.).

This “borderlessness” pictures the collection as a place where “those kinds of borders that are going up [politically] … don’t exist” (Morris 2017a n.p.). This figure has also become Morris’s prime extended metaphor, because “a [geographical] borderlessness [gives licence] to transgress other borders, of medium, of gender, ethnicity, so we can look at and celebrate the whole world of creativity” without exclusion (Morris 2017a n.p.). The metaphor of “borderlessness” describes multiple operations: a rejection of geopolitical hierarchies, of hierarchies of subject position, and of hierarchies between media.

10.3.2. “From Berlin to Beijing”

Morris’s further extension of this metaphor is especially revealing: “Tate Modern is “a place where you don’t need a visa to walk between Beijing and Berlin (Morris 2017d n.p.). This pictures the collection as the world in miniature, and visitors as cultural tourists who can traverse geographical space unproblematically by walking through it. Several chains of equivalence need to be operative for this figure of the collection as a microcosm of the globe in its a totality to make sense. First, artworks have to be read as surrogates of their authors. Second, authors must be defined by their geocultural affiliations, such that object, author and culture are indexically related. Object, author and their place of production all three occupy the same geographically specific cultural identity. Each art object stands in for a human collective, i.e. a city, and each is differentiated geopolitically. In this sense, the collection has been refigured as an assembly of collectives: a microcosm of the world as a totality, knowable through its representatives. My analysis is that Tate Modern has returned to an older type of “museologies [that] were grounded upon the metaphoric, metonymic, and anaphoric associations that might be mapped amongst their archived specimens”, as Preziosi has plotted (Preziosi 1998: 509). In this model, “museums [are] exemplary models for ‘reading’ objects as traces, representations, reflections, or surrogates of individuals, groups, nations [because] … the modern museum has most commonly been constructed as an [entity composed of] evidentiary and documentary artefacts” (Preziosi 1998b: 517). As I explore later, in Tate Modern’s scheme “an artwork serves as the distal extension of the author”, such that “artworks are extensions of their authors personalities [and subjectivities]” (Gover 2018: 1,2).

It is a truism that the “representational context” of post-2000 biennials requires artefacts to “denote [authors’] national cultural identity” or “ethnic or cultural origin” first and foremost, and this is what differentiates artworks in them (Groys 2008: 17, 16). This is partly true of Tate Modern, although what it has succeeded in achieving is creating displays through which changes to the concept of art are exemplified through contributions made across space. Theorist Boris Groys has observed that there are two models of museum, very broadly: those that measure “success on the art market” like MoMA; and those that value the “political commitment” invested in an object, like Tate (Groys 2008: 16). His simplification is not wholly untrue. Tate curators have intermittently made explicit that their displays favour “works which powerfully reflect the diversity of artistic practice in the regions from which they originate” because “the museum is [itself now] a clear reflection of this huge [geocultural] variety” (Tate 2010 n.p.; Dercon 2014: 7). Morris’s predecessor Chris Dercon argued that “unlike other forms of [art], visual art delivers immense sets of subjectivities [...] it is [only] in the encounter with the art in the Tate Collection that a communal [global] culture is created” (Dercon 2014: 7). The need to figure the collection through the unusual idea that it ‘delivers’ sets of subjectivities to spectators reflects a distinct change of philosophy, immediately prior to its realisation in displays in 2016 and after.

10.4. A New Name: Tate Modern as a Representative Assembly

8: What figure can best describe each collection?

The idea that Tate Modern has been refigured by senior staff as a “discursive space” for “debate”, where “disasgreement is possible and useful” about imagine “how we would like society to be” provide a clear image of how Tate Modern is ordered (Tate 2019 n.p; Balshaw 2019 n.p.). That Tate Modern is a collection of cities, as Morris implies, is similarly indicative. The collection is ordered on the basis of democratic parliamentary assemblies that are the inheritors of the pre-modern forum or agora – but scaled up as a global forum rather than a civic or national one. If we take these ideas seriously, then Tate Modern’s ‘collection-being’ is one of a political body itself. The aim of ‘representativeness’ rests on the ‘success’ of its correspondence between

the macrocosmic planetary ‘world’ and the microcosmic world of the ‘collection’. As Osborne has suggested, museums’ authority is granted “by virtue of their power of assembly” alone: an idea I identify Tate as having taken ownership of in the sector by reimaging what the limits of this ‘power of assembly’ can be (Osborne 2013: 164)

One remark that can illuminate the fundamental “rethink” instituted in 2016 is Serota’s claim “there is no sense in which the display you will see … is everything that is best in the Tate” (Serota in J. Morris 2016 n.p.). Marginally earlier, colleagues had posited the opposite: that “Tate aspires to collect the best art *regardless of geography*” (Tate 2010 n.p.). Serota’s remark is a counter-intuitive claim to say the least, being made on the occasion of opening a £260m building. It begs the question: if the collection as shown does not assemble the ‘best’ or most important artworks that are owned, why not? If we assume an alternative, anti-hierarchical logic is in play instead, how can we describe that?

My hypothesis is that an assembly is not an intrinsically hierarchised entity but has something like an indexical relation to a people through the identities of its membership. My claim that Tate Modern is a ‘cosmopolitical assembly’ recalls Rancière’s speculative correlation between types of “assemblies in art and politics” where both stage “a form of world” (Rancière in Esche and Papastergiadis 2014: 27,38). In his terms, curators “participat[e] in a form of rephrasing, of *refiguration*” of an imagined community because they “theorize [imagine] assemblies” of actors in a “collectivization of [their] forms” (Rancierè in Rancierè, Papastergiadis, Esche 2014: 28, 37, 40). Such an assembly is“a [new] form of gathering, a form of being together, a form of world” (Rancierè in Rancierè, Papastergiadis, Esche 2014: 40). In this analysis, the three meanings of ‘assembly’ overlap at Tate Modern. The collection aligns the verb to build or construct an entity; the verb to gather bodies in space; and the noun of a representative democratic forum.

10.4.1. Tate Modern’s ‘biennialisation’

Relatedly, the three new types of display introduced since 2016 are best seen as ‘micro-assemblies’: as spaces in which a panoramic range of producers identified with different geocultural positions are convened. My conclusion is that the collection order as a whole is similarly a microcosmic ‘representation’ of “the whole world” in

Morris's phrase (Morris 2017 n.p.). My conclusion is that Tate's collection exemplifies the "biennialization" of museum practice since the "'biennial boom' [[...]] since the mid 1990s" (Green in Gundlach 2015 n.p.). Like Tate Modern, biennials are expressly associated with "transcultural exchange" between regions (Green in Gundlach 2015 n.p). My conclusion is that Tate Modern's collection is a biennial continued through other means. Morris herself has implied as much, noting that it was "biennials [and] triennials … that governed our thinking" since the 1990s, and provided the new "name of the game … 'polycentrism'" (Morris 2016b n.p.). In this regard Morris agrees with Green that it was biennials that initially "usher[ed] in" a "new chapter for the global visibility" of artists formerly excluded from the "North Atlantic primacy over the image of what was contemporary art" by expanding the scope of art's representative institutions – biennials and museums – to incorporate "the cultural geography of […] the world at large, not [only] one of its zones [regions]" (Green in Gundlach 2015 n.p.). In summary, both Tate Modern and "biennials [are] characterized by [their] geo-political 'globality' [as] they [characteristically] extend across a protoglobal space and the scope of their ambition is no longer primarily national, or even regional, but that of a geopolitical totalization of the globe" (Osborne 2015: 175-6). This describes the headline on the building: "see art from around the world", in philosophical terms.

The Tate collection displays should therefore be seen as a kind of permanent biennial in constant rotation. In the Head of Displays' terms, the strategy that is unique to Tate Modern is that "we don't change a whole bunch of rooms adjacent to each other all the time … we change [individual] rooms across the building … [and] did 40 changes this year" (Gale 21.12.18). In other words, the principle of 'chapterising' displays means individual rooms within each "wing" allows for a model of 'permanent revolution' akin to a perpetual biennial (Gale 21.12.18). This 'chapterised' order allows each individual wing to display artworks acquired from as broad a range of geopolitical locations as possible, and as wide a variety of types of practice as possible alike. The overall transformation has been from a canonical art historical order restructured in thematic terms towards structuring the collection as if it was a biennial.

More specifically, Tate Modern's display structure parallels those of the more politically engaged biennials of the last two decades, since Owkui Enwezor curated

Documenta 11 in 2002. Enzwezor is the figure who has been identified as having "remapped [the] art world" in its entirety by introducing artists resident in Africa and the global south into curators' consciousness (Farago 2019a n.p.). Tate Modern has continued this exact project, but in its collection. As suggested, biennials since c.2000 have been defined by their expansive geopolitical remit based on convening artists from every continent and sub-continent in one site. They have *also* been characterised by a structure that internalises critical theory and political thought more than the evolutionary narratives of mid-twentieth century art history.

It is important to restate precisely how novel both ideas are in collections practice. Even in exhibition practice, the earliest examples of curating artists from across multiple geopolitical regions are commonly ascribed as being the Havana Biennials of the 1980s curated by Gerardo Mosquera (see for example Steeds 2013, O'Neill 2012). In Paul O'Neill's history of curatorship, it is only in the 1990s that Western biennials began to adopt this model. It has only been since 2000 at the very earliest that these ideas have provided the new grounds of competition between collecting institutions, where status claims are pursued through whose 'reach' is greatest (see O'Neill 2012).

10.4.2. "A world in miniature"

The hypothesis here is that both the format *and* function of biennials have become internalised at Tate. The artist Dave Beech is, to date, the only contributor to have compared the logics of practice in biennials and museums of presenting "picture of the world" in its totality, or presenting "a world in miniature" (Beech 2015 n.p.). If we supplant the term 'Tate Modern' for "the museum" his insights are extraordinarily apposite:

> The museum and the biennale share a cognitive framework for art in which species being unites the world. In this sense, the biennale inherits from the art museum a philosophical and practical rationale of universality that has nothing to do with the general, the average or the aggregate … It maps the world and therefore is … totalizing. The biennale's universality – its drive towards the comprehensive representation of world art – is a legacy of the enlightenment conception of knowledge, the revolutionary conception of an egalitarian

humanity and the … unification of the world. (Beech 2015 n.p.).

These terms directly parallel the idea Tate curators' idea they stage "the world shown to itself" (Muir pers. corr. 29.11.18). What this entire scheme relies on is that artworks behave as "representatives of other places", as Beech insists (Beech 2015 n.p.).

10.4.3. A global, cosmopolitical representative assembly

Tate Modern, in my analysis, now resembles Spivak's idea that the arts move from a national framework towards an ever-wider one: their trajectory is "from politheia [until] we advance to cosmopolitheia" (Spivak 2012: 107). This is a metaphor of governance. Indeed, across the literatures and Tate curators' utterances, these metaphors are commonplace, without ever having been properly put under extended analysis. For Beech, the biennial is a "global parliament [that] collapses spatial difference", animating Morris's idea spectators can walk "from Beijing to Berlin" (Beech 2015 n.p.). Relatedly, the art historian Sabeth Buchmann has speculatively floated the idea that museums must become "the parliament of art" – without providing any specificities (Buchmann 2019: 20). My question is simple: what if these metaphors are exactly what Tate Modern's collection has become, rather than figures of speech? What if it is, in effect, an artistic equivalent to the United Nations' "General Assembly" in which representatives from "193 member states" are convened? (United Nations 2020 n.p.). The UN's description of its General Assembly remains through the idea of a "forum" (United Nations 2020a n.p.).

This is one figure that all of its directors have employed across the last decade. In 2013 Serota began describing Tate Modern as "a forum" for the first time (Serota in Rocco 2013 n.p.). Chris Dercon described "Tate Modern [a]s a site of interchange, a contemporary equivalent to the agora of ancient Greece that was the … place for the exchange of ideas. In the twenty-first century the museum increasingly serves a comparable role" (Dercon 2014: 7). It is also far from coincidental critics have pictured it as a "mixing chamber as much as a repository for art", figuring it a parliamentary debating chamber (Wainwright 2016 n.p.).

If Tate Modern is now ordered as if a representative assembly, it is because it rests on “the crucial synecdochal [principle] on which representative democracy depends”: that “parliaments … stand for the whole” as a collective representation of the entire body politic (Runciman 2019: 9). In other words, a museum that internalises the principles of “representative democracy” into its collection order takes authors as “representations, reflections, or surrogates of … groups” (Preziosi 1998c: 509-10). In 2021, Tate Modern corresponds to Preziosi’s definition of pre-twentieth century museums as “a world of ‘objects’ where some are legible or construed as representative” because the collection is “grounded in … traditions of thought [themselves based in] civic and secular forms of representational adequacy” (Preziosi 1998c: 509-10). Tate Modern’s ‘forms of representational adequacy’ are civic, political traditions rather than the quasi-theological terms of an earlier art history. What its curators have done is “ask [themselves] what the *res publica* is in its totality”, where the *res publica* must be reimagined as a cosmopolitical community that all ‘global citizens’ are invested in equally (Maak in Klonk, Maak, Demand 2011 n.p.).

10.5. Related Figures: ‘a global ‘republic of letters’?

9: What other figures are related?

The figure of a community distributed across space as a ‘republic of letters’, or a ‘commonwealth’ are worth examination. After nearly three decades as director of Tate, Nicholas Serota introduced a new figure to describe it: that “Tate Modern is a commonwealth of ideas” (Serota 2016: 22). Whilst ‘republic’ and ‘commonwealth’ are not identical in their valances, they are closely related. This is peculiarly antiquated metaphor.

Similarly, the enlightenment idea of a ‘republic of letters’ is not in curators’ lexicon at present, being absent from all of the relevant literatures. It can be summarised as an ‘imagined community’ distributed across geographical borders, acting as a fictive space for debate between nominal equals, where that state of *equality* rests on a suspension of hierarchical differences. The members of the “‘republic saw themselves as engaging each other on intellectual — and therefore equal — terms

[but…] the more international your network, the more cosmopolitan you were thought to be" (Hindley 2013 n.p.). This describes the version of network theory Tate curators have internalised.

During the research period, world literature has been described in similar terms, such as *The World Republic of Letters* or the global *Commonwealth of Letters* (Casanova 2004 title; Kailliney 2013 title). The original 'republic of letters provided a space in which the commensurability of contributions was presumed, just as at Tate all cultural production from every location is *a priori* commensurable. If Tate Modern is understood in these terms, it represents the scaling up of a liberal civic humanist ideal of art onto a global scale in any museum of modern art. In these terms, its curators have assembled a worldwide "republic of the fine arts", populated with "citizens" who bring with them their places of production, origin or affiliation (Eames 1988: 429, citing Barrell 1986: 34). Tate's collection should certainly be seen as being "structured as a political republic", and this is its "master metaphor [that] authorizes a group of more specific key metaphors" including ones of travel, mobility and authorship (Eames 1988: 429). The only possible conclusion to draw from senior staff's remarks is that every "theory of art is, at base, a theory of society", and pre-twentieth century theories of art and of museums characteristically "identifie[d] political with artistic behaviour" (Barrell 1986: 145). In this regard, Tate Modern departs from the MoMA model of modernism, to return to how art was understood by predecessors as much as looking forward to a globalised economy of art.

10.6. Tabulation of Findings

The table immediately below provides a diagrammatic summary of the findings to render them comparable to MoMA's model and to allow a headline-level understanding how Tate compares to Stedelijk and Folkwang.

Figure 10.1. Tabulation of findings and speculative conclusions: Tate Modern

	Question	**MoMA 20C**	**Tate Modern**
Q1	**Problematic**	Creating modern art's history	Geopolitical

Q2	**Type of relations**	Sequential cause and effect	Identitarian / chapterised
Q3	**Mode of individuation**	Chronological	Subjectivities
Q4	**Mode of Unity**	Genealogical	Cosmopolitical
Q5	**Model of collectivity**	Transhistorical elite	Universal / democratic
Q6	**Onto-political correlate**	Liberalism	Cosmopolitanism
Q7	**Prime value**	Universality	Equality
Q8	**Figure**	Family Tree	Assembly
Q9	**Collocates**	Patrilineage	Republic

As above, the purpose of the table is to reveal at a glance how the founding values of the two institutions – at least in MoMA's former incarnation – have diverged during the research period. From the evidence accumulated, it is only during this period that it makes sense to describe Tate Modern as an 'assembly'. It was only during this period that its own directors, past and present, began to use similar, though not identical metaphors in their own position statements. For an entire cohort of senior staff to suddenly deploy an entirely different framework to describe their work from before, as has been the case, merits a close reading of what is implied.

Chapter 11. Stedelijk Museum: 'Undisciplining' the Collection

11.0. Purpose and Structure of Chapter

Chapters 11 and 12 similarly undertake empirical display analyses that afford more speculative propositions about the ideological co-ordinates of the Stedeljik collection display 'Stedelijk Base'.

11.1 "Post-Medium Displays"

1: What is the principal problem addressed by curators in each case study?

I identified the principal problematic addressed by Stedelijk curators as creating the first "post-medium" collection display through cross-departmental working (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). Beatrix Ruf's description of the Stedelijk as a "laboratory for … innovation"' in its interdisciplinarity underpinned this process (Ruf in Ruf et al 2016 n.p.; Stedelijk Museum 2018e n.p.). The project was to return the museum to "the forefront of [museums'] representational modes and models" by staging "the first-ever major, integrated presentation of art and design in the history of the museum" (Ruf in Buck 2014 n.p.; Stedelijk Museum 2018a n.p.). Individual displays were structured through "all media [being] … in dialogue with each other" and disciplines becoming "integrated" in a single gallery (Stedelijk Museum 2018a n.p.). For the Head of Collections Bart Rutten these aims involved nothing less than a wholesale "transformation of [the] collection" (Rutten in Ruf et al 2016 n.p.). For one interviewee, the purpose of the display was to create a "cacophony": to de-segregate and de-structure the collection and preclude any easy grasp of their patterning (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). Almost nothing about Stedelijk Base resembles the other two case studies.

11.2. 'Post-Disciplinary' Relations

2: Which type of structuring relation between artworks, artists, or cultures does each type of problem create?

One peculiarity of the final version of Stedelijk Base not yet outlined is the co-existence of dual orders in the one gallery space. On the perimeter wall is a relatively orthodox chronological timeline of objects, albeit alternating design objects with artworks. In the interior is a more experimental order, realised through an unorthodox spatial layout. On the perimeter, the chronology is announced by vinyl texts placed at floor level marking individual decades from 1880 onwards. Within the interior, the principles of organisation and visitor orientation are rendered deliberately opaque.

My initial finding elaborated below is that Stedelijk Base goes some way to being a “post-discipline” display more than a ‘post-medium’ one, because its distinguishing feature is that collections of fine art and with design are juxtaposed rather than separated (Farquharson 2013: 58). More specifically, their objects are alternated rather than seen in parallel spaces. The photograph in figure 11.1, taken from above, more fully illustrates how the distribution of screens is irregular, where none are perpendicular or parallel to each other. Objects themselves are ‘clustered’ together rather than placed into any regular rhythm or systematic pattern.

Figure 11.1 Partial panoramic view of Stedelijk BASE from above, January 2019. Author’s own photo.

The crucial insight to understanding Stedelijk Base is that “the museum wall [i]s … a metaphor”: “the museum [order] is figured in its walls” (Reylea 2015: 172, 180). As outlined above, museums’ system of spatial organisation characteristically divide the field of production into its structural categories, whether by medium, into chronological episodes, or by national ‘school’. Walls are “concretely enacted belief” because they spatialise these categories (Reylea 2015: 172). Understanding the

metaphorical character of the architectural structure is therefore of prime importance in any analysis of Stedelijk Base. Whilst one critic has intuited that “Martelli’s screens [suggest] the idea of a figurative space” no contributor has elaborated this insight (Tilman 2017 n.p.). Stedelijk’s remarkable innovation is to create a form of spatial layout no museum of modern art has ever attempted to date. Spatial layouts organise how “we encounter, make sense of, and write the history of … art” in its entirety because the concepts of art and collection have been co-determining as Pearce argued (Balsom 2018: 6).

In Stedelijk Base, the single greatest transformation was to move all objects from all disciplines, media and periods into one uninterrupted wall-free, column-free gallery. To recap: the single most important “purpose was [to have] no traditional division of the space into rooms, but to create [an] open floorplan” in which objects across every prior category could be convened to fraternise in new ways (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). What Stedelijk curators have achieved is to “transgress the limits of the current [museum] order across media and disciplines” so that *all* objects can “converse with one another out[side] of their” prior taxonomic categories (Pollock 2007: 10, 12). In Griselda Pollock’s terms that directly parallel those of Stedelijk curators, such a ‘transgression’ is precisely where the political potential of the museum collection lies: in staging new ‘conversations’ between types of quasi-subject who have never had the chance to enter into ‘dialogue’, and overturning the dominant art historical order.

In other words, the reordering project ‘liberated’ artworks from their place in the museum’s prior social order, allowing them to ‘socialise’ without limits. Indeed, the purpose of the project precisely was to create new ‘social situations’ in which ‘strangers’ would meet for the first time. Only by voiding museums’ “traditional division[s] … could [curators] make very different connections” between objects (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). As outlined, Stedelijk Base contains nearly 700 objects in an exceptionally dense hang, allowing for numerous ‘connections’. The analyses below are based on interviewees’ testimonies that objects were explicitly placed adjacently to each other to imply a ‘connection’ between them that visitors would have to account for, rather than having explained directly. The term “clusters” like ‘constellations’ signals the difference between orthodox hangs and that at Stedelijk Base: it is evocative of an alternative, less rigid or systematic form of order than a

taxonomic one, in which things are allocated their rightful place.

An initial recap of the overarching spatial system is required. The first unusual feature is that there are no ‘rooms’ to speak of. I outlined the convention by which rooms are correlated with discrete categories of object above. In conventional collection displays, each spatial envelope occupies a distinct category, ordinarily based on medium, time or space. The system of screens prevents any discrete spatial envelopes being identified. The irregular geometry allows for vista towards at least two further ‘clusters’ from any position in the ‘maze’. In short, this ensures that multiple *types* of object are always within any visitor’s viewpoint. Moreover, there is no single predetermined route identifiable because the screens’ disposition is “almost random” (Bava 2018 n.p.). Finally, no contingently partitioned space is the same as another: there are only “non-standard” shapes Bava 2018 n.p.).

Figure.11.2.: Partial view of Stedelijk BASE from above, January 2019. Author’s own photo. Max Beckmann’s 1941 *Double Portrait: Max and Mathilde Beckmann* is fourth from left, near wall.

The structural relations between objects are determined by their unusual proximity, as illustrated in figure 11.2. Objects are 20-30cm apart at the least, and 30-60cm apart at most. This breaches the convention that spaces between objects should be at least equal to their own sizes. The display consistently transgresses almost all the spatial conventions seen in other museums of modern art since the 1980s. Visitors' trajectory through Stedelijk Base is through notably "smaller spaces" than customary such that "you are as it were pressed with your nose on the paintings" (Bava 2018 n.p.; Tilman 2017 n.p.). The necessity of keeping each 4000kg steel screen stable restricted their height to eight feet. Accordingly, larger pictures are hung no more than 30cm from the floor. Critics noted that the "low height at which the works of art are hung [affords] an [unusually] intimate sense of the works of art" (Tilman 2017 n.p.). What my argument rests on is that the cumulative effect of these transgressions of spatial strategies is that they amplify each other, by "allow[ing] visitors to see [too] many things at the same time" (Tilman 2017 n.p.).

If I have emphasised the differences between Stedelijk Base in 2017 and other museums, this format has a clear set of predecessors. Single hangar-sized galleries articulated only with partitions defined new museums in the 1970s. Both the Sainsbury Centre (built 1974-78, designed by Foster & Partners) and the Centre Pompidou (built 1971-77, designed by Rogers & Piano) adopted this model. Stedelijk Base revivifies the Centre Pompidou's original 1970s display model, "uninterrupted by load-bearing structures" and its interdisciplinary ideal of exhibiting "all forms of cultural activities" (Centre Pompidou 2017 n.p.; Piano in Centre Pomipdou 2017 n.p.). The Stedelijk itself gave rise to this model. As Serota has described, the Pompidou only provided a "model for the interaction of creative disciplines in the twentieth century" because it was a direct "develop[ment of] ideas pioneered by Willem Sandberg at the Stedelijk Museum" (Serota 1996: 13,14). If Stedelijk has been back at "the forefront of [museums'] representational modes and models", it is by looking back to its earlier ideals (Ruf in Buck 2014 n.p.). It is also implicitly constructing a counter-history of European museums of modern art based around the centrality of Sandberg's ideas.

11.2.1. Display 1: transdisciplinary, transhistorical comparisons

My analyses are based on the idea that ‘connections’ between objects in the display in Stedelijk Base rest on what the Head of Collections called a “dialogical” structure (Rutten in Ruf et al 2016 n.p.). This is a ‘game’ of staging works in immediate juxtaposition that imply grounds for comparison or outright contrast, on unexpected grounds. The display analyses below therefore focus in detail on ‘dialogues’ between works placed into pairs and trios, both on the chronological perimeter wall, and the inner area of Stedelijk Base.

The first micro-display I take to exemplify the new order is one which juxtaposes eight works by the Dutch designer Maarten Baas from the 2000s with the painting *Painting, Smoking, Eating*, (1973) by American artist Philip Guston. As figures 11.3, 11.4 and 11.5. show, the nearest of Baas’s objects to Guston’s painting is the vermillion *Clay Table With Drawers.* It is a near-identical shade of red to Guston’s keynote colour, providing a chromatic ‘bridge’. My understanding is that until the last decade such a display would have been unthinkable in a permanent collection instead of in a temporary exhibition at major museums of modern art. It was only thinkable in speculative experiments such as those Pollock has undertaken in a “virtual …museum”, where the ordinary rules of the museum could be suspended (Pollock 2007: title).

Up until 2017, Baas’s work was seen in one wing of the building and Guston’s another, without any possibility of cross-comparison. Before 2017, Guston and Baas were separated by discipline, being a fine artist and a designer. They employed entirely different media, namely oil paint and clay, to create objects with entirely different functions. They lived and worked on different continents in New York and Rotterdam, and were born in Canada and Germany respectively. They are from different generations: Guston was born in 1913 and Baas in 1978: Guston died before Baas’s birth. Their work has never been exhibited together. They exemplify the new ‘conversations’ that transgresses disciplinary and generational boundaries that Stedelijk Base rests on. The cause of the comparison was the novel process of cross-departmental working: it resulted in ‘blind dates’ between objects from different departments.

Figure 11.3. Installation, Stedelijk Base, January 2019.
Left: Maarten Baas, *Clay Table With Drawers* (2006-11); right: Phillip Guston *Painting, Smoking, Eating*, (1973) c/o Stedelijk Museum.

11.3 Mode of Individuation: "Modes of sensibility"

3: How are artworks individuated within these structuring relations?

This micro-display begs the question of what relationship exists between Guston and Baas or these particular works. It also begs the question of how this *kind* of display individuates them. As outlined, there is no relationship pre-existing, nor identifiable on taxonomical grounds. There is no 'thematic' connection or of subject matter. The only explanation for their 'dialogue' is that it is a 'problem' or 'puzzle' to be solved.

If the Stedelijk's structure is indeed "dialogic", my hypothesis is this is a dialogue between parallel practices in art and design – or rather, one between parallel authorial identities. To use what is an anachronistic term that has been rehabilitated in curatorial literature, the parallel is between two 'sensibilities'. Again, such a type of

display has been prefigured in curatorial theory, but never realised. Irit Rogoff's ideal museum is, like Pollock's, one structured by "rejecting … pre-established encoding, all these modes of manipulation [mediation] … in order to construct [artists' practices as] *modes of sensibility*" (Rogoff 2010: 41). This describes Stedelijk curators' project exactly. Stedelijk Base is an experiment in transhistorical and transdisciplinary 'dialogues' *across* the taxonomic categories that the collection is traditionally structured on. In Rogoff's similarly anthropomorphising, politicised terms, "modes of sensibility" are, by definition, "modes of relation with the other": they are ways of relating to what each artwork is *not* (Rogoff 2010: 41). Again, I take this as having prefigured the procedure by which displays are structured. The two ways in which Stedelijk's model has political ramifications, as outlined below, are how it de-naturalises the modernist canon; and how it expands the privileges of authorship more fully onto every discipline represented. Framing design objects as having authorial 'sensibilities' begins to equalise their value in mixed displays. It is the prerequisite to creating displays that cut across existing categories and are based on comparisons across disciplines.

The model of individuation employed therefore relies on principles of comparison and contrast between artefacts that are ordinarily categorically separate, by highlighting one axis of 'connection' alone. This is familiar in exhibition-making, but not in collections. It can *only* offer "suggestive juxtaposition [which] takes the place of hard [art-historical] exegesis" (Cahill 2020: 22). Baas and Guston's works invite comparison on certain formal grounds as figures 11.4 and 11.5 show, though this is 'suggestive' rather than meaningful. The significance of their comparison lies in their relative field positions in their respective disciplines. This type of display privileges a *positional* understanding of makers. Prior knowledge of both makers' careers is the prerequisite for this comparison to have weight. As Rancière's has shown, a display based on "the putting together of things that normally don't go together … can be interpreted as … a kind of new complexification of the relation of art practice to a spectator" (Rancière in Rancière, Papastergiaidis and Esche 2014: 38).

Figure 11.4 Philip Guston *Painting, Smoking, Eating* (1973) © DACS

Figure 11.5. Maarten Baas *Clay Table With Drawers* (2006-11) © The artist / Stedelijk Museum

11.3.1. Dialogues between field positions

Some exposition of these makers' positions is essential. Guston is now known for his late paintings that repudiated his earlier "formally accomplished abstraction" (Tate 2020 n.p.). This late work's sensuous play of materials contrast to "grotesque" a cartoon-like idiom (Stedelijk Museum 2020 n.p.). This acted as a critique of 'polite' modernism that he decried as "ridiculous" by returning social critique to modern art (Guston in Coolidge 2011: 31). Baas's reputation is as a designer of unique, hand-made products for collectors in an equally 'grotesque' idiom. In Guston's words, "all you possess [as an artist] are the simplest and most archaic of means" to create "the only thing left in our industrial society [that] an individual alone can make" (Guston in Coolidge 2011: 86). Baas's work is similarly made from 'the simplest and most archaic of means'. The comparison is only worthwhile if it begins rather than ends with formal similarities.

What is more important is how both makers pioneered the use of a strategic crudity that extended the boundaries of acceptability in their discipline. Both undertook a strategic renunciation of formal sophistication pursued by their immediate predecessors and peers. Both undertook strategies of negation. Guston rejected the sophisticated abstraction dominating the 1960s. There is a parallel critical consensus that Baas embraced atavistic production methods as a pointed counter-thesis to 1990s minimalist design. The comparison makes sense if objects function metonymically, standing in for each creator's artistic identity – at least in its received image.

11.3.2. Dual canons alternated

Stedelijk Base principally places objects from the dual canons of art and design into an alternating A/B/A/B/ rhythm. One interviewee observed that the new display was more attached to 'the canon' than its predecessor: that it is an "approach [that] is much more about following art history" than before (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). A canon rests upon a process of consensus formation between museums internationally. Baas is the most 'canonised' Dutch designer of his generation, represented in "MoMA, Victoria & Albert Museum, Les Arts Decoratifs, San Francisco

Museum of Modern Art" amongst other museums (Baas 2020 n.p.). My interpretation is that Baas's work acts as a microcosmic representation of the Stedelijk's new order. Baas has famously asked "Does Maarten consider himself an artist or a designer?" by answering "Yes" (Baas 2020 n.p.; 2020a n.p.). The question is directly transposable onto an institutional plane: the collection's question of itself is 'does the Stedelijk consider itself an art museum or a design museum? Yes'.

11.3.3. Display 2: "The Fuchs Principle" – perimeter wall

The perimeter wall display is structured as a sequence of micro-displays of works from an individual decade. No analyst to date has drawn out the consequences of this the A/B/A/B method of ordering a collection, and how adjacency allows relationships to be inferred between design objects and artworks. None has yet outlined how what this achieves is to foreclose reading the collection as a single genealogy. There is no possibility of a *causal* relationship being inferred. The most startling of all displays is about the 1950s, in which objects are individuated through extreme contrasts. In the Baas / Guston juxtaposition, material and formal comparison are privileged. The opposite is true in the '1950s' cluster.

Figure 11.6. Installation, Stedelijk Base, January 2019: overview of the ‘1950s’ display, seen from above. The display is counter-clockwise, right to left with objects by Pablo Picasso, Dieter Rams, Sedje Hémon, Charles & Ray Eames and Barnett Newman. Photo: author’s own.

One of the most unorthodox juxtapositions is between the Barnett Newman painting *Cathedra* (1951) and three 1950s chairs by Charles and Ray Eames (see figures 11.6, 11.7). In an overt ‘transgression’ of how Newman’s paintings were intended to be shown, the Eames chairs overshadow it all but literally. The upper and lower shelves are ranged top and bottom with the painting drawing attention to this. Interviewees testified to the violent critical reactions. Curator Aaron Betsky argued that “curators [have] jammed so many objects together that you can’t properly see” the collection, “heap[ing] it up” into a “chaotic and dysfunctional …mess” (Betsky 2017 n.p.). To Betsky, these juxtapositions are inexplicable or “bizarre”, offering “pure chaos” (Betsky 2017 n.p.). In other case studies, curators have followed the convention Newman’s paintings must fill spectators’ field of vision free of distraction, to allow immersion into an imagined spatial depth. The Eames chairs are 90cm higher than *Cathedra* and 60cm away. If there is a comparability, it is not immediately obvious. My understanding is that both offer an image of American modernity through

simplification and minimal means, embodying the Miesian dictum of 'less is more', and the modernist idea of 'truth to materials'.

The explanation for such transgressions is what Ruf called making the Stedelijk's "DNA" – its institutional history – present in display form itself (Ruf 2016 n.p.). Interviewees described "channelling" the history of Stedelijk displays methods to create a new synthesis from "what can we rescue" from previous modes of curating (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). The particular context of Dutch museums underpins this: "the importance that the Dutch place on their museum directors [is unparalleled] … almost everyone is familiar with the people who run the major museums" (Esman 2003 n.p.). In other words, the distinctive methods of Stedelijk's directors have entered 'popular' memory, in a way unthinkable elsewhere.

Willem Sandberg pioneered the use of temporary screenwalls and interdisciplinary displays, as outlined. The second most celebrated director at Stedelijk was Rudi Fuchs (1993-2003). Fuchs generated "front-page full-color, prime-time TV news" and "few museum directors anywhere have engendered such controversy" for their "unorthodox approach to art" (Esman 2003 n.p.). I believe Stedelijk Base's transgressions can be initially explained through the equation 'Sandberg + Fuchs'. Famously, "Fuchs' exhibitions consist[ed] largely of juxtapositions" between objects with no apparently similarities (Esman 2003 n.p.). Fuchs's famous "juxtapositions" were based on objects "place[d] beside or against each other not on the basis of chronology or style or any similar quality external to the works, but for the connections he discerns within the works themselves" (Esman 2003 n.p.). Nicholas Serota named staging such "unexpected confrontation[s] … the Fuchs principle" (Serota 1996: 50). Stedelijk Base's project manager argued its history was indeed based on offering "surprising connections" for visitors to draw their own "associations" (Schavemaker in Copping 2017 n.p.).

The principles of individuation in the 1950s display reanimate Sandberg's principle of registering connections across the plastic arts, and "the Fuchs principle". Ruf signalled this publicly, according to interviewees, by making a personal invitation to Fuchs to curate a collection display in the basement gallery immediately prior to installation of Stedelijk Base. The display, 'Excitement', (27 May – 2 Oct 2016) acted as a 'trailer' for the changes to come. Just as in Fuch's signature displays of the

1980s and 1990s, the display "was installed [in the] galleries not on the basis of art historical information" or under any taxonomical order, but based on emphasising the contrasts between the "individual physicality" of each artwork (Stedelijk Museum 2016b n.p.; Esman 2003 n.p.). In Fuchs's own words that describe Stedelijk Base perfectly, "when pieces are hung close together, it's far easier to see their individualism. This *individualism* is what museums ought to show their visitors … [placing] works in close proximity throws their singularity into sharp relief …[as] radically different kinds of art" (Fuchs 2016 n.p.). The '1950s' display illustrates these principles vividly. Fuchs's curatorial motif has been described as that he "hung one [artwork] above the other at odd heights and intervals" (Esman 2003 n.p.). This describes the 'odd' way the Eames chairs tower over *Cathedra*, and are unusually close to it. Stedelijk Base recapitulates "the Fuchs principle" through Sandberg's ideas of interdisciplinarity, in its A/B/A/B rhythm and spatial transgressions. The goal is, as Fuchs notes, to individuate artworks precisely by setting them into new relations of contrast.

Figure 11.7 Installation, Stedelijk Base, January 2019: the ‘1950s’ display.
Left: Barnett Newman *Cathedra* (1951); Right, top to bottom: Charles& Ray Eames, *DKR Wire Chair* (1951); *Plywood Group DCM Chair* (1945-6); *DCW Chair* (1945) – chairs displayed c.60-70cm away, and c.90cm higher than Newman’s painting. Photo author’s own.

11.3.4. Dual canons and their others

Immediately adjacent to the Eames chairs is an informal ‘trio’ of objects whose juxtaposition also illuminates the wider principles of the installation. Two of the three

works are by canonical male ‘masters’ of modern design and modern art: Dieter Rams and Pablo Picasso. The third artist is, by contrast, a largely unknown female Dutch artist-musician. Their three works are Sedje Hémon’s linocut *Pas de Quatre* (1961), Dieter Rams and Hans Gugelot’s *Phonosuper’ (Model SK4) radio* (1956) and Picasso’s *Femme ne devant le jardin* (1956). Beyond their chronology, these works would initially appear to have even less in common than the Eames-Newman pairing.

Figure 11.8. Sedje Hémon *Pas de Quatre* (1961). Photo author’s own.

Figure 11.9. Dieter Rams & Hans Gugelot, *Phonosuper' (Model SK4) radio* (1956), © Stedelijk Museum.

Figure 11.10. Pablo Picasso, *Femme ne devant le jardin* (1956) © Stedeijk Museum.

The A/B/A/B rhythm between design objects and artworks requires considerable prior knowledge of makers' field positions, or immediate access to information about them, to register their place in a field of positionality. I use the term 'field positions' here in the Bourdieusian sense of occupying metaphorical 'territory' within a particular discipline or profession, to describe how the relations between these positions can be imagined (see Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). This trio of objects underscores this idea. The received image of Picasso's place in twentieth century art history has been

as *the* avatar of modernist experimentation across all possible media, including painting, sculpture, ceramics, drawing and printmaking: Stedelijk describe this painting as an opportunity for spectators to "meet an icon" of modernism (Stedelijk Museum 2018d n.p.). Immediately adjacent is a radio designed by Dieter Rams, who occupies a similarly canonical position in design history to Picasso's in modern art. Rams is the industrial designer "responsible for the dominant [design] aesthetic of our age", whose objects are "monuments of modernism" (Lange 2018 n.p.). Copies of this design are owned by MoMA, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, and The Museum Angewandte Kunst, as it exemplifies Rams's modernity, and that of post-war design overall (see MoMA 2016 n.p.; Lange 2018 n.p.). Rams and Picasso are positioned as 'modern masters' of the 1950s in orthodox ways. What complicates this display are the implied comparisons between Rams's and Sedje Hémon's work, and Hémon's and Picasso's work. Leontine Coelewij testified that the curators had made an express effort to prioritise female artists and designers under Beatrix Ruf's directorship. This trio exemplifies one Fuchsian method of achieving this, where the unexpected contrasts between objects allow for unexpected conclusions to be drawn. In Serota's words, Fuchsian "juxtapositions can sometimes appear perverse or obscure" precisely because they hazard "a willingness to engage in … unexpected confrontation[s]" and evidence a "curatorial courage" (Serota 1996: 50). This statement identifies the risks and rewards of Stedelijk curators' method, and what is at stake in Stedelijk Base.

Figure 11.11. Installation, Stedelijk Base, January 2019: the ‘1950s’ display. Left: Charles & Ray Eames *DKR Wire Chair* (1951); *Plywood Group DCM Chair* (1945-6); *DCW Chair* (1945). Right: Sedje Hémon *Pas de Quatre* (1961).

Figure 11.12. Installation Stedelijk Base, January 2019: the ‘1950s’ display.
Left: Dieter Rams and Hans Gugelot, *Phonosuper’ (Model SK4) radio* (1956),
Right: Pablo Picasso: *Femme ne devant le jardin* (1956)

My hypothesis is that the unusual proximity of this trio, spaced only 40cm apart, invites a counter-reading of these artists’ positions in the history of modernism. Unlike Picasso or Rams, Sedje Hémon has never been collected by any major museum. Her work was ‘rediscovered’ in 2007 as “one of the first artists to work in a interdisciplinary way” and as a direct predecessor of contemporary artists’ practices (Derks 2018 n.p.). The Stedelijk describe her as a “rediscovered …composer and artist … who developed a unique approach of translating the visual into the sonic” (Stedelijk Museum 2021 n.p.). My understanding is that, in the game of ‘blind dates’ staged between objects proposed by different curatorial departments, Hémon’s work is adjacent to Rams’s radio because both objects evoke music: Hémon’s synaesthetically, Rams’s through its ‘period’ aesthetic. However, the comparison also rests on the idea Hémon created functional objects that happen to take the form of

abstract paintings. She defined her works through by their utility for her, as tools to "generate musical scores directly" (Hémon in Documenta 14 2007: n.p.). They are designs for acoustic landscapes, that spatialise sound. For the dialogue to function, visitors need to register that Hémon's works are "visual scores" and transdisciplinary experiments (Hémon 2020 n.p.).

My understanding of the Picasso / Hémon juxtaposition is that Hémon's work is more contemporary than Picasso's, as a transdisciplinary artist rather than one who used traditional media. The comparison frames Picasso's as orthodox and Hémon as the true radical whose work prefigures contemporary art. Picasso's work is rooted in academic genres; Hémon's transcended them entirely. Picasso's work presents 'the female nude'; Hémon's work exemplifies female creative subjectivity. Picasso's work invokes the European painterly tradition; Hémon's points forward towards contemporary art's post-disciplinary condition.

11.3.5. "For opacity"

Curators' method of juxtaposing authors 'sensibilities' to underscore their individuality is best described as "for opacity" (Glissant 2019a: 189). Ruf's description of her beliefs are startling for any anglophone museum professional: opacity is essential because "we need to *protect* the art from interpretation" (Ruf 2016 n.p.). This expresses her belief a curatorial 'voice' can 'drown out' artists' 'voices'. For Ruf and Fuchs, artworks are polysemic entities whose purpose is to prompt the play of imaginative association, and curatorial mediation can forestall that. Martelli testified that for Ruf, the "association[s]" between objects were strategically left "open" to "allow visitors to discover" associations rather than making them explicit (Martelli 2018 n.p.; Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19.). As he remarked "we want to leave visitors free to create [their own understandings] without badgering them", because "curatorially the intention was not … to provide a[ny] didactic story" (Martelli in Mascolo 2017 n.p.; Martelli in Twemlow 2018 n.p.). The goal was one of "permitting curiosity": to "allow the visitor to … to move … freely" between clusters without predetermined routes (Martelli in Twemlow 2018 n.p.). Martelli noted that even "the audioguide limits itself to explaining the [individual] works" alone on their own terms, rather than explaining their 'clustering' (Martelli in Mascolo 2017 n.p.). All of these

point towards one conclusion: curators' objective was to prompt imaginative *speculation* about authors' relations, by presenting relations as problems. Each individual juxtaposition acts as a puzzle, akin to a clue in a crossword-like whole.

11.4. Unity: A Transhistorical, Transdisciplinary Artworld

4: How do these structuring relations unify the collection?

Interviewees were clear that each individual counter-reading accumulated into an alternative ideal of unity, where the history of modern art is re-read from the perspective of the present in an anti-historicist manner. In Martelli's testimony, the most "interesting arguments to do this [project] from Beatrix [were] to take *all* the art and give it a 'contemporary' reading and explore what a new environment, what a new spatial approach could give to more historical art" that had lost its relevance to current practice (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). In other words, the process was of one of 'contemporanising' older work: "it was [about giving a new opportunity to historical art … to give it a 'contemporary reading" that would reposition it as relevant to artists today, and current debates (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19).

11.4.1. Transdisciplinary defines modern art

My hypothesis is that the Hémon's work, like Baas's, can be read as exemplifying this idea. Hémon's work rests on a transdisciplinary "theory of the 'integration of the arts'", just as Stedelijk Base itself does (Hémon 2020: n.p.). My understanding is that Hémon's and Baas's works act as distributed 'links' in a chain of transdisciplinary practices across the history of modern and contemporary art, which are strategically positioned throughout the gallery. This cumulatively creates a counter-reading about the nature and trajectory of art across the last century. This counter-reading locates the modernity of modern and contemporary art alike in their shared transdisciplinarity. This imperative has similarly been figured in curatorial theory, being described by Rogoff as the process of "undisciplining" of a collection (Rogoff 2010: 40). 'Undisciplining' artworks means framing them outside of their disciplinary affiliation so that they can 'fraternise' with their disciplinary 'others'. As Rogoff

suggests, “when [an artwork is] unframed [by discipline] it is less grounded genealogically”: this is clearly true at the Stedelijk, where there are no genealogical relations able to be inferred between Picasso and Rams, or Rams and Hémon (Rogoff 2010: 41). For Rogoff, as for Stedelijk curators, when artworks have new and “unexpected companions, [this new] company […in its] proximity can provide … [a] challenge” to the canon, because artworks lose their “place within the [former] chain of argumentation” altogether (Rogoff 2010: 40). I see Stedelijk Base as an alternative ‘chain of argument’ to MoMA’s former canonical order that corresponds directly to Rogoff’s speculative theory of an ideal display. It offers an entirely different logic from which the dominant concept of art can be reassessed.

What Rogoff’s idea only implies, and what the chapter below elaborates, is that the Stedelijk collection should be understood as an ‘open society’ of authors, whose modernity lies in the idea that all ‘quasi-subjects’ can socialise, ‘democratically’. Whilst the mode of unity at Stedelijk convenes elite authors from across space and disciplines into ‘clusters’, it also admits newcomers. Interviewees admitted they addressed competing imperatives of “consolidating the canon on the one hand, and do[ing] something different” by privileging female artists’ contributions to art and design history (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). Hémon’s work was included to equalise the gender balance on the perimeter wall: “what we tried here in the Base is to include, for example, more women artists than we had done before in the presentations. But still – I counted it – and it is only 23%” (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). Stedelijk’s curators purposefully quantified the proportions of male and female artists in their “collection display[s]” with the ambition to “have it 50 / 50 or even more women artists” – and although “it [remains] more difficult when you work with the historical collection we try to find” opportunities to achieve that (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). The Head of Collection Bart Rutten similarly discussed how female makers were being “brought to the surface” having remained in stores for decades, as I outline below (Rutten in Ruf 2016 n.p.). The picture of art and design history is one where “transdisciplinary” production defined both modernism and defines contemporary art alike, where female artists had central but unacknowledged roles (Documenta 14 2017: n.p.).

11.4.2. Problems of transdisciplinary display

One of the 25 clusters is dedicated to the Bauhaus and its legacies. This cluster is of signal significance in the entire order: it exemplifies the ideal of breaking down boundaries between the plastic arts. The inclusion of *Relief Rug* (1934) by the Bauhaus-trained Dutch designer Kitty van der Mijll Dekker reveals the problems a transdisciplinary display order faces. This example reveals the Stedelijk's claim to sectoral innovation in short and long terms. In 2017, Tate Modern acquired work by Bauhaus-trained Anni Albers (Tate 2018c n.p.). Dekker's work was bought by Stedelijk in 1936 after its production (Stedelijk Museum 2018c n.p.). *Relief Rug* foregrounded Stedelijk's history of adventurous acquisitions, and support of female makers' then and now, and its own contribution to the history of transdisciplinary practice. Curators emphasised that the new display attends to "the integration of [Stedelijk's] institutional history within [current] practice" to an unprecedented degree (Stedeiljk Museum 2019c n.p.). The lead curator argued that ultimately the unity of the display lay in "the institutional history of the Stedeiljk itself" – of "our" story (Schavemaker in Ruf et al 2016 n.p.). In this regard, the display is closer to an collective biography of the collection itself continued through other means. Her assertion was that "randomness is not an issue or a risk" because curators foregrounded the institution's own history, and objects' lifespans within it (Schavemaker in Ruf et al 2016 n.p.).

Interviewees also testified that "the risk of mixing design and art" is "that you start thinking of design as art, when in fact there are very important differences" (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). *Relief Rug* exemplifies the problem that 'integrating' disciplines is of presenting "design as art" (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). As one critic has also noted, the work "is displayed hanging vertically on the wall" as if a picture (Twemlow 2018 n.p.). There are valid conservation reasons for this. Nevertheless, *Relief Rug* exemplifies "the typological ambivalence" of design objects displayed as if artworks (Twemlow 2018 n.p.). In Martelli's testimony, grey painted walls were reserved for design objects, but *Relief Rug* is shown on a white wall in a 'mixed' cluster alongside photographs, as in figures 11.13 and 11.14, becoming subordinated to a display paradigm for pictures.

Figure 11.13. Kitty van der Mijll Dekker *Relief Rug* (1934) © Stedelijk Museum
Figure 11.14. Installation of Kitty van der Mijll Dekker *Relief Rug* (1934), January 2019, Stedelijk Base. © Stedelijk Museum

In summary: Stedelijk curators have established a novel mode of unity in which a 1956 radio and an abstract painting can be in 'dialogue' despite their lack of any biographical, material or taxonomic relation. This requires initiative and patience from visitors. The juxtaposition between a clay table and a painting can only become meaningful when the new rules of playing this 'game' are understood by visitors. The institution's profile, and the personal profile of its directors in Amsterdam's culture underwrites the possibility and likelihood of this. One critic's analysis of "the Fuchs principle" also describes Ruf's experiment with Stedelijk Base: "to view a Fuchs show right is to take a leap of faith, to trust that what appears to have no sense is rich with reason" (Esman 2003 n.p.).

Chapter 12. Collections as Collectivities.
Stedelijk Museum as an Assemblage

12.0. Purpose and Structure of Chapter

This chapter elaborates my argument is that museum collections can be understood to create their own "ontological communities" as Irit Rogoff has put it (Rogoff 2017: 619). By this, she and I mean that what is created is itself a new "collectivity" that must be understood on its own terms, rather than in representational ones (Osborne 2011: title). This is to say that collections need not 'represent' makers, or the places or cultures where they worked or lived, but can instead be seen as a new grouping in and of itself, rather than through reference to 'external' or non-artistic categories. To date, only one journalist has suggested that the Stedelijk display should be understood "not [as] a representative overview of the art of the 20th century, but [an entity that] produces a new reality itself" (Tilman 2017 n.p.). None have unpacked the consequences of this idea, such that Stedelijk's significance has not been explored.
Again, five questions structure the chapter:
5: What model of collectivity correlates to these sets of answers?
6: What ideological tradition does each type of collectivity draw on?
7: What value is privileged in each ideological tradition?
8: What figure can best describe each collection?
9: What other figures are related?

12.1. 'We, the Authors'

5: What model of collectivity correlates to these sets of answers?

12.1.1. "We collect … authors"

Stedelijk curators testified to taking authors rather than objects as their units of analysis under Beatrix Ruf's directorship, as part of the "post-medium" ideal. If individual authors work across disciplines and media, only their authorship logically provides the unifying connection between diverse objects. The curator of

photography Anne Ruygt described “the [new] position of the museum” as representing “authors …we don’t collect websites, we don’t collect photos, or photo books – we collect makers, we collect artists. So it’s a different way of thinking of the work: it’s not the medium, it’s the artist” that is the fundamental unit (Ruygt in Oktober Matthews 2014 n.p.). This was “the [important] move” allowing a post-medium order to be institutionally entrenched (Ruygt in Oktober Matthews 2014 n.p.). Ruygt has also emphasised that “the best thing you can do as a museum” is allow authors to “really talk to each other” (Ruygt in Oktober 2014 n.p.). Figuring artworks as *authored* quasi-subjects who ‘talk to each other’ about their author’s ‘sensibilities’ is one very specific mode of anthropomorphisation. As outlined, it is one where the field position of each authorial vision is necessarily prioritised.

To paraphrase the new media historian Beryl Graham, Stedelijk asks the question of “what is [actually] collected?” with the answer ‘authors’ (Graham 2014: 30). In Graham’s analysis, “the popular aphorism stating that what is collected is ‘artists not artworks’” (Graham 2014: 30). MACBA’s curators have similarly described it as “a museum of artists via works of art; we work with artists before we work with artworks” (Mari 2009: 2). This is a crucial distinction to the curators at both Stedelijk and MACBA, but one that risks reinstating a much earlier, conservative model of art production. Such a model of collection is ultimately “‘a biographical art history that singles out particular artists as the central focus” (Krauss 1981: 6 quoted by Halsall 2017: 45). It is possible to see it as an orthodox form of museum practice where, “when we talk about art, we often elide the object …[with] their producers” completely (Smith 2016: 73). As the Stedelijk, as in UK and EU law, the convention is that “artworks are understood first and foremost as the expression of their authors” because “artists are personally tied to their works” (Gover 2018: 26, 1).

I take it that “legal declarations are based [on] fundamental concepts”: that they can only codify *inherited* conventions rather than embody emergent ideas (Gover 2018: 2). The most orthodox art collections are “an art history of the proper name”, in Rosalind Krauss’s own phrase (Krauss 1981: 6). The Stedelijk’s order is an accumulation of authors assembled in one space, in this regard, being ‘artist-centred’ to an unprecedented degree. As in Rosalind Krauss’s analysis from 40 years ago, it remains “the [creative] identity of the author / artists who provides the key, coherence or origin to a body of work” (Krauss 1981: 6 quoted by Halsall 2017: 45). The

distinction to Tate here is that it is a specifically *artistic* persona made manifest in each object that provides the key to understanding, rather than makers' subject positions. My argument is that Stedelijk's collection display should be understood as a "single space […that] offers an image of […] the collective field of the producers" (Myers-Szupinska 2017: 20). The image of the collection is one of the 'collective field of the producers' of all the plastic arts – and not of the 'collective field' of 'the world' at large as at Tate. It is an aggregation of elite authors from across all disciplinary categories. I understand it as speaking as 'we, the authors': a space that unifies the authors who determined or represent the most important extensions of the concept of art across time. The 'we' of the Stedelijk collection speaks as 'we, the canonised authors', with notable exceptions outlined above. As the example of the Baas / Guston pairing outlines, each author's artistic persona is central to the story constructed, being understood as the index of each object. If Tate Modern has mixed artistic elites distributed across space in each gallery and wing, Stedelijk has mixed elites from across time.

It is a commonplace that a collection is "not just about bringing *things* from around the world in the name of contemporary art, but also about the *people* responsible" even when they are not present themselves (Steeds in Steeds, Von Bismarck, Meyer-Krahmer 2019: 330). In this scheme, an individual artwork 'stands in' for this whole 'body of work', standing in metonymic relation to an absent *oeuvre* and its absent creator. This model of collection involves an indexical concept of how artworks signify, and a particular type of anthropomorphisation. What it rests on is the idea that "the indexicality of artworks — their ability to suggest the latent presence of an absent maker — provides their ability to speak" at all (Smith 2016: 73, quoting Graw 2015: 40). My own analysis is that Stedelijk's order should be understood through the resurgence of interest in Alfred Gell's concept of art for continental European curators (see Gell 1998). In Gell's theory, artworks exemplify how humans "are present not just in our singular bodies, but in everything … which bears witness to our existence, our attributes" (Gell 1998: 111). In Gell's terms, "artefacts have the capacity to index their 'origins' in an act of manufacture" (Gell 1998: 23). Ultimately, the Stedelijk's author-centred display similarly presents artworks as if "exuviae" – akin to "pieces of the Subject that have been detached from them and cast out", retaining their subjectivity imprinted in their material structure (Gell 1998: 111). This is to say that at the Stedeljik, the logical prerequisite of a 'post-medium' collection is

that objects partake of their makers' artistic subjectivities in their very materiality, as the "objectification [of a subject] in artefact-form" (Gell 1998: 112). This is a quite different conception of artworks as quasi-subjects to that operational at Tate.

12.1.2. Individuation: disciplinary and geographical "de-differentation"

One curatorial strategy at Stedelijk illuminates the change named above: how textual interpretation is employed in an 'artist-centred' display. As well as de-classifying objects by medium or discipline, Ruf de-classified them geographically, partly in response to artists' geographical mobility as much as their disciplinary 'mobility'. Until 2013 Stedelijk Bureau curators had focused squarely on the project "Collecting Geographies", of acquiring works from outside NATO areas, framing them in displays through the particular cultural resonances articulated by makers from different geopolitical regions (Bouwhuis 2015 n.p.). Stedelijk Base removed makers' nationality and place of birth for the first time, as information that should not determine readings of artworks. Until 2017, "we did mention where the artist was born and where they died" explicitly because "it can be really relevant" to understanding artists' intentions and cultural contexts: "those were things we paid a lot of attention to" (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). As the longest-serving curator Leontine Coelewij's insisted "I miss" the information about authors' place of birth of work (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). For her, globalised collections require such information for audiences to make sense of the cultural differences between objects.

The removal of this information starts to specify what is stake politically in Stedelijk's experiment. Ruf's actions can be seen in relation to an opposition to what Gerald Raunig calls "identitary forms of composition" that exert a "double … reduction" of both objects and creators where both are reduced to a single index that "diminish[es]" art *qua* art by truncating imaginative labour (Raunig 2013: 113). Stedelijk's is "a mode of collectivity" that cannot be reducible to pre-existing "collective representations" that structure social life (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 218; Magun 2013a: xx). Again, Rogoff has been the only cuatorial contributor to prefigure Stedelijk's new order, demanding curators "recast the notions of collectivity … beyond nationality … ethnicity, and kinship as grounding relations and allegiances", to emphasise the singular character of each author's singular artistic identity (Rogoff 2017: 619). In such a scheme, authors necessarily become "detached from

traditional identitarian markers" as extra-artistic concerns (Rogoff 2017: 619). Ruf's entire project should be described as moving away from a "traditional art museum" in which objects occupy "a set of categories determined by medium, geography, and chronology" (Graham & Cook 2012: 4). Stedelijk Base moves away from all three ordering principles. Stedelijk curators' method can be described as one of "de-differentiation" on disciplinary, chronological and geographical grounds, and re-differentiation i.e. individuation in terms of authorial sensibilities (Jameson 2015: 102).

12.2. The Collection as Cityscape: "Museums … are themselves almost like cities"

6: What ideological tradition does each type of collectivity draw on?

My conclusion is that analysts should take seriously the claim that the project lead made in interview: that the Stedelijk is as "a[n urban] landscape … we have designed" (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). One critic has directly echoed this to date, arguing "Koolhaas and Martelli create[d] a city at the Stedelijk Museum" (Mascolo 2017 n.p). The operative world is 'create', not 'represent'. The curators have forged a new type of "collectivity" (Rogoff 2010 n.p.). Interviewees elaborated what I identify as an extended metaphor of 'the collection as cityscape'. I accept this, but the figure begs the question of what *kind* of city the Stedelijk is given its highly irregular organisation principles. The most immediate terms of description would be the experience of visiting a non-Western city without a map, where the city is not organised on concentric principles with an identifiable centre. The perimeter excepted, there are no obvious points of orientation. The principles of organisation must be worked out from each individual instance – abstracted by each visitor – rather than being made plain at the outset. This is as far from the Stedelijk's previous order of spatialising time as can be imagined. A more exact identification of the principles in play can be found, in my analysis, in urbanist thought concerned with 'civics'.

As outlined, curating any representative collection requires "the organization and spatialization of knowledge" (Bava 2018 n.p.).Koolhaas's own position is that

"museums [...] are themselves almost like cities", which individual artworks "inhabit on an urban level" (Koolhaas 2017: 125, 123). His insight, extrapolated here, is that museums are now "quasi-urban" entities themselves (Koolhaas in Kunsmann 2018 n.p.). In his more extended metaphor, "a museum is like a city" because its collection is orchestrated in space as if "an urban layout, with [its displays as] places, plazas, squares" that contribute to the whole (Koolhaas in Mascolo 2017 n.p.; Koolhaas in Wrathall 2018 n.p.). At Stedeljik, clusters are neighbourhoods: "a mosaic of episodes", like an agglomeration of villages, where "discontinuous – even irreconcilable [entities attain] a degree of consistency and coherence" through sheer proximity alone (Koolhaas 1978: 10,20). By conceiving of the Stedelijk 'as a cityscape', it is possible to understand the rationale and benefits of the curatorial 'de-differentiation' of categories and 're-differentiation' of authors as individuals.

For Martelli, the "scale of the [basement] room and the proportions" in particular vivified this metaphor "because it was striking how big, how large this room is" as "the largest underground space in Europe" (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). It was Koolhaas's and and Martelli's conviction that "you [now] have to assemble institutions and [their] components in an urban way" because of their fundamental diversity rather than their scale (Koolhaas 2017: 123). This figure is far from unprecedented but has never been credited with any explanatory power or critical agency, having remained a turn of phrase. What analysts have not noticed is how this figure has taken on currency across the field during the last decade. In museology, Kali Tzortzi has attempted to figure "the museum as city" (Tzorti 2015: 153). In curatorship, Donatien Grau has described collections as "a city within a city" where "objects … have a life of their own, and this autonomous life unites them like a parallel city" (Grau and Coccia 2018: 4, 128). These new proposals start to specify the change at Stedelijk.

12.2.1. Galleries as cities plan: in praise of "organised complexity"

The argument I pursue is that Stedelijk's 'city' is organised on principles exemplified in Jane Jacobs's work. Oddly, Koolhaas has taken Jacobs as his nemesis as an urbanist, arguing "you can draw a genealogy between Jane Jacobs and Disney", or the 'Disneyfication' of cities (Koolhaas in Sudjic 2000 n.p.). My analysis is that

Stedelijk is unarguably Jacobsian. Jacobs's ideals countered the functional "zoning" of cities by governments after 1945 in Europe and America (Jacobs 1961: 229). The parallel I am drawing is between Jacob's ideal and a resistance to segregating objects taxonomically into separate, segregated categories. Jacobs opposed the spatial disaggregation of functions in a city; Stedelijk curators oppose the disaggregation of the concept of 'art' into arbitrary subcategories.

Koolhaas's reputation was cemented through his "manifesto" *Delirious New York* that vaolrised the modernity of the "Manhattan grid" (Koolhaas 1978: subtitle, 18). The layout of Stedelijk Case, as in figure 12.2 is as un-grid like as imaginable. Instead, it is a "labyrinth" to get lost in (Schavemaker in Wrathall 2018 n.p.). Only pre-modern cities are labyrinthine; early-modern London being figured as a "mighty labyrinth" (De Quincey in Darcy 2020: 4). Figures 12.1 and 12.2. starts to illuminate exactly how labyrinthine the floorplan is, and how it is the polar opposite of a legible grid-plan. Jacobs famously described her ideal city plan as exhibiting a "jumbled jaggedness", rather than geometric order (Jacobs 1961: 164).

Figure 12.1. Partial panoramic view of Stedellijk Base's partitions, January 2019. Photo author's own. The partitions create an irregular 'labyrinthine' spatial configuration.

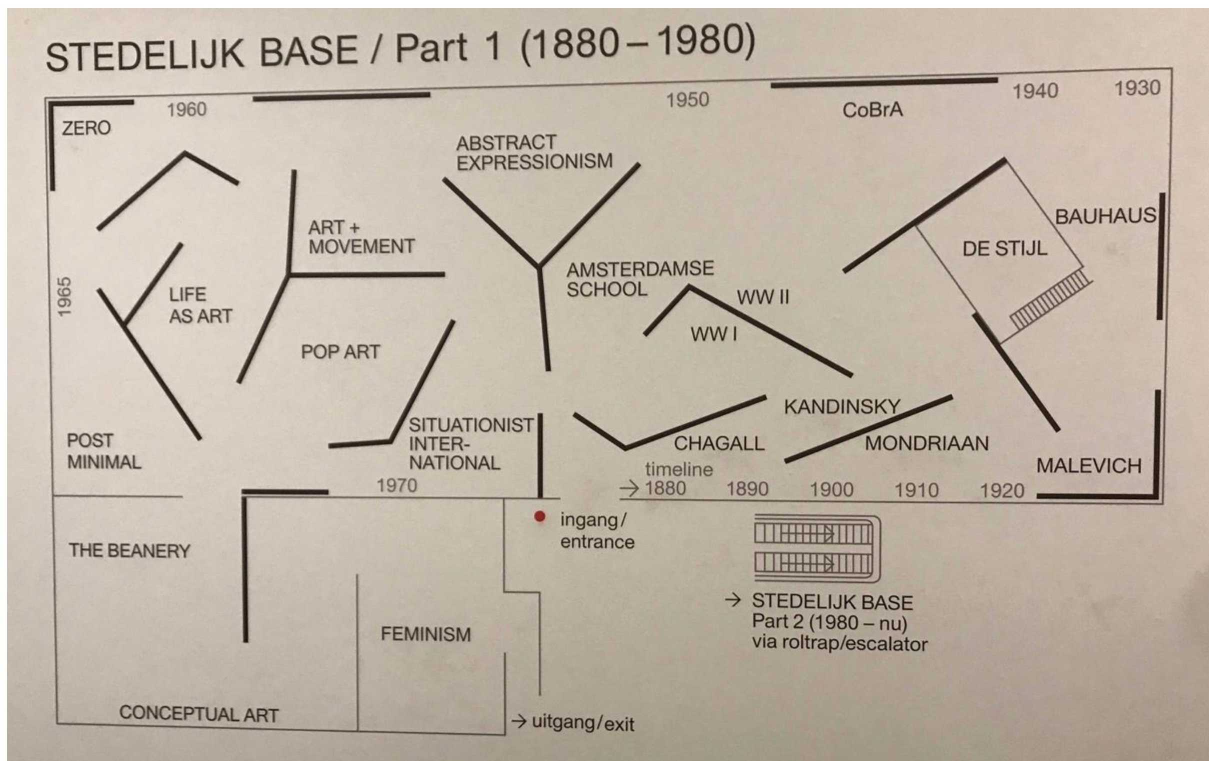


Figure 12.2: Stedelijk Base floor plan, basement level, January 2019.© Stedelijk Museum

Figure 12.2 is what Martelli labelled “the diagram of everything … represent[ing all] relationships, connections” (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). For interviewees this city is determined by the sum total of its *relations* rather than its objects: an insight geographer Doreen Massey’s work directly echoes (see Massey 1992). When seen as a Jacobsian cityscape, the Stedelijk’s desegregation of categories has one profound function: “the great function of the city is … to encourage, to incite meetings, encounters, challenges, between all persons, classes, groups” (Mumford in Jacobs 1961: 211). This is to say that it affords unexpected forms of fraternisation between object ‘strangers’. In Jacobs’s analysis “cities are, by definition, full of strangers” and defined by their proportion of strangers to acquaintances (Jacobs 1961: 114). The Stedelijk curators’ insight is precisely parallel. Collections are ‘full of strangers’ whose potential interactions could alter the nature of the city. The collection as city is defined by the latent energies that its possible relationships consist of. What Stedelijk’s curators have realised is that whilst the possibilities of new relations are vast, they have seldom been exploited under a taxonomic system. In Metropolitan Museum of Art curators’ phrase, collection curators’ job now is one of “discovering [the] infinite connections in art history” that were always present but disallowed under an order of taxonomic differentiation (Metropolitan Museum 2020:

title). What Stedelijk Base has ended is the ‘zoning’ of authors and artworks into discrete, self-contained categories. In Jacobs’s terms, what defines successful cities is their “interweaving of … [multiple] patterns” – their ability to contain complexity instead rather than spatially segregating functions and classes (Jacobs 1961: 229). This is a vitalist image of cities: one in which only “complexity” has the “potential … for generating diversity” (Jacobs 1961: 434, 244). Stedelijk parallels Jacobs’s single most important idea: that a city is “a community … [which] *behaves* like a problem in organized complexity” (Jacobs 1961: 434). Only government, or in the museum curatorship, has the potential to render the city inert through simplification. As seen above, even MoMA’s director has admitted that canonical collection displays “simplifie[d] relationships among works of art” (Lowry 2019: 14).

Figure 12.3: Stedelijk Base’s partitions at irregular angles, January 2019. Photo author’s own. ‘Jagged’ geometries afford ‘multiple proximities’ through sightlines.

12.2.2. “Exuberant diversity” against paternalism

For Jane Jacobs, what a successful city requires above all else is “seeming disorder”: for interviewees, Stedelijk is an “amazing …cacophony” in its apparent disorder (Jacobs 1961: 50). This explains critics’ identification of “pure chaos”: ‘the Fuchs principle’ does create a display which “appears to have no sense” (Betsky 2017 n.p.; Esman 2003 n.p.). The purpose of the project was to stage an alternative form of order, or test the benefits of disorder (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19.).

I articulated that ‘the Fuchs principle’ rests on an unorthodox proximity between objects. In Jacobs’s terms, a cityscape only comes alive through density and proximity. Stedelijk’s ‘quasi-subjects’ sociability is best described through her terms. Their “mingling must be fairly close-grained” to generate their “exuberant diversity” even if they “compose an orderly whole” (Jacobs 1961: 150, 14, 50). For Jacobs, ideal cities consist of small spatial units set into “intricate” relations, where the “opportunities to turn corners must be frequent” to generate interactions (Jacobs 1961: 178). This describes the Stedelijk layout exactly, where it is not clear to first-time visitors what lies around the corner of each screen. Jacobs’s ideal city’s is defined by its “irregularities” and its wealth of small “niches”, rather than its top-down geometric order (Jacobs 1961: 238, 164). The opposite is merely a “dull, inert …paternalist” order (Jacobs 1961: 448, 336). I outlined above that Ruf’s key imperative was to “*protect* the art from interpretation” – from paternalistic interventions that would prevent artworks coming alive in spectators’ imaginations (Ruf 2016 n.p.). These ideas have a far more than coincidental relation: they are parallel vitalist philosophies of art and of the city. In both, dynamism and diversity are privileged. Ruf’s original aim was to rehang the entire collection twice yearly because “a museum could ideally … continuously change displays” in permanent dynamic rotation (Ruf 2016 n.p.).

12.3. Core Value: Fraternity

7: What value is privileged in each ideological tradition?

My own analysis is that authors in ‘fine’ and ‘applied’ arts stand as if siblings, but not yet as full equals, as Dekker’s example illustrates. The problem is that the collection still presupposes “the very concept of art as a universal activity”, which design has

been partly admitted to and only problematically (Jameson 2015: 102). My analysis is that the founding value of this type of de-segregated, 'undisciplined' society of authors should best be named as fraternity rather than equality. Design and art occupy a looser, fraternal "similitude" rather than a formal equality of status (Simpson 1933: ix, x). Interviewees' testimonies and display analyses alike indicate that design objects do not share equal status, and their display was subordinated to that of artworks.

As outlined, the ultimate purpose of transgressing both categorisation of objects and spatial conventions was for objects of *all* kinds to 'fraternise' for the first time beyond their own 'social groups' in the museum's prior social order. What Stedelijk has undertaken is the creation of a different 'society of objects' in which the "social lives [that] objects" can live are now profoundly different to before (Appadurai 1987: title). Objects have been able to enter into new types of relationships and unlikely that through 'the Fuchs principle' allow them to have "confrontations" as much as "echo" or 'converse' with each other (Serota 1996: 54). The Stedelijk's wager is that this approach "can yield [interpretive] rewards" that more orthodox approaches simply cannot (Serota 1996: 54, 50). In Martelli's terms, the new "associations between various artworks and [design] objects" means that the Stedelijk is its 'own' community of authored objects, rather than one following any pre-existing pattern (Martelli in A Morris 2017 n.p.). The crucial point is that the individual examples of 'fraternal' sympathies, which I have examined a handful of, accumulate into something greater than the sum of their parts, across the 25 clusters.

The lack of equality granted to design objects at least as of 2019 remained a concern of interviewees, for whom "at the moment it is the visual arts – painting, sculpture, video, with a few design objects connected to it. But [when we] change, we can have a different starting point [...] [and] start to approach the collection then from the viewpoint of the design collection – graphic design, industrial design, applied arts" (Coelewij pers. corr. 23.01.19). This statement was made by the curator of contemporary art, who one might expect to push for more space for art rather than design. In the current incarnation, Stedelijk Base has not treated design objects as full equals – as yet.

Moreover, curators' focus on 'highlights' has narrowed attention onto canonised authors. The inclusion of works by Sedje Hémon and Kiity van der Mijll Dekker are important exceptions. However, Stedelijk Base remains in large part a metaphorical 'fraternity' of male authors who constitute the makers of 77% displayed in 2019. The sociability granted to authors across all three of the traditional taxonomic axes of time, space and medium has not fully been extended to identity positions – but this is a matter of acquisitions as much as display.

12.4. New Names: Assemblage

8: What figure can best describe each collection?

Interviewees' description of the collection display as a city offers significant new possibilities for how collections can be reimagined. Stedelijk Base's cityscape, like the concept of assemblage, does not posit any categorical commonalities between its contents, so that its relations exist in "something like a correlation" rather than any systematic order (Magun 2013a: xx). An assemblage is therefore a mode of "unity … incarnated [without] a center" to speak of (Magun 2013a: xx). Figures 12.1., 12.2 and 12.3 have no 'centre', literal or figurative: this is the layout's determining feature.

It is possible to specify what kind of (ideal) city Stedelijk Base corresponds to. However, any further insights can be garnered from recent urbanist thought that Martelli drew on in shaping the design. Earlier I outlined that MoMA's curators borrowed ideas from Stedelijk Base in 2019. Their language for their own display is helpful. All six of MoMA's most senior curators have written that their display "the collection can be described more fairly as a shape-shifting assemblage" (Bajac et al 2019: 23). In 2013 the term 'assemblage', associated with the 'material turn', had begun to enter museology. For MoMA curators, and here, the process of "reimagining the modern" itself has led them to rethink their display order through the concept of assemblage (Bajac et al 2019: 19).

The elaborations of assemblage in architectural and urbanist theory provide a way into what Stedeiljk curators have achieved. It is far from coincidental that Jane Jacobs's most prominent heir, Richard Sennett, enthusiastically adopted the idea of

cities as “assemblages” in 2020 to refigure the different types of “relationships between different [types of] actors in urban space” (Sennett and Sendra 2020: 57). If we see cities as themselves assemblages of different categories of thing, then the idea that the curators have “create[d] a city at the Stedelijk” make sense (Mascolo 2017 n.p.).

12.4.1. Collections and assemblages: ‘internal’ / ‘external’ relations

Stedelijk Base is constituted by *categorically* different types of component entities, and defined by its internal heterogeneity, not a quasi-scientific order. In Manuel DeLanda’s terms, an assemblage is “composed of a variety of different types of entities that exist in *relations of exteriority* to one another” – whereas a collection is “an interrelated set of objects which bear an intrinsic relation to each other” as in Pearce’s definition (DeLanda 2006: title; DeLanda 2006: 10; Pearce 1995: 20). This specifies the difference between Stedelijk in 2017 and 2013. The two are categorically different types of entities.

Stedelijk’s order could hardly be further from Donald Preziosi’s picture of museum collections as machines of “periodization and [categorisation where] every artwork becomes a point on a grid, defining an information matrix” (Preziosi paraphrased in Bava 2018 n.p.). Every single curatorial decision informing Stedelijk Base contradicts this image. This includes the layout of its walls; its removal of categories of subject from interpretation; the refusal to explain the clusters (Martelli pers. corr. 29.01.19). A collection cannot be “cacophony” internationally (Martelli pers. corr. 29.01.19). Stedelijk’s order does not treat artworks as ‘information’ on a ‘grid’. It implies artworks are not assimilable into this kind of order, and their nature is antithetical to it.

The displays analyses demonstrated that the relations between objects do not correspond to any ‘internal’ type of relation between single types of artefact. On the contrary, they are structured as relations of “exteriority” that cut across objects from multiple categories. This distinction starts to explain the nature of the project. Assemblages are “never composed of *one* type of entity” but composite entities (Bryant 2010 n.p.). Stedelijk Base is structured around setting multiple *types* of entity into contingent relation through proximity. Assemblage theory fits closely to

Stedelijk's curators' account of the agency of individual objects, where relationships are neither structuring nor causal but contingent, speculative, oblique, or even invisible to non-experts. Describing Stedelijk Base as a collection does not makes sense when curators "*protect* the art from interpretation" (Ruf 2016 n.p.). Ruf, as an exhibition curator unsurprisingly describes the nature of an exhibition gallery rather than a museum: a space without totemic rule-bound processes or procedures. From the outset, Ruf emphasised that the Stedelijk had to make manifest a "multiplicity of relations", rather than subordinate all relations to any single principle (Ruf 2016 n.p.). Assemblages, like Stedelijk Base, are collective entities whose parts are conjugated creatively or poetically rather than scientifically or academically, and able to describe one type of curatorial project with some acuity.

12.4.2. A "philosophical problem of distributed agency"

Appadurai's most recent work can clarify how Stedelijk Base proposes what a 'society of objects' might be. As he argued shortly after it opened, "when an object is put on [museum] display there is obviously … an ontological aspect" of that display (Appadurai 2019: 219). Museum display involves (a) a value claim about individual objects ('*this* is art'); and (b) a claim about the concept of art ('art is *this*'). What Appadurai has recognised, as Stedelijk curators have, that collections are themselves a "philosophical problem of distributed agency" where remodelling *relations* between objects affects the claim 'art is *this*' (Appadruai 2019: 219). If Stedelijk speaks as 'we, the authors', individual artists' voices are at least equal. They are clearly not paramount above all else: the A/B/A/B rhythm indicates a structure that can be followed, even when interpretation is opaque to the point of rebus-like, and the spatial structure labyrinthine. If the display functions as a whole, its character can only be 'pieced together' imaginatively rather than taken as a given or revealed through a clearly legible overall structure. A city understood as an assemblage is one that "does not work as a fixed and stable whole but [only] as the sum of many pieces" (Sendra 2020: 56). This is one particular model of part-whole relation, and part-part relation in a plural subject entity. It is also one in which there is no single objective, universalising system available to explain those relations. Instead, the subjective character of relations is foregrounded.

12.4.3. Art without subcategories: unity without essence

The most incisive way of describing this new order is that curators have rejected their traditional roles of explicit category formation in favour of higher-level hypotheses about the shape of the entire history of art, and of museum collections. Individual objects do not sit under higher-level categories, whether demographic or art historical ones, that are external to themselves. In one account of the concept, “assemblages are opposed to [incompatible with] the Durkheimian interest in ‘the great collective representations’” – opposed to taking the concepts of nation-state and class as determining (Rodriguez-Giralt, Marrero-Guillamon, Milstein 2018: 257 quoting Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 218). My conviction is it is no coincidence Ruf’s project downplayed these ‘great collective representations’ when staging other forms of relation between the collection’s component parts, removing information.

The display composing work by Picasso, Dieter Rams and Sedje Hémon into a trio is one example amongst many in Stedelijk Base of a display organised so that its contents occupy a type of being described in social ontology as an “internally different being-together” that is “without a unitary form” as a totality (Magun 2013a: xx). The Stedelijk Base layout lacks ‘unitary form’, i.e. cannot be imaginatively processed through any geometric figure or familiar framework of reference. The layout remains resolutely abstract and inexplicable in any conventional terms. Baas and Guston occupy a state of ‘being together’, through their proximity; their internal difference is unarguable. There is no prior relation between Sedje Hémon and Picasso, but what curators have done is “initiate [a] play of resistances, convergences and divergences” between these authors, rather than attempt to suggest they have an ‘internal’ relation (Nancy 2010: xiii). Guston’s and Baas’s works might be best said to ‘converge’ through their ‘association’. Hémon and Picasso’s works exist in a state of ‘divergence’: their co-presence amplifies their differences in a play of contrast. There are no material commonalities that can be registered, and no thematic ones either. An assemblage only “communalises singularities [loosely] but without necessarily … unifying them” to use architectural theorist Michael Tawa’s phrase (Tawa 2010: 258). An assemblage is “a collective that might be named” in any other way. This cannot be objectively proven for the 1950s cluster, but it starts to describe how curators have resisted recreating existing forms of display that can be read and assimilated without conspicuous effort.

What Stedelijk curators have also assumed is that objects are not defined by their physical properties (their medium or moment of creation) but by what in assemblage theory is called their distinctive “potentialities” or “unexercised capacities” (Tawa 2010: 258; Bryant 2010 n.p.). The basis of assemblage theory that Stedelijk Base rests on is that polysemic objects “always harbor unexercised capacities” which remain latent unless they are made to “enter into different relations” to those taken as customarily defining them (Bryant 2010 n.p.).The purpose of curating is to ‘release’ objects’ latencies, potentialities, or capacities through productive ‘association’ alone, by exploiting the “relational potentialities [remaining latent in] museum display” (Cranfield 2017: 118). In this light, the founding purpose of putting work into ‘clusters’ was rested on the “distinction between 1) the *properties* an entity exemplifies in an interaction or relation with other entities, and 2) the *capacities* an entity has to interact with other entities”, as Levi Bryant has argued elsewhere (Bryant 2010 n.p.). In other words, a taxonomic order only alerts us to artworks’ properties. The Stedelijk’s assemblage alerts us, in novel ways, to different ‘capacities’ that become apparent on every rehang. Again, to redeploy Bryant’s terms, the Stedelijk’s display corresponds to the concept of assemblage “because it allows us to think the manner in which objects can depart from certain relational networks within which they are enmeshed and [how they can] produce different properties or qualities” if related in alternative ways (Bryant 2010 n.p). The role of curators and the nature of collections are entirely different under this order.

12.4.4. Geneaology of concept of assemblage in art practice

My conviction is that ‘assemblage’ has new value in redescribing this display order because, whilst a “travelling concept” in Mieke Bal’s sense, its origin point was in art practice (Bal 1999: title). The term “assemblage was first used in the arts in 1953 by Jane Dubuffet to describe an ‘art form in which … *objet trouvés* [found objects] are assembled into three-dimensional structures” (Sendra 2020: 56). It has therefore ‘travelled’ from describing a particular type of three-dimensional artwork made of multiple media, into theoretical discourse, before being reappropriated by curators and theorists to describe unconventional collectives that are not subject to a hierarchical governing order. Having been refigured under the label “agencement” by

Gilles Delueze and Felix Guattari, and championed by Manuel DeLanda, since 2000, it has become reappropriated into museology, urbanism and architectural discourses alike (Deleuze and Parnet 1977: vii; DeLanda 2006, 2016; Muller 2020: 82).

12.5. Related Figures: The Serendipities of the Crowd

9: What other figures are related?

This final section answers the question of which alternative figures correlate to Stedelijk Base's mode of being. Stedelijk Base is defined by the density in which an unprecedented diversity of quasi-subjects share one space. As Martelli remarked "we always knew that the exhibition had to be very dense" for both practical and symbolic reasons (Martelli pers. corr. 24.01.19). Every account of Stedelijk Base has emphasised its unorthodox density, but no-one has as yet articulated the most obvious points: its crowdedness is strategic such that it figures the collection *as if a crowd*. For Koolhaas, the metropolitan condition [is] hyper-density": the crowd is the emblematic motif of modernity (Koolhaas 1978: 10). What cities need, and in Koolhaas's understanding what museums need, is a new "paradigm for the [positive] exploitation" of this density (Koolhaas 1978: 10). Stedelijk's 'condition' is hyper-density: having "clusters …crammed" into a single gallery, abutted against each other in unorthodox relations affords "surprising connections and associations" between *dissimilar* objects (Schavemaker in Copping 2017 n.p.). Only through an unorthodox proximity could these be secured. The museum's spatial transgressions emphasise the *possible* relations between different types of entity. The co-presence of a crowd resists being reduced to a single, identifiable order. A crowd is the most dynamic, contingent and unstable form of human collective: one without a single shape or governing order. Stedelijk's layout and spatial transgressions resemble this idea closely.

As I outlined, Stedelijk Base is where object 'acquaintances' become 'strangers', and strangers become acquaintances, as in a city. It is no accident Ruf actively described Stedelijk Base through the figures of the "pathways of flaneurship" and "the possibility of movement" through it (Ruf 2014 n.p.). The function of 'the crowd' is that Jane Jacobs identified with cities at large: it affords chance encounters with our 'others', whichever subject position or hierarchical status group we occupy. In the modernist

literature of the crowd, it is only within the crowd that bourgeois subjects can cease to be figuratively “locked up … in a box” in sociological terms and experience a “universal communion” in which categorical distinctions between subjects are temporarily suspended (Baudelaire in Gapper 2021: 9). In this tradition, it is only in the crowd that subjects are liberated from their determining subjectivations.

12.6. Tabulation of Findings

Finally, as earlier, I tabulate the findings above into two columns that allow for comparison between the earlier MoMA model, broadly conceived, and the model instituted at Stedelijk.

Figure 12.4. Tabulation of findings and speculative conclusions: Stedelijk

	Question	MoMA 20C	Stedelijk
1	**Problematic**	Creating modern art’s history	‘Post-medium condition’ / ontological-institutional
2	**Type of relations**	Sequential cause and effect	Transcategorial
3	**Mode of individuation**	Chronological	Latencies / Capacities
4	**Mode of Unity**	Genealogical	Self-reflexive
5	**Model of collectivity**	Transhistorical elite	Convening authors
6	**Onto-political correlate**	Liberalism	Jane Jacobs’s civics
7	**Prime value**	Universality	Fraternity
8	**Figure**	Family Tree	Assemblage
9	**Collocates**	Patrilineage	Crowd

This table begins to clarify the scope of the differentials that Ruf introduced into Stedelijk’s way of working, providing a set of ‘headlines’ able to distinguish what is at stake in a ‘transcategorial’ display order from one ordered into genealogical relations of cause and effect, in which each medium has its own, discrete history that scarcely touches those of the others. With Tate, that directors now take their prime value as being equality is unarguable. Describing Stedelijk’s ‘society of objects’ through the

figure of fraternity may be more speculative, but it is strongly evidenced by curators' careful choice of language around 'connections', 'associations', 'relations' and 'dialogue' and their image of artworks, like people, 'clustered' into individual corners of the gallery. These are all figures of sociability, not ones of political order. The following chapters dedicated to Folkwang examine a different type of collective again: the idea of an organic community united without division.

Chapter 13. Museum Folkwang: 'Defamiliarising' the Collection

13.0. Purpose and Structure of Chapter

The following pair of chapters examine the changes wrought by the reordering project at Museum Folkwang in 2017-9, where collection displays are now presented under the title "New Worlds: Discovering the Collection". The two chapters are based on the identification of the principal problem as being that Folkwang curators have attempted to 'defamiliarise' the collection to facilitate its 'discovery'. The structure of this chapter is again fourfold:
1: What is the principal problem addressed by curators in each case study?
2: Which type of structuring relation between artworks, artists, or cultures does each type of problem create?
3: How are artworks individuated within these structuring relations?
4: How do these structuring relations unify the collection?

13.1. 'Defamiliarisation'

1: What is the principal problem addressed by curators in each case study?

As outlined above, the estrangement of Folkwang's signage and display system from its previous 'self' provides my starting point. In the director's terms, the problem of 'rediscovering' the collection was one of *revivifying* it by defamiliarising it both from audiences but also from its own curators. The way of addressing this problem was "thinking [about] how things *actually* combine" when read as discrete worlds, instead of through the "narration of art history" (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19.; Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19). The director's project to reanimate Folkwang's original ideal from 1902 is counterintuitive. In 1902, it "represented a radically new approach to museum design and display … [that] overturned historicist museum principles", because "principles of simultaneity displaced linear narrative and historical and geographical classification" (Kuenzli 2013a n.p.). In its first decades, "continuities [across

categories of art] were foregrounded in the Folkwang's strikingly visual and ahistorical installations" (Kuenzli 2013: 516). This strategy has been reanimated to foregrounds the exceptional diversity of "the Folkwang cosmos".

13.2. Objects in Non-Relation

2: Which type of structuring relation between artworks, artists, or cultures does each type of problem create?

The novel form of inter-departmental cross-working at Folkwang, in which each display features works proposed by curators from multiple departments, similarly structured all 25 rooms. As at Stedelijk, the ordering categories of medium, time and space do not prescribe the order or the contents of each room: the "idea [was] of cross-media" displays to encompass multiple category of object in one room, whatever their period, medium, or point of origin (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19).

Unlike at Stedelijk, the goal was as outlined, "to test out how far or how close together you can bring very different things" (Seelig pers. corr. 13.03.19). This describes two related ideas. The first is a spatial idea. It asks what the spatial limits of creating implied relationships between two objects are – just how far apart objects can be in gallery space before they are read separately, rather than in relation to each other. The second idea is about how categories are constructed in gallery space. Folkwang's project is also to ask precisely whether dissimilar objects can be classified as part of a larger entity, or set in relations through their spatial proximity. Or more precisely, its curators have investigated what kind of dynamics of psychological and conceptual distance they can set up between objects that have never been shown together before. At Folkwang, the customs and conventions of associating objects through their spatial proximity are tested to their limits. The artworks, as world-like entities, exert their own affective 'gravitational fields', as I will outline.

My hypothesis in this section is that what distinguishes Museum Folkwang is precisely how far the curators deliberately risk setting artworks into *non-relation* through games of proximity and distance, and breaches of organising objects into

familiar categories. The novelty of this cannot be overstated either. It is not a strategy familiar in collections practice. To understand this, I again return to the question of how, as “thoroughly socialised thing[s]” we can ask of artworks “in what does their sociality consist?” (Appadurai 1986:6). As at Stedelijk, at Folkwang the 25 ‘social situations’ of new displays each introduces objects that have never ‘met’ to each other.

13.2.1. Artworks as self-sufficient worlds

Folkwang’s curators themselves developed an intriguing extended astronomical metaphor to describe their philosophy, and the rehang as a solution to a problem. The entire rehang reveals “the Folkwang cosmos”, which should be seen as a “univers[e]” in and of itself (Museum Folkwang 2019c: n.p.). This collection has been newly figured as the ultimate type of indivisible ‘totality’: a universe. Within this extended metaphor, individual displays are “constellations”, akin to solar systems; and within these, individual artworks are “new worlds” (Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19). This figural repertoire undertakes multiple forms of work. It underscores the unity of the collection as a single entity, of course. More importantly, in my understanding, is that the master metaphor is actually that of individual artworks reimagined as ‘worlds’. This is to invite visitors to reimagine artworks as self-contained entities that are replete, and are complete in-and-of-themselves. This would seem to place Folkwang on one end of the spectrum in Serota’s sliding scale between ‘experience’ and ‘interpretation’ (Serota 1996: title). What it might be better seen as doing is to join up the two ends of this scale into a circular form, so that the most extreme form of barely mediated ‘experience’ should be reunderstood as *also* being the most extreme form of ‘interpretation’ at the same time. Nevertheless, my hypothesis is that Folkwang’s ideal rests upon a paradigmatically modernist ontology of art that has survived and still flourishes in German-speaking territories. In Peter Osborne’s concise formulation, this rests on the assumption that every true “work of art is an ideal unity” and stands in self-containment (Osborne 2013: 124). Indeed, interviewees outlined their new ideal is to present each work of art “as an entity, as a whole” – that is, as a “world” unto itself as a self-contained whole (Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19.). Interviewees’ remarks were unambiguous, and indeed emphatic on the prime importance of this understanding of art.

The figuration of artworks as 'worlds' is associated with Martin Heidegger (Heidegger 2002: 23). Not entirely coincidentally, it has had a revival in anglophone art historical and curatorial literature during the research period, being central to Pamela M. Lee's return to how curators make the "work of art's world" manifest (Lee 2012: 8). In Julian Myers' terms similarly, curatorship is the exposition of "*producing* and *forming* a world" in and of itself (Myers 2013 n.p.). This figural tradition implies that works of art are hierarchised through the degree to which they are a self-sufficient and self-contained entity. As I will outline, at Folkwang, individual works of art are the unit of curatorial analysis, in some distinction to Stedelijk. What characterises Folkwang is that curatorship is not *mediation* between worlds, but *exemplification* of each world's character.

13.2.2. Thematic displays without themes

Within each of the 25 displays, a single work provides the 'centre of gravity': the star around which all others orbit, or the "anchor" or "hub" (Gorschlüter in Folkwang Museum 2019a n.p.; Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19). Each display is titled with the name of that artwork rather than any frame external to the artworks 'themselves', despite the overall rubric being loosely "thematic" (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19). Titling displays with the names of artworks instead of external categories directs attention onto artworks, and the collection 'itself', rather than 'outwards' to fields of knowledge or entities external to it. It cannot be stressed how unusual this strategy is in collections: I have not encountered it in two decades of curatorial practice in a museum display. The 25 galleries are almost Borgesian in their diversity. Displays include *Ecce Homo* titled after Honoré Daumier's painting (1851) but encompasses "representations of Christ and male heroes"; *Prometheus Bound* is named after Barnett Newman's painting of 1952; *Everyone is Talking About the Weather: We Are Not,* takes its title from a political poster (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19).

The hyper-diversity of categories of display is strategic: it illuminates the scope of "the Folkwang cosmos" in the sheer range of categories it encompasses (Folkwang Museum 2019c n.p.). The project deliberately points towards world history, mythology, cultural history, politics, biology and the history of technology. The only

common denominator is that each foregrounds “aspects [of] the arts that are *universal*, that are not only time-based” – not specific to one historical period or culture (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19). The categories have no intrinsic common denominator, and cannot be imaginatively assembled into any higher-level taxonomic category through any commonalities. Just as individual artworks as individuated as ‘worlds’, so displays are presented as discrete, self-contained units. There is no possibility of the galleries composing *any* type of sequential order or as interconnected in a conventional sequential logic. Put simply: the categories of displays are *strategically disassociated* from each other and have no necessary internal relations other than being part of this collection.

13.2.3. Iconographic and affective relations

The first display curators conceived together was titled *Nelly im Blumen* [*Nelly Amongst the Flowers*] after the Otto Dix painting of 1924. In this display, the ‘worlding’ undertaken by artists describes how “moments in life [the life cycle such as] childhood… constitute a ‘new world’ for the individual” (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19). What is not quite true is that “the room is a[bout] children”, because the displays complicate the very idea of ‘thematic’ display (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19). Curators’ strategy to relate objects works on two levels: iconographic and affective. In the curator of photography’s words, each display was constructed specifically in order to “propose a double reading” of each work – readings of the “two different sides” of artworks: appearance and affective charge (Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19). They also described this as identifying “a hidden agenda” in each work: as attending to the complexity of works of art by implying each ‘world’ has multiple facets (Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19).

Two objects in *Nelly im Blumen* are immediately comparable on iconographic grounds: *Nelly im Blumen* itself and Nan Goldin’s *Ulrika, Sweden.* Indeed, they are uncannily similar, as figures 13.2 and 13.3 illustrate. They are similar sizes and depict two infants adopting similar gestures. However, this coincidence is a point of entrance into a display in which the ways Folkwang can construct more unorthodox types of relationships begins to be outlined.

Figure 13.1. Installation, “New Worlds: Discovering the Collection”, October 2020: display *Nelly im Blumen*. Foreground: Andreas Slominski *Untitled* (2000); background Nan Goldin *Ulrika, Sweden* (1997) © Museum Folkwang

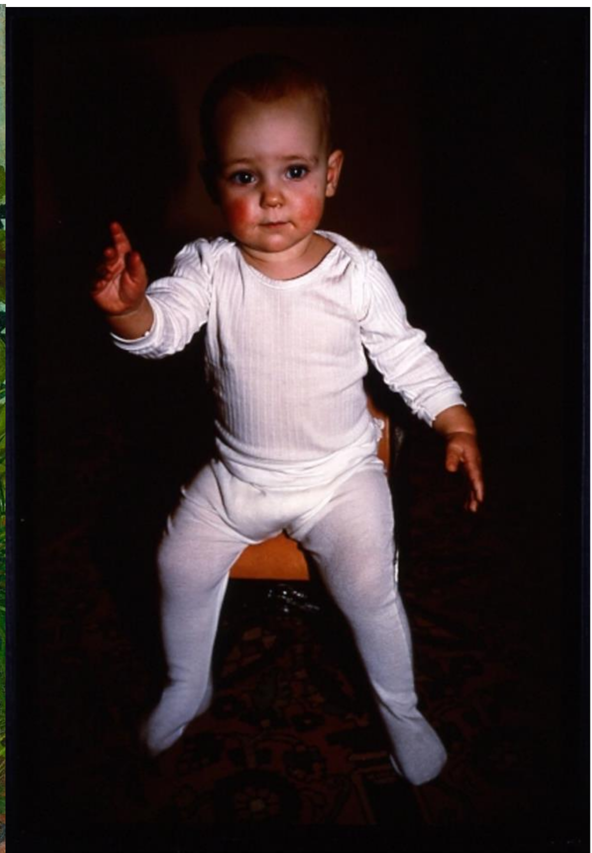


Figure 13.2. Otto Dix, *Nelly im Blumen* (1924) © Museum Folkwang

Figure 13.3. Nan Goldin, *Ulrika, Sweden* (1997); © the artist / Museum Folkwang

13.2.4. Affective affinities

The surprising finding was that curators structured the displays around affective states, not 'themes' that could be readily conceptualised. The objects in *Nelly in Blumen* do not depict children directly but evoke states of affect associated with childhood. Often these states are generated through allusive or elliptical means. The principle of structuration is one of curators claiming 'affective affinities' exist between artworks, rather than elective affinities. This is not wholly unrelated to the principles at Stedelijk, but there are differentials.

The selection of artworks in *Nelly in Blumen* was described by the curator of contemporary art as strategically counterintuitive such that works would appear unfamiliar against each other, or 'to' each other. Her term was that it should appear to be "a really wild mixture" of objects (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19). Her argument was that this first display that set the tone for the other 24. In Appadurian terms, the display is a social occasion where no-one present had ever 'met' to date – and would be unlikely to ever occupy the same social space subsequently. One interviewee argued precisely that this 'wild mixture' of objects was intended to "take a risk" in imagining what could possibly be considered legitimate company for artworks to keep (Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19). Nevertheless, the selection included works whose iconography is readily associated with childhood. *Condensed* (1979-96) by Jana Sterbak, is a rust-damaged sphere that resembles a dangerously heavy beach-ball (see figure 13.5). Andreas Slominski's *Untitled* (2000), presents an empty wheelchair on a see-saw as if removed from a children's playground figure (figures 13.1 and 13.4). These two works are readily able to be connected to the figurative artworks that picture children, both through their iconography and other means.

Figure 13.4. Installation of ‘New Worlds: Discovering the Collection”, October 2020, display *Nelly im Blumen*: foreground Andreas Slominski *Untitled* (2000) © Museum Folkwang

Figure 13.5. Jana Sterbak *Condensed* (1979-96) © the artist / Museum Folkwang

13.2.5. ‘Units of sensation’

As I outline below, Folkwang’s later displays are far more adventurous, and genuinely counter-intuitive. The logic of practice in *Nelly in Blumen* is relatively orthodox in comparison to the displays that followed. Folkwang’s director was adamant that the imperative was to restructure displays by “be[ing] more *associative* in the way we handle” art objects (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19). In *Nelly in Blumen*, the dual chains of association (iconographic and affective) between artworks are straightforward, if unexpected.

For one interviewee, the “precondition” [relation] of *Nelly in Blumen* – its structure – was the “dream-like, dark” tone of Otto Dix’s painting rather than its subject matter alone (Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19). For another, “the idea is to bring them together because they share the same *mood*” (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19). In *Nelly im Blumen*, all the objects “have something a little strange, some strangeness” uniting them: “*this strangeness* is the [real] idea of the room” (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19). The purpose of combining “very different [types of] things coming together that you wouldn’t mix usually” was to identify artworks concerned with particular forms of affect that could, but only could, be tied to related subjects (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19).

This ideal is voiced in modernist criticism as that “the basic unit of contemporary art is not the idea, but … sensation” (Sontag 1967 n.p.). This ideal has not governed major collections of modern art, to date, although resembles Osthaus’s Nietzschean philosophy of collections at Folkwang’s outset, in interviewees’ terms. As outlined above, one purpose for the reordering project was to reposition Folkwang within museum history and modern art’s history by revivifying Osthaus’s ‘original’ set of values. For Folkwang’s historian its founding order “combined [emphasis on] individual sensation with a focus on the material properties of the medium” (Kuenzli 2013: 509). This describes curators’ approach precisely. For them, “the physical existence of the objects” in and of themselves as ‘worlds’, rather than their authorship, provided the interpretive structure (Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19). This allowed for a profound ‘defamiliarisation’ of the collection, given the orthodoxy that continued up until 2019. The next section outlines how objects have been defamiliarised in other displays through a poetics of distance and of sensation.

13.3. Disintermediation: Individuating Objects

3: How are artworks individuated within these structuring relations?

The display *Missing the World* extends the principles that curators first "test[ed]" in *Nelly im Blumen* (Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19). In this display, some objects are connected as painted or photographic landscapes – but others are manifestly unable to be subsumed into the idea of 'landscape'. The differences between types of work are such that ties of affect, rather than other criteria, connect works and differentiate them. Folkwang has 'defamiliarised' individual artworks and the idea of a collection, by following the Nietschean-Deleuzian idea that artworks are defined by their states of affect. The implication is that artworks are not defined by their prior relations, or that those art historical relations distort our experience.

The display contains some of Folkwang's most valued objects including Edvard Munch's *The Lonely Ones*, 1906-7 and Caspar David Friedrich's *Woman Before the Setting Sun*, (c.1818). Neither provide the title. Instead, the title is, oddly, drawn from a far less well-known contemporary painting by Danish artist Per Kirkeby (1997). This counterintuitive choice alerts us to the idea that the "mood" exemplified by Kirkeby's work sets the tone, rather than art historical importance (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19).

Several unusual decisions can be identified. Kirkeby's work is seen in figure 13.6 with Munch's work and Wilhelm Lehmbruck's sculpture 'Contemplative Woman' (1910-1) at either edge. Lehmbruck's and Munch's works are chronologically related, which would suggest their proximity and distance from Friedrich's painting, which is a century older. Curators undertook the opposite, placing them at opposite ends of the gallery.

Figures 13.10 and 13.11 illuminate how unorthodox the installation of *Missing the World* is. Figure 13.10 illustrates the spatial dynamics of the gallery, in which objects exist only in their 'own' space independently of other artworks, where curators "test[ed] out how far or how close together" objects could be legitimately installed (Seelig 21.03.19). In *Missing the World*, objects are very far apart indeed with one

exception. Figure 13.10 shows Kirkeby's work 20 feet away from the nearest other wall-based work, by Munch and Corot. As Ben Cranfield has argued, *proximity is relation* in museum space: co-presence underwrites category formation. Customarily, galleries only contain one category of artwork in a chain of movements, a chronology, or an array of single media. The logical corollary of this is that spatial separation signifies non-relation or non-correspondence – namely, categorical difference.

My interpretation is that this curatorial "test" examines how much spatial distance between objects is needed to strategically disaggregate displays into their component elements. My speculative conclusion is that the result of this is that *artworks occupy their own categories*. The display parallels Ben Cranfield's analysis, the sole remaining "critical opportunity … latent within traditional museology that lies at the heart of the museum: [is of] the irreducible gaps of the exhibitionary encounter" (Cranfield 2017: 118). The convention of objects' "proximity" or "co-presence" underwriting the categorical unity of a display has been inverted by Folkwang, in my understanding (Cranfield 2017: 118). What Folkwang's curators have tested is "how the gaps within exhibition display may be (re)practiced" (Cranfield 2017: 118). This is to say that they have created 'gaps' between individual objects in displays that cannot be overcome – that objects cannot be subsumed into higher-order categories than themselves. This collection order is, of course, afforded by the sheer scale of Folkwang's 5m- 7m high rooms, and its million sq/ft estate. It is not readily replicable. The curators' enterprise may therefore be summarised as testing how far objects 'co-present' in the same gallery can resist becoming subsumed into any higher category, or enter into conceptual intimacy become associated with taxonomic categories, but establish their own, self-defining 'worlds'. What they have achieved is form of radical individuation of objects: curators' 'test' of "conventions of proximity" positions artworks as *sui generis* (Cranfield 2017: 118).

More unusually, the two works with the fewest similarities of any kind within the display and are least likely to invite comparison are placed together. I identify the principle at work as that objects are situated strategically apart to retain their independence as 'worlds' – except from when they are *not* comparable. This is a clear inversion of curatorial conventions that runs directly counter to expectations of how objects should be 'set into relation' in museum space. Curators testified that the purpose of 'New Worlds: Discovering the Collection' was to pose "questions of what

its [the collection's] limits are, what its customs are" – with the aim of "creating an alternative" to the previous order (Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19).

Figure 13.11 shows that Wilhelm Lehmbruck's sculpture is positioned to interrupt axial sightlines of Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot's painting *The Feast of Bacchus (Evening)*, (1866). Given the generous volumes of both floor space and ceiling heights in Folkwang's galleries and the spacing of other objects, this can only be read as an intentional device to complicate the readings of both works. If many of the paintings are 'landscapes' of different forms, Lehmbruck's figure introduces a disjunctive presence. It ensures there is no single subject, material, period or theme that all of the artworks in *Missing the World* could relate to. It suggests that other principles must be operative. On the curators' testimony, this juxtaposition situates objects in a 'constructive "ambiguity" where their relations remain unclear (Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19). The only grounds for comparison between Lehmbruck and Corot's work is that they "share the same *mood*" (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19). No other identifiable points of comparison remain: Corot's work is an idealised neoclassical landscape; Lehmbruck's is a carved female nude. Corot's work is from 1866; Lehmbruck's 1910-1. Corot's work was made in France; Lehmbruck's in Germany.

Lehmbruck's expressionist late work, made from 1914-1919 until his suicide, is widely understood as being "closed, self-contained, reflective, and melancholic", i.e. introspective and "turning away from the (social) world", in a different museum's phrasing (National Gallery of Art 2011 n.p.). The connection to the idea of 'missing the world' exists on this affective plane. *Missing the World* therefore gathers artworks whose affective registers range from anxiety and melancholia (Munch), to metaphysical yearning and oceanic sensations (Friedrich), to existential isolation or loneliness (Munch, Kirkeby, Lehmbruck). All of these broadly draw on the legacies of Romanticism in the visual arts, from the 1860s through to the present. The display refigures one stream of modern art as being a 'long Romanticism', or the coming to terms with its consequences.

The room's text panel argues artworks make "desires visible" in "ideal" realms, and depict versions of "Arcadia" (Folkwang Museum 2019c: n.p.). Making "desires visible" might just be tentatively ascribed to *The Lonely Ones*, in contrast to Munch's

canonised work, but this is a counterintuitive reading. The project of 'defamiliarising' canonised authors has been achieved in part by displaying artworks that do not correspond to received images of their authors. Corot's work, as an arcadian classical landscape, is highly uncharacteristic of his association with the development of realist painting in mid-century France. His body of work is therefore read 'against the grain'. The connections between works in *Missing the World* are 'poetic' rather than historical or conceptual. To adapt Edouard Glissant and his interlocutors, in place of "the logic of linear sequences", the display manifests an alternative "poetics of relation" that works towards "decategorizing understanding" – defamiliarising objects by restructuring their relations (Obrist in Obrist and Thirlwell 2019 n.p; Glissant 1997: title; Wing 2010a: xii.). Folkwang's poetic relations 'decategorise' artworks by emphasising that their taxonomic categories are *not* their locus of meaning.

Figure 13.6. Installation, "New Worlds: Discovering the Collection", October 2020, display *Missing the World*. © Museum Folkwang. Left: Edvard Munch *Two Human Beings: The Lonely Ones*, (1906); Centre: Per Kirkeby, *Missing the World*, (1997); Right: Wilhelm Lehmbruck, *Contemplative Woman*, (1910-1)

Figure 13.7. Edvard Munch *Two Human Beings: The Lonely Ones*, (1906)

Figure 13.8. Per Kirkeby, *Missing the World*, (1997)

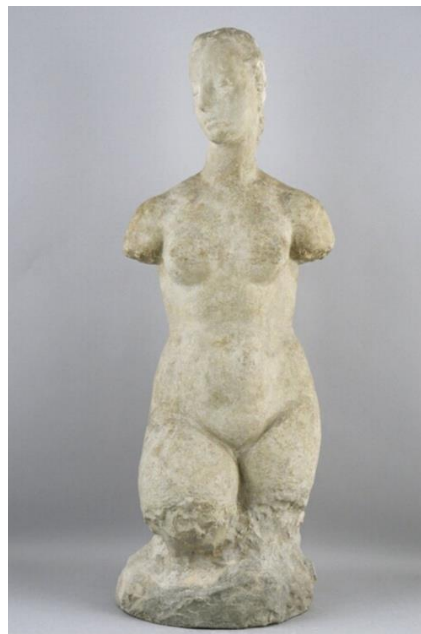


Figure 13.9. Wilhelm Lehmbruck, *Contemplative Woman*, (1910-1)

Figure 13.10. Installation, “New Worlds: Discovering the Collection”, October 2020, display of *Missing the World*.

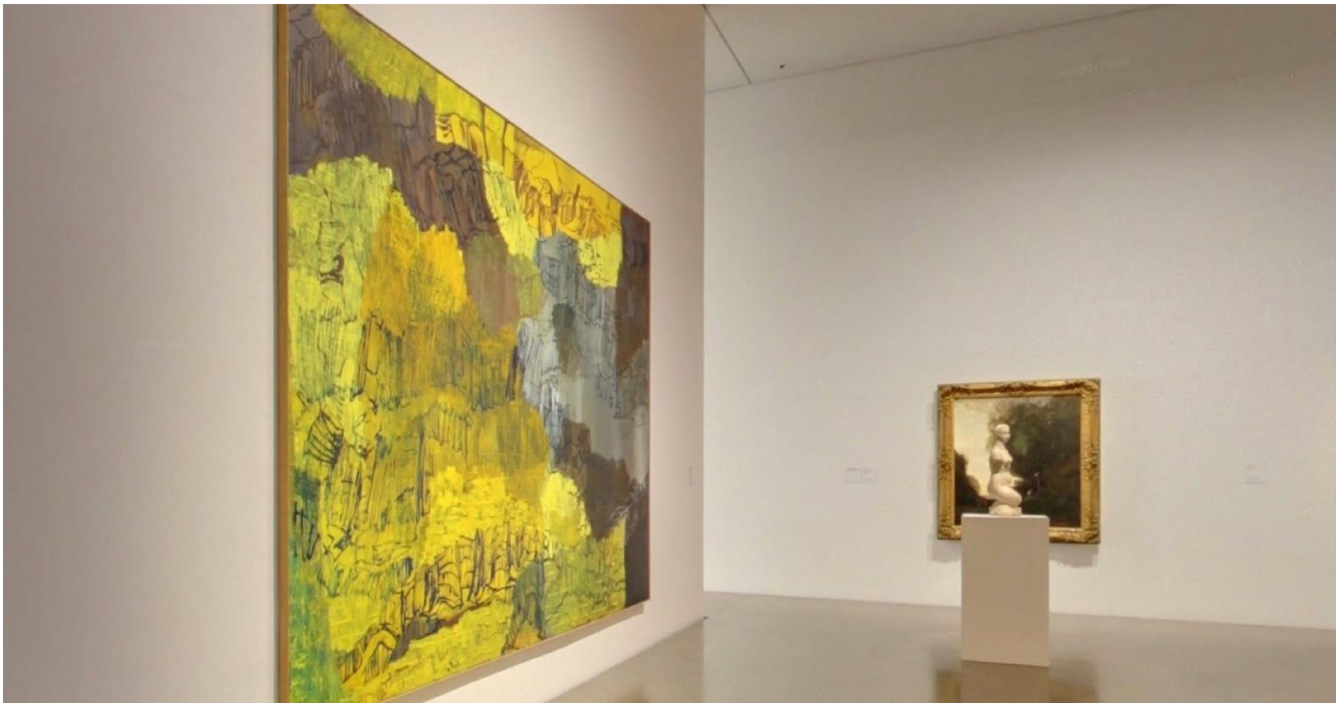


Figure 13.11. Installation, “New Worlds: Discovering the Collection”, October 2020, display *Missing the World*. October 2020, display. A rare example of a sculpture work installed expressly to interrupt axial sightlines of another artwork.

13.3.1. ‘We, the objects’

In 2010, “an emphasis on individual authorship ha[d] supplanted Osthaus’s” original vision, in the Folkwang’s historian’s understanding (Kunezli 2013: 524). As above, the departure made in 2019 was to move away from ‘emphasising authorship’ towards privileging “individual sensation […and] the material properties of the medium”, with curators emphasising “the physical existence of the objects” above all (Kuenzli 2013: 509; Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19). These ideas are a modernist ontology of art where “*form* [i]s above all formative”: where the concept of artistic form differentiates artworks (Lee 2012: 25). As in early modernist conceptions of art, each display individuates artworks as an “ensemble of immanent, intended form[s]” above addressing them in any other way (Brown 2019: 19). Interviewees were accordingly united in the belief that “the museum should be a place of … experience, of encounter and perception”, in the first instance (Gorschlüter in Welt 2019 n.p.). Folkwang’s galleries obey “the convention of timelessness that constitutes the [modernist] gallery” in order to render artworks comparable on these formal grounds (Osborne 2013: 175). This is to say Folkwang’s modernist architecture underwrites the possibility of staging a “really wild mixture” of artworks across periods and media *and* of imagining the entire collection as a single, united “universal” entity (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19; Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19).

The ideal of a universal, phenomenological, affective experience of art, which defined Folkwang’s earliest decades, was always intended as a political ideal, as I suggested earlier. It was intended to create a ‘level playing field’ between classes differentiated by cultural capital where different subjective responses are equally valid. The original Folkwang collection embodied a “democratic ethos” because its “highly visual displays were meant to appeal to visitors on an emotional and psychological level that ostensibly did not depend on their level of education” (Kuenzli 2013: 504). The following chapter therefore outlines the character of how Folkwang’s curators have attempted to reclaim the basis of modernism, and how they have positioned it as politically progressive, as it was intended at its outset.

Curators echoed this idea, describing their project as attending to the “different materialities” of objects rather than authors’ identities, as these require art historical knowledge that hierarchically differentiates visitors (Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19). In the director’s terms, the goal was to “put people at the centre” by repositioning the

‘museum encounter’ as an exercise in imaginative empathy with each artefactual ‘strangers’ (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19). Gorschlüter’s own terms were that “we aim to *activate* the collection”, in the sense of returning it to a ‘state of animation’ (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19). This directly echoes the “modernist” ontology of art as “living experience” where “artworks themselves become animate” (Schjeldahl 2020: 72; Adorno 2002: 175-6). Folkwang’s unique place in the history of museums is that it marked “the birth of the modernist art museum” by valorising the being of art as different “modes of vivacity” irreducible to academic knowledge (Kuenzli 2013: 503; Sontag 1968: 267). The 2019 rehang underscores Folkwang’s status as “the first modernist museum”: it is a claim about what modern art and modernist museums most fundamentally are, based on “spontaneous, individual relationship[s] to works of art” (Kuenzli 2013: 503).

There is one key distinction between Stedelijk and Folkwang: in the latter, objects themselves are imaginatively “freight[ed] … with their *own* personas and imagined subjecthoods”, rather than embodying those of their authors, either artistically or demographically (Smith 2016: 70, my emphasis). The differential here is that, at Folkwang, in my understanding, artworks *are* “the process of production of a subject” rather than merely indexical of the subjectivity of their authors or communities (Osborne 2011 n.p.). I identify this type of order as one which artworks speak as ‘we, the objects’. Folkwang’s mode of anthromorphising artworks as ‘we, the objects’ installs a phenomenological rather than a representational understanding of collections. Folkwang now occupies an extreme position in Serota’s dyad of “experience and interpretation”, where the former inspires a “a sense of discovery” instead of “reducing the experience [of art] to the level of information only” (Serota 1996: 55). The similarity to the new title ‘Discovering the Collection’ is no coincidence: Folkwang has extrapolated this philosophy of collections into new territory. Folkwang’s position parallels Serota’s idea that “audiences seek … immersive experience, both physical or phenomenological … or emotional” in the museum encounter (Serota in Wullschlager 2012 n.p.).

The Folkwang position is that individual sensation and formal appreciation are paramount, such that ‘information’ about authors’ prior art historical importance is irrelevant and providing it a distraction. This ‘democratic ethos’ has been revived for the same reasons, and in similar ways. Bourdieusian analysts would admit of the

viability of this idea, as it implies distinctions of cultural capital can be readily transcended. Nevertheless, Folkwang curators' experiment demonstrates an imaginative way in which a curators can aspire to instantiating a more 'democratic' philosophy of collections that contrasts to anglophone museum practice. It installs this ethos by continuing the critiques of orthodox museum practice made in German-speaking philosophy forwarded by Nietzsche, Heidegger and Adorno that "dethrone rationalism in favor of instincts and senses" (Kuenzli 2013: 503; for the genealogy of these ideas see Babich 1989; Adorno 1967). The importance of Nietzsche's ideals for Folkwang in 1902, if not in 2019, has been plotted both by Katherine Kuenzli and James Sheehan (Kuenzli 2013: 512; Sheehan 2000: 140–43). At Folkwang's outset in "the 1890s a new generation of [German] museum directors scoured the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche", but it was Osthaus's project at Folkwang that "represent[ed] the most comprehensive attempt to reform the museum among lines proposed by Nietzsche" of all of these (Kuenzli 2013: 503). What is remarkable is that this polemical approach remains polemical, a whole century later.

13.3.2. Individuation through disintermediation

The process of individuating artworks at Folkwang can be best understood as the 'disintermediation' of artworks and visitors: the removal of intermediaries to provide apparently unmediated "direct contact" with artworks, which are liberated from any "curatorial voice" individually (Oxford Languages 2020 n.p.; Sen and King 2003: 153; Morgan 2013: 26). Unlike in the other two case studies, there are no texts about any artworks, only one display panel per room. I characterise this as a quintessentially "modernist" position where believing artworks only "complete their meaning with verbal information … amounts to heresy" (Schjeldahl 2020: 72). It embodies one artist's aphorism about the poetics of display: "don't kill it by naming it" (Tillmans in Buck 2019: 3). The interpretive orientation these panels offer is towards forms of affect or phenomenological responses, rather than towards concepts. In *Nelly im Blumen*, curators articulate artworks' commonalities as their "haunting", "ambivalent" affective states including feelings of "abandonment" (Museum Folkwang 2019c n.p.). What is obvious is that the contemporary artists responded to the concept of "the uncanny" and its ability to diagnose "infantile neurosis": this goes unmentioned

(Freud 1919 in Strachey 1955: 297). No concepts distract from the physical experience of artworks themselves.

Folkwang's order is a polemical, anti-didactic return to modernist ideals. This interpretive model was superseded at Tate in the 1980s. Until then, as at Folkwang, "works of art had a label giving you the name of the artist and the title of the work … there was nothing to tell you about any of the [individual] works" (Wilson in Lahav 2011: 67). In anglophone museology and practice, the dominant supposition is that collections "do not explain themselves and the meanings of artworks are not self-evident" is normative (Enwezor 2019 n.p.). Folkwang's position is a radical counter-claim to this.

As outlined above, what distinguishes the interpretive regime of 'New Worlds: Discovering the Collection' is its disjunctive character. There are no cues as to artworks' meanings offered by chronological order, grouping by medium, geographical location, or movement. There are no texts about objects. This is an extreme form of disintermediation. The prior structure mediating between individual works and the whole has been jettisoned. This parallels one tendency towards 'un-curating' collections across museums of modern art internationally. SFMoMA's director described its new strategy as countering the idea that "the curator has authored an idea and the pictures illustrate that idea. We've done something just the opposite, and terribly old-fashioned [[...]] We're refocusing on the artists and letting each one speak. The curators are not imposing their will on the paintings at all" (Benezra in Wullschlager 2016 n.p.). The Centre Pompidou director announced in 2016 that "we've decided to strip everything back and return to something simpler and clearer", removing levels of mediation (Blistene in Wullschlager 2016 n.p.). The Castello di Rivoli Museum of Contemporary Art's director Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev has similarly declared that "art may seem to be in danger of being drowned by talk" since the 2000s (Christov-Bakargiev 2012: 38). At Tensta Konsthall, Maria Lind has summarised this 'turn' as being that "mediation referred to something highly esteemed, like the duties of priests, it is now genuinely ambivalent, associated with compromise and false reconciliation" (Lind 2012a: 16). Notably, all of these examples are from continental museums of modern where mainstream modernist positions have continued to be persuasive. No anglophone museum has attempted such a policy change.

13.4. A Poetic / Ludic Unity

4: How do these structuring relations unify the collection?

At Folkwang *every* interviewee emphasised the new "unity" of the collection as central to their thinking (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.13; Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19; Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19). The form of unity was, if in a different way to Tate, "like [that] at a biennale" (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19). In the curator of contemporary art's words, in a "bienniale", the dominant assumption is of "no 'break'" between different forms of art, because the concept of art exists only in the generic singular (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19). In a second interviewee's similar terms, "the question … [is] how we can learn from the fluidity that characterises the exhibition programme, and transfer that into collecting", to create an "new model" exemplifying "the type of *freedom* that exhibitions have: that [ideal] is transforming our treatment of the collection" (Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19). Folkwang's first iteration embodies its founder's "totalizing" drive to create a "universal collection" (Kuenzli 2013: 524; Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19). This is a fundamentally "interdisciplinary *way of thinking* and bringing together different mediums" (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19.). As outlined, it reanimated Osthaus's earlier "coordinated ensembles of modern art, architecture, and the applied arts" in displays, that positioned "Folkwang as [a] *gesamtkunstwerk*" (Kuenzli 2013: 525, 503).

In the curator of photography's words, their process was working "across the borders of departments … to be able to read [each display as] photography and sculpture *together*, photography and painting together, or painting and sculpture *together*" in an operatic whole (Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19). The prime imperative was expressed as "to break down the barriers between things in a *universal* collection" (Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19). As at Stedelijk, the belief is that the museum's taxonomic system in 2010 only ever divided 'art' into arbitrary subcategories. However, at Folkwang, the belief is fundamentally misrepresented its *existential* unity and the "unity of art and life": *this* is "the Folkwang Idea" (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19). Accordingly, when Tate has painstakingly differentiated objects from geopolitical regions, Folkwang has unified them under a modernist conception of both the unity of the arts, their

universality, and their integration into social life. As Claire Bishop has plotted, a small group of left-leaning curators including herself, and a small cohort of thinkers including Susan Buck-Morss have returned to ideals of universality in the 2010s, paralleling Folkwang's surprising turn (see Bishop 2013)

Chapter 14. Collections as Collectivities. Museum Folkwang's Monadism

14.0. Purpose and Structure of chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the value structure governing Folkwang's new display order, through the five questions:
5: What model of collectivity correlates to these sets of answers?
6: What ideological tradition does each type of collectivity draw on?
7: What value is privileged in each ideological tradition?
8: What figure can best describe each collection?
9: What other figures are related?

14.0.1. Overview

This chapter draws extensively on contributors who have forwarded alternative ontologies of art and alternative ontologies of collective entities that correlate to and can explain Folkwang's unorthodox position. In 2019, as in 1902, it has rejected "the academic discipline of art history [that] museums had espoused [in its] principles of historical and geographical classification for most of the nineteenth century" (Kuenzli 2013: 203).

As I outline, new research in both immediately related disciplines parallels, and immediately preceded Folkwang's project. Even if its curators did not articulate specific contribution they have drawn upon, the radicalism of their changes requires explanation. As also outlined, Folkwang was chosen both because of its extraordinary collection and because as it has historically essayed a highly distinctive philosophy of art in which "art[works are] … tools through which society conceptualizes itself" (Fine 2019 n.p.). Its relationship to concepts of art in formal philosophy are well established. Of the three case studies, this chapter risks being the most abstract because curators have shaped an 'un-curatorial' display order. The display analyses suggested how the displays minimise the role of ordering concepts,

in what I will describe as a curatorial hyper-empiricism that returns to the ideals of "the first modernist collections" anywhere (Kuenzli 2013: 509).

14.1. Singularities, Aggregated: "Asocial Sociality"

5: What model of collectivity correlates to these sets of answers?

The displays analyses above require an unorthodox answer to Appadurai's question of "what does [artworks'] sociality consist?" (Appadurai 1986:6). *Missing the World* bears no intrinsic or logical connections between its contents other than an array states of affect associated with the legacy of Romanticism. My analysis is that Folkwang can be best described through the idea that a collection of modern artworks is "a contradictory collectivity-in-individuation" (Myers-Szupinska 2017: 18). Folkwang now exemplifies this *in extremis,* in my understanding. My belief that there is always a "dialectic of individuality and collectivity at play" in collections that 'collectivise' artworks into a whole, then the 2019 change illustrates this perfectly (Osborne 2014 n.p.). In the 2010s, the "typical narration of art history" unified the collection through the most orthodox means possible, and as one type of collective, namely a canon (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19). Since 2019, artworks' individuality has been emphasised to an extreme degree. The bewildering lack of orthodox connections between objects or their counterintuitive placing; objects' spatial isolation and lack of intimacy with their others; the lack of 'themes' or ordinary titles for rooms; the lack of any text about objects all function cumulatively. They are part of one strategy. There are few immediate or obvious 'dialogues' or 'encounters' as at Stedelijk. Instead, artworks is that they co-exist in space without entering into any figurative intimacy. The most incisive image available is Kant's description of an "asocial sociality" of objects (quoted in Osborne 2013: 76). In Kant's terms this is a "distributive unity": an informal unity between objects distributed in space, which is not based on identification of their common properties, but which *presupposes* they exist in a state of existential unity nevertheless, only ever at the level of being (Osborne 2013: 76).

To articulate this idea, it is necessary to return to Folkwang's self-desciprtion: that the "new presentation represents [the] diversity and the richness of [artworks in] the collection in their uniqueness" (Museum Folkwang 2019a n.p). The "Folkwang cosmos" consists of an extraordinarily heterogeneous range of artworks, in which each of which is *a priori* "unique" (Folkwang Museum 2019c n.p.). I will place weight on these terms below, in the belief this 'mission statement' articulates precisely what is at stake, and how Folkwang's project should be seen in political terms, or its collection is an allegory of political relations. Its keywords are 'diversity' and 'uniqueness'. Folkwang's director testified that his key aim was for the collection to regain "the unity of the arts and life" that Osthaus envisaged it as *embodying* (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19). In Folkwang's historian's words, its founding purpose "to forge new bonds of collectivity" – between visitors, but also between artworks that symbolise humans, as quasi-subjects (Kuenzli 2013: 504). As outlined, Folkwang's founding mission and its new incarnation take it as read that "art[works] are … tools through which society conceptualizes itself" Fine 2019 n.p.). The entire "Folkwang Idea" was based on "yoking aesthetic unity to social objectives" from its origins, because it implied a concept of an organic community united in its wholeness (Kuenzli 2013: 504). This is an ideal of an "organic solidarity" both between subjects, not citizens – and symbolically between artefacts (Durkheim 1933: xv). This is a pre-political unity in which no division – "no 'break'" is discernible between types of object, nor types of person (Fricke pers. corr. 30.01.19). Osthaus's Folkwang was a wider "reform project" that was "seeking to reconcile the individual with totality" – paradoxically pursued *only* through a new "focus on individual experience" (Kuenzli 2013: 503,504). That is to say, the Folkwang idea was a question of 'I and we' from its outset. Seen in these terms, Osthaus's model of collection and that of 2019 both rest on "Folkwang [curators having] introduced productive tensions between the cultivation of individualism …[and] the provisional nature of totality [of art] in the modern era" (Kuenzli 2013: 504). This defines the ideal of a "universal" collection that "the Folkwang Idea" makes manifest in space (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19.).

What the 2019 order embodies again is "the cultivation of individualism" that was always latent in a specifically modernist ontology of art, but constrained by the other imperatives of 'collectivisation' that the MoMA model of collections installed, as did every other taxonomic order (Kuenzli 2013: 504). The 'principle of individuation' and the need for the 'collectivisation' of artworks into constituent subcategories kept each

other in check, with neither given absolute priority in the dominant model. My hypothesis is that at Folkwang, these imperatives are no longer held in dynamic tension, such that the imperative to individuate artworks comprehensively dominates. Folkwang's new display order can therefore be described as having 'unleashed' the single imperative – of individuating artworks to the highest possible degree – that was inherent across models of the museum of modern art, but constrained by competing imperatives.

The language to articulate this process is scarcely available in curatorial discourse currently, at least in English. It requires drawing on wider ideas than those available in the dominant discourse to be able to become vivid. Folkwang's community of object exemplifies two related ideas: that of artworks' existential unity; and of their status as singularities, akin to that of human subjects.

Firstly, I understand this mode of as one of extreme individuation in which the 'organic solidarity' of the community of objects is taken for granted, as the *a priori* condition of all objects under the name of art. The Folkwang collection order corresponds not only to an 'organic solidarity' but something more complex: namely the concept of "community" elaborated by Jean-Luc Nancy and Giorgio Agamben (see Nancy 1991, 2016; Agamben 1993). In Agamben's terms, "community … does not presuppose commonality or identity as a condition of belonging" (Mills 2007 n.p.). As the display analyses above concluded, no gallery in the Folkwang is structured on the properties of objects alone, or at all. There are no identifiable common properties between Lehmbruck's *Contemplative Woman* and Per Kirkeby's *Missing the World*. There is no taxonomic category that could accommodate them both. Their 'condition of belonging' lies elsewhere. In Nancy's terse distinction, the contrast between an organic community and a polity is between "being-together [and] a being *of* togetherness" (Nancy 1991: xxxix). My hypothesis is that a collection ordered taxonomically has a 'being of togetherness': a unity that the governing authority of the museum installs. Folkwang's display exists only in 'being-together': of having no essentialising connection beyond co-presence alone under the concept of art. Couched in the terms of social ontology, Folkwang's collection rests on the assumption of a "primary ontological co-belonging" of all quasi-subjects (Magun 2013b: 28). Its universality rests on this, being underwritten by "the presumption of collective unity" (Osborne 2013: 121).

Secondly, the definition of artworks at Folkwang is far closer than at any museum of modern art to date of being a "singularity" (Osborne 2013: 121). A "world", by definition, constitutes a category of its own. A collective body of "new worlds" can only be understood as a "multiplication of singularities" that happen to share space (Osborne 2013: 121). Folkwang's is a community of artefacts whose ""unity [is located] in the aspect of [their] singularity, *uniqueness*" alone, to again draw on individualistic social ontology (Magun 2013a: xvi). Therefore the most apposite description of Folkwang's order, which brings together every type of artform in one space is that it forms a community of "whatever singularit[ies]", as in Agamben's terms (Agamben 1993 quoted in Mills 2007 n.p.). In Agamben's philosophy of community, there is no single "representable condition of belonging … other than the "co-belonging' of singularities itself" (Agamben 1993 quoted in Mills 2007 n.p.). This describes *Missing the World* incisively. The display presents artworks as singular entities to be understood only in their "unique[ness]" and intrinsic "diversity". There is no "kind of shared 'essence'" uniting the display (Osborne 2013: 123). In this light, Folkwang's curators, just like MoMA's, have admitted their predecessors' model always denied modern art's "irreducible inner heterogeneity", by simplifying it to a single narrative (Groys 1996: 101). For Folkwang curators, modern art is defined by its capacity to resist and exceed taxonomic structures. (REF). The logic of 'the Folkwang idea' is to exemplify modern art's intrinsic heterogeneity and internal difference. Folkwang's philosophy is, therefore, a philosophy of difference.

Thirdly, this is not *only* an art historical claim, or one affecting the philosophical aesthetics. It corresponds directly to more speculative theorisation of what a twenty-first-century-model of an emancipatory model of collections based on empiricist and individualist philosophies might be – rather than one based on identitarian categories. To date, these debates have been embryonic, or wholly abstract. Gerald Raunig has proposed a "form of collecting [that] is not a unification [but] another mode of ordering singularity", arguing for the need to avoid subsuming objects into determining categories, on broadly Deleuzian grounds (Raunig 2013: 138). His voice has been a lone one up until the very late 2010s. In Raunig's terms, an ideal, emancipatory collection would be constituted by "realms of individual things", just as the social world is; Raunig's argument are ontological claims both the singularity of quasi-subjects and subjects (Raunig 2013: 138). What is remarkable is how closely

Folkwang's new order parallels this ideal. It is only at the very end of the research period have curators themselves proposed that the "revaluation of collections" should involve repositioning artworks as "'multiple singularities'" so that their sheer "eclecticism spanning art-historical time across all media" could "level [the] hierarchies" that the canon sustained (Hunt 2021: 16). Even then, these were theoretical ideals to date: only Folkwang has actually realised these ideals in my understanding, by reanimating its radical founding ideals. The "growing reverence and enthusiasm for singularities" in continental philosophy has found its correlate and exemplar in actual museum practice (Osborne 2004 n.p.). This is not compatible with the "sociologism" and representational imperatives of anglophone museums (O'Sullivan 2008: 242).

14.2. "Autonomy [for] Postautonomous Times": Absolute Autonomy

6: What ideological tradition does each type of collectivity draw on?

At Folkwang, every curatorial device is employed to avoid referring outside of artworks' own materiality or affective change, from its lack of texts to the titles of rooms being those of artworks themselves. Folkwang's order has removed all art historical signposts and prior structuring categories. Moreover, in 2019, no wall text mentioned demographic categories or "protected characteristics" (UK Govt 2010 n.p.). I understand this a refusal to allow artworks to have *any* "subjection or dependency" to purportedly 'external' categories to themselves, as quasi-subjects (Osborne 2013: 78). These tactics "grant more significance to individual agency in shaping a field of artistic positions, at the expense of the idea that (general) regularities should govern the field" (Van Maanen 2009: 83). None of the displays reveal any 'general regularities' specific to the field, beyond the universality of their themes of forms of affect: there are no commonalities of medium, subject, periodisation or place of origin. Avoiding 'generalities' can be seen as precisely the point of Folkwang's display order: the curators attend only to each artwork "as a whole, as an entity" that is a 'world' in and of itself (Seelig pers. corr. 13.03.19). All of the above is to say more simply: artworks are sovereign at Folkwang. It is also to say that this sovereignty is what defined one tradition in modernist art practice and theory. Whilst sovereignty and autonomy are separate ideas, they are closely related.

I follow Christoph Menke in taking "the concept of autonomy" and "the concept of sovereignty" defining artworks as structurally "link[ed]", and co-determining (Menke 1999: viii, x).

In my understanding, recent research into the historical meaning of artistic autonomy in modernist thinking parallels Folkwang's developments almost uncannily. For one historian, what has been lost in anglophone museum practice are the "connections between the ontology of the modernist object and the political implications of modernist conceptions of autonomy" (Byln 2014: 857). What the Folkwang returns to is the prior ideal that "aesthetic autonomy had – and continues to have – deeply political implications" – or more precisely, that it models an "ideal relation" between the individual and collective (Byln 2014: 857). In another historian's similar terms, what "the autonomous work of art" did was always "model a relation" between the individual and the collective: an idea now entirely lost in anglophone museums (Siraganian 2015: 141, f47).

If we can begin to articulate Folkwang's distinctiveness, it is through the figure of an "autonomy in [for] postautonomous times" coined by curator Sebastian Olma (Olma 2018: 7). Since the millennium, the questions of post-coloniality under globalisation, and of identiarian demands for representation that I outlined as 'we/them' type questions have dominated anglophone curatorial problems. These questions have not dominated German art museums to the same degree. What became subordinated was the idea that there is *always* "a vexed relation between freedom, individuality, and sovereignty" inherent to art collections as Irit Rogoff has observed (Rogoff 2010: 41). For Rogoff, Hunt, Raunig and Folkwang's curators, politically progressive art museums must return to framing artworks through "processes of individuation", to ensure their "(re)singularisation" instead of their reduction to sociological categories made manifest (Rogoff 2010: 39). This is a minority position that has made almost no impact on anglophone literature or curatorial practice to date.

Folkwang's role, as curators testified, was understood in 1902 to be prefigurative of an *ideal* set of future social relations – rather than representing any extant collective. What a truly modernist art collection achieves is an imaginative suspension of existing relations, in subjects' 'subjectivation', and subjugation. Bourdieu observed

that art museums were “the performed renunciation of [existing] social relations”; Folkwang takes this as an ideal, not a deficit (Bourdieu cited in Braddock 2015: 2). In one interviewee’s pregnant phrase, what defines the Folkwang ethos is that “for 98 years we have looked at the promise of the future” above all (Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19). Jesse Cohn has identified that individualist, anti-authoritarian art as resting on the idea it “’prefigures' the society it seeks to bring about in its practices here and now” (Cohn 2007: 115-6). Similarly, what Osborne identifies modern art as having always been “the *prefiguration* of freedom” (Osborne 2006: 39). In Bishop’s astute observation, an emancipatory museum allows objects to speak in “the *future anterior*” – about a society that is yet-to-come (Bishop 2013; 24).My hypothesis is that these four remarks are ultimately one and the same. Moreover, what Folkwang’s curators have returned to is the idea of “the art object’s political life” in and of itself (Siraganian 2015: title). The key idea is that it is objects *themselves* that have a ‘political life’, not merely as presenting their authors’ subjectivities by proxy. If Folkwang presents an ‘ideal community’, it is because curators believe “reassembling [objects] in new speculative configurations” offers alternative “models of thought” about social relations (Hunt 2021: 16). Folkwang’s curators have “compose[d] … an order as yet unrealised” in which “a multiplicity of voices” co-exist without hierarchy (Hunt 2021: 16).

14.3. Core Value: Liberty

7: What value is privileged in each ideological tradition?

The prime value that interviewees made reference to was “freedom” (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19.; Seelig pers. corr. 13.03.19). For Peter Gorschlüter, “becoming more modern” meant allowing all classes to “experience this [collection] as a kind of *freedom*” (Gorschlüter pers. corr. 30.01.19). This ideal revives the modernist ideal that the “aesthetic was [always] a synedoche for ‘freedom’” because “modern art is [made] in the name of subjective freedom” (Osborne 2013: 78; Osborne 2010 n.p.). The correlations between modern art’s ideal of liberty and self-determination have been condensed by critic JJ Charlesworth as having been that “what people have invested, historically, in the idea of [modern] art … [i]s a space for self-directed action and self-determination – in other words, freedom […because] art is an individuated,

partial realisation of self-determination in a world in which self-determination is impossible [thus providing a model for] the creative determination of the whole of a society" (Charlesworth 2019 n.p.). This idea describes Folkwang's new ethos with exceptional precision – or rather, it describes an ideal that was always present in the idea of modern art from the Folkwang's first incarnation onwards, but under the dominance of the MoMA model, never given license.

What Folkwang's curators implied, and what I make explicit, is that this modernist conception of a collection instantiates a microcosmic model of a community. The type of community is highly particular to modernist German art museums. There, art objects in their collective state are understood to implicitly act as "theory of society [that acts] as a countervailing image" to the dominant order, rather than a 'reflection' of it, in the philosopher Ekkehard Knörer's words (Knörer in Knörer & Rebentisch 2019 n.p.). The "special ethical status of art" at Folkwang even more than other German museums "is that … it is to a certain extent directed towards both poles of freedom (freedom in and from the social)", as Juliane Rebentisch argues relatedly (Rebentisch in Knörer and Rebentisch 2019 n.p.). This has never yet been put under curatorial analysis. I outlined the moral authority of modernism in German art museums above, but its ongoing consequences have barely been understood in anglophone literature. My analysis is that at Folkwang, art objects occupy the idealised state of 'freedom in and from the social' that Rebentisch has theorised in the abstract. This is what an "asocial sociality" of objects describes: a community of objects that "test out how far or how close together" each can be and remain 'together' (Osborne 2013: 76; Seelig 21.03.19). This is a community of objects who threaten to not have social lives as such, but only remain individuals, such is that spatial separation. Objects are apart from each others' sphere of influence, and certainly have no causal relations to each other as displayed.

What this can be seen to embody is "a concept of 'real self-determination' or 'real emancipation'" in which "the concept of freedom itself" is spatialised (Knörer in Knörer & Rebentisch 2019 n.p.). The implication is that for each artwork, the framework of understanding is themselves alone. Folkwang has made manifest the idea that "art is a sphere in which [we recognise our] freedom from the social sphere [and] as elements [by] which we distance ourselves from our own socialization" (Rebentisch in Knörer & Rebentisch 2019 n.p.). This is to say in museums if we

‘distance ourselves’ it is always both spatial and figurative at the same time: the spatial is *always* symbolic; and at Folkwang, it is symbolic of an ‘ideal’ community in its “sheer diversity” (Folkwang Museum 2020a n.p.). What Folkwang has done is to assert that “modernist aesthetic autonomy was always a political event that attempted to defend fundamental forms of liberal relations”, because “the freedom of the art object … present[ed] a way to imagine an individual's complicated liberty within the state” (Siraganian 2015: 183, 1). To summarise: a ‘modernist art museum’ true to the modernity of modern art would recognise each “art object [as] a way to envision the political subject’s ideal relation to a[n] … essentially *liberal* state (Siragnian 2018: 4, original emphasis). The pair of operative terms here are ‘liberal’ and ‘ideal’. The Folkwang order can be seen to relate closely to liberal-libertarian, emancipatory and individualistic philosophico-political traditions. These do not occupy a single point on a left-right political spectrum. Above all, the common denominator amongst contributors to this tradition is that they place *ontological* privilege on the individual as the basic unit of being, and value the *political* virtue of individual liberty. As outlined earlier, the basis of my argument is that “the political cannot be separated from the ontological … as it is concerned with a [social] being” (Boelderl 2016: 28). In other words, all methods of structuring collectives are claims to ‘what is’ – in this instance, what modern art is and what the modernity of an ideal community is.

For Peter Gorschlüter, art objects’ ‘own’ freedom is sacrosanct: **“**there is [only] an *associat[ive]* way in which they are connected to each other” rather than through any pattern of conventional categorical or conceptual connections (Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19). In the simplest terms, “the political meaning of autonomy is freedom” because by being emancipated from the ‘governance structures’ of museum administration, in their taxonomic categories, individual artworks can become self-determining quasi-subjects (Osborne 2013: 84). This is undoubtedly a liberal-libertarian ideal, given “liberalism is above all … [a] doctrine of liberation [that] generates a radical individualism” (Walzer 1980: 97). Folkwang’s displays exemplify this ‘radical individualism’, in my understanding. Agamben’s description of “whatever singularities” is helpful: singularities are, for him, “the principal enemy of the State” in its authoritarian, centralised and repressive forms (1993: 86). In this regard, the Folkwang project should be seen precisely as an audacious attempt to recapture the extraordinary moral and intellectual authority associated with the modernist tradition

in Germany. Modern art is repositioned, in Folkwang's project, as the historical agent of individual emancipation *and* the historical bulwark against (state) repression. What Folkwang's process of disintermediation and de-categorisation reject are "processes of subjectivation in the sense of being-subject-to" a single external authority that threatens individuation: "the *prefiguration* of freedom" requires quasi-subjects to be cast as ideal subjects freed from social constraint (Osborne 2017 n.p.; Osborne 2006: 39). My hypothesisis is that the idea latent in the museum of modern art was of artworks' potential "to reach [their] full *individualization*" – as idealised versions of actual subjects, where "the figure of the artist [i]s the individual in his or her fullest realisation", to adapt Cranfield's insight (Kropotkin 1910 at Marxists 2015: n.p.; Cranfield 2015 n.p.). The contemporary thinker who voices this modernist ideal most clearly is Graham Harman: "the stages [of self-realisation] of an object [as of human individuation are] steps towards autonomy" (Harman 2016: 116). This is Folkwang's philosophy encapsulated, as a modernist ontologies of art where artworks are paradigmatic examples of ideal self-actualisation.

As Hal Foster has identified, "the values of autonomy … [have] become timely again" having "made a comeback in contemporary art" precisely because it remains an "important aspect … of modernity" (Foster 2012: 14). Folkwang is the museum of modern art that has exemplified this 'turn' most fully in Europe. To summarise: Folkwang's collection affords an unprecedented individuation of artworks in which they are subject to no single or overt interpretation external to themselves, nor placed in immediate proximity to any others. 'Modernising' the collection, or remodernising it, has defamiliarized both individual artworks and the collection as a whole, by disaggregating its prior categories.

14.4. New Name: From Autonomy to Monadism

8: What figure can best describe each collection?

My hypothesis is that the Folkwang's revivification of a modernist model of art collection has supercharged the ideal of autonomy to such a degree that it constitutes a new category of display entirely. Theoretically, the "absolute individuation" of each and every object is a logical impossibility (Osborne 2013: 85).

However, Folkwang has pushed at the limits of how close collections can come to this as an ideal.

In the philosophy of art, the ideal of artistic "autonomy" was understood throughout the twentieth century as "one of the constitutive elements of the modern concept of art", such that the concept of autonomy "is actually constitutive of 'art' in its modern sense" (Gaiger 2009: 43; Osborne 2013: 85). I take this to mean that modern artists were defined principally by their freedom from social and political determination, in opposition to far-left and far-right regimes. There is a categorical difference between imagining artists as autonomous from socio-political determinations and artworks as autonomous from art historical determinations to the point of being sovereign.

This is an empiricist belief that "true 'individuals' that compose our universe", such that "identifying ([is] referring to) particulars" alone (Scruton 1994: 95). What displays such as *Nelly im Blumen* and *Missing The World* offer is a 'category-less' structure: one with no mediating meso-scale categories between 'art' and 'artwork'. What the Folkwang has created is an anti-collection of single-object categories, each "self-identical" and "unviolable in their essential integrity" (Adorno 2002: 176; Sontag 1967 n.p.). As its curators outlined, each artist is treated "as a whole" (Seelig pers. corr. 13.03.19). These are modernist principles *avant la lettre.* Folkwang's "empiricism" is a movement of disaggregation, not reclassification (Deleuze 1987: xii). This is an "ontology of individual entities" that resist categorisation (DeLanda 2012: 1). Concepts are avoided in all text panels, as generalisations that are "totalizing groupings [which] commit the … violence of reducing the rich heterogeneity of a complex field to … [a] homogeneous" entity (Elliott and Attridge 2011: 2). The "subsumption or regulation" of entities under higher-order categories is therefore rejected *a priori* (Osborne 2013: 122). In

In one curator's words, "so many things have been collected that go beyond the historical [inherited display] categories and which [defy] the separation of categories" that the current generation inherited (Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19). Voiding "the separation of categories" is 'truer to life' than the alternative, because it reveals the true "heterogeneity" or even "infinite diversity" of artworks, a diversity that cannot be contained within inherited art historical category systems (Osborne 2013: 121).

There is no trace of “the [Linnean] ‘logic of specification (genus / species / subspecies)” left at Folkwang (Osborne 2013: 122). This is a genuinely radical, quasi-anarchistic ontological proposition about what modern art truly is. It bears no relation to Pearce or Preziosi’s concepts of collection.

Nevertheless, it rests on a tradition with its own extended “philosophical lineage” from “Duns Scotus […to] Spinoza and Nietzsche”, via “Leibniz’s *Monadology* and Heidegger”, up to Deleuze, DeLanda and Harman (Widder 2009: 27; Deleuze 1994: 39; Harman 2011b: 211). I outlined above how Nietzsche’s concept of art determined Osthaus’s own in the 1890s; and the title ‘New Worlds’ invokes Heidegger’s image of artworks as worlds. Folkwang embodies Harman’s “ideal that objects … are mutually autonomous” because they are “self-identical” (Harman 2018a: cover; Harman 2016: 116). In total, what curators offer is a “Leibnizian monadology”, where artworks are autonomous, sovereign, self-legislating entities (Osborne 2013: 85). This process towards “individualization” has the logical endpoint of artworks’ autonomy being “self-legislating”, as the etymology of the word ‘auto-nymy’ indicates (self +governance) (Vishmidt 2015 n.p.). This explains why, for Folkwang’s curators, the “question [of our time has become…] what is the significance for society of an ‘autonomous art’”: it is why “a political argument for an autonomous art is … of vital importance” in democracies (Ter Thije 2012 n.p.).

If Folkwang’s radicalism can be summarised, it is through the idea that its curators have fully realised Adorno’s ideal that “artworks [should be understood] as that living autarchy that Goethe was fond of calling entelechy, the synonym for monad” (Adorno 2002: 179). Accordingly, I identify the Folkwang order as being “a mode of collectivity … [defined by its] inherently plural structure of *being*”, rather than one of stylistic difference, or differences of “historical and geographical belonging” (Magun 2013a: 12; Pollock 2014: 12). These are all subsumed under a “philosophy of difference … within a univocity of being”: the universalist concept of art outlined (Osborne 2013: 122). In philosophical terms, this is a far more revolutionary proposition than Tate or Stedelijk’s projects.

14.5. Related Figure: Haecceity

Folkwang's order is almost 'monadic' in character, given curators relinquished the traditional curatorial imperatives to classify and explain artworks' relations. In theory, in the MoMA model, "everything about a work of art [was] contrived to force us to perceive it as a unique object [when…] meeting it in a museum" (Kubler 1967 n.p.). This was never true: the MoMA model always rested on relations of cause and effect; Folkwang's does not. It proves "autonomy['s] … institutional dominance under modernism" was only ever partly realised, being constrained by competing imperatives (Gaiger 2009: 43). Artistic autonomy was believed to be the precondition and founding value of modern art. In practice, artists' autonomy for socio-political determination was privileged; the autonomy of artworks themselves, for all determinations, was never possible.

Artworks in the museum remained subordinate to either MoMA's evolutionary order, to or an "art history of the proper name' (Krauss 1981: 6). In the 1980s and 1990s, one alternative model gained favour in continental museums of modern art: author-driven, monographic displays called "chamber" galleries (Tate 2019c n.p.). In Serota's words, a 'chamber' "focus[ses attention] on the work of single artists [and] obliges us to develop our own reading" of one artist's trajectory (Serota 1996: 9-10). He claimed "experience becomes paramount", taking them to spatialise the principle of autonomy (Serota 1996: 10; title). Curators described them precisely as "self-contained, autonomous events" that "undermine[d]" orthodox "museum displays" (Schubert 2000: 85). What Folkwang reveals is that individual works of art were not 'self-legislating', but always subordinate to the 'proper name' and the author function. In *Missing the World*, the process of individuation is in terms of objects rather than authorial identities – these latter are confounded or reinterpreted wherever possible. The Folkwang model has become "the museum [as] the place in which works of art may be experienced for themselves" (Serota 1996: 57, f9). It is not a chronological account of art, an author-based one, a thematic account, nor a geocultural account: it is thinkable that an anti-taxonomic account of art's diversity could be pushed further, but not by much.

As DeLanda phrases it, "'individual' means simply singular or unique, that is, not a particular member of a general category, but a unique entity" (DeLanda 2012 pers. corr. 30.01.19). I will identify the difference between monographic 'chambers' and Folkwang as the difference between quiddity and haecceity, and between authorship

and uniqueness. In a chamber, a gallery accentuates the quality that exemplifies a single *class* of objects, exhibiting the "what-ness" ('Picasso-ness') of its Picassos; Folkwang exemplifies the "this-ness" of each individual artwork (Stanford 2014 n.p.). Its principle is of that artworks exhibit "haecceity, the uniquely identifying features of *this"* particular artwork, in DeLanda's terms (DeLanda in DeLanda and Harman 2017: 35). In a chamber only artists are singular, not artworks. In a chamber, curating is "a discipline whose purpose is to exemplify" an artist's practice such that all "artworks can speak of … the individualism of the creative author" (Gleadowe 2013 n.p.; Pollock 2007: 10). In *Missing the World*, Lehmbruck's work has *no* categorical relation to its neighbours, and *no* cues to define its author. There is no biographical information about artists in any display.

In orthodox museums, an artwork *is* its author: it "disappears in or is exhausted by its predicate" such that "the predicate itself…becomes the subject" (Osborne 2010: 1). At Folkwang, the "very basis of our using the same predicate for more than one distinct individual" artwork becomes problematic, as each is *sui generis* (Stanford 2019 n.p.). Other forms of classification beyond authorship are essential. What Folkwang embodies is the idea "individual works of art must actively resist heteronomous determinations of their meanings if they are to achieve autonomy" (Osborne 2014 n.p.). Osborne's term is "individual works of art": *not* artists. Instead, artworks are displayed only "as an entity", each entity revealed in their "different materialities", as a distinctly anthopomorphised 'presence' in gallery space (Seelig pers. corr. 13.03.19). This strategy allows Adorno's ideal of "the principle of individuation… *principium individuationis"* to be the sole logic (Adorno 2002: 180). Artworks are quasi-subjects 'of their own'.

One way of describing what Folkwang has achieved is through the idea of "post-representational curating" – where objects do not to 'represent' any external entity beyond themselves (Sternfeld and Ziaja 2012: 22). This idea has never been tested in any major museum to date, being a manifesto in search of a manifestation in the 2010s. The attempts to theorise this idea have "not [been] built on empirical detail" or "dissociated … from the practice of curating" itself – up until now (Ajana 2014: 403). If any major museum has attempted to realise a display on these principles, it is Folkwang. Curators' experiment proves that what remains needed is "a whole new vocabulary [that still] needs to be invented" to describe how displays operate with a

more precise and differentiated lexicon than that of ‘encounters’ and ‘dialogues’ (Radman 2017: 191).

14.6. Tabulation of Findings

My conclusion is that an agglomeration of singularities is the polar opposite of a collection, as conceived of in museology. The diagram below tabulates the answers above, to plot how far Folkwang curators have departed from predecessors’ philosophy of collections.

Figure 14.1. Tabulation of findings and speculative conclusions: Folkwang

	Question	**MoMA 20C**	**Folkwang**
Q1	**Problematic**	Creating modern art’s history	Defamiliarsation
Q2	**Type of relations**	Sequential cause and effect	Thematic / non-relation
Q3	**Mode of individuation**	Chronological	Disintermediation
Q4	**Mode of Unity**	Genealogical	Poetic-ludic
Q5	**Model of collectivity**	Transhistorical elite	‘Non-universal universalism’
Q6	**Onto-political correlate**	Liberalism	Libertarian liberalism
Q7	**Prime value**	Universality	Liberty
Q8	**Figure**	Family Tree	Hyper-autonomy
Q9	**Collocates**	Patrilineage	Haecceity

The conclusions I draw above are based upon an identifiable consensus between the interviewees, and how precisely their ideas describe the Folkwang’s founding ethos, which has itself been the subject of recent research. In every instance, the collection was always assumed to be an entity that exists in a state of already-existing ‘unity’; in every instance, the ‘freedom’ of both artworks and visitors was the prime goal. Stedelijk has had highly celebrated curators whose *leitmotifs* are central to the embryonic history of curatorship of modern art that is now being written for the first

time. Folkwang has a stellar place in the history of the museum of modern art as a type of institution, and in the idea of modernist museum more specifically. It also has an almost unique position, as interviewees emphasised above all, as having a founding philosophy that has continued to define the institution with only selected exceptions, such as in the recent past. There is no such thing as ‘The Tate idea’, although many people could specify what ‘the idea of Stedelijk’ was, especially since 2017. “The Folkwang Idea” has had a career of its own, which its current cohort of curators have not only revivified but extrapolated. Moreover, this idea was itself based directly on a particular type of philosophical aesthetics, with Osthaus drawing its first inspiration from Nietzschean anti-nomian individualism and vitalist philosophies of art. These ideas have been compounded by rereading them through Heideggerian notions of the ‘artwork as world’. The timing of the Folkwang redevelopment coincides with, or feeds from the resurgence of this idea under object-oriented ontology – a movement that has positively dominated curatorial debates in the mid-2010s. Accordingly, curators explicitly described understanding artworks in terms of their ‘uniqueness’ and ‘diversity’, as made manifest in their ‘materiality’ and ‘physical’ presence, correlating art with affect, following Deleuze. Unlike at the two other case studies, they emphasised displaying artworks ‘as an entity’, and ‘as a whole’, that exists in its own space of ‘freedom’. All of these concepts are highly specific to German-speaking philosophies of art; and they are all highly philosophical elaborations of the concept of art, rather than pragmatic ones.

Chapter 15. Conclusions

15.0. Beyond the MoMA Model: After the Canon

All of the case study museums have, in differing ways, addressed the principal problems that all museums of modern art have in common, but to surprisingly different degrees. These problems include the globalisation of the field of production; the ‘post-medium condition’; competing demands for representation; and the sanctity of ‘the artist’s voice’ or of individual artworks.

All three museums have attempted to overturn or avoid inherited or predetermined categories of display. However, the first surprising finding was how post-colonial ideas and identitarian representation were subordinate priorities, in continental museums of modern art. In fact, these ideas were prominent at Stedelijk earlier, but supplanted by Ruf. However, in 2020 Stedelijk appointed a new director who returned to its pre-2014 priority of “Collecting Geographies” (Stedelijk Museum 2020a n.p.). Rein Wolfs appointed two “curators at large”, Yvette Mutumba and Adam Szymczyk (Stedelijk Museum 2020a n.p.). Their roles are that of “addressing the museum’s structures and conceptual frame” to create new “narratives that transcend Western European modernism, and thus examine the museum’s own foundations”: tasks normally reserved for the director (Stedelijk Museum 2020a n.p.). They are to return the museum’s focus onto the globalisation of art production from its ‘post-medium’ frame. In 2021, curators described their plans to replace Stedelijk Base entirely. Such a development testifies to the intellectual and ethical force of Tate Modern’s model, and the centrality of debates around globalisation and decolonisation that Tate has led in European museums of modern art.

At Folkwang, new prominence has been given to non-Western artists since 2018-9, with entire displays dedicated to, for example, Indian photographer Soham Gupta, although the principal programme remains focused on established European masters. Instead, Folkwang’s ethos has to a large degree returned towards its founder’s distinctive vision of “change through culture – culture through change” (Osthaus quoted by Folkwang University 2016 n.p.). This founding vision of an

“artistic education [across] the unity of all the arts” in the round, and under one roof, stands in contrast to Folkwang’s position in 2010.

The second surprising finding was how far two of the three case studies ‘looked back’ to their own institutional histories in order to ‘look forward’. Stedelijk and Folkwang both took their defining characteristics to be those from the moments they dominated sectoral debate. In Stedelijk’s case, this involved “channelling” ideas first pioneered by former directors in the 1950s and 1980s: of emphasising the plastic arts’ interdisciplinarity; and making unexpected connections. In Folkwang’s case, all of the interviewees identified wholeheartedly with its founding vision. Even if theirs is necessarily a selective version of that vision, what is extraordinary that any concept of museum from the 1900s and 1910s could be salvageable, let alone provide a viable working model for a museum in the 2020s. The curators’ project has in effect been one of repositioning Folkwang as itself having been *sui generis* amongst museums, rather than subsumed into a category of museums, just as with its operations with artworks. Essentialising the institution’s history under ‘The Folkwang Idea’ is, of course, a strategic decision to justify a highly unorthodox curatorial process. It is, however, genuinely based on an equally unorthodox precedent.

The third surprising finding was precisely how different curators’ conception of the political agency of their collections has been, across what were formerly broadly parallel institutions. The differentials between the three case studies are undoubtedly far wider than they were in 2013. That contrast cannot be explained solely in reference to their situational pressures. When led by Hartwig Fischer in 2010, the Folkwang exemplified an ultra-orthodox canonical order; all that has changed.

The fourth conclusion I reach is just how different the trajectories of these institutions have been: how different the types of problems directors have addressed have been. My image of the sub-sector is now one of a centre that has not ‘held’, with entirely different institutional accounts of modern and contemporary art in museums that were broadly committed to the Euro-American canon not long beforehand. Relatedly, the leeway taken by individual directors have had licence to pursue idiosyncratic and unorthodox strategies has become remarkable, with collections altered in their entirety.

My understanding is that to date, the consequences of institutions reformulating display orders have never been articulated fully or at least never been amenable to cross-comparison. This cross-comparison has revealed how the three novel strategies are positions on a spectrum defined by the “dialectic of individuality and collectivity at play”, and defined by which collectivity is imagined as represented – or brought into being (Osborne 2014 n.p.). Museums’ representative collective of bodies of artworks narrate a public history of art, such that how its concept is defined rests on how artworks’ ‘social lives’ are structured.

15.1. Disaggregation of Values Inherent in Museums of Modern Art

The explanation I have forwarded for the diversification of museums’ orders does not lie solely in the individual pressures named above, but in the possibilities that the very idea of the museum of modern art offers. Where the MoMA model held several competing values and imperatives in dynamic equilibrium, the “dialectic of individuality and collectivity at play” was *within* each institution rather than between them (Osborne 2014 n.p.). The imperatives were finely balanced. This dialectic is now both played out between institutions, and new extremes being tested. Different museums have pushed at the limits of how ‘collectivised’ and how individuated artworks can become, in displays.

I identified three separate imperatives. One is reidentifying modernism with an internationalist imaginary, where the collective is ‘everyone’. A second is recasting it as always having been an interdisciplinary phenomenon, in which artists worked across media and disciplines far earlier than was presupposed. A third is identifying modernism with enshrining the sovereignty and autonomy of individual artworks. The three imperatives of internationalisation, ‘undisciplining’ artworks, and securing their autonomy were, once, necessarily intertwined. Since 2013 they have been disaggregated. They were all were present in the MoMA model from its outset but were never allowed to become the sole imperative to the exclusion of the others. The new differentiation between institutions rests on their exploitation of possibilities that were already latent within this dominant model, but which had never been drawn towards their logical conclusions. These possibilities have drawn each institution

towards an entirely different value scheme. Accordingly, at Tate, a novel equality between cultures and geopolitical regions and between identity positions provide the single highest institutional priority. At Stedelijk, introducing a new fraternity between disciplines is the logical outcome of creating the first fully 'post-medium' display in a museum of modern art. At Folkwang, returning to modern art's universalising ambitions, and earlier ideals of liberty became an overriding imperative. These ideas of the museum provide distinctive regulative modes of unity.

15.2. Democratic Values, Disaggregated: Equality, Fraternity, Liberty

Understanding collections as types of collective, plural-subject entities allows for a new form of analysis of what museums are and do. The three core values named here as equality, fraternity and liberty are part of attempts to install a more broadly 'democratic' order in displays, of highly different types. It is no coincidence that these are the foundational values of modern democratic European societies. In one account, it is "liberté, egalité and fraternité [that] are [the] fundamental values that … define democratic life in general" (Civil Liberties Union for Europe 2021 n.p.). This suggests that these museums are part of 'democratic life', even if the democratic models of the UK, Germany and Holland are different. As other analysts have noted, in Western Europe the institution of the museum is inextricably interwoven with the development of civic society and the expansion of ideas of democratic representation. Across Western Europe, and especially in Germany, modern art has long been symbolic of the virtues of a liberal-democratic political regime. The premise of the analyses here has been that European museums of modern art can only be properly understood in relation to the political orders they are funded and administered through.

In each case study, in differing ways and differing degrees, the three new display orders can be readily interpreted as models of a democratic collective, or what an ideal democratic collective could be. At Tate, where quotas have been imposed for different identity positions (i.e. monographic displays of male and female artists), this is readily visible. The museum order 'represents' the macrocosmic social world outside the museum, in a quantitative way. At Folkwang, artistic modernity is equated with the *promise* of modernity, as exemplified in the remark "for 98 years we have

looked at the promise of the future" (Seelig pers. corr. 21.03.19). At Stedelijk, authored objects have been granted the metaphorical status of 'freemen of the city', with the gendering intentional, having become able to enjoy 'the freedom of city' for the first time. They have been given license to 'fraternise' beyond their 'own' social group in a convivial setting with the entire 'society of authors' convened in the collection.

What at least two, if not all three of the case studies have in common is that they have pursued different *emancipatory* logics of practice. Tate has pursued a project of extending the privileges of authorship to non-Western artists, women artists, the African diaspora, and other categories of subject not previously represented in its collection. Stedelijk has attempted to liberate the privileges of authorship from being associated with individual media or disciplines, to allow artists as authors to occupy ever-larger imaginative territories. As at Essen, in this model creative artists stand in as idealised representatives of 'us', as our 'best selves'. Folkwang has attempted to liberate artworks from their prior determinations by earlier art history. Their individuality has been liberated: the image is of quasi-subjects set free from their governing order or emancipated from restrictive curatorial practices.

The process through which these alternatives have flourished should be seen as institutions forwarding competing ontological claims to what was decisive in defining artistic modernism, or in modernity at large. In Tate Modern's case, the question rests on the idea that artistic modernisms existed in the plural, all of which were responses to the 'multiple modernities' that developed in parallel across space. In Morris's terms, the dominant "master narrative" of modern art enshrined by MoMA and indeed Tate throughout the last century was "a story of pioneers just as compelling as the narrative of colonial exploration and conquest that provided the backdrop to it" (Morris 2021 n.p). This implies that European modernism specifically *was* coloniality.

My conclusion is that these claims are not mutually compatible ways to order materials: they should not be seen exclusively as epistemological claims. The nature of 'representative' museums is that their purpose is to instantiate the full range of the key extensions of the concept of art, and in doing go, create an authoritative history of art. A 'representative 'museum, cannot pursue an arbitrary order: it *constitutes* the concept of 'art' through its holdings, as Preziosi has argued. To undertake a

reordering project of the entirety of a collection display as at Tate Modern in 2016, Stedelijk in 2017, and Folkwang in 2019, is to reconfigure the very concept of art that is being forwarded. It is always an ontological claim about the nature and trajectory of art.

To test the veracity or falsifiability of such claims, the requirement is museums is to forward incompatible propositions about what modern art and modernism are. To take one comparison, the Vanabbe Museum's counterintuitive commitment to the "demodernisation" of museums of modern art is one polemical proposition that echoes Morris's above (Esche in VanAbbe Museum 2017 n.p). Such propositions would be inadmissible under the hegemony of the MoMA model. The diversification of collections signals their vitality: each institution is able to expose the limitations or exclusions of the other claims. Advances are only possible if curators allow 'a hundred flowers to bloom', to adopt Mao Zedong's aphorism.

15.3. Liberal-Democratic Character of Anglophone Collections

The obvious potential obstacle to 'a hundred flowers blooming' is if anglophone museum practice gains a renewed hegemony amongst continental museums, merely on its latest model. This is a distinct possibility because MoMA has internalised Tate's position substantially. It is only when intense pressure is placed upon the dominant model from without that sector-wide change is instigated. Admirably, both of these institutions have now placed these dual questions of representativeness at the forefront of their self-definitions. They have argued that for museums to offer a picture of art that is more "true to life" (Muir. pers. corr. 29.11.18.). As I noted above, in 1992 the Tate Gallery displays included artworks by only two women artists across 50 galleries; no artworks by artists of ethnic minorities based in the UK or made outside NATO territories. The change since then is extraordinary and relates directly to "key traditions of democratic thinking" in political thought (Held 1995: viii). The "commonwealth of ideas" of 2021 is not that of 1992 (Serota 2016 n.p.). However, it is not the only politically engaged philosophy of collections, nor necessarily the most radical course of action, as Claire Bishop identified in relation to the L'internationale group of museums (Bishop 2013).

The model advocated by Tate Modern is essentially based upon a principle of democratic representation in which different constituencies are convened in one assembly by being co-present. Tate's project of achieving ever more *proportionate* representation of 'constituencies' parallels the trajectory of democratic rights over time. The train of ideas here is that, in politics and in museums alike, it is only in the last generation that it has been understood that progressive "arguments … could be turned against existing institutions to reveal the extent to which the principles and aspirations of equal … participation remained unfulfilled" (Held 1995: 11-12). The "actual achievement of citizenship for all" and of the privileges of authorship 'for all' have been protracted processes (Held 1995: 12). The 'actual possibility' of the privileges of authorship being extended to 'all' has required the *quantification* of resources and visibility allocated to different groups. This has required Tate curators to reimagine their collection through a model of representation akin to that in a parliamentary assembly in a liberal-democratic political regime. Thus, the character of anglophone collections is increasingly that of a liberal democracy. In Frances Morris's terms, the collection will "transgress … borders, of medium, of gender, [and] ethnicity" alike, such that in theory at least, there are no *a priori* categorical exclusions across space or subjectivity (Morris in Evans 2017 n.p.). If this Tate's culture is 'democratic' it is also because its curators believe it is "a representative or a legislature [that] should mirror … its constituency as a painting mirrors life – i.e. be a true copy of the represented" world that exists external to it (Kharkhordin 2013: 203). The new "common ground" or "grid of a common table" that unites its objects into a single framework is not art's 'own' history, but the representation of all subjects as they are currently classified (Preziosi 1998a: 514).

My own analysis is that Tate Modern's collection order draws both on pre-modern and distinctively twenty-first century models of democratic thought. Tate curators' key problem has been how "a cosmopolitan model of democracy" can be created, if "the nation-state itself can[not] remain at the centre" of any collection, nor any conception of democracy (Held 1995: ix, xii). One decisive change in Tate Modern's order parallels the shift in political thought that democracy *is* the "relations and networks which stretch across national borders" (Held 1995: ix). A second is that Tate Modern also now resembles the pre-modern conception "democracy … [which] was largely associated with the gathering of citizens in assemblies and public meeting places" (Held 1995: 11). Museum display *is* the co-presence of objects. Tate Modern's

display is an assembly refigured under a “cosmopolitan model of democracy” characteristic of twenty-first century political thought (Held 1995: xii). My understanding is that this marks a momentous change of museums’ philosophy in collections that has not yet been articulated, let alone theorised. If Tate now has a “democratic culture”, then it risks becoming a “democracy [that] knows neither order nor unity beyond political representation” – although displays like ‘Intimacy, Activism and AIDS’ suggest the poetics and politics of display are finely weighted (Rebentisch 2016 n.p.).

15.4. Art’s Exceptionalism

There are several “key traditions of democratic thinking … [that] stem from republicanism, liberalism and Marxism” rather than one alone (Held 1995: viii). Other modes of democratic political agency remain thinkable in museums, beyond the logic of representation. Museums’ political agency is not limited to which artists they choose, or which demographic categories of artist they promote. Beatrix Ruf’s prime achievement in restaging the Stedelijk collection was to extend onto design the “state of exception” due to ‘fine’ art alone onto sister disciplines (Bourdieu 1996: xvi). The ‘post-medium condition’ implies art’s “state of exception” has no material basis, and only an institutional one. In Stedelijk’s curators’ retrospective assessment, what the reordering project achieved was to reframe the ‘applied arts’ as integral to the concept of art, if not equally with other modes of working as yet.

Ruf’s erasure of information about makers’ nationalities and birthplaces suggests a different view to Tate’s. It is most readily explained through the proposal that “‘the global’ [has] become a smokescreen that conceals inequalities”, rather than being intrinsically emancipatory in itself (Acavedo-Yates 2014: 4). The avoidance of ideas connected to globalisation despite their prominence suggests a view it is “a term that encourages the deceptive notion of worldwide connectedness and horizontal networks of communication and exchange” which have not been realised, *contra* Morris (Acavedo-Yates 2014: 4). Stedelijk’s display order is a democracy of disciplines, where Tate’s is a cosmopolitical democracy.

15.5. A Democracy of Objects

The differential between Tate Modern and Folkwang can be illuminated in the push-pull of the "contradictions between the 'liberal' and 'democratic' components of liberal democracy" (Held 1995: 4). This is because there is a contradiction "between the liberal preoccupation with individual rights … and the democratic concern for the regulation of individual and collective action, that is, for public accountability" in its dominant senses (Held 1995: 4). Folkwang's ideal is of the 'rights' of the individual artwork; Tate Modern's of its 'public accountability' to a polity, or cosmopolitical populous as a 'global institution'. Not *all* political questions concerning museums can be posed from a Rancièreian understanding of authorial representation, where 'democracy is equality'. Democracy need not equate to equality, or equality alone. At Folkwang, by contrast, "democracy entails a commitment to … the 'principle of autonomy'" as it does in liberal regimes (Held 1995: xi).

The defamilarisation of the entire collection is similarly based upon an idea expressed in curatorship and in political thought. This is that the dominant order "could and frequently did, deprive [artistic] citizens of political and social freedoms", in the museum by mistaking their contingent relations for the totality of their meaning and value (Held 1995: 9). Folkwang's priority upon the freedom of objects, and not authors, to be 'self-legislating' has political implications, as figures like Lisa Siraganian has proven (see Siraganian 2013).

15.6. Consequences of Research for the Concept of Collection

I conclude that the distance between the three museums' current display orders and what preceded them in each instance is genuinely sufficient to merit reconsidering the use of the term 'collection'. Firstly, I have demonstrated that the display orders categorically depart from the concept of collection as it is outlined in museology. Vernacular use of the term 'collection' fails to distinguish between post-canonical museums. In this sense it is partly redundant and misleading: its continued use acts to mask significant divergences between museums' practices and what they stand for, and what has changed.

There is no necessity to regard the term as sacrosanct, beyond acting as a placeholder if it cannot offer any critical purchase on any of the three case studies, let alone differentiate them. The idea of a 'collection' can now be imagined as the concept that underwrites the popular supposition that there should be a single, dominant concept of art, and there is a single history of twentieth and twenty-first century art which all parties adhere to. The supposition here is that, hiding in plain sight, the very concept of 'collection' is the agent propping up the supposition that museum collections can have an apolitical character because of their intrinsic moral authority. If this is the case, the term collection should be understood as a "philosophical … concept [that is a] worn-out metaphor": a legacy of a former era that nevertheless still bears "many figurative meanings still active in the background" that do not correspond to what museums have become (Latour 2016b: 465). Any critical gain can only be made by introducing terms that can specify the relationships and values institutions instantiate. If, as I have demonstrated, other concepts offer a greater specificity and critical purchase on what is at stake in different institutions, then they can be employed as modifiers at the least. Strictly speaking, the idea of the 'collection as assemblage' or a 'collection of monads' are logical contradictions: the concepts are incompatible.

Curators' new imperatives mark such "a significant transformation" of "the meaning and function of curating" that the term 'collection' cannot be continued unmodified (Ajana 2014: 401). The means of understanding this transformation necessarily "requires [going] beyond the [existing range of] figurations" available (Ajana 2014: 401). New curatorial methods, and new concepts of art need new names. It is only through new "figurations" that we can "attempt to rethink the activity of curating in non-conventional ways" (Ajana 2014: 403). If what museums do is shape "the process of knowledge production" by which the concept of art is known at all, then the experiments at Tate, Stedelijk and Folkwang offer profoundly different forms of knowledge (Ajana 2014: 403). What the three museums have in common is believing in "the necessity to reclaim the political potential of curatorial practices by various means" (Ajana 2014: 403). If "curating … has the potential to make a contribution towards rethinking institutions' political agency", it is through other means "than [merely] enact[ing] representation" alone (Rogoff 2014: 45). It is by figuring "the political dimension of existence" in a far wider range of ways than commonly understood (Ajana 2014: 403). This involves understanding collection as themselves

“issues of relationality and community” and “as a form of gathering … that contributes to the active formation of the *polis*, that is, the political dimension of existence”, rather than ‘represent’ it alone (Ajana 2014: 403).

At their outset, museums of modern art had far more varied conceptions of collections than became the case in the late twentieth century, under the influence of the MoMA model. At no point in the history of Western European museums of modern art was the *only* option available that of a chronological and taxonomic one. However, by the late twentieth century, as almost all commentators agree, “New York’s Museum of Modern Art [w]as a universal role model” such that institutions aspiring to status were necessarily “emulators”, in J.Pedro Lorente’s terms (Lorente 2011: cover). This is no longer the case. As the Folkwang’s history illustrates, systematic attempts to create alternative orders to inherited taxonomic and chronological ones were fundamental to the idea of the modernist art museum. That they were sidelined even in the most ambitious and formerly radical institutions is one salutary conclusion. In 2021, there are more options than a binary choice between “emulators” and “contramodels” (Lorente 2011: cover). This is precisely what curators argued at Stedelijk: that “I don’t how why we did that to ourselves” as curators – limit our options to two alone (Schavemaker in Ruf et al 2017 n.p.).

15.7. Tabulation of Findings

This final section outlines the three sets of findings in relation to the MoMA model as earlier. This completes the process of cross-comparison. As the tabulation of the findings confirms, what the case studies reveal is the sheer diversification of practices away from the prior dominant model, such that the whilst the three museums own objects by some of the same authors, the ways in which they have ordered their holdings have become radically differentiated. The term ‘collection’ is inadequate to all orders equally, having no purchase on what they are or do.

Figure 15.1. Tabulation of findings and speculative conclusions: all venues

	Question	**MoMA 20C**	**Tate**
1	**Problematic**	Creating modern art’s history	Geopolitical

2	Type of relations	Sequential cause and effect	Identitarian / chapterised
3	Mode of individuation	Chronological	Subjectivities
4	Mode of unity	Genealogical	Cosmopolitical
5	Model of collectivity	Transhistorical elite	Universal / democratic
6	Onto-political correlate	Liberalism	Cosmopolitan
7	Prime value	Universality	Equality
8	Figure	Family Tree	Assembly
9	Collocates	Patrilineage	Republic

	Question	Stedelijk	Folkwang
Q1	Problematic	'Post-medium condition': ontological-institutional	Defamiliarsation
Q2	Type of relations	Transcategorial	Thematic / non-relation
Q3	Mode of individuation	Capacities	Disintermediation
Q4	Mode of Unity	Self-reflexive	Poetic-ludic
Q5	Model of collectivity	Convening authors	'Non-universal universalism'
Q6	Onto-political correlate	Jane Jacobs's civics	Libertarian liberalism
Q7	Prime value	Fraternity	Liberty
Q8	Figure	Assemblage	Hyper-autonomy
Q9	Collocates	Crowd	Haecceity

15.8. Reflections

In 2013, the project set out to investigate how collections were being reformed under the multiple pressures upon museums, and in response to individual curators' and directors' proposals as to how modern and contemporary art should be reimagined. Towards the end of the research, in 2019, it is notable that even the most powerful institution in the sector, MoMA, undertook an institution-wide rehang of its entire collection, in large part in response to these problems. It was no coincidence that MoMA's project drew directly on Stedelijk Museum and Tate Modern; and that its

director expressed that its purpose was to return the institution to its original, founding values of acting as a laboratory rather than an archive – paralleling Folkwang's trajectory uncannily. As outlined, it was Folkwang that provided the model that MoMA was based on, as the first museum of modern art, and the most experimental modernist museum in Europe in the 1900s.

I was fortunate to find three venues that also undertook institution-wide reorderings during the research period, of entirely different kinds, and where interviewees were forthcoming. In this sense, I have been able to answer the originating question. At the outset, in 2013, curatorial theorists had proposed new ways by which exhibitions, if not collections, could be ordered. At that stage, construction of the Switch House was underway, but neither Stedelijk nor Folkwang had planned radical reorderings. Other European museums undertaking expressly politicised new policies were discussed by Bishop in *Radical Museology* after research commenced – providing a promising indication that collections were becoming an area of contention in practice and in the literature, although directing me away from Vanabbe Museum, Reina Sofia and MACBA, which she already described (Bishop 2013). Since that point, as the controversy around ICOM's definition of museum suggests, the diversification of museum practice has been dramatic, and more radical ideas forwarded than seen in decades in continental museums. At the same time, a host of new propositions about the nature of art museums were forwarded, from multiple disciplines, both speculatively and in response to practice. The need for new names appeared unarguable from the profusion of new figures proposed – ranging from "is the museum a database?", to seeing "art institutions … as radical, as mother as salad, as shelter" (Pepi 2014 n.p.; Paper Monument 2019: title). No such new figures have been proposed on any systematic basis, until now.

The experiments undertaken at the case studies are not directly transferrable, being specific to a world city that provides access to a particular cohort of international collectors, in Tate's case; to a collection prioritising both art and design, seen in a gallery of unprecedented scale, at Stedelijk's; and to an institution which is itself almost *sui generis,* and embedded in the German art world, at Folkwang's. The specific ways in which curatorial principles have been extended are not generalisable, but the case studies have demonstrated just how different the principles that museums are based on have become. The three examples now

provide three profoundly different ways of thinking about what displays can be, and how collections can be reordered into new forms where those forms have their own political agency. They illuminate both the axes upon which decisions can be made, and the scope for further diversification, such that senior museum personnel should not feel the need to ask “why we did that to ourselves” in future (Schavemaker in Ruf et al 2017 n.p.).

What could not have been anticipated was how profoundly new directors can reshape medium-sized institutions. At Stedelijk, this prompted a backlash from popular press. Ruf’s departure cast a shadow over Stedelijk for the entire year to two years after her resignation, fostering a ‘bunker mentality’ amongst curators making research more difficult. The institutions each have different forms of civic ‘ownership’ of their collections by stakeholders, publics, and media. What is remarkable, however, is how experimentation with new forms of display has been given institutional priority even when that objective is not essential to all stakeholders. None of the three institutions’ reordering projects originated from governmental pressure. The impression I take away of Stedelijk and Folkwang, as two medium-sized institutions, is that their directors enjoy have a very high degree of autonomy because of the stakeholders’ commitment to curatorial and artistic experimentation that their modernist traditions extend. Tate, on the other hand, enjoys curatorial autonomy because of its ‘extraordinary funding base’, allowing it to pursue a liberal internationalist agenda whichever government is in place.

What I hope to have contributed to the literature is to have enabled cross-comparison between different models of museum, and to elaborate how these models both have entirely different philosophical bases, and forms of political agency. This has been lacking to date. Moreover, I hope to have brought research from numerous disciplines including art history, philosophy, and political thought to bear on the understanding of art museums. Across the last decade, the contributions made to rethinking the relationship between artistic autonomy in modernist art and literature and political thought, for example, have transformed this area wholesale. Such contributions have not been internalised into museology or curatorial studies in any way. This project, by providing something approximating to a theory of art museum curatorship, at least across several of its forms, enables further future research to be undertaken. By understanding art museums as sites where individuals are granted

an exceptional anthropomorphised special status as quasi-subjects, and by understanding collections as collective entities that can be reimagined in numerous different ways, I have provided a framework by which art museums further afield can be reconsidered. A close specification of the different modes of anthropomorphisation dominant in museums has not been undertaken. How these different modes relate to how museums spatialise relationships to create forms of order has thus far been an open question. My analyses provide answers to this question.

Future research in this area will need to consider the changing relationship between exhibitions, acquisitions and collection displays, given that in most Western European territories the relative purchasing power of public institutions has been diminishing almost exponentially. As outlined, the contemporary art market alone is now worth $7bn, and the market for modern art is a multiple of this. Almost no European museum is in a position to make major acquisitions without private support, at this point in time. What I have not had space to elaborate is how the case studies have negotiated this problem and understood their actions in this arena as equally ‘political’. Tate Modern’s model supercharged the American model of philanthropic giving, by targeting ultra-high net worth individuals worldwide that can subsidise public provision of art. For Tate, the resulting problem is one of positioning itself as a ‘global institution’ whose collection is seen both by an international audience of tourists and online users more than by the UK’s citizens. In the words of one critic, Tate’s is “an international collection that happens to be based in London” that “completely describes the western paradigm of an arts system being exported all over the world” (Rappolt in Brown 2014 n.p.). By contrast, Folkwang, is acquiring an increasing number of photographic works solely as data, to only ever print them ‘on demand’ and exhibit them around the city of Essen rather than in its galleries. Their goal is to de-couple public ownership from the possession of precious artefacts – to weaken Bourdieu’s ‘magic’ spell by owning digital ‘materials’ that can enter the public domain in new ways. As Folkwang’s photography curator has argued, the future of art collections may yet be distributed in space rather than only shown in one place at one time or require conservation-grade conditions. His current ambition is to acquire artworks that can be realised as large format prints outside of the museum’s walls entirely, on billboards and hoardings throughout Essen. This, of course, will transform

the nature of display and the nature of relationships between artists and artworks wholesale, by creating an entirely different problem-field for the museum.

Appendix 1: Interviews

Interviews listed in chronological order.

1 Gregor Muir, Head of Collections: International Art, Tate. 29 November 2018

2 Matthew Gale, Head of Collections: International Art, Tate. 21 December 2018

3 Leontine Coelewij, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 23 January 2019

4 Federico Martelli, Project Architect, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 23 January 2019

5 Anna Fricke, Curator: Contemporary Art, Museum Folkwang, 30 January 2019

6 Peter Gorschlüter, Director, Museum Folkwang, 30 January 2019.

7 Thomas Seelig, Head of Collections: Photography, Museum Folkwang, 21 March 2019

8 Yasufumi Nakamori, Senior Curator International Art: Photography, Tate, 29 June 2019

All interviews were conducted at the interviewees' place of work with the exception of Thomas Seelig, which was by phone due to scheduling issues.

Appendix 2: Sample Research Agreement

Research agreement and participant information

PhD Research conducted by Alistair Robinson at Newcastle University:

“From the Art Historical Canon to the ‘Post-Collection’ Museum: Collections as Collectivities in Western European Museums of Modern and Contemporary Art, 2013-20.”

The project:
When the future histories of art are being written, what will define the accounts provided by museums of modern and/or contemporary art through their collections? There is common agreement about what they are they wholly unable to collect, and what pose no problems to collect. What, therefore, are the especially problematic areas of collecting activity and policy that constitute the changing boundaries of what such museums can acquire?

In the twenty-first century, European museums of modern art have faced dramatic new challenges. Long-established international museums of modern art in particular, have, special demands upon every one of their resources, and a novel set of expectations to adapt to.

Since their inception, each institution has, broadly speaking, attempted to account for ‘the’ story of modern art – by collecting and preserving in perpetuity the representative art of their time, namely that which, it is believed, has been proven and will continue to be proven to be the key works of art created by the most significant, dynamic and influential artists.

The directors and curators of such institutions necessarily have to chart the spatial and artistic parameters of art production that they believe appropriate, i.e. shape the most adequately representation of ‘contemporary art’ that they are able.

The challenges that museum professional face encompass spatial, temporal, philosophical and technical changes to the very definition of the term 'contemporary art', itself ordinarily understood as making reference to the production of a cadre of elite artists, familiar to visual art professions internationally.

On the one hand, the acceptance of an ever-widening internationalisation of art production at the highest level is notable in the twenty-first century, being amplified by the capitalisation of 'new' markets in territories across South America, Asia, Africa, and Australasia. On the other, the nature of artworks has become increasingly diverse, and the traditional expectation of museums to preserve artworks in perpetuity meets ever greater and more challenges – spatially, technologically or technically, financially, and in the expertise, media, spaces – and time – required to present and consume certain works. Since the millennium, several museums have collected performance-based and performative works for the first time, for example. This phenomenon may be seen to either expand upon, or depart from the precedent established by leading Conceptual artists in the late 1960s of presenting works which are only present in their realisation in each instance, rather than consisting of a single, discrete, spatially defined and portable object, constructed solely from materials with a particular longevity or durability.

The research project focusses on three case studies of the collecting activities, policies, and protocols of three museums in north-west Europe: Tate Modern, London; Stedelijk, Amsterdam, and Museum Folkwang, Essen. These institutions are based in cities in different nations, of different populations and tax bases, but with comparable remits and 'international' ambitions and operations. Other adventurous institutions such as Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven provide points of comparison.

Your participation:
This is an opportunity to contribute to a new understanding of how art museums' collections are formed, and what dynamics determine their growth and trajectories. Your participation will be alongside that of other major museum directors and curators across North-West Europe.

The interview process and use of it:

Participation involves being interviewed by Alistair Robinson of Newcastle University. The interview will last approximately 30-60 minutes. The interviewer agrees to undertake a digital recording of the interview along with notes which will be transcribed and both securely stored on a stand-alone PC that is not accessible to other parties and is the sole property of the interviewer. The written transcript will be produced within 28 days of the interview. At this juncture it will be forwarded to the interviewee for approval and/or amendments to any statements as required. The interviewer agrees to undertake any amendments and not to cite or publish any remarks removed from, or amended from the original recording. This will be the final opportunity to correct or amend remarks made verbally, and the interviewee will have 14 days to provide any changes or clarifying remarks from receipt of the document. Subsequent to this juncture the interviewee agrees that their words as transcribed can be used freely in the study. In the study, the interviewer will necessarily identify the interviewee by name. Any remarks explicitly made in full confidentiality will be undertaken outside of the recording and not used in the study. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to UK data protection policies and protocols that protect individuals' and institutions' rights.

Future uses of the interview:
The interviewee also agrees that their words can be subsequently quoted in formal publications or presentations that relate directly to the subjects discussed, without additional permission being sought.

Alternative modes of participation:
If the interviewee does not wish to be recorded they can participate in an informal manner but will not contribute directly to the study.

Contact details:
If the interviewee has any questions prior or subsequent to the interview they should contact the interviewer by email on alistairrobinson4826@gmail.com in the first instance.

Matters of contention:
In the eventuality of any disagreement, interviewees are able to contact the interviewee's supervisor, Professor Chris Whitehead, on chris.whitehead@ncl.ac.uk

or by post at Media, Culture and Heritage, School of Arts and Cultures, Armstrong Building, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU.

PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF SHEET

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincerest gratitude to you for agreeing to participate in this project. Your contribution will directly inform the study and illuminate how museums of modern art have faced dramatic new challenges in the twenty-first century. Your remarks will provide a clear historical record of the ideas associated with your position in the field of contemporary art, and/or your institution of employment at the time of the interview.

Timescale:

After the interview:
A transcript will be provided to the interviewee. At this stage the interviewee can amend, alter or remove any of their remarks, with the understanding that any such remarks will be not be included in the study or considered applicable for further discussion. This is the final occasion that the interviewee will be able to amend their remarks.

Conclusions:
At the conclusion of the project the interviewee will be provided with a copy of the section/s of the thesis within which their institution is discussed and/or any remarks credited. This will be provided by email to any address provided. A copy of the entire thesis will be available on request subject to the agreement of other participants.

Subsequent dissemination:
In the first instance, the conclusions found will be submitted solely as part of the doctoral research conducted by the interviewer. The interviewer agrees to inform in advance the interviewee of any subsequent employment of the remarks made, and the context within which they will be reproduced.

Right of redress:
In the unlikely event that the interviewee believes that they have been intentionally misrepresented in any way, the interviewer will provide direct acknowledgment of this in the thesis itself, quoting any comments provided by the interviewee in writing

within a reasonable framework. This acknowledgment will serve to clarify the nature of any disagreement of emphases, or of differences in the opinions expressed or implied by the interviewee or interviewer between the occasion of the interview and the completion of the project. In all subsequent written versions of the thesis or any related documents thereafter such acknowledgments will also be made present.
In the extremely unlikely event that the interviewee believes that they have been subject to extreme deliberate misrepresentation, or deception in any aspect of the process, they are able to contact the Ethics Research Committee at Newcastle University

For further information or discussion pertaining to any of the above please contact Alistair Robinson on E alistairrobinson4826@gmail.com

Indicative questions:

Questions for individual participants are not generic but will be based upon individual case studies of the display and interpretation process relating to particular works of art now owned by the museum, seen in particular displays; and the overall structure of interpretation and display constituting an order of modern and contemporary art.

Questions may include:

Can you describe the problems relating to the process of presentation and interpretation of particular works that have been especially challenging for the collection?

Can you describe a display that has presented a particular challenge in terms of the prior ways that the collection had been ordered?

Can you discuss how you and other curators have been describing the collection in its entirety, and any notable changes to the terms of description?

Could you indicate what future direction you see the shape of the collection as taking in response to changes in the ways that art is made?

Appendix 3: Sample individual permission form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERVIEW RESEARCH

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Alistair Robinson, a PhD candidate at Newcastle University. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about the policies and protocols of acquiring works of contemporary art for museums of modern art in North-West Europe, and the problems faced by curators in achieving a coherent and convincing account of the art of the twenty-first century for the public, and for future generations. I will be one of approximately 10 people being interviewed for this research.

Please tick the boxes to confirm you have understood and agree to the statements outlined.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, no- one in my organisation will be told. X

2. I understand that the study does not address highly contentious or controversial issues in itself. If for any reason I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have full right to decline to answer any question, or to terminate the interview as appropriate. X

3. Participation involves being interviewed by Alistair Robinson, Newcastle University. The interview will last approximately 45-90 minutes. The interviewer agrees to undertake a digital recording of the interview along with notes. A written transcript or digital recording will be produced within 28 days of the interview. At this juncture it will be forwarded to the interviewee for approval and/or amendments to any statements as required. The interviewer agrees to undertake any amendments and not to cite or publish any remarks removed, or amended, from the original recording. If the interviewee does not wish to be recorded they can participate in an informal manner but will not contribute directly to the study. X

4. I understand that the interviewer will necessarily identify me, the interviewee, by name, until specified separately in advance and anonymity required. Any remarks to be made in full confidentiality will be undertaken outside of the recording and not used in the study. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to UK data protection policies and protocols that protect individuals' and institutions' rights. X

5. No other party will either be present at the interview or have access to notes or the transcript (apart from the academic supervisors and examiners) unless agreed with the participant. X

6. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee at the Newcastle University. For research problems or questions regarding subjects, the Committee Institutional Review Board may be contacted. X

7. The interviewee also agrees that their words can be subsequently quoted in formal publications or presentations that relate directly to the subjects discussed, without additional permission being sought. X

8. I have read and understand the explanation provided about the project as provided in the Information Sheet dated April 2014. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. X

9. I have received and signed an original copy of this consent form. X

10. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation. X

My Signature Date My Printed Name

Alistair Robinson
Interviewer's signature Date Interviewer's name:

Contact details:

If the interviewee has any questions prior or subsequent to the interview they should contact the interviewer by email on alistairrobinson4826@gmail.com in the first instance.

Matters of contention:
In the eventuality of any disagreement, interviewees are able to contact the interviewee's supervisor, Professor Chris Whitehead, on chris.whitehead@ncl.ac.uk or by post at Media, Culture and Heritage, School of Arts and Cultures, Armstrong Building, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU.

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