Refigured Museums.
Interdisciplinary Perspectives for Spatial Research in Museums.

Symposium

Refigured Museums

Date: 3-4 March 2022
Location: Online, Zoom link will be sent via email (see below for registration)

Many voices are currently rising in search of the museums of the future (schnittpunkt & Baur 2020; Bast et al. 2018). The reflection on the role of the museum as a social institution and as space of powerful social narratives is in line with museum research that critically analyzes the history, practice, and tasks of the institution. At the same time, the institutional critique regarding the future of museums must also be considered in the light of global and social transformations of the present. Globalization and digitalization have brought the idea of the museum to a crossroads in its history. As places historically dedicated to the production, transmission and storage of knowledge, museums must review and justify their social relevance and topicality in the context of broader reordering processes, understood as the refiguration of spaces (Knoblauch & Löw 2020). Here, the museum logic of preservation and collection, spatialized in depots and archives, may at times conflict with other (newly) emerging spatial logics such as curatorial transparency or dynamic (re)presentation.

We therefore see great potential in the spatial study of museums for considering questions of spatial knowledge, communicative dimensions as well as the circulation and order of museum spaces. Which social spaces are constituted in and with museums? How is the co-production of knowledge spatialized within the museal institution? And how can museums be designed in the future to make these knowledge processes more accessible and diverse?

In our interdisciplinary and international conference, we would like to bring together researchers from the fields of sociology, anthropology, art history, architecture, and art who are dedicated to the question of space in and around the museum. By establishing a discourse on museum spatial research we would like to initiate a spatial turn in the museum studies.

References
Bast, G., Elias G., and David F. (eds). 2018. The Future of Museums. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
Knoblauch, H., & Löw, M. 2020. The Re-Figuration of Spaces and Refigured Modernity—Concept and Diagnosis. Historical Social Research, 45(2), 263-292.
schnittpunkt, ausstellungstheorie & praxis, & Baur, J. (eds.). 2020. Das Museum der Zukunft: 43 neue Beiträge zur Diskussion über die Zukunft des Museums. transcript Verlag.

Organization: Séverine Marguin (TU Berlin), Henrike Rabe (BIM), Sarah Etz (HU Berlin)
Please register at: m.gartlinger@tu-berlin.de
Further Information: https://www.kulturtechnik.hu-berlin.de/en/research/museum-space-knowledge/

Program

9.30–10.15
Welcome and Opening Presentation
Museum Space Knowledge: Researching Spaces of Knowledge Co-Production
Séverine Marguin (Technische Universität Berlin), Sarah Etz (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) and Henrike Rabe (Berliner Immobilienmanagement GmbH)

10.15–12.15
Panel 1 – Spaces of Knowledge Co-Production
Looking at Sculptures: View Space and Action Space in the Museum
Mathias Blanc (École du Louvre, Paris)

The Interactive Constitution and Transformation of "Open-Plan Gallery Spaces"
René Tuma (Technische Universität Berlin) and Dirk vom Lehn (King's College London)

Interrogating the Role of Space in the Museum
Kali Tzortzi (University of Patras, Greece)

12.15–13.30
Lunch Break

13.30–15.30
Panel 2 – Visitor Experience and Perception
Refigured Museums: Encountering People, Artworks and Space
Dimitra Christidou (The National Museum of Norway/ University of South-Eastern Norway)

Visitor Interaction in Museums: On the Embodied Construction of Space in Heavily Structured Settings
Wolfgang Kesselheim (University of Zürich)

Input from the Practice: Beyond Matter
Lívia Nolasco-Rózsás (Hertz-Lab & ZKM Karlsruhe)

15.30–15.00
Coffee Break

16.00–18.00
Panel 3 - Architecture and Scenography
Museum Spaces as Perceptual Landscapes
Nina Tessa Zahner and Cornelia Escher (Kunstakademie Düsseldorf)

In Negotiation: The Everyday Life of a Museum Building Under Heritage
Sabine Hansmann (HafenCity University Hamburg)

Input from the Practice: Exhibition Design
Frédéric Eyl (Thegreeneyl)

Friday, 4th of March 2022, 9.30-12.00

9.30–11.30
Panel 5 - Circulation, Provenance and the Poetics of Display
Epistemic Challenges and Aesthetic Remedies
Sophia Prinz (Züricher Hochschule der Künste)

Spatializing Conflicts in Conservation at the Botanical Garden of Berlin
Jamie-Scott Baxter (Technische Universität Berlin)

11.00–11.15
Coffee Break

11.15–12.45
Panel 6 - Institution, Identity and Critique
Infrastructuring the Agonistic Museums
Friederike Landau-Donnelly (Radboud University)

2nd Order Censorship? The Re-Institutionalization of Critique as a Marker of Refi gured Modernity
Jochen Kibel (Technische Universität Berlin)

12.45–13.30
Round Up

Abstracts of the Talks

Spatializing Conflicts in Conservation at the Botanical Garden of Berlin
Baxter, Jamie-Scott (Architecture, Technische Universität Berlin)

Botanical gardens are complex spaces structured by three interlinked types of conservation: organic, built, and knowledge. Beyond conserving plant biodiversity, they must also deal with the conservation of built heritage (e.g. historic glasshouses, or the preservation of landscape plans). Furthermore, historically, they are museal institutions that have produced and conserved botanical knowledge, protected and stored in archives, herbariums, seed banks, and living collections. However, at the beginning of the 21st century refiguring processes, including climate change, the imperative of decolonisation, and advances in digital technology are challenging the stability of these spaces and ordering logics that underpin them. First results of our teaching-research project "Spatializing Conflicts in Conservation" reveal the spatialized tensions at Botanical Gardens Berlin (Bo) as a result of these forces between the three types of conservation.

Looking at Sculpture: View Space and Action Space in Museum
Blanc, Mathias (Sociology, École du Louvre Paris)

This paper reports on a fieldwork at the Louvre-Lens museum in France, with visitors discovering a sculpture of the Louvre, the *Discophore*. In order to study the reception of this statue, we have developed a mixed methodology based on video recordings and what we call "annotation drawings in augmented reality." Therefore, the paper exposes the salient results of several weeks of fieldwork with and without different versions of the "Ikonikat 3D" digital device. It appears that our study corroborates the strong influence of the label on the way visitors look at sculptures. But it shows as well that using a digital device, and its human-machine interaction embedded, in front of an artwork creates a view space and an action space that have consequences in terms of distance and point of view. Lastly, we can observe different registers of meaning that unfold in this museum situation. It leads us to some perspective about how to enhance visitor's engagement in front of sculptures.

Refigured Museums: Encountering People, Artworks and Space
Christidou, Dimitra (Pedagogy & Museum Studies, The National Museum of Norway/University of South-Eastern Norway)

Movement is central to how people experience and understand place, and movement is a mode through which visitors make meaning. In this presentation, I wish to discuss map-making as a method for collecting data on the museum experience. Map-making is seen as an activity that constitutes a form of place-making but also sense-making that brings together visitors, artworks, and space. By looking closely at maps created by researchers through timing and tracking and maps created by visitors themselves, I wish to discuss the museum experience as an embodied experience in space and time.

Wayfaring through the Modern Chamber of Wonders. A Visitor Study in the Science Exhibition of the Humboldt Lab Berlin
Etz, Sarah (Sociology & European Ethnology, Humboldt Universität Berlin), Séverine Marguin (Sociology, Technische Universität Berlin) and Henrike Rabe (Architecture, Berliner Immobilienmanagement GmbH)

Museum spaces and exhibition design follow a long history of established spatial and aesthetic arrangements inscribing cultural values (Klonk 2009: 3). As one historically specific arrangement, the chamber of wonders has featured a seemingly unordered proximity of different types of artifacts, displaying the macrocosm in the microcosm. In a modern take, the Humboldt Lab is making use of this poetic of display: it offers no preconceived paths through the exhibition and frames the mode of scientific knowledge transfer as "sensuous insight" (Pieken 2021) for multiple experiencing.

Following a mixed-methods-approach, drawing on movement tracking, visitor survey and ethnographic observations, we will present the first results of our spatial investigation on the effect of the spatial design on the experience and reception of the visitors. From an intersectional perspective and by means of a multiple correspondence analysis (MCA), we want to reveal multiple spatialities in the constitution process of museal spaces according to specific groups of visitors.

In Negotiation: The Everyday Life of a Museum Building Under Heritage
Hansmann, Sabine (Architecture, HafenCity University Hamburg)

The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts (1978), a museum and educational building by Foster Associates, became listed as a heritage site in 2012. Following the dismantling of the exhibition *Space Light Colour* by artist Rana Begum, this talk investigates the negotiations that become particularly visible when entering the entanglements of a museum's space under preservation. With the help of actor-network theory (ANT), a methodology rooted in science and technology studies, both actors being present and actors being absent are taken into account when following the people who work with the building in an everyday manner. Circumventing the traditional divide between humans and nonhumans, this presentation shows how ANT allows for a nuanced understanding of the countless negotiations in and with a building characterized likewise by stability and flux. Exploring the building from a complex experiential perspective, it will be argued that space is not what exists inside the building but what is done with the building, with a network of countless actors, each having their timings and spacings. Thus, while it is common to deal with the physical world and its temporal layers in a linear and abstract manner, here, the specific tension in the work towards the creation of some kind of homogeneity (Hetherington 1999) and the multiplicity and complexity inherent in museum spaces (Macdonald, 2006) will be under scrutiny.

Visitor Interaction in Museums: On The Embodied Construction of Space in Heavily Structured Settings
Kesselheim, Wofgang (Sociology & Linguistics, University of Zürich)

Visitor interaction in museums and science centers has been analyzed from two vantage points. One type of analysis starts from a semiotic exploration of the complex communicative arrangement in the exhibition space – objects, texts, exhibition architecture, etc. (cf. Ravelli 2006). The second type of analysis starts from a fine-grained observation of the visitors' interaction. Its aim is to reconstruct how the visitors interactively construct the meaning of their surrounding space with embodied means: talk, gestures, body movements. In my talk, I will

bring these two approaches together using the concept of "usability cues" (Hausendorf/Kesselheim 2016), which has recently been applied to "heavily structured material settings" such as churches or classrooms. The material basis of my talk is photo and video data from the Zoological and Palaeontological Museum Zurich.

2ⁿᵈ Order Censorship? The Re-Institutionalization of Critique as a Marker of Refigured Modernity

Kibel, Jochen (Sociology, Technische Universität Berlin)

The German Bundeswehr is confronted with a dilemma: it has to distance itself from an extensive repertoire of horrifying pasts, while it also has to articulate a minimum of historic continuity to legitimize itself. In its museum self-representation, the German military copes with this dilemma through what I call the 'institutionalizing of critique.' Numerous topoi of the refigured modernity, such as 'reflexivity,' 'multi perspectivity,' and '(self-) critique' are appropriated and historicized as resources of identity. In short: distancing itself from the past is rendered as a tradition of the institution.

The museum achieves this through a twofold spatial tactic. First: an *architectural* intervention. A steel and concrete-shaped wedge designed by Daniel Libeskind cuts through the neo-classicist façade of the museum. It also allows a fundamental spatial rearrangement of the exhibition space and the exhibits inside. Second: the cutting-edge architecture, as well as the spacings of the exhibition, are made meaningful through *discourses*. The architecture of the museum and the discourses around them remain highly contested and reveal different attributions of meaning that operate in conflictive spatial logics.

With this paper, I (first) show that institutionalized critical negation can be also found at other contemporary museums (for instance the Humboldt Forum) since it allows to make a coherent self-narration out of the multiple and conflictive historic narratives that are constitutive for the refigured modernity. Secondly, I'll show how space, both in its material and discursive construction, is used to achieve this. Finally, I ask whether the incorporation of critique with its claims of inclusion constitutes exclusion on a different level and therefore leads to a 2ⁿᵈ order censoring/ silencing of deviant voices.

Infrastructuring the Agonistic Museums

Landau-Donelly, Friederike (Cultural Geography, Radboud University Nijmegen)

This exploratory contribution discusses the trope of infrastructuring (Korn et al. 2019) to advance a definition of museums along the lines of what they do. In light of the unsettled definition of what a museum 'is' (ICOM 2021; Landau 2021; Sternfeld 2018), I set out to provide a 'negative' definition of museums as places articulated from ontological lack and absence (Landau et al. 2021).

By (re)directing attention to the constitutive conflictuality in any act of place-making, I develop an agonistic account of museums. I locate these conceptual considerations in the *Conflictorium – Museum of Conflict*, in Ahmedabad, India, to give insights what such a conflict-attuned museum feels and looks like.

Epistemic Challenges and Aesthetic Remedies

Prinz, Sophia (Sociology & Cultural Sciences, Zürcher Hochschule der Künste)

It is dawning on even the smallest provincial museum that the Eurocentric narrative had its day. Museological categories of the 19th century fail to grasp the origins of our global present as we can no longer divide the world into the "West and the Rest," modern and pre-modern, or art and non-art. What is mostly left out in current debates about a new museology is, however, the specific design of exhibition spaces. It matters how things are presented,

and this is an aesthetic as well as epistemic challenge. To experience history and social processes as utterly complex requires modes of perception that leave ample space for contradictions and ambiguities. The link between a new museology and aesthetic forms of display will be demonstrated with examples from the Johann Jacobs Museum in Zurich and the "Mobile Worlds" exhibition.

The Interactive Constitution and Transformation of "Open-Plan Gallery Spaces"

Tuma, Rene (Sociology, Technische Universität Berlin) and Dirk vom Lehn (Sociology, King's College London)

In his book "Relations in Public" Goffman (1971) describes the space that museum visitors create in front of works of art as "use space." This is the space that visitors create between themselves and paintings when they come to stand in front of them. In this use space, visitors view and examine the work of art in interaction with each other. By virtue of their bodily figurations in front of the work, visitors render observable for others and mark their use–or view space. Visitors usually pay deference to the view space of others and make visible their deference by keeping a distance from and avoid stepping into it. Because galleries are often populated by multiple people at the same time, the space within them becomes an "open-plan gallery space," not dissimilar to an "open-plan office" where various visitors and visitor groups simultaneously and independently from others conduct similar kinds of action, such as viewing and inspecting paintings, reading labels, and moving between exhibits.

In this presentation, we analyse video-recordings of action and interaction in galleries and explore the creation and transformation of "open-plan gallery spaces." Our analysis is concerned with how visitors mark and observably differentiate their view spaces from others. We also investigate how visitors orient to the view spaces of others. Our detailed examination of video-recorded action and interaction begins to reveal different bodily figurations through which visitors segment and configure the open-plan gallery space. The video-data have been recorded in art exhibitions in France and the UK.

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Interrogating the Role of Space in the Museum

Kali Tzortzi (History, Archeology & Museology, University of Patras, Greece)

Recently, there has been an increasing awareness of the spatial dimension in the museum studies literature, rendering the issue of space one of its central themes. In parallel, the later part of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first is characterized by radical experimentation and innovation in the design of museum space. The presentation

aims to explore a key theoretical and practical issue: how the way space is organized affects visitors' experience of museums. It will suggest that space is significant in three senses: the way it makes connections between galleries, influencing the way in which we explore them; between objects, shaping the way we perceive and read them; and between visitors, affecting the way they become aware of each other. To analyze museum buildings as systems of spatial relationships, we will use concepts and methods from space syntax. To explore these arguments, we will first comparatively analyze a pair of museums which bring to light two different ways of organizing space and its experience, resulting in two opposing *spatial cultures*; and then explore a series of cases where the architecture of the museum projects meanings through the interaction between patterns of moving and patterns of viewing. The case studies analyzed in the presentation suggest that interrogating the role of space in the museum and clearly describing its visual, kinaesthetic, and perceptual dimensions can theoretically inform the creative design of museums and exhibitions.

Museum Spaces as Perceptual Landscapes

Zahner, Nina Tessa (Sociology, Kunstakademie Düsseldorf) and Cornelia Escher (Architecture, Kunstakademie Düsseldorf)

In the last years, architecture and social theory have increasingly focused on the experience of material and atmospheric qualities. In this context, the agency of materials and the affective power of buildings have been particularly highlighted. Arguing in favour of immediate sensual experiences, these approaches aim to transcend rationalism, modernism, and humanism.

In our contribution, we will analyse if a similar trend can be found in museum spaces and in their representational strategies. We will present material from an ongoing phenomenological research that investigates the experience of architectures. In doing so, we will focus on designs that deliberately incorporate somewhat mystical and/or holistic elements and ask how they are perceived, experienced, or interpreted by users.