

# **Architecture of the Exhibition:**

## **The Evolution of Exhibition Space in Relation to Social and Market Demands**

### **Introduction**

This essay analyzes the spaces of art exhibition in relation to changing cultural ideals and demands of the art market. Through this course, we have begun to understand the importance of context on our perceptions of art, and how each can influence the other. This essay aims to further explore these relationships.

I will start from the definition of exhibition space as the physical setting of a public display of art work, including museums, galleries, fairs, and emerging typologies. These typologies will be referred to collectively as “exhibition space” throughout the essay, specifying between them only when necessary (the term gallery is used interchangeably for galleries and museums). This is to promote a cross-sectional analysis of typologies to elicit commonalities, and because the developments of these typologies have great overlap.

This essay is structured by three main sections: The Historical Development of Exhibition Spaces, Contemporary Exhibition Spaces, and The Future of Exhibition Spaces. Each of these main categories will be explored through landmark developments on the architectural strategies of exhibition space, and a thread of common themes will tie these landmarks together, including changes in market demands, social ideals, perceptions of space...etc. The architectural elements to be considered include the development of typologies, interior details, visitor circulation, configuration of spaces...etc.

The ultimate purpose of this essay is to use the analysis of art market and cultural demands, exhibition space strategies, to evaluate possible alternative scenarios for the future of exhibition spaces, and to come up with a potential prescription for the design of new exhibition spaces.

### **Historical Development of Exhibition Spaces**

**\*\*more about fairs/galleries\*\***

The development of historical exhibition space has changed in relation to changes in social perceptions of the individual related to art, as well as demands of the art market. A variety of exhibition experiences are presented in this essay to demonstrate the forces that shape exhibition space, and in order to help explain the issues, what many would call the crisis, of contemporary exhibition space.

### **The Emergence of Public Exhibition Spaces and the Institutionalization of the Museum**

Previous to the development of public art galleries there were two ways to see art in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Europe. One could visit the private collection of a wealthy collector (with good connections and a bit of luck), or could attend one of the annual exhibitions held by local art societies (Klonk, 21). Public exhibition spaces developed out of the desire to make art collections more accessible. Toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, these private collections were organized and showcased in places (Hughes, 10). However, these were adaptive measures as the buildings were not originally intended to host exhibitions. The Sir John Soane Museum in London and the Uffizi gallery in Florence were such galleries that developed out of the private collections of such patrons. These exhibitions were intended primarily for educational and self-improvement purposes, and were arranged based on unifying themes (Hughes, 11). The

individual characteristics of artists or schools were glossed over in favor of a particular narrative (Klonk, 24). The result was a in **integrated and subjective exhibition strategy**. The architecture was specifically detailed to showcase the art, and the art was arranged in a specific narrative presented to the viewer.

The first purpose built art gallery in the UK was Dulwich Picture Gallery in London (Hughes, 11). As it was one of the first buildings ever dedicated solely to the exhibition of art, this was an important precedent in the development of the art gallery typology. It also

X Dulwich Picture Gallery

X Interior

Gallery interiors at this time were vastly different from what we know today. Walls were often a soft neutral color. Greyish-green was very popular.

## **The shift from subjective to objective viewership resulting in a change in Exhibitions**

Improvements in transportation spurred the growth of many other exhibition spaces. The Great Exhibition of 1851 held at the Crystal Palace in London showcased technological improvements of the time. **As the ideological relationships between man and the world began to change, gallery spaces began to reflect this. The focus began to shift away from the subjective viewing experience to the objective.** The opening of the National Gallery in London in 1824 challenged the strategy of displaying works in thematic arrangements. Its works were arranged individually with large spaces in between, establishing an objective relationship between the viewer and the work (Klonk, 28).

X National Gallery

X Interior

## **The Bazaar and its Link between Commerce and Exhibition**

Around this time, another major trend in exhibition spaces was developing. Bazaars introduced new types of exhibitions- the diorama and the cosmorama., mobile three dimensional models depicting a scene, in the latter case, a scene of images from around the world. Walter Benjamin notes that the bazaar makes a **link between commerce and exhibition, making it as a transitional moment between the department store and the museum** (Klonk, 28). Though most department stores began to sell art by 1850, the museum would not make this connection until much later. **This link between commerce and exhibition would also dramatically change the role of the viewer.**

## **Institutionalization of the White Box**

The establishment of the Museum of Modern Art in \_\_\_\_\_ established a radical break from the exhibition spaces of the past which continues to dominate today. The MoMA is credited with the creation of the “white box.” Influenced by Bauhaus design principles, director Alfred Barr reconceptualized the gallery interior as a pristine white space, with artworks displayed at generous intervals with emphasis on each work as an independent object (Hughes, 16). The architecture of the gallery space receded to the background for the sake of the artwork. It became unobtrusive and unimpressive for the sake of flexibility. All shows were treated in the same way, no matter what the style. This strategy of exhibition was meant to provoke viewers to look at art in a different way. Perhaps this is why the white box has continued to be the dominant mode of exhibition space ever since.

The MoMA is also credited with changing the role of the spectator to consumer. It prescribed that the new role of the art gallery was not of education but entertainment (Klonk, 17).

## **White Box/Black Box**

Many argue that there has been no significant change in the architectural strategies of exhibition space since the white box.

In either case, the architectural strategy is the same- keep the space innocuous and generic, focus on architecture as infrastructure.

## **Contemporary Exhibition Spaces**

Contemporary Exhibition Space is in a state of crisis.

**Contemporary Exhibition Concepts-** shopping (make a chart of strategies), branding, market demands, new media, social concept of viewer in relation to art

## **Taxonomy of Contemporary Exhibition Typologies:**

**White Box/Black Box-** objective view of artwork, architecture is passive or reduced to the point of pure infrastructure, not as strong shopping diagram

- 1. Box**
- 2. Warehouse**
- 3. Architecture as Infrastructure**

**Gallery As Object-** subjective/integrated view of artwork, architecture is assertive (exterior only, or to the point of distraction) not as strong shopping diagram

- 1. Icon**
- 2. Interactive**
- 3. Mixed Media**

**Other-** Give a brief paragraph that links all typologies: here, the strategy is not either or, it is something else. Gives us insight to other issues to break away from the dichotomy: shopping, temporality, hyperdensity, reprogramming, integration, hybridization, internationalism as they relate to the art market

### **1. Virtual**

Market demands have in many ways exceeded the ability of physical exhibition spaces. Though these physical spaces offer irreplicable experiences, virtual exhibition components such as social media and \_\_\_\_\_ represent a new market niche.

### **2. Temporary**

The use of temporary and traveling exhibition strategies is nothing new, however, these exhibition spaces are particularly relevant today.

### **3. Hypermarket**

The “hypermarket” refers to a temporary exhibition spaces characterized by an ultra high-density of concurrent exhibitions that results in unique social and market benefits.

Because the hypermarket's social and economic impact is so great, it often extends beyond the perimeter of its main venue, creating satellites of smaller, related venues throughout the city. This creates a subtypology which I would call the “event

circuit.” This is only considered in reference to the hypermarket and not given its own category as the architectural, social, and market implications lie beyond the scope of this essay. It is included as an observation of potential future demands.



#### 4. Pop-Up

Pop-up galleries are another interesting typology capable of challenging the current dichotomy\_\_\_\_. Tellingly, art exhibition pop-ups developed from retail pop-ups in which clothing retailers would open impromptu shop spaces in places like bus depots [ ]. Their strategy is

there are many vacant spaces in the city. The pop-up gallery have the benefits of being temporary, manuvorable, and low cost. They can bring the isolated museum back into the city. They can make use of word of mouth and socail media recommendations to draw visitors. “test labs for experimentation” (Reinhardt, 41).

Many pop-up organizations, including: Pop-Up Art Loop in Chicage, Chashama in New York, Use socail media to organize. Have exhibition applications, floorplans,

The social implications of pop-ups

The market implications of pop-ups

*Openhouse* “Openhouse is not just a space. It's a pop-up concept lab”- one spaces rented out to clients transformed into inpromptou spaces-



[M1] A pop-up gallery by Chashama

[M2] Images of *Park Here* installation at Openhouse pop-up gallery

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**Taxonomy Chart- Diagrams, Key Market Strategies, Social Strategies, Architectural Strategies and Attributes- hyperlink to topics in the paper**

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**Shopping- Diagrams- hyperlink to topics in the paper**

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### **Emergence of New Exhibition Concepts**

concepts: temporality, age of the curator, speed dating, orosity, virtuality, reprogramming, scatter, hybridization, rein=tegration with city

### **The Future of Exhibition Spaces: Alternatives**

Perhaps social and market demands have exhausted the capabilities of physical space. Perhaps through analysis of contemporary exhibition spaces, we can

Whether or not one subscribes to this view, most scholars agree that contemporary exhibition spaces are in a state of crisis.

#### **Anti-Architecture-**

- 1. Virtual space**
- 2. Architecture as Infrastructure**

### **An Architectural Prescription for Future Exhibition Spaces**

As an alternative to the previous scenario, in which the architecture of the exhibition is dead, outlined here is an architectural prescription for future exhibition spaces. To many, the physical experience of the exhibition is irreplaceable and could not bear to see it replaced by virtual space or relegated to infrastructure. But the crisis still remains- how can exhibition space develop beyond the white box/museum as object dichotomy?

Perhaps to answer the question of how to create new exhibition spaces that engage new social and market demands, scholars have been taking the wrong approach. The problem is thought to be a problem of form. This is only partially true. Perhaps by identifying the real crisis of contemporary exhibition spaces, we can outline a new approach to their design.

- 1. Temporality-** *curator, temporary platforms, "age of the fair" new trends point toward this-pop up, fair, hypermarket, traveling exhibitions,*  
It seems that of all the demands of the art market today, temporality the most pressing architectural issue. As \_\_\_\_\_ says, we are in the age of the curator.
- 2. Program-** *hybridization of typologies (museum-> archive+ museum/gallery/fair),*

*recategorization (museum space as archive/study)*

- 3. Form-** *integration into the urban fabric, street porosity, scattered, push congestion (programmatic layering that is not possible in isolated buildings)(ex- more interesting to have a gallery next to laundromat?), challenge the white box with variation, new shopping model? (exteriorized not interiorized), temporary structures (fairs)*

## I. Historical Development of Exhibition Spaces and Basic Architectural Strategies

A. Institutionalization of Museums

B. Bazaars as the Link Between Museums and Commercial Spaces

C. Galleries as Alternatives to the White Cube

D. Dominance of the White Cube

E. Emergence of Art Fairs

\* Common Themes- dominance of commerce, consumer as spectator, individual vs. collective experience

## II. Contemporary Strategies of Exhibition Spaces

A. Museums And the Dilemma of White Box/Black Box

B. Museum as Brand

Architectural Strategies of Exhibition spaces-

basic structure-

X. Shopping model- contrast with a mall floorplan, strategies-anchor programs, compartmentalization

C. Emergence of New Typologies

1. "Hyper-markets"- Art Basel, Venice Biennale, Armory Show...

2. Pop-up galleries- marketing strategy- bring art into community, multiple locations

3. Anomalies- Storefront for Art and Architecture, Prada Transformer...

\*Common Themes- effects of new media, hybridization(blurring of boundaries bt art, film, arch, performance...)

## III. The Future of Exhibition Spaces

A. Future Demands

1. Hybridization

2. Digitization and Interactive space
3. Focus on Narrative Structures and Underutilized Museum Programs (archives, study spaces, contemplative space..)

#### B. Possible Alternatives

End of the Museum or Pushing Beyond the White Cube?

Should the museum model go back to the gallery? Emergent art spaces?

Should we keep a sharp distinction between exhibition typologies?

Virtual Spaces of Exhibition

Museums Matter: In Praise of the Encyclopedic Museum. Cuno.

New Exhibition Design 02. Philipp Teufel

Spaces of Experience. Klonk, Charlotte

Fair Design: Architecture for Exhibition. Sibylle Kramer

Engaging Spaces: Exhibition Design Explored. Herman Kossmann

**Exhibition Design. Philip Hughes.**

**Project Area: Exhibition Design. Bertron, Aurelia**

The Harvard guide to shopping. Rem Koolhaas

Documenta: <http://d13.documenta.de/>

Venice Biennale: <http://www.labiennale.org/en/Home.html>

Art Basel Miami: <http://www.artbaselmiamibeach.com/>

Armory Show: <http://www.thearmoryshow.com/>

Seven Days in the Art World

<http://metropolism.com/magazine/2008-no3/the-art-fair-age/>

The public Art museum in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain <http://books.google.com/books?id=RE5SdhUQClkC&pg=PA96&lpg=PA96&dq=museum+%22building+typologies%22&source=bl&ots=QJFnxkc1pG&sig=cO0myCZMAOXEpbtDcWqAO5lsG-M&hl=en&sa=X&ei=WsQUT63ACMrs0gHGqryCAw&ved=0CDgQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=museum%20%22building%20typologies%22&f=false>

musuem diagram strategies: <http://archidose.blogspot.com/2008/08/building-diagrams.html>

[M] Pop-Ups

NY Times article: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/13/fashion/13Close.html>

OpenHouse-Pop-Ups: <http://www.openhousegallery.org/work-with-us>

Images

[M1] <http://www.chashama.org/locations/current>

[M2] <http://www.openhousegallery.org/pop-up-case-study-openhouse-creates-new-yorks-first->

[pop-up-park-with-park-here](#)

[C] Hypermarkets

Images

[C1] <http://www.google.com/imgres?um=1&hl=en&client=firefox-a&sa=N&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&biw=1680&bih=872&tbm=isch&tbnid=4UNPaHikvtVpWWM:&imgrefurl=http://www.aboutmiami.co/2011/11/01/art-basel-miami-beach/&docid=TSb9yKWNY2V3BM&imgurl=http://www.aboutmiami.co/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Art-Basel1.jpg&w=400&h=277&ei=2PUVT7XgC8fr0gHgqv2RAw&zoom=1&iact=rc&dur=395&sig=107065817656893031348&page=2&tbnh=157&tbnw=209&start=29&ndsp=35&ved=1t:429,r:4,s:29&tx=49&ty=18>

[C2] <http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10150375171074643&set=pu.52860439642&type=1&theater>