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Kunsthallen as contemporary art
venues: A review of their
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THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE**

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**Kunsthallen as contemporary art venues:
A review of their development in the European public
sphere**

Doctoral thesis

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Abstract

This thesis traces the historical development of Kunsthallen and examines their influence on the art world. The point of the argument is how Kunsthallen have influenced the way art is received and interpreted by the public by fostering critical debates and challenging traditional art systems. The thesis emphasizes the focus of Kunsthallen on contemporary art and their efforts to promote the role of art in society, but attempting to distinguish them from museums. By examining the historical and contemporary significance of Kunsthallen, the study contributes to the discussion on the institutional environment for contemporary art and highlights the position of Kunsthallen as catalysts for artistic innovation.

Resumen:

Esta disertación rastrea el desarrollo histórico de las Kunsthallen y examina su influencia en el mundo del arte. El quid del argumento es cómo las Kunsthallen han influido en la forma en que el público recibe e interpreta el arte, fomentando debates críticos y desafiando los sistemas artísticos tradicionales. La tesis enfatiza el enfoque de Kunsthallen en el arte contemporáneo y sus esfuerzos para promover el papel del arte en la sociedad, pero intentando distinguirlas de los museos. Al examinar la importancia histórica y contemporánea de las Kunsthallen, el estudio contribuye al debate sobre el entorno institucional del arte contemporáneo y destaca la posición de las Kunsthallen como catalizadores de la innovación artística.

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1 Introduction

Art institutions, such as museums and galleries, play a significant role in the care, preservation, and presentation of artworks. However, within this diverse landscape of art institutions, Kunsthallen have emerged as spaces that have a fundamental influence on the artistic landscape, both locally and internationally. Kunsthallen, a term derived from the German language meaning “art halls,” are characterized by their commitment to temporary exhibitions. Unlike traditional museums with permanent collections, Kunsthallen have always focused on contemporary art, showcasing nowadays newest artistic practices. Focusing on the latest trends in the evolving art scene, they are exploring the latest developments in artistic expression. The origins of the Kunsthallen can be traced back to the late 19th century and thus the concept of temporary exhibition spaces for contemporary art. They set up Kunsthallen because they wanted to break away from the historical and canonical view of art that top-down institutional museum policies aimed to maintain. Kunsthallen sought to establish lively and horizontal platforms that could inspire dialogue, provide spaces for innovation and experimentation. Artists finally had spaces where they could challenge, provoke, and push boundaries easily. In recent decades, the influence of Kunsthallen would extend far beyond their own local environment. Museums had become major characters in the world of contemporary art, attracting famous artists and curators as well as fans from around the globe. And because they were not just showplaces for pioneering art but also places in which to bring people together culturally, and offer social encouragement of the arts, all four halls have been important in contemporary art theory as well. To delve into the topic, it is important to explore the historical development of this typology of institutions and its relationship to the broader art world. The term “Kunsthalle” originated in the mid-19th century and referred to contemporary exhibition venues in German-speaking countries. These spaces quickly gained popularity, providing artists with flexible and experimental platforms to show their work. The Kunsthalle became a space for contemporary art, challenging traditional notions of art presentation and encouraging new forms of artistic expression. However, the concept of “Kunsthalle” itself has evolved over time, leading to some confusion and different interpretations. In common usage, Kunsthallen are often seen as non-collecting institutions, focusing solely on temporary exhibitions. Yet, a closer examination reveals that many early Kunsthallen did have collections, and the notion of a Kunsthalle as a non-collecting institution was sanctioned much later. As an institutional format the Kunsthalle has become more and more important in the past 50 years. Based on the definition and language of art in the 20th century and especially after the spatial experimentation and idea-based art works of the 1960s, there was a need to develop other models of art venues

with a completely different scale of interaction with audiences. The inherently adjustable and flexible public/private structure of the Kunsthalle proved to be a very suitable platform for different expressions of contemporary art and their demand for more room to experiment, critique and process. It is essential to understand the historical context and the fluidity of the term when discussing Kunsthallen and their impact on the art world. Looking at contemporary art exhibitions today, the reflection of the exhibition venue on a viewer's experience is often overlooked, whether it's exhibited in a commercial art gallery, a museum, a Kunsthalle or another art venue. Some may think that the location is only a frame, but there is a theoretical and historical difference in the way various art institutions work and, in the way, art is experienced. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the term "Kunsthalle" itself, focusing on the role of this sort of institution in contemporary art, and in the society as a whole and to look at the development of the European Kunsthallen with the aim to rediscover and obtain new perspectives thereby emphasizing the overall development.

Before analyzing the Kunsthalle, the terminology encompassing it must be examined. Significant changes appeared in the function and role of contemporary art institutions but still there is a certain lack of clarity regarding their categorization. A closer examination of the term Kunsthalle shows however that there is a difference in what is meant by common usage and its art historical meaning. Markus Walz defines the Kunsthalle as an originally German name for buildings or institutions exhibiting fine art, thus encompassing all sorts of exhibition spaces or art museums, adding that in other languages (e.g. French) the term is used for an exhibition center, usually a contemporary art center.¹ Damian Lentini uses constantly the term Kunsthalle as synonymous to contemporary art center in his dissertation about the development of contemporary art venues *A Friendly Invasion of Spectacular Aliens: The Design and Function of Contemporary Art Centres in the 21st Century*. According to Lentini, the term first resurfaced with other meanings within the institutional discourse in the English-speaking countries. It was used as a label for an "alternative" space especially for contemporary art.² Lentini further mentions that the first use of the term 'Kunsthalle' is attributed to the German linguist Joachim Heinrich Campe (1746-1818) who, in the culture of romanticism, proffered it as a substitute for – and interchangeable with – "museum", a classic word which he considered to be antiquated.³

¹ "Originally, a German proper noun for buildings or institutions exhibiting fine arts either as exhibition halls or as art museums. Other languages use this borrowed word for art exhibition centres, especially ones that focus on contemporary art" Markus Walz, *Kunsthalle* in: Mairesse, François (dir.), *Dictionary of Museology*, ICOM Routledge: Abingdon-New York, 2023, p. 268.

² Damian Lentini: *A Friendly Invasion of Spectacular Aliens: The Design and Function of Contemporary Art Centers in the 21st Century*, unv. Diss., University of Melbourne 2009, p. 6.

³ Cf.: Lentini (2009) quoted from: Jan Tabor: *Die Hallen für die Kunsthalden*, Bonn 1992, p.71.

Volker Plagemann notes that the name ‘Kunsthalle’ was used to designate smaller civic museums.⁴ An early conception, as pointed out by Lorente, was devised in 1839 by the Baseler Kunstverein, which proposed the creation of a Kunsthalle where their members could exhibit and sell contemporary works.⁵ A lack of funds however, impeded the Kunstverein from constructing their Kunsthalle for several decades. Even after the art association finally managed to acquire a permanent building in 1872 its function as both an exhibition venue and a commercial space meant that, in this instance, the idea of a Kunsthalle had more in common with that of a commercial gallery than with official art institutions. Therefore, the first Kunsthalle became the Staatliche Kunsthalle in Karlsruhe, which was opened in 1846; but it was founded as an archive for the state’s collection.⁶ This example shows that the common classification of a Kunsthalle as a non-collecting institution is misleading. In fact, the first Kunsthalle without a collection was the Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, which was opened as late as 1909. That year also marks a turn in the cultural program of Kunsthalle Basel, where the first curator Wilhelm Barth began to change institution’s commercial targets in the direction of education.⁷

Finding a definition is even more complex when, on closer examination of the topic, it becomes clear that this ambiguity is so deeply rooted. In common understanding, the notion of a Kunsthalle appears as an opposite to the traditional museum. Jesús Pedro Lorente contrasts the contemporary museum with, on one hand, the *Nationalmuseum* and, on the other hand, the *Kunsthalle* (describing both as different museum types).⁸ But he does not draw up what exactly a Kunsthalle is. To have a clearer idea, it is important to take the history of exhibiting institutions into account. Art shows developed different exhibition formats and institutional structure in parallel. There is the traditional art museum and there are various contemporary non-collecting art organizations. But both types do not exclude each other, instead they began to influence their practice. Arlene Goldbard explains that art groups during the 1970s and 1980s in New York, working between “establishment institutions such as museums and the street-level arts activity still operating beneath the establishment’s radar” became a fixed component of the “buffer zone,” by adjusting to “structures of public, corporate, and foundational funding,

⁴ Cf.: Volker Plagemann, *Das deutsche Kunstmuseum, 1790-1870: Lage, Baukörper, Raumorganisation, Bildprogramm*, Munich, 1967, p.100.

⁵ Cf.: J. Pedro Lorente.: *Cathedrals of the Urban Modernity. The first Museums of Contemporary Art, 1800 - 1930*. Ashgate, Aldershot 1998, p. 145.

⁶ Cf.: Website of the Kunsthalle Karlsruhe: www.kunsthalle-karlsruhe.de (URL: <https://www.kunsthalle-karlsruhe.de/en/kunsthalle/history.html>), date: 25.3.2018.

⁷ Cf.: Lentini *Op. cit.* 2009, p. 11.

⁸ Cf.: J. Pedro Lorente, *Op. cit.* 1998, p. 145.

all of which follow a pattern set by corporate culture.”⁹ Due to its organizational framework and methodology towards art, the Kunsthalle occupies a unique position at the intersection of divergent paradigms, thereby becoming an omnipresent sight within urban landscapes globally. Moreover, it represents one of the most prevalent, yet paradoxically least comprehended, concepts within the dialogue surrounding contemporary art.

Thus, the terminology, like the concept of contemporary art itself, has various meanings with no consensus in the international usage. Commonly considered as an institution which refrains from establishing an art collection in favour of presenting a series of exhibitions of contemporary art, despite that the Kunsthalle has, like contemporary art itself, established various institutional paradigms. A Kunsthalle is a German noun for facilities hosting art exhibitions: roughly translated, the term means “art gallery,” but the literal translation would be “art hall;” Kunsthallen were often founded by a *Kunstverein* which means “art association.” The *Kunstmuseum* is also like the Kunsthalle but differentiates politically and historically. In common sense, the difference is that it is a more official institution, which has a permanent collection. By not having its own collection, Kunsthallen do not have to collect or preserve art, renouncing to the museological practice of establishing and exhibiting a permanent collection of artworks; instead, these alternative art centres base their entire activity on a continuing series of contemporary exhibitions and events. However, the criterion “no permanent collection” should not be taken for granted. Upon closer examination of nearly all Kunsthallen in Germany and its neighboring countries, it is striking that the oldest of these institutions do have a collection, moreover some of them speak about themselves as museums. Additionally, modern museums now seem to act like a classical Kunsthalle. The binary classification of “collection/no collection” falls short of capturing the complexity, as the boundaries between these two states are progressively blurring.

Therefore, it is necessary to start with the historical development of museums and art shows. Furthermore, it is important to explain the conceptual development of the idea of a Kunsthalle which also explains the difference of its approach from that of a museum. The term museum derives from the ancient Greek *museion*, which denotes a temple, or a place dedicated to the muses and therefore a building consecrated to study. The modern museum itself emerged out of the *cabinets of curiosities*, with *naturalia* or *artificialia* which were opened to the public during the Enlightenment. Special arrangements were made to allow the public to see the royal

⁹Arlene Goldbard, “When (Art) Worlds Collide: Institutionalising the Alternatives”, in: Julie Ault (ed.): *Alternative Art, New York, 1965 – 1985: A Cultural Politics Book for the Social Text Collective*, Minneapolis 2002, p. 183 - 199, here p. 192.

or aristocratic collections. This process initiated a certain professionalization and the birth of art history as a discipline. The aim of the early nineteenth-century museum was to represent history conveying ideals of arts and aesthetics.

In the general spirit of sociocultural changes, it is in relation to these social shifts that the Kunsthalle emerged in the 19th century, with that as its point of departure. Terry Smith believes this marks the beginning of the first of three developmental stages in the history of Kunsthallen. In the 1960s, Terry Smith started on stage two of the history of Kunsthallen. This stage was about the change from "late modern art" to "the contemporary". Smith's third period was one in which Kunsthallen increasingly turned into what he calls the 'visual arts exhibitionary complex', a network of art exhibition sites which includes all venues ranging from Kunsthallen to biennials and museums, and self-organized spaces etc.¹⁰

The invention of Kunsthallen changed the artistic landscape. The significance of these institutions is widely acknowledged but a comprehensive analysis of their historical development, curatorial practices, and influence on the exhibition and reception is still lacking. By undertaking this research, this thesis seeks to bridge this gap in knowledge contributing to a deeper understanding of the role and significance of Kunsthallen in the art world. Furthermore, this thesis wants to compare the engagement strategies employed by Kunsthallen. While museums focused on collection, preservation, and interpretation of artworks, Kunsthallen focused on the temporary presentation. By analyzing the similarities and differences between these types of institutions, we can gain insights into how Kunsthallen have redefined the boundaries of engagement with art, offering a more fluid and responsive approach that adapts to the ever-changing art landscape. As will be shown, the Kunsthalle as an institution is a place where a new relationship between art and society is taking place. The exhibition space no longer serves to represent a claim of power, but to entertain. Another important distinguishing factor is the fact that the driving force and initial impetus for a new exhibition institution is not in collecting but in art production.

The changing shape of contemporary art museum leadership reflects a larger transformation in how these institutions conceive their role and responsibility within the art world. Decisions about exhibitions and collections were once the province of a small group of museum professionals, such that curatorial authority operated largely in isolation. One result was the presentation of a closed and singular narrative, with little opportunity for alternative or

¹⁰ Terry Smith, "Kunsthallen as Quasi-Independent Art Spaces: A historical and Global Perspective", in: Peter J. Schneemann, *Localizing the Contemporary. The Kunsthalle Bern as a Model*. Zurich: JRP Ringier Kunstverlag AG, 2018, p. 67-90, here p. 68.

dissenting perspectives, or for collaboration with diverse publics. Trends in museum leadership thus point towards structures that are more responsive, collaborative, and multivocal and which value and make space for community expertise and authority. One potential structure for applying network governance and collaborative leadership to contemporary curatorial practice takes place within exhibition-making. In this mode, exhibitions are developed according to principles of shared control, multivocality, and community authority, such that exhibitions are more than a presentation; they are a platform for multiple narratives that reflect the polyvocal experiences and expertise of a diverse public. In this way leadership is recoded as the capacity of a museum to affect its communities and, crucially, the capacity of communities to affect the museum; this mutual constitution indicates a more fluid and inclusive space, in which the museum is not only a fixture as teacher but also as student and partner. This shift is indicative of broader moves towards an even more expansive and inclusive sense of what might constitute a museum and is a recognition of the need for cultural institutions in the present day to reflect and be embedded within the multitude of publics that they might serve. It describes efforts not simply to make museums into spaces in which art is encountered, but into spaces of dialogue, mutual recognition, and understanding among and between different interested and invested publics.¹¹

The transformation of museum management reflects changes in the broader cultural landscape, where the current emphasis is on the visitor experience. In tandem with this, there has been a shift within art institutions from more traditional, top-down management styles to more bottom-up, inclusive, and community-oriented approaches. For museums, the traditional top-down model took collections and their preservation as its first concern, often to the detriment or exclusion of the broader community — not to mention the diversity of experiences had by its visitors. Kunsthallen have always been more progressive, leading with an emphasis on contemporary art. They were in the business of directly engaging with living artists making work within a current movement in art. Operating in this way naturally made for a much more dynamic and responsive mode of operation, one that was much more in-tune with the shifting winds of the art world, and the contemporary public, which had different needs and interests. Today, museums are beginning to look more and more like their kunsthall cousins. Increasingly

¹¹ Pegno, Marianna and Christine Brindza, “Redefining curatorial leadership and activating community expertise to build equitable and inclusive art museums”, in: *Curator the Museum Journal* (2), vol. 64, p. 343-362., here p. 351. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cura.12422> (20.12.2023)

museums are also moving their focus away from collections and toward their visitors, and, in this model, community.¹²

In this way Kunsthallen are experiencing a similar transformation to public authorities, ultimately marking a radical change in their audiences and operations. Both are adapting to new management paradigms, in which their physical confines as well as staff conducts are loosened, all while embracing digital platforms, social media and online initiatives to reach a broader public that extends well beyond the walls of the exhibition space. It underlines the idea that Kunsthalle is not just one room, but a mass medium that reaches people on other channels than purely by physical attendance.¹³

In the analysis, it is important to acknowledge the large time lapse between the oldest and youngest Kunsthalle, which spans over 100 years. The selected institutions serve as examples to illustrate this transformation. Additionally, it is worth noting that from the mid-20th century onwards, artworks increasingly incorporate materials that are delicate, ephemeral, or oversized, posing special challenges for their preservation and display. The development of the art market also influences this context a lot. One can say that Kunsthallen emerged in a commercial context because they were initially established to provide temporary exhibition spaces with the aim of promoting local and national artists and to facilitate the sale of their artworks. The question arises as to whether they shape art production or reflect artistic practices. Therefore, the subsequent discussion explores the relationship between art and the Kunsthalle.

1.1 Previous research devoted to the history of exhibitions and Kunsthallen

The history of Kunsthallen has not yet been researched in deep, therefore literature and institutional discourse are shrouded in ambiguity while not much has yet been achieved on the part of academic discourse. In early texts, J. Pedro Lorente had already contextualized the emergence of new art venues in connection with the Kunstvereinen.¹⁴ He mentions the

¹² Markku Sotarauta, “An actor-centric bottom-up view of institutions: combinatorial knowledge dynamics through the eyes of institutional entrepreneurs and institutional navigators”, in: *Environment and Planning C Politics and Space* (4), vol. 35, p. 584-599. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263774x16664906> (20.12.2023)

¹³ Clare R. Harding, Susan Liggett, and Mark Lochrie, “Digital engagement in a contemporary art gallery: transforming audiences” in: *Arts* (3), vol. 8, p. 90. <https://doi.org/10.3390/arts8030090> (19.12.2023)

¹⁴ Cf.: Jesús Pedro Lorente: “Art in the urban public sphere: art venues by entrepreneurs, associations and institutions, 1800-1850”, in: Peter Borsay and Jan Hein Furnée: *Leisure in urban Europe. A transnational perspective*. Manchester, 2016. Jesús Pedro Lorente: “Asociaciones de artistas y sus espacios expositivos en el siglo XIX”, in: María del Carmen Lacarra Ducay: *Arte del siglo XIX*. Zaragoza, Institución “Fernando el Católico” de la DPZ, 2013, p. 279-312. Jesús Pedro Lorente: “Las asociaciones de amigos de las artes y sus exposiciones en el siglo XIX. Modelos internacionales, e interrogantes sobre su desarrollo en en España”, in Álvaro Zamora, M^a Isabel, Concepción Lomba Serrano y José Luis Pano Gracia: *Estudios de Historia del Arte. Libro homenaje a Gonzalo Borrás Gualis*, Zaragoza, Institución Fernando el Católico, 2013, p. 467-477.

“phenomenon” Kunsthalle but does not go into it in detail. Similarly, most publications are mainly concerned with the development of new museums and do not address newer institutional concepts. Further examples are *Museums for a New Millenium – Concepts, Projects, Buildings* (1999) by Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani or Angeli Sachs and *New Museums* (2005) by Raul A. Barreneche.¹⁵ One publication that tried to deal with newer institutions is the exhibition *Museums in the 21st century* of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf, which took place in 2006 in the K20.¹⁶ Other recent publications like *Das unmögliche Museum. Zum Verhältnis von Kunst und Kunstmuseen der Gegenwart* by Tobias Wall try to shed light on a contemporary view of the exhibition business and its relationship to art, but also fail to capture the totality of all exhibition institutions.¹⁷

In connection with the development of the exhibitions, it is also necessary to consider the space, which refers to the exhibition location. In the 1960s and 1970s contemporary art began to demand its own experimental exhibition space, later in the 1980s and 1990s the guiding theme was identity construction. In order to understand the development of exhibiting institutions, it is necessary to analyze the relationship between art and space. This discussion is also interesting from the perspective of gallery owners, art critics and artists. On the other side, there are books dealing with institutional critique by artists. A good publication on this is *Das Museum als Arena. Institutionskritische Texte von KünstlerInnen* edited by Christian Kravagna and the Kunsthaus Bregenz.¹⁸ The most specific study was done by Damian Lentini in his doctoral thesis about the Kunsthalle and its environment in the post-industrial city. In it he dealt with the design and function of contemporary non-collecting art institutions or temporary exhibition sites.¹⁹

On the other hand, the development of the institutions cannot be treated without the history of the development of the art exhibition. These, however, concentrate mainly on methods, regardless of their space. Some institutions like Hamburger Kunsthalle or Kunsthalle Bremen have attempted to shed light on this, but not from an objective point of view, lacking critical

¹⁵ Cf.: Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani and Angeli Sachs, *Museums for a New Millenium - Concepts, Projects, Buildings*. Exh. cat., Munich and New York: 1999. Raul A. Barreneche, *New Museums*. New York: 2005.

¹⁶ Cf.: Suzanne Greub and Thierry Greub, *Museums in the 21st Century - Concepts, Projects, Buildings*. Munich: Prestel, 2006.

¹⁷ Cf.: Tobias Wall, *Das unmögliche Museum. Zum Verhältnis von Kunst und Kunstmuseen der Gegenwart*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2006.

¹⁸ Christian Kravagna und Kunsthaus Bregenz – Edelbert Köb, *Das Museum als Arena. Institutionskritische Texte von KünstlerInnen*. Köln: Walther König Verlag, 2001.

¹⁹ Cf.: Lentini 2009. It is the basic for his forthcoming book *The History of the Contemporary Art Centre* to be published by *Routledge Studies in Modern History*.

distance.²⁰ Also, they focus on specific cases, not addressing general changes in art practices and exhibition venues whose function and design have changed over time, with three exceptions: one is the publication of a symposium on the occasion of the centenary of the Kunsthalle Bern, the second is the jubilee book for the 150th anniversary of the Basler Kunstverein, which was an important source for the present work, and the third is Kunsthalle Nürnberg, which has compiled the history of its development in great detail and provided rich photographic material.²¹

A third research field to be considered is the history of art associations, for it was these associations that founded the first Kunsthallen. Historical research has been much better prepared for this. For the German-speaking countries a good compendium was offered by Thomas's Schmitz *Die deutschen Kunstvereine im 19. und 20 Jahrhundert. Ein Beitrag zur Kultur-, Konsum- und Sozialgeschichte der bildenden Kunst im bürgerlichen Zeitalter* (1997).²² There could be other perspectives for the research on the history of art halls. Various fields such as cultural management, art history or museum studies investigate the development of exhibition institutions. However, there is little material and information on the connection between the development of art and the development of exhibition institutions. The specialized literature mainly deals with topics of museum management or cultural economics. Because this study is primarily concerned with German and Swiss art galleries, German-language literature will be examined.

1.2 Research gap and problem definition

As described above, the existing literature has widely covered museology and museum management, focusing on the various components of museum work. However, this emphasis on museums has overshadowed the core factor of art itself and its role within the institution. The relationship between art and the exhibition institution, particularly the development and interaction of art and Kunsthallen, has received limited attention and study. Existing research primarily focuses on museums, neglecting other forms of art exhibition institutions. Therefore, this doctoral thesis aims to address this research gap by analyzing the development of Kunsthallen in relation to the art context, rather than focusing on management aspects.

²⁰ Cf.: Ulrike Lorenz, *Stadt in der Stadt. Die neue Kunsthalle Mannheim*. Mannheim: 2017. Meinhard von Gerkan and Nikolaus Goetze, *Kunsthalle Mannheim*. Berlin: 2018. Arndt Klippgen and Nicola Verstl, *150 Jahre Hamburger Kunsthalle*. Hamburg: 2019. Ellen Seifermann, Michael Diefenbacher, *Von der Kunst-Ausstellungshalle zur Kunsthalle Nürnberg. 1913-2003*. Nürnberg: Hofmann Verlag, 2003, p. 47

²¹ Peter J. Schneemann, *Localizing the Contemporary. The Kunsthalle Bern as a Model*. Zürich: JRP Ringier, 2018. Basler Kunstverein, *150 Jahre Kunstverein Basel. 1839-1989*. Basel: Basler Kunstverein, 1989,

²² Thomas Schmitz, *Die deutschen Kunstvereine im 19. Und frühen 20. Jahrhundert. Ein Beitrag zur Kultur-, Konsum- und Sozialgeschichte der bildenden Kunst im bürgerlichen Zeitalter*. Neuried: Ars Una, 2001.

The thesis indicates that art influences the development of the institution, and in turn, the institution shapes the development of art. By exploring the interaction between these two factors, the study aims to gain insights into the cultural enterprise and its functional mechanisms. The investigation into reception-theoretical and institution-theoretical relationships will reveal important structural aspects of the 'institution's history. The theoretical part of the thesis examines the relationship between the institution and art, introducing art theoretical ideas and presentation models that will be applied in the practical part.

Because of the poorly researched situation and no proper existing art historical theory for the Kunsthalle, the term is used thoughtlessly and has become an empty case, able to absorb arbitrary contents in different manners. Therefore, this thesis would like to proceed with several steps to get to a substantial redefinition. In the first step, a brief history of exhibitions and connected with that the development of visual culture will be sketched.

One crucial question this thesis seeks to address is whether the Kunsthalle institution and its presentation concept have an impact on the development of art and the conceptualization of art in the present. To answer this question, it is essential to study the historical development of art exhibition practices, starting from the French Salons. By situating the analysis of Kunsthallen within the broader framework of the art system, this research seeks to shed light on the role of Kunsthallen in contemporary art and society as a whole.

The emergence of spatial experimentation and conceptual artworks in the 1960s onwards necessitated new solutions for the exhibition and preservation of these art forms. Artists began creating art where the idea held greater significance than the physical manifestation. This gave rise to new art forms that couldn't be easily exhibited. Occasionally, remnants of performances or happenings would be displayed later, but this only served as a documentation of the past and an aestheticization of a relic. Displaying these relics would essentially transform the museum into a cemetery, as expressed by Douglas Crimp.²³ Traditional museums often struggle to accommodate such works, resulting in the exhibition of mere documentation or relics, thereby failing to capture the essence and intention of the original artworks. This highlights the different goals and priorities of museums and Kunsthallen. While museums evolved with the purpose of educating and conserving art objects for the benefit of all citizens, Kunsthallen were initially established to exhibit art for art laypeople and collectors, being gradually more aimed for the entire public. Over time, both institutions have developed and mutually influenced each other, shaping the reception and interpretation of art within their respective spaces.

²³ Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993.

The way in which people receive art will be directly related to where it is displayed. For location determines the meaning of a work. The role of curation in "Kunsthallen" plays a vital part, as placing a work of art in a specific setting not only establishes connections but also shapes the ambiance. This means the way art is arranged and presented can greatly influence how it is perceived and experienced. The combination of the curator together with artists becomes the main force, they do not just redefine space but allow art to unfold concurrently. However, traditional museums usually separate art from its original environment, turning it into a type of showpiece that can exist independently of its surroundings. Kunsthallen, by recontextualizing the exhibits, stress the interrelations between them (in this manner producing a new space). While the museum takes works of art and isolates them, focusing on each one's unique significance within the museum. The crucial difference is in how historical museums transmit a knowledge of art, while Kunsthallen today offer cultural experiences through art.

It is of note that the original intention behind Kunsthallen was to offer artists' latest works to the public through Kunstverein raffles. But when the exhibition curators began to participate more and more in exhibitions, Kunsthallen distanced themselves from their Kunstverein and developed their own exhibition programs. As their character evolved in this direction Kunsthallen began to take on an independent identity that would assist in nurturing and fomenting contemporary art. But there were no comprehensive studies of the distinctive traits and contributions of Kunsthallen in molding of artistic forms. By tracking the historical development of art exhibition practices and the evolution of Kunsthallen as distinct exhibition spaces, this study seeks to illuminate the interactions between the displayed works and the institutions that exhibited them. This work wants to investigate the changing relationship between museums and Kunsthallen and bring to light how these institutions have coped with each other even as they closely followed the art on display. Another facet of the research gap is seen in the fact that little attention has been paid to the dynamic relationships between museums and Kunsthallen and their art-related practices. Kunsthallen and museums; Curatorial tasks and missions, as well as their attitudes toward how art should be displayed and presented are different in character. Knowing these differences will promote a better understanding of the roles and functions of Kunsthallen in tandem with museums.

This study will explore the potential transforming role that Kunsthallen can play through their "alternative" perspectives and different styles of showing or experiencing art. In short, this doctoral dissertation tries to answer the research gap around the word "Kunsthalle" and its place in contemporary art and society. Through the examination of existing literature, case studies, and interviews with curators, this doctoral thesis strives to provide a deeper understanding of

the nature of the Kunsthalle in our world Today. Ultimately, it is expected to offer insights that may inform future discussions, policies, and practices in contemporary art and society.

1.3 Methodological framework and objectives of this dissertation

This thesis investigates Kunsthallen, along with the transformation of the exhibition space through other contemporary exhibition venues. It focuses on the institutions themselves and the art they display to illuminate in what ways Kunsthallen have shaped and influenced the artistic landscape, both locally and internationally. Their implications for the display and reception of different art forms and movements are brought to the fore, along with the negotiations of art in contrast to museums. A historical analysis is presented to reveal the formation of Kunsthallen and museums within the landscape of art history. A mature understanding of this moment necessitates a consideration of multiple Kunsthallen and museums at local and international levels.

The emergence and development of Kunsthallen and museums is illuminated within a historical context to understand the formation of these institutions. It studies in what ways Kunsthallen, as spaces for the exhibition of art, have developed in contrast to museums, and the various aims and objectives they have pursued. The influence of societal and cultural factors on these institutions is also assessed. Furthermore, investigation is given to the ways in which Kunsthallen have served as spaces for both experimental and avant-garde art and how they have shaped and played a role in both the formation and dissemination of particular art movements. Another focus is placed on the examination of the exhibition and reception of different art forms and movements in Kunsthallen compared to museums. It analyzes how Kunsthallen have developed different exhibition concepts and strategies to present artworks and art forms optimally. It also considers how these exhibitions were perceived and interpreted by visitors, and how Kunsthallen facilitated active engagement of the audience in the artistic process.

Furthermore, the study sheds light on the differences in the engagement with art between Kunsthallen and museums. Kunsthallen often have more flexible and ever-changing exhibition spaces that allow for exploring new artistic ideas and concepts. They are also less influenced by historical collections and art historical discourses compared to museums.

Overall, this historical analysis will contribute to developing a comprehensive understanding of how Kunsthallen have shaped and influenced the artistic landscape both locally and internationally. By examining their development in the context of art history and comparing them to museums, it will show their impact on fostering new art forms, supporting avant-garde movements, and creating experimental exhibition spaces. Moreover, it will illustrate how

Kunsthallen actively involve the audience in the artistic process and pursue a more contemporary approach to art presentation.

1.4 Previous considerations of official art systems

Surveying the origins of our modern art system, social art historians have often referred back to the Italian royal courts of the Quattrocento, where a fundamental change in the structure of society took place, which led, among other things, to the development of an autonomous consideration of art.²⁴ Different theories have pointed out that a distinction was made between what belonged to this system, i.e., what was art and what was not art. This related to a *Leitdifferenz* according to Luhmann, a distinction that controls the information processing possibilities of a theory or the system.²⁵ A guiding difference acts as such a constraint, regulating or evaluating a statement, specifying what is selected and what is not. Thus, an information is guided within a system. It is important to note that this is a linguistic differentiation model. There was such model in the Middle Ages, but it was integrated into scholasticism, so that every judgment was also a judgment about God and nature at the same time. It was only through the change to functional differentiation of society that this semantic differentiation gained independence. The formation of an autonomous system also meant that art was no longer seen as a fragment of a world view. In this way, the semantic difference was transformed into coded communication.²⁶ Art began to structure its own program through which it manifests its code values. In that way, the art system functions as a closed operation system with a boundary between itself and the environment around it.

As described above, society at the beginning of the early modern period developed from hierarchically structured to a functionally ordered. In the field of art, art associations made a significant contribution to this development. Art in modern times must therefore also be viewed from the perspective of the social model. With the development of a system-specific program, i.e., without a religious world view binding on society, which assigned its essential meaning and form, art was able to produce several art styles independently, detached from society. This

²⁴ Cf.: Niklas Luhmann, *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt a. M.: 1995, p. 257 ff.

²⁵ Cf.: Niklas Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme: Grundriss einer allgemeinen Theorie*. Frankfurt am Main: 1987, p.19
“Alle Selektion setzt Einschränkungen (constraints) voraus. Eine Leitdifferenz arrangiert diese Einschränkungen, etwa unter dem Gesichtspunkt brauchbar/unbrauchbar, ohne die Auswahl selbst festzulegen. Differenz determiniert nicht was, wohl aber daß seligiert werden muß.” – („All selection presupposes restrictions (constraints). A guiding difference arranges these constraints, for example under the aspect of usable/useless, without determining the selection itself. Difference does not determine what has to be selected, but that it has to be selected.” (translated by the author) - Niklas Luhmann: *Op. cit.*, 1987, p. 57.

²⁶ Cf.: Niklas Luhmann, *Op. cit.*, 1995, p. 309 and p. 376.

subsequently developing system-immanent complexity of the subject led to the emergence of philosophical aesthetics as an academic discipline in the middle of the 18th century.

Through Kant's statement that every work of art is a "Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck,"²⁷ art could become autonomous. The basic prerequisite for art museums would be a clear interpretation of what art is in the first place and what distinguishes it from other objects (non-art). With a definition, art gains autonomy. The autonomy of aesthetics influenced the reception of art and the different types of museums. When the princely cabinets of curiosities were opened to bourgeois intellectuals, a new display principle emerged. Arbitrariness and indulgence gave way to order and mediation. The unsystematic Wunderkammer became a purposeful series of works of art. Friedrich II von Hessen made his collection accessible to the public for viewing and the scholars for processing in 1779. The quality improved because of the proper processing of the holdings and trained specialists.²⁸

One such specialist, Antoine Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849), archaeologist and writer, was involved in the planning of the Louvre. However, he openly criticized the theft of works of art by Napoleon Bonaparte. Works of art were seen as spoils of war and trophies, brought to France to legitimize the claim to power. The systematic looting and appropriation of art, which formed the basis for museum collections, already led to a controversial debate on the function of museums at this time. Quatremère de Quincy published his critique in a series of letters and later as a book entitled *Lettres sur le préjudice qu'occasionneroient aux arts et à la science*.²⁹ In doing so, he criticized above all the decontextualization of works of art from their context of production and use by museums but also by the art market. In this way, the objects were isolated, i.e. separated from their original context, and became a "work of art". Quatremère de Quincy equates the decontextualization of the object from its religious and cultural context with a disruption of its reception: "Quatremère's basic assumption consists in linking the art object to its production and reception with inseparable ties. To him, moving art objects to a museum is necessarily an act of destruction."³⁰ Quatremère de Quincy demanded that objects should

²⁷ "Expediency without purpose" (translated by the author). Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790), volume 10/12, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974, p. 136.

²⁸ Wolfgang Kemp, "Die Kunst kommt ins Museum", in: *Funkkolleg Kunst. Studienbegleitbrief 3*. Weinheim: 1984, p. 42.

²⁹ Cf.: Antoine Quatremère de Quincy, "Lettres sur le préjudice qu'occasionneroient aux Arts et à la Science: le déplacement des monumens de l'art de l'Italie, le démembrement de ses Ecoles, et la spoliation de ses Collections, Galeries, Musées, &c"(1796), in: Jean-Louis Deotte, *Considerations morales sur la destination des ouvrages de l'art; suivi de, Lettres sur l'enlèvement des ouvrages de l'art antique a Athenes et a Rome*, Paris: Fayard, 1989, p. 187–250.

³⁰ Cf.: Jesper Rasmussen, "Continuity and Destruction. Quatremère de Quincy and History", in: Uwe Fleckner, Maike Steinkamp and Hendrik Ziegler, *Der Sturm der Bilder. Zerstörte und zerstörende Kunst von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2011, p. 77–100, here p. 84.

remain in their original place so that they could be perceived as heritage for all nations. According to him, detaching the object from its actual place would also lead to new conditions of production. Art would be produced to be included in a museum collection. Quatremère de Quincy was also critical of the art market. This would degrade artistic artefacts to an interchangeable object of decoration. Art, bought from dealers instead of directly from artists, would be reduced to a commodity and its value would be purely incidental.³¹ It became clear that both the art market and the museum undermined what they were supposed to promote. Yet the French post-revolutionary conception of the museum as an institution spread throughout Europe, becoming a new way of representing and staging the power of the elites. The consequence of musealization of artworks was their liberation from ideological and representative functions to place them in a historical continuity as examples of artistic masterpieces, according to the current hegemonic value system. The nobility adapted to this new behavior; they had enjoyed objects of art, which became the object of education. After the collections were opened up, the rational hanging principle dominated over the previous forms of picture aggregation on the wall.

According to Robert Jauss, there is a moment in the history of art reception when art and the bourgeois individual enter a progressive relationship. For Jauss, the reception of art as a medium of self-experience is related to the awakening self-awareness of the bourgeois individual. Work and viewer stood in a reciprocal relationship. Following the bourgeois conception of art, in which art served as a means of social emancipation, art became increasingly autonomous. Christa Bürger criticizes this process, saying that art's autonomy made it unavailable for precisely this purpose of self-understanding. Bürger sees the beginning of the separation of art and life in Schiller's Letters on Aesthetic Education (1793-95).³² The public held on to its understanding of art as an emancipatory medium for self-awareness and identity formation. However, the increasing autonomy of art brought it into conflict, as the bourgeois ideology of art and its reception no longer coincided. The distance that had occurred between the autonomy of art and the desire for education would have led to the viewer clinging to individuals and

³¹ Cf.: Rasmussen: „Continuity and Destruction“, p. 84.

³² *“Schillers ästhetische Theorie hat die (Wieder-) Herstellung der Totalität des Menschen durch Kunst zum Ziel“, dennoch kommt es zu einem „geheimen Widerspruch der klassischen Ästhetik: die verheißende Befreiung von den Zwängen der Realität meint nicht die Autonomie des Rezipienten, den sie vielmehr zum Objekt der schöpferischen Tätigkeit des Kunstproduzierenden macht.“* – “Schiller's aesthetic theory aims at the (re)production of the totality of man through art,“ yet a “secret contradiction of classical aesthetics occurs: the promising liberation from the constraints of reality does not mean the autonomy of the recipient, whom it rather turns into the object of the creative activity of the art producer.” (translated by the author), Christa Bürger: *Der Ursprung der bürgerlichen Institution im höfischen Weimar. Literatursoziologische Untersuchungen zum klassischen Goethe*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977, p. 137 f.

ultimately adopting a devotional attitude of reception. Bürger sees the reaction to the separation of art and life by most of the audience in the turn to entertainment.³³ Autonomy of art here means the formation of the artist's personality and his independence. This autonomy was formed in the 19th century and influenced the design of museums.

The representational function in art loses its meaning, artists become free in their design and interpret the world according to their understanding. The autonomy of art, however, also refers to its content, which frees itself from its form. This increasing distancing of art from the recipient required enlightenment in the art museum as an educational institution. The art museum itself influenced the formation of the public's taste but also the education of artists when they were able to study and copy the works, and thus the future production of art. Jürgen Habermas saw in art the function of a "literary public sphere" in which the public could exchange ideas with each other.³⁴

Museums were part of this enlightened public sphere, created to show and present the collected objects in a certain order according to certain criteria. To convey such ideals was the display fundament and the whole museum structure was aimed to educate audiences. The German "public"³⁵ that began to take an interest in art around 1800 was the educated bourgeoisie. Education became a means of distancing themselves from the petit bourgeois and its traditionalism, which no longer corresponded to the newly educated bourgeois image. At the same time, education served as a way for this new class to rise above the aristocracy in the society of the states. In the course, various associations were founded, such as the hunting association, reading association, etc. These associations had the function of "educational groups" in which citizens could define themselves beyond their innate social status. Education became a means to liberalization. The emergence of the associations led to the *Bildungsbürger* characterizing themselves as a social group of their own value and behaving accordingly.³⁶ In the context of this work, this development will be discussed below with a perspective on art.

³³ Christa Bürger: *Der Ursprung der bürgerlichen Institution im höfischen Weimar. Literatursoziologische Untersuchungen zum klassischen Goethe.* Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1977, p.108.

³⁴ Communication among citizens initially took place in literary and reading circles. In these circles, according to Habermas (1962), the "literary public sphere", a preliminary stage to the self-organized, "political public sphere", had developed. He saw this as an important step toward the emergence of a civic "self-consciousness". The public now consisted of single individuals, instead of a public assembled by the feudal lord for his self-expression. Habermas distinguished between intimacy and privacy on the one hand and the public sphere on the other.

³⁵ The term 'public' is used here according to the argumentation of Habermas's habilitation thesis *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (1962). The term describes the public, which no longer assembles itself, but organizes itself around an object selected by experts.

³⁶ Pia Schmid, *Deutsches Bildungsbürgertum. Bürgerliche Bildung zwischen 1750 und 1830.* Diss. Frankfurt am Main: 1985, p. 34.

Education was to be acquired by everyone, regardless of birth, and it led to a new status. This new status allowed people to participate in the culture of the nobility. However, the reception of art remained an exception for the bourgeoisie, whereas the nobility could continue to cultivate contact with art. In this way, culture became something exclusive that was conveyed to the bourgeoisie through education. The museographical discourse was a new model of art education, which interpreted the collection and preservation of purchased and stolen goods as a merit and elevated these possessions to a measure of value of cultural significance.³⁷

For Tony Bennett, the staging and pedagogical strategies of the museum are central museological functions. According to him, these would lead to an identification of the subject with the values of the respective hegemonic system. In contrast, the collections of the former aristocracy, the Wunderkammern, were staged more as a symbolic version of the world. The modern museum, on the other hand, functions as an educational complex. In the context of museum studies, Tony Bennett applies Michel Foucault's ideas in his book "The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics," (1995) on disciplinary power, panopticism and governmentality to the 19th-century public museum, viewing it as an institution designed not only for public improvement but also to induce self-regulation among citizens.³⁸ This perspective aligns with the concept of "governmentality," which Stuart Hall defines as the state's indirect cultivation of attitudes and behaviours in its citizens. Bennett's portraits of exhibiting society shift the unmasking of the Panopticon as a myopic view that occurs by exiting the Panopticon to an exercising of Panopticism to a view from the middle of the circular stir by manipulating the gaze it publicizes that the powerful can know they are being watched while the less powerful can be publicly displayed as they exercise self-regulation. He argues that museums, through their spatial arrangements, created a similar self-regulating effect by putting the public on display. He then links Foucault's discussions about the spatial relations of knowledge and power to Antonio Gramsci's Marxist theory of culture reproducing taste of the ruling-elite class which he

Bildungsbürgertum is a social class which developed in the mid-18th century in Germany as an educated class of the bourgeoisie. As the German term 'Bildung' refers not only to education but also to culture and is rooted in the Enlightenment. The term refers to a longer process of development in a person's life rather than pure acquisition of knowledge.

Cf.: Manfred Fuhrmann, *Der europäische Bildungskanon des bürgerlichen Zeitalters*. Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 2004.

³⁷ Walter Grasskamp, *Museumsgründer und Museumsstürmer. Zur Sozialgeschichte des Kunstmuseums*. Munich, 1981, p. 38.

³⁸ Panopticism – a term established by the French philosopher Michel Foucault in his book "Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison" (1975). It refers to a form of power and social control exemplified by the design of the Panopticon, a theoretical prison devised by English philosopher and social theorist Jeremy Bentham, where a single guard can observe all inmates without them knowing whether they are being watched. This mechanism creates a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures automatic functioning of power, leading to self-regulation among the observed individuals as they assume they might always be under surveillance, thus internalizing disciplinary mechanisms.

described in his “Prison Notebooks” (1929-35). However, he interrogates what he considers a purely Gramscian analysis that would see museums as mere instruments of ruling-class hegemony. Bennett believes this may unduly prophesize that museums could be effortlessly deposited into the service of counter-hegemony, ignoring the complex socio-cultural dynamics at work, an analysis which has been taken up by Pierre Bourdieu in the realm of art galleries and cultural taste, highlighting that culture has historically served to segregate individuals into social strata and bestow various status levels.³⁹

Critiques of the Foucauldian analysis, as employed by Bennett, present different views. Clive Barnett criticizes the interpretation of Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power for its neglect of Foucault’s emphasis on the agency of governmental subjects. Colin Trodd also critiques the Foucauldian approach for its potential oversimplification of the multifaceted and conflicting forces within individual museum contexts.⁴⁰ In this essay, Bennett emphasizes the role of cultural institutions in the production and global circulation of art, arguing that these institutions manage, assert power not out of sight, but by showing works of art. Acts of confinement and acts of display are for Bennett linked forces in regulating the role of subjects for and in cultural institutions. Bennett suggests that the history of cultural institutions more generally is an account of how art display has been related to audiences. They produce sites from, and through which one looks at the world and oneself. Thus, they remain both spectacle and surveillance. By this transition from conservative/restrictive moves to exhibitional ones, institutions are always thus playing society itself, representing and showing it, its parts and all: spectacle.⁴¹

On the other hand, Louis Althusser has described the museum as a cultural ideological state apparatus.⁴² Thus, the museum is partly responsible for the legitimization of the state and its governmentality. According to Foucault, governance is the correct arrangement of things, and consequently, the classification of works of art in the museum, which is carried out by art history, is an expression of the hegemonic bourgeois ideology.⁴³ It must therefore be noted that this constructed history does not necessarily correspond to the past, but rather had to be ideal created through a synthesis from a variety of other possible locations.

³⁹ Cf.: Rhiannon Mason: *Cultural Theory and Museum Studies*, in: Sharon MacDonald: *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2006, p. 17-32, here p.2.

⁴⁰ Cf.: Rhiannon Mason, *Cultural Theory and Museum Studies*, in: Sharon MacDonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2006, p. 17-32, here p.2.

⁴¹ Castellano, Carlos Garrido, 2017. "The institution of institutionalism: difference, universalism and the legacies of institutional critique", *Culture Theory and Critique*, Vol. 59, no. 1, p. 59-73, here p. 68.

⁴² Cf.: Louis Althusser, *Ideologie und ideologische Staatsapparate*, Hamburg: VSA, 2010, p. 37–102.

⁴³ Cf.: Michel Foucault, *Geschichte der Gouvernementalität I: Sicherheit, Territorium, Bevölkerung. Vorlesungen am Collège de France 1977–1978*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004, p. 145.

“Kulturhistorische Sinnstiftung ist also stets ein in höchstem Mase wertgesättigter, selektiver, gestalterischer Prozess, bei dem wir den Phänomenen, die wir zunächst einfach nur zu beschreiben scheinen [...] paradoxerweise durch diese Beschreibung überhaupt erst Realität verleihen.“⁴⁴

Since then, there have been museum professionals mediating between artists and recipients. They would decide which works could enter the museum and how they were shown. These professionals determined the aesthetic function of art and thus displaced the autonomy of the viewer. Such professionals were also active in the art associations that developed meanwhile and influenced the way culture was perceived. Art associations emerged out of the need to serve as mediators between local contemporary art and an art interested audience. The oldest art association in the German culture is the Kunstverein Nürnberg-Albrecht-Dürer-Gesellschaft established in 1792, followed by the Badischer Kunstverein in Karlsruhe, founded in 1818. Since the 19th century art associations have been forming in almost every major German city. Most of these Kunstvereine were registered as public lot associations. They financed themselves mostly through raffles and selling exhibitions for their members. Their members acquired one or more shares, which were at the same time a lot number, as well as the capital of the Kunstverein. This money was used for purchasing artworks for the lottery, which was held annually. A certain amount of the same money was used to build their own art collection.⁴⁵ The main purpose of their emergence was to encourage sociability, educate, take on public duties and pursue idealistic goals.

1.5 Starting hypothesis about the Kunsthallen

A distinct type of art galleries or exhibition halls called *Kunsthalle* were founded and financed in German-speaking countries at the beginning of the 19th-century by art associations called *Kunstvereine*, which started to show art. However, the aim was distributing artworks to their members through raffles or by direct purchases. It should be noted that there was a difference between residential capitals and other commercial cities. While residential cities could look back on a courtly art support, art associations in other cities had to finance their activities from

⁴⁴ „Cultural-historical sense-making is thus always a highly value-saturated, selective, creative process, in which we paradoxically give reality to phenomena that we initially seem to simply describe [...] through this description in the first place.“ (translated by the author). Christian Demand, *Wie kommt die Ordnung in die Kunst?* Sprunge: Zu Klampen Verlag, 2010, p. 275.

⁴⁵ Cf.: Christoph Behnke, “Zur Gründungsgeschichte deutscher Kunstvereine”, in: Bernd Milla und Heike Munder, *Tatort Kunstverein*. Nürnberg: Verlag für moderne Kunst Nürnberg, 2001, p.11-22, here p. 11.

the very beginning.⁴⁶ There is a notable absence of references to the term until its adoption by the Baseler Kunstverein in 1839. The Kunstverein proposed the establishment of a Kunsthalle, wherein their members could display and sell contemporary artworks. However, due to financial constraints, the Kunstverein faced a delay of several decades in constructing their Kunsthalle. Therefore, the initial exhibitions, starting with the *Allgemeine Schweizerische Kunstausstellung* in 1840, were held in rented buildings. Even after the Kunstverein eventually acquired a permanent building in 1872, the Kunsthalle served both as an exhibition venue and a commercial space, resembling more a commercial gallery rather than contemporary art institutions as known today.

The gap of over thirty years between the Baseler Kunstverein's original proposal and the opening of their space meant that the honor of being named as the first Kunsthalle fell to the Staatliche Kunsthalle in Karlsruhe, which opened in 1846.⁴⁷ In contrast to commercial art galleries, the Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe was conceptualized, designed, and constructed with the intention of creating a "Gesamtkunstwerk" that encompassed architecture, painting, and sculpture. The institution was originally founded as a private association called the "Verein zur Veranstaltung von Kunstausstellungen zu Karlsruhe" (Association for the Organization of Art Exhibitions in Karlsruhe) in 1846. Its declared purpose was to create a space for the exhibition of contemporary art and to promote artistic exchange. In 1849, the society established its first exhibition space in a temporary building, and it held its inaugural exhibition in the same year. The success of these early exhibitions led to the decision to construct a permanent building to house the growing collection and host future exhibitions. Similar to other early museum projects in Germany, the Staatliche Kunsthalle aimed to influence the cultural development of its citizens, considering the art museum as one of several institutions that contribute to general cultural formation. The construction of the Kunsthalle building began in 1865 based on designs by the architect Heinrich Hübsch. The building was completed in 1869 and opened to the public as the "Grossherzogliche Kunsthalle" (Grand Ducal Art Hall). The architectural style of the building reflects a combination of neoclassical and Renaissance influences.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Schmitz, *Op. cit.*, 2001: p. 243. An example would be the Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, which took care of the state's collection.

⁴⁷ Plagemann, *Op. cit.*, 1967: pp.93-101

⁴⁸ Over the years, the Kunsthalle Karlsruhe expanded its collection and exhibition spaces. It has undergone several renovations and expansions to accommodate the growing collection and provide modern facilities for exhibitions and events. Notable expansions include the addition of a new exhibition wing in 1959 and the renovation and extension of the building in the late 1990s. https://ka.stadtwiki.net/Staatliche_Kunsthalle_Karlsruhe (12.04.2023)

Examining other Kunsthallen built during that period reveals a comparable desire to create spaces centered around existing art collections, with the Kunstverein's contribution differing significantly in each case. For example, the Kunsthallen in Bremen (1849) and Hamburg (1859) were founded by Kunstvereine,⁴⁹ while the Kunsthalle-zu-Kiel (1909) resulted from a collaboration between the Christian-Albrechts-Universität and the Schleswig-Holsteinischer Kunstverein, highlighting art as a form of moral education. The aim was to create a space specifically for contemporary art exhibitions, separate from collections and conservative approaches of traditional museums.⁵⁰ Furthermore, all three institutions were dedicated to the storage and exhibition of permanent art collections, additionally emphasizing their connection to other museum spaces. Many of these early Kunsthallen also played a significant role in the cultural identity of their respective communities, serving as the foremost museum institution in their cities. For museum practitioners of that time, the term Kunsthalle appears to be interchangeable with "museum," with equal importance placed on its construction and presence within the urban landscape as a major museum project.

The associations had acquired so many originals and distributed so much contemporary art to their members through raffles that an exhibition venue became necessary. In the course of the 19th century, the tasks between art associations and Kunsthallen were more and more divided, and both institutions established their own structures and functions. The increasing professionalization and specialization of art institutions led to a clear distinction between the two. Kunstvereine generally maintained their membership-based structure and continued to support a broader range of artistic activities, including exhibitions and educational programs. Kunsthallen on the other hand, became more focused on presenting temporary exhibitions and engaging with contemporary art. The separation between Kunstvereine and Kunsthallen can be seen as a response to the evolving needs and dynamics of the art world. Kunstvereine remain important cultural institutions that support local artists and contribute to art education, while Kunsthallen continue to provide spaces for temporary exhibitions and new art practices. There are only a few art associations left which do have their own art collection. Most of them lend their collections to museums, like the Kölnischer Kunstverein to the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum.⁵¹ This example shows the great structural differences between each *Kunsthalle* and *Kunstverein*, and that each of them must be looked at individually, from its historical and regional circumstance as well as the different cultural policy. These factors have influenced the

⁴⁹ <https://www.kunsthalle-bremen.de/en/kunsthalle-bremen/the-kunsthalle> (12.04.2023)

⁵⁰ <https://www.kunsthalle-kiel.de/de/kunsthalle> (15.05.2023)

⁵¹ Cf.: Wulf Herzogenrath, "Der Kunstverein in Bremen: Träger der Kunsthalle", in: Bernd Milla und Heike Munder, *Tatort Kunstverein*. Nürnberg: Verlag für moderne Kunst Nürnberg, 2001, p.23-25, here p. 23.

working method of these institutions, quite apart from the individuals of the board members who determined the principles.

This meant a very fundamental change in their activity: the traditional patrons of art, the court or the church would no longer be the only customers. A new way to reach the new public was to convey art via local exhibitions or through travelling shows. This again required a certain adjustment to the predominant aesthetic standards, subjecting themselves to a process of selection. However, the art academies conveyed a conservative image of “ideal” art. Therefore, most of the aspiring artists tried to become, in accordance with the genre hierarchy, active in history painting. On the other side the bourgeoisie preferred genre pictures. This led to a division between academic “high art” and the non-academic “low art” for the bourgeois. This development could be portrayed as a transition from top-down cultural policies to more horizontal initiatives reflecting broader tastes. Art associations have been of great importance for the emergence of an independent art market, organizing exhibitions in many provincial towns for the first time and establishing travelling, group exhibitions. The establishment of exhibition cycles contributed to the founding of an art market as well. The Kunstverein exhibitions dominantly showed smaller-format pictures, which were more dimensioned to the premises of the bourgeois living room than to the princely halls. The selection of the raffle pictures to be purchased by the association was bound to financial considerations.

The important difference to museums, deriving from the Wunderkammern of the nobility, is that Kunsthallen were built by the middle-class, whose driving force for building up a collection was the accumulation of wealth by the increasing value of art. The Kunsthalle founders were already aware in 1858 that galleries would have “immortal value”, and “their content” would rise to a “higher capital”.⁵² That means that the Kunstverein had a strong interest to increase the value of the purchased artworks, which subsequently made the membership profitable. In that way the Kunstverein-model is a symbolic exchange with real increases in value rather than a charity or patronage. However, it was not directly possible, as the founders of art associations had first to create a sense of art. For this purpose, Christopher Behnke points out, art associations included all products of manufactories, factories, and work of instrument makers, gunsmiths, and artisans in their exhibitions.⁵³ What is here important to consider, is the fact that this action contributed to create a ground for an aesthetic disposition of the rising middle class. By merging art and industrial heritage, mixing art and business, an internalization of taste categorization was created, and it was supposed to spread a new aesthetic view in everyday life.

⁵² Cf.: Schmitz *Op. cit.*, 2001, p. 241.

⁵³ Cf.: Behnke *Op. cit.*, 2001 p. 14.

This new aesthetic view, the devotion for exquisite and beauty, which was taught in the Kunstvereine, caused a distinction between merchandise and the art world. Thus, the Kunstverein also became a part of the industrial capitalist production. Because there was no demand for the possession of art in private sphere, unlike that art which had representative tasks within the framework of courtly life, it had to be created first. "If art is to have an effect on life, it must be connected as closely as possible with life, and a painting is nowhere so enjoyed and perceived as where it accompanies and witnesses to all domestic life," said Wilhelm von Humboldt.⁵⁴ Significantly, the Bremer Kunstverein distinguished itself as the pioneering institution to secure funding for its Kunsthalle through member contributions rather than relying on noble patrons for financial support. The city of Bremen generously provided the Kunsthalle's premises without charge. In 1823, under the leadership of Senator Hieronymus Klugkist, a group of 34 art-interested merchants founded the Kunstverein in Bremen with the explicit objective of disseminating and cultivating an appreciation for beauty, with a particular emphasis on the visual arts. An early initiative of the Kunstverein involved the acquisition of hand drawings and printed graphics from a significant local collection by encouraging its members to purchase shares, likely serving to safeguard these artworks from potential loss to the city. Initially, membership in the Kunstverein was restricted to 50 individuals, but after this limitation was lifted in 1843, membership rapidly expanded to encompass 575 persons within three years. During the association's initial two decades, public art exhibitions were integral to its activities, and the financial proceeds generated from these exhibitions played a crucial role in sustaining the organization and acquiring art objects. Starting in 1843, the Kunstverein forged collaborations with Kunstvereinen in Hannover, Lübeck, Greifswald, and Rostock to jointly organize exhibitions, a strategic initiative that continued through active engagement with Kunstvereine and museum support circles in Hamburg, Hannover, Stuttgart, and other cities. This ongoing cooperation encompassed collaborative exhibition projects and coordination efforts among these institutions.⁵⁵ In addition, the Bremer Kunsthalle is still in the Kunstverein's ownership today.

Most Kunstvereinen lost members after stopping the raffles. For this reason, a lot of art associations could not achieve the ideal of constituting their own collection and building a

⁵⁴ Behnke *Op. cit.*, 2001 p. 15. "Wenn die Kunst auf das Leben einwirken soll, muß man sie so enge als möglich mit dem Leben verbinden und ein Gemälde wird nirgends so genossen und so empfunden, als wo es Begleiter und Zeuge des ganzen häuslichen Daseyns ist" –, quoted from: Dieter Hein, „Bürgerliches Künstlertum“, in: Dieter Hein and Andreas Schulz, *Bürgerkultur im 19. Jahrhundert. Bildung, Kunst und Lebenswelt*. München: C.H. Beck, 1996, S. 107.

⁵⁵ <https://www.kunsthalle-bremen.de/de/der-kunstverein-in-bremen/der-kunstverein> (30.04.2023)

Kunsthalle.⁵⁶ It should be noted, however, that the so-called collections were often a confused accumulation of legacies, donations, or unclaimed prizes. When Alfred Lichtwark visited the Wilhelminische Prunkhalle of the Lüneburger Museum, built in 1957, he was appalled about, “this large, wide, wall-less room with the magnificent pillars, the simple bourgeois and peasant household” which looked “like rubbish that does not belong there.”⁵⁷ A common problem of these galleries was the lack of space and a lack of curatorial care. Also, as Lorente mentioned, Kunstvereinen would not specialize into certain kind of art. Rather they exhibited artefacts including archeological, scientific, and technological items.⁵⁸ So, the walls were often overhung, and various antiques were placed next to works of art and nature.⁵⁹ However, the value of the collections could never reach a high status because the art association’s purchases for both the gallery and the raffle corresponded to the general taste of their members and was bound to their financial possibilities. Here it is interesting to take a closer look at the (non-existent) curatorial activity of Kunsthallen. When Gustav Pauli was appointed director of the Bremer Kunsthalle, he described its collection as something “that was to be eliminated rather than expanded, which in any case could not become the core of a modern directed collection activity. One still sees several Kunstverein paintings, whose storage back into the depots is the embarrassing task of the director.”⁶⁰ Gustav Pauli played a pivotal role in establishing the Kunsthalle Bremen as a highly regarded gallery of modern art on a regional level. His strategic acquisition of contemporary German Impressionist works and notable French paintings contributed significantly to the institution’s reputation. Undeterred, the Kunsthalle Bremen staunchly supported prominent contemporary artists and advocated for the integration of French modernism into German museum collections.⁶¹ Pauli’s dedication to expanding the Kunsthalle’s collection further enhanced its standing. He introduced scientific principles to the curation process, ensuring scholarly rigor in the assessment and presentation of artworks. Additionally, Pauli undertook the reorganization of the exhibition spaces, optimizing their layout and design to enhance the visitor experience. In 1914, Pauli’s contributions to the field

⁵⁶ Cf.: Schmitz *Op. cit.*, 2001, p. 248.

⁵⁷ Schmitz *Op. cit.*, 2001, p. 249. “*In diesem großen, weiten, wandlosen Raum mit den prachtvollen Säulen sieht der schlichte bürgerliche und bäuerliche Hausrath aus wie Gerümpel, das da gar nicht hingehört.*” (translated by the author), quoted from: Gerhard Körner, *Museum für das Fürstentum Lüneburg*. Hamburg: Verlag Cram, 1965, p. 14-15.

⁵⁸ Article in: Jesús Pedro Lorente: *Op. cit.*, 2013, p. 467-477, here p. 475.

⁵⁹ Cf.: Schmitz *Op. cit.*, 2001, p. 249.

⁶⁰ „*die es mehr zu beseitigen als auszubauen galt, die jedenfalls nicht zum Kern einer modern gerichteten Sammlungstätigkeit werden konnte. Man sieht noch jetzt eine Anzahl jener Kunstvereinsbilder, die langsam in die Depots zurückzudrängen die peinliche Aufgabe des Direktors ist.*“ quoted from: Gustav Pauli, *Erinnerungen aus sieben Jahrzehnten*. Tübingen: Wunderlich Verlag, 1936, p. 150.

⁶¹ <https://www.kunsthalle-bremen.de/de/der-kunstverein-in-bremen/der-kunstverein> (30.04.2023)

of art led to his appointment as director of the Hamburger Kunsthalle, which solidified his influential role in shaping the trajectory of renowned art institutions. With Gustav Pauli and Wilhelm Barth, as mentioned above, the Kunsthalle became more professional, enhancing curatorial expertise. In the case of Gustav Pauli, it meant the purchase of expressionist works of art.

Overall, it can be said that only a few Kunsthalle foundations were tackled professionally, since curatorship usually failed because of the bourgeois desire for property. Most art associations practiced collective patronage by commissioning a large number of artworks for public space. In this way they supported local artists. Yet the rising bourgeoisie was not into altruistic patronage, but rather a selfish drive of possession. Because of the bourgeois desire for property, the art associations were struggling to preserve their original idealistic character as art-promoting educational institutes. Thus, almost all idealistically motivated attempts to abolish the raffles, in favor of creating a collection, were undermined by fierce resistance of most club members, who expected a compensation for their annual contributions in the form of raffle prizes.

Thus, Kunstvereine began to collect to make profit. Not many Kunstvereine have succeeded in selflessly creating their own collection or building, even fewer to fill this with sophisticated works not coming from legacies.⁶² This autonomy changed, however, with the erection of the associations own Kunsthallen during the 19th and early 20th century. Nonetheless not all of them could put their wish into practice. It is noteworthy that those Kunsthallen were built exclusively with mixed funds, mainly with municipal and state subsidies, and other private donations. Conclusively one could say that the structural change of the art public was accomplished in the mercantile field due to art associations and free art trade. On the other side the new art public failed as patrons, because of the bourgeois possessive culture and thus behind the monarchs. Many collections of associations were accumulations of donated estates or unclaimed raffle prizes – from today's point of view they resembled bourgeois Wunderkammern. Looking with the perspective of modern art historical development one can say that the aesthetic program of the German art associations was very poor as they ignored many important artists. Consequently, their program moved away more and more from our art history canon. Most of the exhibitions were full of artist names and artworks that have not survived the subsequent "cultural selection", while great artists of our art history canon and the current art market scene were unrepresented.

⁶² Schmitz, *Op. cit* ,2001, p. 342

2 Conceptualizing the origins of Kunsthallen in the history of art displays

A view on the history of public art displays reveals initially two very simple insights about the characteristics of the museum: the principle of the distance of art and life, and the principle of objectification of art. Starting at the place of worship of the Greek *mouseion* via the *Wunderkammer* of the Renaissance and Barock and the enlightened bourgeois museum to the modern educational institutions, the museum turned out to be an exclusive place, in which art and spectator are in a distanced relationship. It became apparent that the fundamental characteristics of the collecting institutions are linked to their social situation, structure, and function. For many centuries, the exceptional importance of an art object was because it was of value, rare or noteworthy scientific importance. One could speak here about a material or symbolic feature of the collection's objects. The aesthetic as a science of sensual cognition developed during rationalism, where an appreciation in the epistemological sense took place. A cognition was expressed in the artworks, which were neither explainable by everyday rationality nor by science.

A brief outline of the exhibition concept and its development shall give an idea of the exhibition concept and its relation to society and its institutions. It is useful to follow the historical *epistemes* distinguished by Foucault in *Les Mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (1966). He stated that the history of ideas cannot be understood with terms like tradition, influence, or development, but with terms like break, discontinuity, and transformation. Every specific historical period has its own knowledge whose constituent parts are, among other things or paintings. Crimp specifies Foucault's critique by defining the materialistic foundations which gave art idealism its importance. For this he resorts to Goethe's observation about the Louvre in the *Propyläen* (1798). The Louvre was a symbolic place in the politics of art display, as the *Académie Royale de Peinture et Sculpture* regularly staged exhibitions in the *Salon Carré du Louvre* since 1737. This new exhibition venue initiated a development which shaped all the important forms of a modern art exhibition. The annual exhibition shaped all the important forms of modern art shows.⁶³ Since then these exhibitions became more and more a sovereign form of art education, which was not understood as a neutral presentation venue for art works anymore. When the academy exhibitions gained continuity, the name *Salon* became the epitome for "good art". Artists of the academy could periodically present their works shaping public art discourses. The Musée du Louvre, opened in 1793, had no contemporary art, but the Salon Carré was open every summer for the public exhibition of

⁶³ Cf.: Koch *Op. cit.*, 1967, p. 255

recent art. The Salon Carré became a place of regular art presentations and of public art discourses. Thereby it defined fundamentally the general dissemination of the art exhibition.⁶⁴ Two singular aspects are important here: first, only contemporary art was shown and second, a *décorateur* organized the artworks by topics and formats.⁶⁵

The exhibition gained in that context its own aesthetic value and ultimately became the medium for art mediation, because the systematic organization and structured way of seeing to an effective and decorative entity gave it an intrinsic value. This put it beyond its immediate representational function to a particular public and artistic event.

The art historian Georg Friedrich Koch describes extensively which influence the state-owned academies had on this development of art exhibitions.⁶⁶ Since their founding they did not focus only on training of emerging talents but mainly on the dissemination of a certain opinion and view on art and a related art taste. The academies regularly showed artworks of their artists and could in that way present performance standards and artistic conventions. At the same time, they enhanced the competition within the academies and functioned as an instrument of the governmental power. The Salon exhibitions in 18th and 19th-century France, for example, played a crucial role in defining artistic standards and shaping public taste. Especially in the Parisian art scene driving forces fought against isolation, enclosure, dogmatism, and traditional academicism. The periodic exhibition made direct comparison possible and offered a social meeting place, a forum for critique in which artists, art and the public met.

With the passing of time, the Salon system faced criticisms for its exclusivity and conservative nature, which led to the emergence of alternative exhibition practices. In the early 19th century, other venues for public exhibitions started gaining prominence, offering a more inclusive platform for artists to exhibit their works. These alternative exhibitions, such as the Paris *Salon des Refusés*, challenged the established art establishment and provided opportunities for avant-garde artists to present their innovative works to a broader audience. The shift from institutional culture to artists' shows marked a turning point in art exhibition practices, allowing for a greater diversity of artistic expressions and encouraging experimentation with new forms and subjects. It also democratized access to art, enabling a wider range of viewers to engage with and appreciate artistic creations.

A new power relation emerged. During the Enlightenment the lay audience had started to emancipate themselves from the aesthetic judgement of the academies. Especially in the

⁶⁴ Cf.: Koch 1967, p. 253.

⁶⁵ Cf.: Christina Stoelting, *Inszenierung von Kunst. Die Emanzipation der Ausstellung zum Kunstwerk*, Diss., Weimar, 2000, p. 16.

⁶⁶ Cf.: Koch *Op. cit.*, 1967, p. 252.

Parisian art scene driving forces fought against isolation, enclosure, dogmatism, and traditional academicism. A tension between the official, monumental, and decorative art represented by the academies and the increasingly autonomous and liberal art, which not always attuned to an inhomogeneous public, that began to split up into insiders and outsiders.⁶⁷ The periodic exhibition made the direct comparison possible and offered a social meeting place, a forum for critique in which artists, art and public met. Even though it was not intended by the artist to make the exhibitions to a platform for criticism it became its essential characteristic.⁶⁸ The competitive character and increased effectiveness in the public realm boosted art production, with a notable increase of quantity; only a stricter selection made it possible to curb the unclear mass of artworks. This granted the academies even more power over the career of artists, who could face great difficulties exhibiting very innovative art works. Art critics and merchants could help, as influential forces of the modern art system, but another novelty of this context was the foundation of the first art unions and independent art associations from the first decade of the 19th century.

Such new scenarios should be considered emblematic of the new cultural setting that Foucault called the modern episteme. Indeed, the concept of modernism should not be understood as a style period but as the whole art epistemology, the knowledge-constituting theories of art history and of art mediating institutions. As the 19th century advanced all European countries established a network of museums, which created the need for alternative shows. Museological historiography indicates the dialectic, which holds the art museum and art history together.⁶⁹ While the first museums were a colorful mixture of curiosities from nature and art, little by little these rarities were sorted by different categories and classes and found their way to historical museums, natural history museums, ethnological museums, museum for applied arts, technical museums and some of those objects went to art museums. Thus, the overfilled museums distributed their holdings to specialized museums. However, this also meant that artworks were detached from other collections, all detached from the places for which they were originally intended or where they had been traditionally kept. Wolfgang Kemp describes the development of the art museum as the institutionalization of art:

“Die Kosten der Musealisierung heißen: Verlust der Funktionsbindung in religiösem, politischem und abbildend-informativem Sinne, Verlust des Realgehalts, Verlust der angestammten Bindungen ‘mit allem übrigen’. Der

⁶⁷ Cf. Ibid., p. 253.

⁶⁸ Cf. Ibid., p. 255.

⁶⁹ Cf.: Sheehan, *Op. cit.*, 2002, p. 141

*Gewinn, wenn es denn einer ist, heißt: Bildung einer neuen Gemeinschaft der Kunstwerke alle Zeiten und Nationen, Herstellung eines neuen gemeinsamen Nenners, der auf so verschiedene Namen wie Stil, Schönheit, Kunstgeschichte, Form, reine Kunst hört und den wir kurz 'Ästhetische Funktion' nennen.*⁷⁰

As a governmental instrument of power, academies and art institutions were able to intervene in the relation of the society and art, by presenting their doctrinaire view on art to the large public. However, both museums and the Salon system faced criticisms for its exclusivity and conservative nature, which led to the emergence of alternative exhibition practices. Lay audiences started to emancipate themselves from the aesthetic judgement of the academies and state officialdom. Against the official, monumental, and decorative art represented by the academies an increasingly autonomous and liberal art scene emerged, not always attuned to an inhomogeneous public, that began to split up into insiders and outsiders. Non-official public exhibitions started gaining prominence, offering a more inclusive platform for artists to exhibit their works. These alternative public exhibitions challenged the art establishment and provided opportunities for emerging artists to present their works to a broader audience.

The shift from official Salon culture to a variety of public shows marked a turning point in art exhibition practices, allowing for a greater diversity of artistic expressions and encouraging experimentation with new forms and subjects. It also democratized access to art, enabling a wider range of viewers to engage with and appreciate artistic creations. In this modern cultural context Kunsthallen were born as rivals of traditional museums in terms of their focus, purpose, and organizational structure. What the first Kunsthallen do have in common is that they were founded by provincial *Kunstvereine*, assembling local artists and the aspiring bourgeoisie. They provided a platform to showcase artworks in a capitalist contest nurturing in the respective cities growing art production as part of a burgeoning economy. What would set Kunsthallen apart from other art institutions is their flexibility, adaptability, and responsiveness to the ever-changing landscape of contemporary art.

Born out of the idea to dedicate exclusively to the promotion and education in contemporary art, the *Kunstvereine* made a significant contribution to the emergence of an art market in the German states. Thus, they had an influence on the structural change of the public sphere and

⁷⁰ *"The costs of museumization are: loss of the functional connection in a religious, political and informative sense, loss of the real content, loss of the ancestral ties 'with all the rest'. The gain, if it is one, is called: formation of a new community of the works of art of all times and nations, production of a new common denominator, which listens to so different names like style, beauty, art history, form, pure art and which we call briefly 'aesthetic function'."* (translated by the author). Wolfgang Kemp, *Die Kunst kommt ins Museum*, in: *Funkkolleg Kunst. Studienbegleitbrief 3*. Weinheim: 3, 1984, p. 42 f.

replaced the primacy of art consumption by the aristocracy and the church. Dealing with culture and collecting art should no longer be exclusively for the nobility. In that way these associations showed the progress towards the modern democratic society – a free form of social organization set against state corporatism. The first art journal *Kunst-Blatt* (1816) and the founding of art associations established a public art scene.⁷¹ Although some rulers have officially made their *Wunderkammern* public, the entry was still very limited. What was new, however, was that both the nobility and the middle-class visitors could see an exhibition together. The infancy of art associations developed in the German speaking countries between 1818 and 1840.⁷² They originated out of local conditions and took over their essential functional elements which are raffles and allocation of consolation gifts (*Nietenblattvergabe*) from English, French and Swiss forerunners. The membership of these art unions mixed artists and art lovers and soon evolved into bourgeois associations.⁷³ In the book *Die deutschen Kunstvereine im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert* Thomas Schmitz examines the social history and development of German art associations in the 19th and 20th century and traces the socio-economic structural transformation of the public sphere in art consumption. He describes that art associations played an important role in the constitution of the bourgeoisie as a new social class. For through the structures of the associations, the bourgeois had established new principles of communicative behavior in competition with the aristocratic state: (hypothetically) legal equality among members and democratic freedom of choice.

While grass-roots associations promoted temporary shows of contemporary art, museums belonged to officialdom, as establishments consecrated to art history, based on the classification of schools, nationalities, and particular masterpieces. The display of museum collections was not only intended to tell a narrative of cultural history, but also to serve artistic education. Consequently, works of art were hung under a new arrangement. According to Carol Duncan, instead of the “gentlemanly hang,” the *galleria progressiva* prevailed, with a chronologically continuous sequence of masterpieces creating connections between the works of different times and places.⁷⁴

“Organized chronologically and in national categories along the museum’s corridors, works of art now became witnesses to the presence of, genius’ cultural products marking the course of civilization in nations and individuals. The ritual task of the

⁷¹ Cf.: Schmitz *Op. cit.*, 2001, p. 164.

⁷² Cf.: Bernd Milla und Heike Munder: *Op. cit.*, 2001.

⁷³ More on the topic of art associations in Europe: Lorente, *Op. cit*, 2013, p. 467-477, here p. 475.

⁷⁴ Cf.: Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals. Inside public art museums*, New York: Routledge 1995, p. 24.

*Louvre visitor was to reenact that history of genius, re-live its progress step by step and, thus enlightened, know himself as a citizen of history's most civilized and advanced nation state.”*⁷⁵

Whereas the permanent survey of masterworks arranged chronologically by school and nationality at the Louvre became the international role-model of many other art museums. Other art venues showing contemporary art became counter-models. Pedro Lorente called them “cathedrals of urban modernity” and traced their history using the Parisian Musée des Artistes Vivants as 19th-century paradigm, contested by the Neue Pinakothek of Munich and other examples, whereas the 20th-century paradigm would be the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which has elicited many emulators and competitors in the recent development of museums. Yet another cultural legacy was missing in Prof. Lorente’s narrative: out of the consecrated cathedrals of officialdom other art venues in Central Europe had worshipped contemporary art by different means, focusing on temporary shows. Our present museums, so involved in blockbuster exhibitions, are also an offspring of this parallel lineage, in which certain institutions could also be singled out as exemplary of different historical stages.

3 The Kunsthalle Basel as a 19th-century model of art exhibition

Through the slowly upcoming public art scene, the art itself was moved away from their previous supporting classes, namely state and church, and thereby also from its representative tasks. This resulted in the artist’s disengagement from the dependence of nobility and in an exposure on the art market. Artists produced for an anonymous market by whom the price was regulated, and not by the patron. That means that the artist no longer had to subject himself to the taste of nobility, but he had to adapt to the demands of the public taste, which was no less arbitrary. So, Schmitz rightly states that art associations should rather be placed in the field of consumer history than in the history of patronage.⁷⁶ To protect art and keep it away from any economic activity and to reduce exhibitions as competitions, some art associations insisted on organizing their exhibitions without a jury and with non-profit aims. The result was that many exhibitions could not present very much outstanding artistic achievements; yet Kunsthallen were mostly committed to show and engage with the ongoing cultural moment and participate in the exploration and promotion of contemporary art practices. Contemporaneity here means

⁷⁵ Cf.: Duncan, *Op. cit.*, 1995, p. 27.

⁷⁶ Cf., Schmitz *Op. cit.*, 2001, p. 343.

focusing on the current artistic landscape prioritizing the exhibition of contemporary art over historical or traditional artistic forms. In that way Kunsthallen embrace contemporaneity and demonstrate a dynamic and responsive approach focusing on evolving trends and debates within contemporary art. This entails an inclusive stance towards diverse artistic mediums, interdisciplinary approaches, and conceptual frameworks, while addressing social, political, and cultural issues through art expression.

The statutes of the Kunsthalle Basel state the Kunstverein's commitment to create a place for the presentation of art to a wider public. However, this institution should also be economically profitable. Temporary exhibitions of contemporary art seemed to have been a suitable concept for this. The ever-changing exhibitions became artistic products that created competition among cities. Art associations that wanted to present temporary exhibitions to boost their local art production needed a physical space. As the founder and still today the sponsor of the Kunsthalle, the Kunstverein plays a fundamental role in its foundation and its continued existence. The history of the Kunsthalle Basel must therefore begin with the founding of the Kunstverein. Such art associations have played an important role in art patronage on the one hand but also as a place of conviviality. In academic discourse, far too little emphasis has been placed on the important role that art associations have played in the history of art. These associations not only organized exhibitions for established artists but also encouraged amateur artists to develop their skills and facilitated the creation of local art markets, flourishing in the art system from 1850-1910, the period of classical modernism.⁷⁷ Another aspect that led to the founding of the Kunstverein was being together in society without class differences playing a role to make art accessible to everyone.

The Basel Artists' Society was formed in 1812 as the *Gesellschaft Schweizerischer Künstler und Kunstfreunde* for education in the field of art. In weekly meetings, drawings were made from plaster casts and then discussed. The society also published artists' books, for which works were donated by artists or by members. In addition, the society organized the first exhibitions open to the public in the Lesegesellschaft building. In 1824, the Basel Artists' Society presented a commissioned memorial column commemorating the Battle of St. Jacob to the citizens of the city. In 1839, when Zurich's proposal to organize an exhibition for the whole of Switzerland met with no response from the Basel Artists' Society, the Basel Art Society was founded, which in its early days set itself the task of organizing the "Allgemeine Schweizerische Kunstausstellung" every two years, starting in Basel as a travelling exhibition. The artists'

⁷⁷ Aesthetic modernism is a phenomenon that transcends genres and can be observed in all arts within a certain time lag. Cf.: Peter Bürger, *Prosa der Moderne*. Frankfurt a. M.: 1988, p. 439-443.

society dissolved in the same year. Like the Kunstgesellschaft, the Kunstverein set itself the goal of promoting art in Basel and Switzerland and educating people in the field of art. While the Kunstgesellschaft was also primarily concerned with the public cultivation of art and sociability was in the foreground, in the Kunstverein art was to be promoted through exhibitions. On the board of the Kunstverein was the president, the governor, clerk, treasurer; but membership itself was less personal than financial, for it was ensured by the purchase of a share that enabled participation in a raffle. The works for the lottery came from the current exhibitions and their selection was made first by proposals of the elected commission and later by voting of the members.

Thus, the Basler Kunstverein was founded in 1839 to promote contemporary Swiss art in the public sphere. The idea was to buy works with the help of Basel citizens, not to give them to a public collection, but to raffle them among the members of the association. The raffles were preceded by exhibitions at which works could also be purchased.⁷⁸ In the 19th century, the raffle of pictures to the Kunstverein members was the main financing regardless of the taste of the winner. With the purchase of one or more shares, one bought a lot number, which was at the same time the capital of the associations. This capital again was used for the purchase of artworks, which were passed to the members through lottery.⁷⁹ The association organized exhibitions and then bought the pictures there for its raffles. The chances to win an artwork were not great. The economy of the lottery aimed to empower the new middle class, the high prices for art had to be subverted to break the monopoly of the nobility. This in turn created an emerging art market, which enabled the development of an art scene whose works should please the bourgeoisie. In that way their support, which was offered as a charitable gift and the return service was the honor of becoming a supporter of art. However, on closer examination one sees that the real attractiveness of being a member of a Kunstverein was gaining something reserved exclusively for the nobility. The new social group needed to assure their superiority during a disputed power shift. That means that the art associations were not only involved in the development of the modern art market and its clientele, but they promoted new interests with the objective of pursuing an aesthetic and market-based category: art criticism as a literary and journalistic discourse in synergy with the art production and the profession of the free artist, who finally, made a breakthrough.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Lukas Gloor, *150 Jahre Kunstverein Basel. 1839-1989*. Basel 1989, p. 15.

⁷⁹ Cf.: Behnke, *Op. cit.*, 2001, p. 11.

⁸⁰ Cf.: Manuela Vergoossen: *Kunstvereinskunst. Ökonomie und Ästhetik bürgerlicher Bilder im 19. Jahrhundert*. VDG, Weimar 2011, p. 233.

After initial difficulties in the first two decades of the art associations the participating artists started getting used to the new distribution structures of their works. The new difficulties coming with this were, that the personal relationship between the client and the artist was anonymized, that artists were endangered to become unknown and that members suddenly became owners of (unwanted) artworks by the coincidence of the lottery ticket. The coincidence of the lot moved the artist away from the consumer and the consumer could not decide himself which artwork should delight him. In that way the Kunstvereine functioned as a medium between the artist and the public, between producer and consumer and developed a noticeable influence on the development of art. Another aspect is that those artworks for the private sphere, unlike that, which had representative tasks in the courtly life, had to meet a demand. This meant to bring art into the living space of the bourgeoisie and concretely meant to produce art, which had a small format merely enough for decorative purposes. On the other hand, this was an advantage for the Kunstvereine as it could purchase more artworks for cheaper prices for their raffles.⁸¹ Kunstverein raffles were probably so popular because the bourgeois members in principle equal enjoyed the aristocracy and equal in prizes. This allowed the art associations to recruit more members, but at the same time threatened them with a drop in the quality of the images because of the high purchase requirements. In addition, the required information was often formulated so that the Kunstvereine met the taste of the audience as much as possible and not to be too expensive.⁸² Thus, the interest for a new privileged class of aesthetically educated citizens came up within the art associations, whereas such a class yet had to be created. Because of this artificially created art market, art lost its old function and was degraded to a status object.⁸³

Exhibiting and collecting were certainly part of the tasks of an art association, but the focus was on promotion and mediation work, i.e. supporting art. As described above, art associations were founded as democratically organised bodies. Art was to be made accessible to the broad middle classes in associative organs with a democratic structure. Its institutional development must also be viewed considering art and its presentation. In other words, the history of the Kunsthalle must be examined considering the development of modern art and the exhibition of current artistic production. The estimated total number of Kunstvereine in the German Confederation in the middle of the 19th century was around 14,000.⁸⁴ Such art associations organized

⁸¹ Cf.: Behnke, *Op. cit.*, 2001, p. 15.

⁸² Cf.: Schmitz, *Op. cit.*, 2001, p. 26.

⁸³ Art association raffles were continued until the First World War, but at the latest after the inflation and the Great Depression, they were abolished Cf. *Ib.*, p. 287.

⁸⁴ Cf.: Schmitz, *Op. cit.*, 2001, p. 26.

exhibitions for their members that were either periodic or permanent. Both the number of visitors and exhibitions increased over time, with increasing prestige for the most veteran associations, as the Swiss art unions. Shortly after its foundation, the first *Allgemeine Schweizerische Kunstausstellung* was held in 1840. The federalist structure of the country, without a cultural center, influenced its exhibition networks. A Salon on the French model therefore did not become established in Switzerland, rather it was conceived as a travelling exhibition. It was organized by the Schweizer Kunstverein at intervals of two years. Only originals by living artists should be accepted for this exhibition. Works of decorative art were not to be accepted at all and graphic art was to be accepted only as an exception. The rotational exhibitions were held for 120 years until 1960.

The Basler Kunstverein set itself the goal of providing artists with a permanent institution for selling their works outside of their studio and the barely existing art trade. In the “permanent” exhibition, works by the artists were to be shown to the public in a non-regular rhythm. However, this again required its own space and so the Kunstverein was dependent on renting rooms from the first “permanent” exhibition in 1840 until it moved into the Kunsthalle in 1872. Soon, however, the Kunstverein did not want to limit its exhibitions to the sale of living artists but strived to present a historical overview of Basel art of the last 300 years. In addition to the art-historical reappraisal, the idea was to present the “patriotic” art from the past and present to create a national spirit. The will to create a national arts policy was politically implemented a few years later with the founding of the federal state.

In 1840, it was only Bern, Basel and Zurich that organized the Schweizerische Kunstausstellung. As early as the second ROTA exhibition in 1842, other cities were added to the list. Despite its success as the most important market for art in Switzerland and as an important concept for conveying contemporary art to the Swiss public, the quality declined. In the middle of the 19th century, art production emerged more and more from small-town productions. This made the national rotational exhibitions more important. This was also the first indication of the long-awaited emergence of a national art shortly before the founding of the Swiss federal state in 1848. Consequently, the public became less interested in expensive large-scale history depictions and smaller landscape and genre paintings became more popular. Although the Basler Kunstverein strongly promoted Swiss art in its first 25 years, local art promotion fell into the background. However, one of the reasons for this was the founding of a new Basel Artists’ Society in 1842, which focused much more on supporting Basel artists. The chairman of the Basel Artists’ Society was Johann Jakob Im Hof. In 1854, he set up the first ferry across the Rhine to finance a Kunsthaus as a club and exhibition venue for the society. In

addition, the artists' association set itself the goal of building a new St. Jakob monument on the site of the old memorial column. In 1863, the first merger negotiations with the Basler Kunstverein began, for Im Hof quickly realized that these two ambitious projects could only be realized with help, but even the Kunstverein could not realize its desire for an exhibition venue without help.⁸⁵ With the merger, the Künstlergesellschaft agreed to be absorbed into the Basler Kunstverein. The Künstlergesellschaft handed over the prospering ferry business with the saved fund for the construction of an art gallery, in return for which the Kunstverein undertook to complete the St. Jakob's Monument project. Towards the end of Im Hof's term of office, critical voices began to accumulate against the still "patriotic" cultivation of art. This led to a reorientation of the cultivation of art.

In the following period, it was no longer enough to exhibit only contemporary "patriotic" art; there was an increasing demand for a commentary and concept on the part of the exhibition management. For until then, the works were hardly ever selected by a professional jury. Laymen and artists had almost equal chances of being included in the Swiss exhibitions. As the 19th century advanced, an ever-deepening separation between the dilettante and the artist changed Swiss art promotion from the ground up. Art practice underwent significant transformations during the modern era, as artists shifted their artistic endeavors. The public exhibitions suddenly were not only a forum of confirmation and approval for good artistic production or place of rejection but also a place of resistance. Those artists who were rejected by the strict jury started to show their art works in self-organized exhibitions. The process of secession, that means the separation of artists' groups from academic art display became the symptom of a new crisis of the art scene which was visible in the diverse splitting in art shows: e.g. the solo exhibition organized by Gustave Courbet with his own works. Other rejected artists, among them Édouard Manet and Paul Cézanne showed their works in the 1863 *Salon des Refusés*.⁸⁶ The rebellion of such artists against the system that put them in crisis, especially regarding contemporary art. The *Salon des Refusés* sabotaged the reliability of the French Academy and in that way, it legitimized the new emerging avant-garde art. Another important fact is that the *Salon des Refusés* emphasized the necessity for alternative exhibitions and prevented the development of an institution controlling the aesthetic taste of the public. Basel Kunstverein realized that organizing patriotic exhibitions in a bourgeois and patronizing manner was no longer sufficient; it had to align with artistic criteria. As art itself evolved, so did the objectives and approaches of art education. The emphasis shifted from a nationalistic enthusiasm to being motivated by

⁸⁵ Cf.: Lukas Gloor, *Op. cit.*, 1989, p. 32.

⁸⁶ Cf.: Stoelting *Op. cit.*, 2000, p. 19.

the intrinsic rules of the art system. This transformation was accompanied by a change from a politicized understanding of art to a more aesthetic discourse. The Kunstverein's new mission was to showcase the innovative directions of contemporary art in Basel, reflecting the evolving artistic landscape and providing a platform for artistic exploration and discussion. This platform was initially rented, whereas other associations had spaces on loan for their exhibitions, for example, in fair trade centers like the Hamburger Kunstverein in the Börsenarkaden.⁸⁷

In 1865 the Kunstverein asked the city council for free building land for the planned Kunsthalle, which was granted in 1867. The competition for the design of the building was won by Johann Jakob Stehlin-Burckhardt with the motto "The temple is built for you, you high muses all." The foundation stone was laid in 1869, and after two years the building was completed and ready for relocating. The entrance to the building is on the Steinenberg. The façade has large arched windows and two side risaltes. The building is divided into a base floor and two stories. On the top floor there is a skylight construction that spans the six central axes of the façade. On the basement floor were the clubhouse and rooms for the staff. The first floor contained the meeting room and the library as well as the hall for the permanent exhibition. On the upper floor, large exhibitions were held in the Oberlichtsaal. Two small cabinets, the "Aktsaal," and a painter's and a sculptor's studio were set up to promote artistic creativity. The Kunsthalle's own garden was enclosed by the Kunsthalle and its extension. The façade is simple in design, with double pilasters highlighting the two side axes, the windows are framed with cornices, and balustrades close off the façade at the top. The garden façade is decorated with a sgraffiato by Arnold Böcklin, Albert Wagner, Rudolf Schweizer and Emil Meier. The restaurant was designed by Carl Brünner. Charles Iguel designed the reliefs on the main façade.

⁸⁷ Cf.: Schmitz *Op. cit.*, 2001, p. 339.



Figure 1 Kunsthalle Basel



Figure 2 Kunsthalle Basel



Figure 3 Kunsthalle Basel



Figure 4 Kunsthalle Basel



Figure 5 Kunsthalle Basel restaurant



Figure 6 Kunsthalle Basel restaurant

In 1872, the Kunstverein opened the permanent exhibition in the Kunsthalle. By then, the Kunstverein showed more and more paintings by foreign painters, which were sent by other art associations or artists themselves. Artists sent their paintings to exhibitions to gain notoriety and thus increase their chances of selling them. Because the permanent exhibition brought with it an additional financial burden, the restaurant had to be converted into a public venue. The rent later became the largest source of income. In 1885, the Sculpture Hall was built on the grounds of the Kunstverein according to Stehlin's design. Due to costly repairs and the growing costs of running exhibitions, the Kunstverein found itself in a precarious financial situation and decided to rent the main building and the side wings to the state. The state was able to house the Public Art Collection there until the opening of the Kunstmuseum.

With the Kunsthalle and the St. Jakobs Monument, the reputation of the Kunstverein increased and more and more members joined. In the course of time, artists sent fewer and fewer works of art for the exhibitions. This was mainly due to increased competition from outside art dealers. Artists began to send their works more and more frequently to larger exhibitions where they could expect higher profits. Because the organization of the operation became more and more time-consuming, the association decided to divide the commission into several delegations. One of these was responsible for exhibitions. The absence of some Swiss artists due to better sales opportunities elsewhere meant that the rotating exhibitions were overcrowded by foreign artists, which even led to individual sections not wanting to take over the rotating exhibitions. Therefore, the Basler Kunstverein decided to organize the Basler Salon, with exclusively Swiss artists, independently of the Schweizerischer Kunstverein. To motivate some of the better-known artists to send in their paintings again, a sum of money was used for purchases.⁸⁸

The Kunstverein Basel has been collecting works by important artists since its foundation. The resulting collection illustrates the goals of the association from its founding until today. Although according to its statutes it was not initially intended to establish a collection at all, in contrast to other Swiss cities, it did provide for ten per cent of its income from membership fees to be used to purchase works of art for the public collection in the Basel Museum. However, the merger of the Basler Künstlergesellschaft and the Basler Kunstverein to form a new Basler Kunstverein changed the fundamentals, for the goals and prerequisites for the merger were the erection of the St. Jakob Monument and the construction of the Kunsthalle. Most of the works entered the collection by raffle or as unclaimed prizes. In addition, the artists' books were reissued.⁸⁹ The rapid growth of the collection required larger accommodation. The Kunsthalle

⁸⁸ Lukas Gloor, *Op. cit.*, 1989, p. 52.

⁸⁹ Lukas Gloor, *Op. cit.*, 1989, p. 66.

building, which was extended in 1898 and was intended for the collection, was ultimately used as an exhibition space. This meant that the collection could only be viewed at long intervals. Wilhelm Barth was a proponent of modern trends in art and so he directed the content of the exhibitions and the collection. With his modern and professional approach to the role of the first conservator, in which, unlike his predecessor, he was independent, his position grew equally as that of the commission. Barth introduced lectures, guided tours in the exhibitions. He was a staunch advocate of Impressionism and followed the trends of the avant-garde. One of the key challenges faced by the Kunsthalle, even in its early days, was the imperative of embracing diversity and accommodating the evolving demands of the market.

In contrast to museums that were established with the purpose of presenting and categorizing Western art and looted cultural artifacts, the Kunsthalle Basel represented a paradigm of classical modernism showcasing artworks specifically created with the intention of exhibition and sale, resulting in their circulation among multiple exhibition venues. This led to the emergence of local art scenes and markets, necessitating not only artistic adaptation but also institutional responses to these new developments. This shift in the art world gave rise to the notion of the “Ausstellungskünstler”⁹⁰ or the exhibition artist, bringing about novel approaches to presentation and display. Consequently, this transformation had a profound impact on art production and its reception. The Kunsthalle emerged as a platform for the representation of contemporary artistic practices. With its newfound social and economic significance, it assumed a pivotal role in the processes of privatization and capitalism. The dynamics of the market began to dictate art production, shaping the nature of exhibition art itself. Simultaneously, the Kunsthalle faced the challenge of reflecting the zeitgeist, which meant capturing the contemporary moment. The perpetual renewal of exhibitions aimed at captivating the audience. This became a distinct product of the capitalist system within the realm of art. What is important to observe about this development is that artists were no longer invited to participate in an exhibition at random but were selected according to artistic criteria. Those responsible for the exhibition were thus responsible for communicating the art and thus also guided the audience according to their criteria.⁹¹

Although in the beginning art objects of all kinds were exhibited together, the exhibition object soon began to be differentiated into several sub-areas of artistic production. More and more

⁹⁰ Oskar Bätschmann, „Ausstellungskünstler. Zu einer Geschichte des modernen Künstlers“, in: Michael Groblewski and Oskar Bätschmann, *Kultfigur und Mythenbildung. Das Bild vom Künstler und sein Werk in der zeitgenössischen Kunst*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993, p. 1-36.

⁹¹ Today, the Kunsthalle Basel's exhibition programme is primarily devoted to young, less-known artists on the verge of a breakthrough, interview Kunsthalle Basel: Claudio Vogt, Head of Press and Public Programs, 04.11.2021.

artists were exhibited who had completed their training at the academy and who, at best, also enjoyed international renown. This in turn led to an increase in the number of foreign artists exhibiting. It is clear from this that the exhibitions showed contemporary art with the chance of sale. In addition, visitors to Basel could directly follow the changes in Swiss art. The developing art market thus determined what was exhibited. Historical paintings and religious paintings became less popular, while landscape paintings attained momentum. Realistic painting gained great prestige and opposed idealism. The Basler Kunstverein also had to bow to the new tendencies. This also led to a professionalization of admission to an exhibition. A commission of the Basler Kunstverein regulated who was admitted to a rotational exhibition, because in its early days, dilettante citizens were put on an equal footing with artists. The initial idea behind the foundation of the Kunstverein was the general cultivation of art. Professionalization, however, separated artists from citizens and brought with it completely new conditions. For a long time, the cultivation of art was primarily directed at the association's own domestic artists. Around 1900, Swiss art became more popular, not because of its political content, but because of a new way of communicating art.

With the increasing contestation to academic art, a new kind of art appreciation began. Many young artists were no longer concerned with the past and tradition, and the patronage-based character of the Kunstverein was no longer sufficient. Exhibitions had to be reconceived and follow new aesthetic values. Art cultivation should no longer happen out of national consciousness but should deal with aesthetic problems. In this way, art was depoliticized. The new demands brought about by artistic modernism were also of a curatorial nature. Exhibitions had to be organized more strictly. But also, communication to the public had to be rethought. In the late 19th century, Basel became a site where the official academic conception of art was challenged, marking a significant movement in the German-speaking world. The Kunstverein and the Kunsthalle played a crucial role in this development by assuming the task of introducing foreign and rebellious art movements to Basel. Through these institutions, the Basel public had the opportunity to witness the evolution of contemporary and international art. The exhibitions of the Münchner Secession, held in Basel in 1894, 1896, and 1898, gained substantial popularity, reinforcing the trend of presenting contemporary international art. Over time, the exhibitions became more curated and professional, no longer inviting artists indiscriminately, but carefully selecting them based on predetermined artistic criteria. The overarching goal was to enlighten the public according to the guiding concept of the exhibition organizers. Despite initial resistance, Wilhelm Barth, the first curator of the Kunsthalle Basel in 1909, successfully

introduced “modern art” to Basel, establishing a significant presence for this artistic movement despite initial skepticism and rejection.

The aesthetic discussion continued to mature, historical-literary bulk was thrown off and artists turned to formal elements. The French Impressionists stood out here, breaking with conventional visual habits. In the 1904 exhibition of the Wiener Secession, the most recent development of international modernism was shown in a pan-European overview. Young Swiss art benefited from this success, which lasted until the First World War. In 1894, 1896, 1898 the Münchner Secession exhibited at the Kunsthalle Basel. The establishment of such splinter associations took place in more and more countries in Europe. On one side of this artistic divide were the established academic and state institutions, while on the other side stood several opposing groups of artists. These avant-garde artists challenged convention, provoking both fascination and controversy among the public. The Basler Kunstverein, adjusted to the shifting currents of the art world, took a keen interest in these emerging art movements. This interest led to the arrival of foreign art with a rebellious reputation on Basel’s doorstep. Basel art lovers, as a result, found themselves at the forefront of current art developments from abroad.

More conservative in taste remained the Kunsthalle Darmstadt, whose origins date back to 1833 as it originated from the Kunstverein für das Großherzogtum Hessen (Art Association for the Grand Duchy of Hesse) under the patronage of Grand Duke Ludwig II. Consequently, it is one of the oldest art associations in Germany. This initiative emerged during the Vormärz period when the emerging bourgeoisie wanted to establish a frame for visual arts alongside the prevailing interest in court theater and music. The driving force behind this establishment was Jakob Felsing (1802-1883), who returned to Darmstadt in 1832 after a ten-year stay in Italy, settling as a printer and engraver and leading the Kunstverein until 1876. Throughout its existence, the Kunstverein operated from various venues, giving rise to numerous branch offices in locations such as Offenbach, Mainz, Worms, Friedberg, and Gießen. In 1836, it joined forces with other Kunstvereine from Darmstadt, Freiburg, Karlsruhe, Mainz, Mannheim, Straßburg, and Stuttgart, and founded the Rheinischer Kunstverein (Rhineland Art Association). This collaborative effort facilitated the exchange of traveling exhibitions and promoted private art collecting. As with other Kunstvereine during the 19th century, it assumed a pivotal role in supporting the arts, which were still heavily reliant on court commissions. In 1889, the Kunstverein gained further prominence within Darmstadt’s cultural landscape upon acquiring its dedicated exhibition building. The location of this site along the prominent Rheinstraße and is close to the Main-Neckar-Eisenbahn railway station (established in 1846) and the Ludwigsbahnhof (1858) proved highly advantageous. The location held historical

significance, as it was erected in 1810 to accommodate a new social class comprising military and administrative personnel, as envisioned by the influential neoclassical court architect Georg Moller (1784-1852). Consequently, the new district attracted cultural and social life, featuring representative buildings like the Casino. The Kunstverein's new building was situated on the site of the former northern guardhouse of the Rheintor gate, which had once served as the western city entrance. The building's original portico was preserved, serving as the entrance to the newly constructed Kunsthalle in the Neo-Renaissance style. Beyond organizing exhibitions, the Kunstverein allocated membership fees to art acquisitions. By the turn of the century, it boasted around 3,000 members and amassed a substantial fortune until succumbing to losses during the ensuing hyperinflation.⁹²

⁹² During the era of National Socialism, the Kunstverein increasingly featured local landscape painters and openly propagandistic exhibitions. In 1936, the Kunsthalle Darmstadt took part in the traveling exhibition "Entartete Kunst" (Degenerate Art), which aimed to defame artistic modernity. The destructive "Brandnacht" on September 11, 1944, almost entirely obliterated the Mollervorstadt, resulting in the disappearance of many prominent buildings from the cityscape. The Kunsthalle's ruins were dismantled after the war, leaving only Moller's portico – albeit without its gable – as a testament to the past. After the war, the Neue Hessische Kunstverein was founded in 1945, organizing exhibitions for the Darmstadt audience once again, albeit in varying locations. The 1950s marked a new era for the Kunstverein, renamed as the Darmstädter Kunstverein in 1956, as its members decided to construct a new building at the site of the old Kunsthalle. The competition of 1955 was won by the architect Theo Pabst, a professor at the former Technische Hochschule, leading to the construction of a distinctly modern exhibition building in 1957. Characterized by its clear form, simple materials, functional elements, and the interplay between closed and open spaces, the structure exemplifies the architecture of Classical Modernism of the 1950s and stands as a manifesto of post-1945 reconstruction. The new Kunsthalle at Steubenplatz became the sole municipal exhibition venue until it was replaced by the Mathildenhöhe. The Kunstverein's membership soon grew to encompass 800 individuals. The collaboration between the city's society, Neue Darmstädter Sezession, and Kunstverein contributed to Darmstadt's widespread recognition as a cultural city. In 1964, Theo Pabst extended the Kunsthalle to create offices and additional exhibition space. On the occasion of the Kunstverein's 150th anniversary, the building was further expanded and reorganized with the addition of the northern annex in 1987. Since 2014, the Kunstverein's leadership and members have spearheaded a comprehensive restoration of the building while preserving its historical significance. Through public and private funding, the facade, skylight, and building systems have been progressively renewed. Furthermore, a newly designed forecourt was created, enhancing the visibility of the art through the steel-glass facade and inviting visitors to linger. In the same pandemic year of 2020, the state-supported project of the "digital Kunsthalle" was initiated, further advancing the institution's engagement with contemporary modes of presentation and dissemination of art https://www.kunsthalle-darmstadt.de/Geschichte_25_0.html (15.07.2023)



Figure 7 Kunsthalle Darmstadt 1889

Not only in Switzerland and Germany was the last quarter of the 19th century a period of dynamic change; traditional notions of art were being questioned and redefined in many other countries in Central Europe. The comparison to the historical developments in Basel, with a focus on the changing exhibition practices and the introduction of foreign and rebellious art movements is like the Kunsthalle Budapest. Founded in 1877 at 69-71 Andr ssy Street on the initiative of the Hungarian National Fine Arts Association, the original M csarnok (meaning “art hall” in Hungarian) building was later relocated to its current site on Heroes’ Square in 1896. Designed by Albert Schickedanz as part of the millennium celebrations, the new exhibition hall adopted the model of German Kunsthallen, operating as an association-run institution. In many ways, the establishment of Kunsthalle Budapest mirrored the developments seen in Basel and other European cities during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It represented a departure from the traditional, academically oriented art institutions and embraced the spirit of artistic revolt that characterized the era. Like its counterparts in other parts of Europe, Kunsthalle Budapest aimed to provide a platform for contemporary art, welcoming innovative and provocative artistic movements. The parallel trends in Basel and Budapest underscored a broader shift in the art world during this period, where artists sought greater autonomy and audiences desired new artistic perspectives. These developments, with their focus on dynamic

exhibition practices and international exchanges, contributed to shaping the diverse art scenes in both cities, making them important hubs for artistic innovation and cultural exchange in Europe. The architectural layout of the Múcsarnok reflects its distinctive character, featuring a three-bayed, semi-circular apse that houses a roofed exhibition hall, allowing plenty of natural light to enter through the roof.⁹³



Figure 8 Kunsthalle Budapest

⁹³ Following its renovation in 1995, the Múcsarnok has served as a platform for both Hungarian and international contemporary artists, actively mediating and representing modern artistic tendencies. While the institution does not possess its own permanent collection, it plays a vital role in showcasing and promoting diverse artistic practices. Partnered with the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Múcsarnok operates as a significant cultural institution in Hungary. It follows the tradition of Kunsthallen by curating and presenting temporary exhibitions, engaging with contemporary art discourses, and facilitating artistic exchange. By embracing its role as an intermediary between artists and the public, the Múcsarnok actively contributes to the dissemination and representation of modern artistic expressions. <https://www.mucsarnok.hu/kunsthalle/history.php> (15.07.2023)



Figure 9 Kunsthalle Budapest

4 Influence of the “First Museum Reform” and modern avant-gardes in Kunsthallen

The Enlightenment in the 18th century marked an important shift towards a secular and scientific view of the world, which had an impact on various areas, including the arts. This is in line with wider cultural and intellectual movements of time, which later led to the emergence of modernism, which sought to apply scientific methods to the study of society and emphasized rational and objective approaches to all aspects of life, including the arts. This period also saw a move away from the romanticization of art and its creators towards a more analytical and critical view of the role of art in society, its functions and its means of production.⁹⁴ An artwork did not have exceptional quality solely through its proximity to the true, the beautiful, or the good but also because of its exceptional position within the system of art historical categories, as argued by figures like Benedetto Croce, who emphasized art as an expression of individual

⁹⁴ Alexis Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums 1880-1940*, Dresden, Verlag der Kunst, 2001.

emotion and experience beyond classical ideals. One could claim that this is the scientific liberal approach to the arts, understanding art as an object. This object is in front of the spectator, that means it is in radical opposition to it and has nothing to do with everyday life. This constellation has a determining and sustainable effect on the relation between the spectator and the object and in accordance with its receptive behavior. The spectator can approach distanced art objects only from the outside. Confrontation with art objects means then aesthetic experience. Heretofore happens another characteristic of the traditional museum institutions: the art exhibition in this determined sense is then a place of aesthetic experience. Roger Fry and Daniel Bell's insights into traditional museum institutions reveal a more complex understanding of art exhibitions as sites for aesthetic encounters. Fry talks about "significant form" and the emotional response evoked by art, which he points out in "Vision and Design" (1920). For Fry, the artwork serves as an object of aesthetic engagement with the viewer. This suggests that art exhibitions are essentially spaces in which the formal aspects of art and emotional responses are foregrounded. While this seems simple, it was a significant shift in the approach of art institutions that prioritized the aesthetic experience of the viewer. In "The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism" (1976), Daniel Bell examines the interaction between art, aesthetic experience, and the cultural dimensions of capitalism. He points out that museums reflect and are influenced by broader socio-economic forces. According to Bell, the focus of art exhibitions is on the aesthetic experience while the focus in museums is more complex. Museums would seek a balance between valuing art on its aesthetic merits and situating it within broader socio-economic and cultural contexts. Nevertheless, aesthetic access to art was overriding in institutions for art shows and world fairs but not a total priority in museums.

During the 19th century, museums played a pivotal role in collecting, preserving, and displaying artworks, serving as custodians of cultural heritage. They adopted a systematic approach to art display, organizing collections based on historical periods, genres, or artistic movements. This curatorial practice aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of art history and educate the public about artistic achievements. The museum's emphasis on art preservation, historical context, and educational value contributed to a didactic approach to exhibition design. Artworks were often displayed in chronological order or thematic groupings, allowing viewers to follow a narrative and understand the development of artistic styles and ideas over time. However, this approach sometimes limited the engagement with contemporary art and experimental practices, as museums tended to prioritize established artists and canonical artworks.

Meanwhile art shows developed into a major event and satisfied the voyeuristic curiosity of the bourgeoisie, but public exhibitions suddenly were not only a forum of confirmation and

approval for good artistic production or place of rejection but also a place of resistance. An exaggerated and decoratively staged architecture had created the frame for the museum display in which paintings were crowded on the walls. The call for well-arranged specialized exhibitions which would display art aesthetically not as a spectacle was getting louder. Although the time of spectacular exhibitions was not over even in the next centuries, a change in the space organization was getting visible. The excessive ostentation and decoration diminished. In the second half of the 19th century the concept of exhibition was influenced by the great world exhibitions, which were attention grabbing and spectacular events. The *Salon des Refusés* sabotaged the infallibility of the French Academy and in that way, it emphasized the necessity for alternative exhibitions bypassing an institution that controlled the aesthetic taste of the public.

As time went on, the reputation of the Kunstverein exhibitions continued to decline. This was related to the increasing number of exhibited pictures, that were not chosen by a professional selection, which in turn ignited critics of the exhibitions. To rebuild the reputation, the idea came up of reducing the number of paintings for the raffles to save money and buy more valuable works of art for the collection. To become more professional, the exhibition program should be set in advance and the artworks should be selected accordingly instead of taking everything. During the 19th century, almost all Kunstverein exhibitions used to be sales exhibitions, whereas programmatic shows with a certain educational requirement on art history were only organized in the second half of the century by a few art associations. As the art historian Georg Friedrich Koch describes in his book about the history of art exhibitions *Die Kunstausstellung: Ihre Geschichte von den Anfängen bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts* (1967), “the traveling exhibitions, the oeuvre exhibitions of individual artists and the exhibition of closed art schools and artist groups were first developed by the art associations.”⁹⁵ Solo exhibitions devoted to single artists, art schools or art groups as we know them today became popular in the second half of the 19th century. The stylistic pluralism spreading in the early twentieth century forced the Kunstvereine to show more focused exhibitions.

Around 1900, the professionalization of the exhibition principle occurs thanks to the development of new professions, such as curators and art historians, who provided new ways for artists to showcase their works and engage with a wider public. Decisive for these changes was the new discipline of art history. With the progressive accumulation of objects, a choice

⁹⁵ “die Wanderausstellungen, die Oeuvreausstellungen einzelner Künstler und die Ausstellung geschlossener Kunstschulen und Künstlergruppen zuerst mit von den Kunstvereinen entwickelt worden.“ (translated by the author), quoted from: Georg Friedrich Koch, *Die Kunstausstellung. Ihre Geschichte von den Anfängen bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1967, p. 270.

had to be made about which objects should be shown and which disappeared into storage. The criteria for the decision were art historical. These criteria differed from the taste or liking of the public. Art historical criteria determined the quality of works of art, art historians displaced artists as museum directors. What was worth exhibiting was not decided by taste, but according to Art History, a new discipline taught at more and more universities: Strasbourg in 1871, Berlin in 1873, Leipzig in 1882. With scientification, it was possible to judge the quality of a work and thus its market value. The development of autonomy aesthetics had the effect of excluding the viewer more and more. The professional structures of the museum evolved and opened new fields of activity. Works of art were shown in a linear series of pictures, adapted to the eye level and the direction of movement of the museum visitors.⁹⁶ The audience, on the other hand, was asked to know the art historical terms that were decisive for the respective exhibition. In the German Empire, the museum developed into a bourgeois place where this knowledge was important to belong to the bourgeois circles. With the new autonomy of art, it was possible to place different works in new contexts, free of their actual meaning. In the course of time art became a commodity that was promoted and constantly re-traded on the market through the art trade. Only when the work of art entered the museum and was thus withdrawn from the circulation of goods did it lose its monetary value. At this point the paradox should be mentioned that art objects in public museums, despite their exchange value, have no use value. However, this is not the place for a detailed art-historical description of the changes in the museum concept; the focus will be on how that change went hand in hand with the novel development of the Kunsthalle as an institution, the behavior of the recipients and the exhibition practice. More and more people were visiting Kunsthallen and museums, so they became more visitor-oriented in the early 20th century. The didactic approach and public engagement within museums underwent limited reform. However, with the advent of museum education, as museum and Kunsthalle directors recognized the need to involve the public in art education, a transformative shift occurred. The independent aesthetic conception of art, which had led to its separation from everyday life, meant “art” had to be brought to the masses. In addition, exhibitions and collections were organized based on scientific criteria.

Key figures in the field of museum education during this period were Alfred Lichtwark (director of Hamburger Kunsthalle, 1886-1914) and Fritz Wichert (director of Kunsthalle Mannheim, 1909-1922).

⁹⁶ Walter Grasskamp, *Op. cit.*, 1989, p 24.



Figure 10 Hamburger Kunsthalle

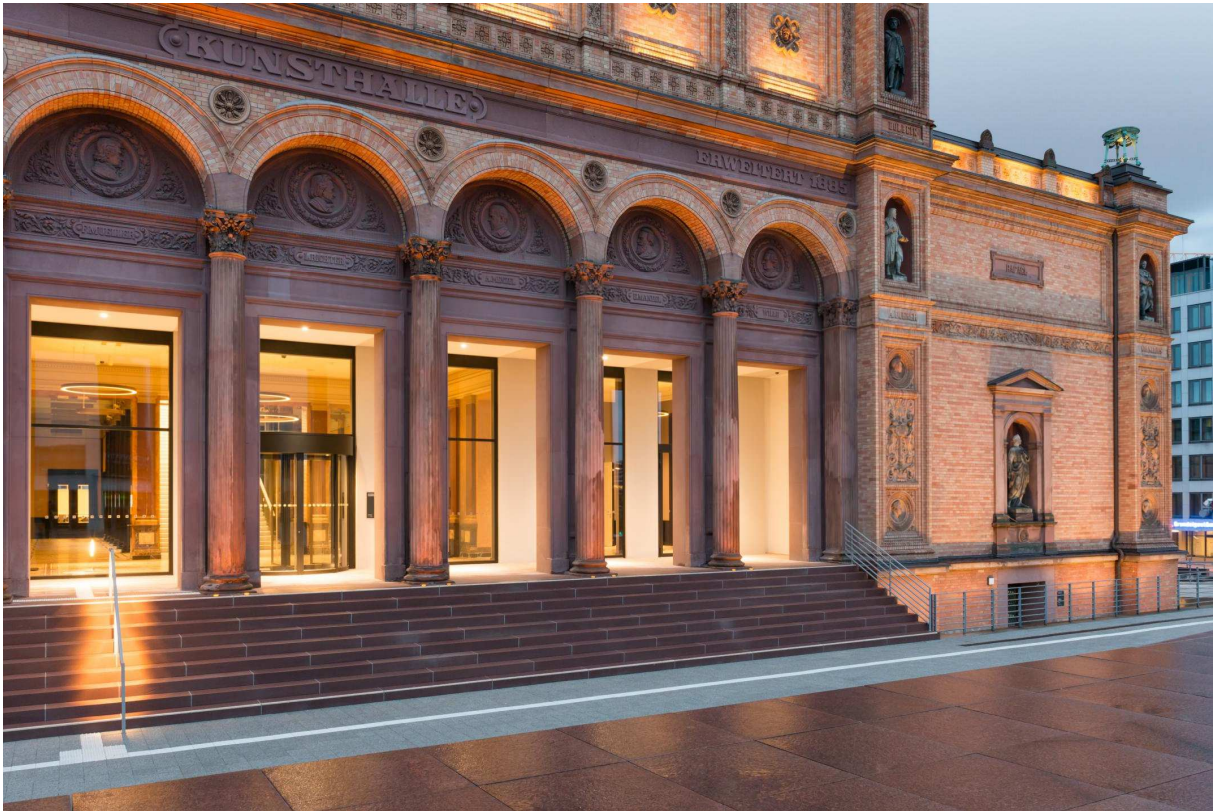


Figure 11 Hamburger Kunsthalle

Under their guidance, public engagement activities such as lectures and guided tours experienced their debut.⁹⁷ These initiatives hoped to revitalize art, most particularly by incorporating the recently emerging modern art movements. For example, Lichtwark early on observed that collections were no longer simply places for the privileged classes to learn about art or leisure, a situation now politically unacceptable. Their expertise was responsible for helping art to develop autonomously, leading to distinctions in art and ordinary life as well as between practitioners and the public. Contemporary art was exposed to the wider public at the Hamburger Kunsthalle under the directorship of Alfred Lichtwark. Nonetheless museum educators were not content solely with providing greater exposure of art but believed in its educational possibilities. Of artistic and educational ancestry, Lichtwark who had already been a teacher before was employed as the director of Hamburger Kunsthalle in 1886. It was during this time that he generally acquired works associated with German Romanticism and French Impressionism. Until today they are still the most significant part of the collection. The Kunsthalle had, in Lichtwark's eyes, come to represent a place for art education and for education through art; a landmark filled with the spirit of the age that would greatly influence the art education movement. The art education movement sprang out of cultural criticism at the dawn of the 20th century. Its aim was to educate society through arts and sports, with aesthetic education serving as a holistic means to re-educate individuals who had become alienated by industrialization. Advocates of the art education movement considered art to possess formative qualities, albeit in competition with mass-produced goods. The Kunsthalle had, in Lichtwark's eyes, come to represent a place for art education and for education through art; a landmark filled with the spirit of the age that would greatly influence the art education movement. The art education movement sprang out of cultural criticism at the dawn of the 20th century.

⁹⁷ Karoline Hille, *Kunsthalle Mannheim*. Munich, New York: Prestel-Verlag, 1994, p. 4.



Figure 12 Hamburger Kunsthalle



Figure 13 Hamburger Kunsthalle

In contrast to the Kunsthalle Basel example, stands the Kunsthalle Mannheim, which opened in 1909, established as a museum, with a large collection of paintings and sculptures. The Kunsthalle's core tasks are conservation, the organization of temporary exhibitions, provenance research and academic work. The institution emphasizes its historical importance and its dedication to the reception and appreciation of various art forms. The Kunsthalle presents itself as a global pioneer in the cause of civic art collections. The Kunsthalle Mannheim, situated in Germany, is considered a model of civic collections, and hosts an array of art from some of the world's most famous figures. The building upon the Jugendstil style architecture, the Kunsthalle Mannheim house was designed by Hermann Billing to mark the city's tricentennial in 1907 and became inaugurated as the city's first museum in 1909.⁹⁸ The institution's journey began in 1907, with the construction of the entrance and staircase hall, which reflected the prevailing concept of museums as sacred temples dedicated to art. However, Mannheim's vision for its cultural identity underwent a significant transformation. In contrast to the traditional idea of museums, the Mannheimer Gallery embraced a forward-thinking motto: "Education through Art." This shift aimed to democratize access to art and cultural heritage, making it inclusive rather than limited to a privileged few. But it would take several years for these ideas to arrive in Mannheim, as the city grappled with its historical identity and sought to establish itself as a cultural hub. Mannheim's history was marked by contrasts. Once a thriving center of culture and science under Elector Carl Theodor in the 18th century, the city's cultural splendor was reduced after the court's relocation to Munich in 1778. Despite Napoleon's efforts to make Mannheim the capital of the new state of Baden, the city remained without a dedicated art museum, despite boasting the second-largest palace in Germany. Mannheim's response to its historical legacy was multifaceted. The city celebrated its 300th anniversary in 1907 with great pride, organizing an "International Art and Grand Horticultural Exhibition" to challenge its reputation as a town that lacks culture. However, the challenge was finding an appropriate location for this ambitious art exhibition. To address this need, the city decided to construct a dedicated exhibition venue on Friedrichsplatz, an area that had recently been transformed into an urban ensemble. This ensemble featured the iconic neoclassical water tower built in 1886, set amid Art Nouveau structures, water features, and gardens. The construction of the Kunsthalle's entrance hall for the Jubilee Exhibition marked the beginning of an ambitious plan, which ultimately included the creation of a museum complex called the Reiß Museum, although these grand plans were never realized.⁹⁹ Wichert laid the groundwork for a modern collection

⁹⁸ Karoline Hille, *Op. cit.*, 1994, p. 5

⁹⁹ Karoline Hille, *Op. cit.*, 1994, p. 7.

through the early acquisition of works from French modernism, including notable artists such as Edouard Manet, Camille Pissarro, and Vincent van Gogh. His successor, Gustav F. Hartlaub (1923-1933), directed his attention primarily towards object-focused post-war art, coining the term “Neue Sachlichkeit” (New Objectivity).¹⁰⁰ Wichert’s visionary perspective engendered a profound transformation within the Kunsthalle, repositioning it as an educational institution accessible to all strata of society. This egalitarian approach sought to democratize access to art and accorded primacy to the significance of contemporary artists and their oeuvre. The institutional framework and collection acquisition strategy that emerged during his stewardship placed particular emphasis on art produced during the 19th and 20th centuries, with a keen eye for works of global eminence.



Figure 14 Kunsthalle Mannheim

The Kunsthalle Mannheim supported avant-garde movements and asserted its role in shaping the reception and understanding of diverse art forms. The institution’s exhibition program is still characterized by an international focus, suggesting an effort to present artworks from

¹⁰⁰ During the period of Nazi dictatorship, Walter Passarge (1936-1958) established a collection of non-controversial modern applied art. Following World War II, under the guidance of Heinz Fuchs (1958-1983) and Manfred Fath (1983-2002), the collection further expanded its emphasis on contemporary sculpture <https://www.kuma.art/de/sammlung> (consulted on 26.04.2023).

different cultural and artistic contexts. Through this approach, the Kunsthalle Mannheim would aim to contribute to the evolving landscape of art reception and interpretation. Its educational program today, known as “Art for All,” is designed to promote inclusivity and ensure that diverse audiences can engage with and appreciate the artworks displayed. This museological commitment mirrors a broader understanding of how different artistic endeavors are received and the importance of the engagement of a cross section of visitors. The first decades of the 20th century were undergirded by a cultural optimism that saw a significant awakening of a sense of the importance of the fostering of artistic creativity and the cultivation of emerging talent in urban centers. It is a period during which the Kunsthalle Mannheim is distinguished by its commitment to the art of its time, as it is to the democratization of cultural engagement that typified many municipalities across Germany with shared aspirations.

The genesis of the Kunsthalle can be traced back to the period following the dissolution of the 1907 Jubilee Exhibition, at which point the nascent institution embarked on the arduous task of building an art collection from the ground up. This process of collection development has, in turn, shaped the very character and identity of the museum. Different from institutions built to house existing collections, or affiliated with various institutional ties, the Mannheim Kunsthalle is distinguished by the way it weaves together architectural form and art content. The reciprocal influence between the Kunsthalle’s historical trajectory and the evolution of its collection is palpable. Within this grand field, French painting of the 19th century held a particularly important position, serving as a shining example for Germany. The museum sought more than just the scarce examples of lasting artwork; it wished to reveal the web of art historical connections. Such was its dual task, involving both a deepening sense about aesthetics and knowledge transfer. Furthermore, The Kunsthalle has consistently shown commitment to sculpture in both its curatorial choices and acquisition strategies. In this way, the institution has already enjoyed a reputation. This is the overriding concept behind the “unity of the arts,” carefully expounded by Fritz Wichert. This idea invites people to look at various art forms within the larger systems of style and development patterns.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ In the year 1979, the municipal governing body of Mannheim sanctioned the initiation of a novel museum building. This architectural endeavor, conceived and executed by the architect Hans Mitzlaff, bore the weighty responsibility of harmoniously integrating into the architectural ensemble of Friedrichsplatz while conforming to spatial constraints. The choice of construction materials, namely red sandstone and green aluminum, conscientiously mirrored the materials employed in the original Billing building, thus achieving a harmonious visual congruence. A significant component of this architectural design was the introduction of a capacious skylit hall serving as an interconnecting conduit between the pre-existing and the newly erected structures. However, it is worth noting that the internal configuration of this skylit hall had undergone a significant transformation, resulting in its division into two separate floors. This spatial element assumed pivotal importance within the exhibition layout, functioning as a central hub facilitating access to various galleries. Cf. Karoline Hille: *Op. Cit.*, 1994, p. 6-8.

Kunsthalle Mannheim's basic attitude, which revolved around promoting artistic innovation and expanding the social role of art, reflects a broader understanding of the reception of different art forms and the importance of involving a wide audience: a genuine museum commitment.¹⁰² Such museological ambitions found a profound resonance in the environs of other art institutions, no matter their name. Thus, the classification of nineteenth-century German art institutions into distinct categories such as Kunsthalle or Contemporary Museum, as delineated by Lorente in his study, is not universally applicable. While it is acknowledged that there were several institutions during this period that did not fit the traditional form of a collecting museum, labeling any organization that did not possess a permanent collection as a Kunsthalle proves to be misleading, even during the early stages of their development. In fact, it was not until the twentieth century that an example of a Kunsthalle purposefully designed and constructed without a permanent collection came into existence: the Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, which was inaugurated in 1909. At the same time this marks the year of the emergence of physical spaces that began to resemble what is now recognized as one of the primary characteristics of contemporary art centers: the presentation of a constantly changing program of temporary exhibitions featuring contemporary art. One notable aspect that seems to have persisted from many 19th-century Kunsthallen is the diverse range of objects displayed within these spaces. As Lorente aptly observes, this definition underscores the concept of the Kunsthalle as a multiplatform exhibition venue, encompassing a range of requirements like those expected of contemporary centers today. However, this passage also underscores the somewhat ambiguous relationship that existed between these Kunsthallen and other museological institutions of the nineteenth century, thereby complicating their classification as mere non-museums.

¹⁰² Today, the self-description presented on the website of the Kunsthalle Mannheim highlights its historical significance, its dedication to showcasing diverse art forms, and its commitment to fostering accessibility and inclusivity in the reception of art. <https://www.kuma.art/de/kunsthalle-mannheim> (5.1.2023). This institution's self description rather resembles a museum. This raises a question here: why is it still named Kunsthalle?



Figure 15 Kunsthalle Baden-Baden



Figure 16 Kunsthalle Baden-Baden

The “Freie Künstlervereinigung Baden e.V.” (Free Artists’ Association of Baden) wanted to have an exhibition building of its own as the previous one, “Haus Pagenhardt” – today the theatre’s stage house – was no longer adequate for the association’s requirements. Therefore, the chairman of the artists’ association Robert Engelhorn, the painter Karl Hollmann and the banker Emil Meyer decided to erect a building for the permanent exhibition of art from Baden and to set up a fund for its operation. The building was designed by Hermann Billing and was built in 1909 in the park “Lichtentaler Allee”. Because a two-winged structure with a central risalit above the entrance was financially not possible, the building was reduced to its present form. The neo-classical building is erected on a slope and the entrance to the building is in Lichtentaler Allee. The façade is closed and there is only one row of windows on the ground floor. Architect Billing used Greek architecture and made the building in Lichtentaler Allee look like a temple. From the outside as well as from the inside the building was completed gradually by artworks. The Institution’s historical development is emblematic of the changing landscape of art reception, as traditional museum structures were contested during the Museum Reform Bewegung (Museum Reform Movement) and new venues were founded to assimilate

the changed artistic expressions of the period. Kunsthalle Baden-Baden defined itself as a key player in this, maintaining the ongoing discourse around contemporary art.¹⁰³



Figure 17 Kunsthalle Bern

In this period, it was a common feature for Kunsthallen in general – even if no specialisation was declared either by name or statutes. Another well-known example of this is Kunsthalle Bern – a very prominent platform for contemporary art exhibitions and cultural discourse in the early 20th century. Founded in 1918, Kunsthalle Bern was the first institution of its kind in Switzerland and has a long tradition of offering innovative and thought-provoking exhibitions. Since its inception, the institution has been dedicated to inspiring critical dialogue, presenting emerging voices, as well as established international artist. By opening itself up to a plethora

¹⁰³ As a state institution, the Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden also pointedly references its cooperation with the Museum Frieder Burda. The private collection is linked to the state institution by a bridge, the architectural symbol of the visual cooperation since 2004, located near both establishments. Furthermore, the Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden maintains an association known as the Freunde der Staatlichen Kunsthalle Baden-Baden e.V., whose primary purpose is to ideally support the exhibition and lecture programs. In emphasizing these cooperations and structures, the presentation history of the Kunsthalle Baden-Baden makes clear that it is a question of strategically and continuously forming cooperations, coupling public and private galleries, and to establish a network of supports to improve its commitment to exhibition and educational ventures <https://kunsthalle-baden-baden.de/en/kunsthalle-en/#ausstellungsgeschichte-1587493605699> (21.04.2020, 20:39).

of art forms, Kunsthalle Bern has played a primary role in shaping the reception and understanding of contemporary art in Switzerland and even further afield.

The exhibition history of the Kunsthalle Bern is marked by a program that has continuously responded to the ever-evolving discourses that shape artistic practice. Its exhibitions have been nothing short of an iconoclastic, reframing artistic endeavours across a range of media in relation to a particular cultural and social context. From their publications, lectures, symposiums and educational initiatives, the institution has sought to foster critical discourse and artistic experimentation. This has created a discursive environment that has actively engaged the culture of contemporary art, serving as a platform for interdisciplinary dialogue. This commitment to fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of contemporary art has solidified Kunsthalle Bern's reputation as an influential institution within the international art community.



Figure 18 Kunsthalle Bern

Now this institution stands as an influential force in the art world, with a history characterized by its dedication to presenting cutting-edge exhibitions, promoting artistic dialogue, and shaping the reception of different art forms.¹⁰⁴ With the respected exhibition history of the Kunsthalle Bern, it has brought up great discussions among the public through its engagement

¹⁰⁴ <https://kunsthalle-bern.ch/institution/> (09.07.2023)

and the fostering of critical dialogue. As a result, many art institutions have started to cater to the tastes of the public to attract them. The art associations of the Secessionism movement were the first to hold such subversive shows by major exponents of their own genre.¹⁰⁵ To understand the effect of the avant-garde movement and its impact on the formation of exhibition institutions; it is necessary to explain these terms related to event art and experience art. The avant-gardes opened the path of abstract art which thus became the path of art into autonomy. For the abstract work of art renounces all narrative or imitative meaning, thus cutting its ties to real life, it is empty of a message. The simplest means, and not the natural world, thus art should be reduced to form and color only. This separation of form and color from image began with Impressionism. For the recipient detachment from nature means detachment from rational seeing.

Thus, when viewing a work of art, the recipient must renounce the representational world as a reference and contemplate artworks as a purely sensual experience. In view of this fact, it becomes clear that abstract art has adapted to the concept of an isolated work transformed into an aesthetic object, while the museum notion became the highest point for the autonomation of art, opposing art movements formed that attempted to change the Western concept of art. Later on, the European avant-gardes criticized the bourgeois conception of art and tried to lead art out of its isolation towards social impact. Then art would change from object to action and the viewer increasingly became an actor.

In this context of changing dynamics of art institutions and the avant-garde movements, the establishment of Göteborgs Konsthall bears historical significance. The art hall was inaugurated during the Grand Jubileum Exhibition, commemorating Gothenburg's 300th anniversary, in 1923, a comprehensive art exhibition showcasing contemporary Nordic art was presented, with Göteborgs Konsthall serving as the venue for the Norwegian segment of the exhibition. This celebratory event witnessed the construction of several notable buildings, including Göteborgs Konsthall, Gothenburg Museum of Art, Liseberg amusement park, and the botanical garden. The event included notable works by artists such as Edward Munch, contributing to the artistic richness and cultural significance of the celebration. The architectural design of Göteborgs Konsthall was conceived by architects Sigfrid Ericson and Arvid Bjerke, who also designed the adjacent art museum. The building's facades feature distinctive yellow-gray bricks provided by Lomma Brick Factory. Notably, the facade facing Götaplatsen encompasses three vaulted

¹⁰⁵ Cf.: Schmitz, Op. cit., 2001, p. 263.

niches adorned with sculptures crafted by artist Palle Pernevi.¹⁰⁶ This was much like the symbolic architecture of museums, but the entire concept of an exhibition setting was under reconsideration.



Figure 19 Göteborg Konsthall

Avant-garde movements inevitably transformed relationships between creator and observer, necessitating changes in conceptualizations of both artists and the galleries displaying their works. Creators drew spectators into pieces and fashioned them active ingredients, so art existed no more as timeless objects but instead unfolded in the living present as ephemeral exposures, as epitomized by fleeting exhibitions within Kunsthalle's walls. For avant-gardists, enactment grew integral to fresh understandings of art's nature. This reimagining of themselves as artists found voice also in abandoning sole reliance on technical skills to share notions, instead

¹⁰⁶ Recognizing its architectural and historical value, Göteborgs Konsthall was designated as a significant structure in 2017 by the County Administrative Board. This recognition highlighted the building's classicistic style, characteristic of its era, as well as its noteworthy artistic and architectural elements manifested in both its interior and exterior spaces. Over the years, the management of activities within Göteborgs Konsthall has been entrusted to various organizations. Since 2001, it has operated as a division of the Cultural Affairs Administration under the auspices of the City of Gothenburg, contributing to the city's vibrant cultural scene and enriching the artistic discourse within the region. Cf.: <https://goteborgskonsthall.se/en/about-us/history-of-goteborgs-konsthall/> (15.07.2023)

adopting theoretical frameworks to structure social realities. Avant-garde art is no longer the product that comes at the end of the creative process, but a means of structuring social life, an instrument to express an idea. Creation becomes the central component of the work of art; it can no longer express itself solely by means of its sensual appearance. It only becomes fully comprehensible when the context of its creation is known.



Figure 20 Kunsthalle Helsinki

Taking such transformation into account, it would be relevant to consider parallel developments that took place in the middle of the 1900s. As the capital of Finland, Helsinki was faced with a particularly protracted debate over the sore need for a new art gallery. The debate had run for almost thirty years until Kunsthalle Helsinki, with all the treasures shown within its walls first saw the light in the spring of 1928. With no contemporary art gallery, people in Helsinki wanted to know where they could see contemporary art. When there were plans for what was to be a new “art palaces” the question provoked much discussion—plans that brought forth diverse proposals about sites and designs. Yet none of these projects ever left the drawing board, much less were acts. Faced with this stalemate, the artists of Helsinki approached the government with a proposal to erect their own art gallery on Nervanderinkatu Street, located in Töölö. The designing of the building was placed in the hands of Jarl Eklund (1876–1962) and Hilding

Ekelund (1893–1984), who had been awarded first place in an invitation contest held in 1927. The commissioning of Kunsthalle Helsinki in 1927 by the Kunsthalle Helsinki Foundation marked a significant milestone in providing a purpose-built venue for contemporary art. The foundation's mission explicitly stated that the gallery was to showcase Finnish and international visual art, industrial design, and architecture. The realization of the project owed much to the support and financial contributions of corporate sponsors and patrons. Notable donations came from influential figures such as industrialist Gösta Serlachius, newspaper publisher Amos Anderson, businessman Salomo Wuorio, and industrialist Jalo Sihtola, who later joined this distinguished group of patrons. On March 3, 1928, Kunsthalle Helsinki celebrated its inaugural exhibition, reminiscent of the Paris Salon, with art covering the walls from floor to ceiling. The first show featured works by an impressive roster of 135 Finnish artists.¹⁰⁷



Figure 21 Kunsthalle Helsinki

Meanwhile, whereas some Kunsthallen became identified with the latest in art, museums specializing in contemporary art were quite rare during the Weimar Republic and the traditional structure of fine art museums remained largely unchanged in Germany. This is not to say that

¹⁰⁷ <https://taidehalli.fi/en/history/> (15.07.2023)

modern art avantgardes were alien to museums, as some of the most radical museographical changes of the Museum Reform Bewegung can be linked to modern artists and their supporters. Let us consider Alexander Dorner, director of the Landesmuseum in Hanover, an important reformer of museum exhibition design. He had come as a custodian to the Landesmuseum in Hannover and took over in 1925 in the age of 30 years as the youngest museum director in Germany. During his studies and his museum work, he concluded that the time had come to change the museum in several points. Dorner was interested in contemporary art and incorporated it into his progressive museum concept. He invited many artists to realize their ideas on exhibition design for modern art. To break with the cult of genius, the works were arranged according to a concept of developmental history. In contrast to the Wilhelminian exhibition practice of the Gründerzeit, Dorner set bourgeois-emancipatory modes of functioning. Probably the most famous result of a collaboration between an artist and Dorner is the *Kabinett des Abstrakten* (Cabinet of the Abstract) (1926-1928), which can still be seen today as a permanent reconstruction in the Sprengel Museum in Hanover. The cabinet comes as a close collaboration between the artist El Lissitzky and art historian and curator Alexandre Dorner. He believed in the need for new exhibition formats for abstract art which would include the possibility for the spectator to interact with the art works and the exhibition spaces. The *Kabinett des Abstrakten* was a room of 20m² in the exhibition area to display works by constructivist and abstract painters. More than a container for the paintings and sculptures on view, it was an arty devise presenting itself as a work of art that seemed to change depending on the viewer's point of view due to the reflections of some materials, the distribution of color on the surfaces. Movable partitions and rotating showcases created changing viewing conditions and involve the viewer. The designed room exclusively featured works from the Expressionists to abstract artists.

The example of El Lissitzky's *Kabinett des Abstrakten* is a good way of explaining the connection between patterns of perception and the generating of a public. The neutrality of the exhibition space, which was supposed to encourage contemplation, was thus critically turned on its head. The *Kabinett des Abstrakten* demanded the commitment of the recipient and in this way made a participant out of him. In addition to color and movement prompts, other artworks were also placed in the cabinet. It can thus be concluded that El Lissitzky did not want to fill a room with objects for display, but rather to design a space. On closer inspection, it also becomes clear that this space, which explicitly demanded the activity of the recipient, formed a new audience and became a place of communication. In that way El Lissitzky broke through conventional modes of reception and activated the audience. Such novel methods of presenting

art were adopted by curators and exhibition designers. Dorner's lifework as a curator was the attempt to overcome what was determined as the traditional museum (i.e. distance of art and life) and went beyond with his museum conception what his colleagues demanded. It was not enough to transform the museum into a visitor friendly educational institution, in which the people could learn and take delight on the achievements of the past. For Dorner there was no separation between art and life praxis. The examination of the artistic works and their presentation in the museum was a possibility for the viewers to experience themselves as social and historical beings. Contemporary art, which confronted the viewer with its current state must have been of great interest. Dorner however cared to the same extent the mediation of past époques. Also, he tried to present more than just art objects of past times. It was important to him to detect with the museum presentation the cultural, social, and also immediate existential background, which led to the development of particular art forms and styles. The life of the past and the present should be experienced through the artworks. A conception such as Dorner's which endeavours to bring together art and life is based on an understanding of art which differentiates fundamentally from the romantic understanding of art of the autonomous artwork. In his art theoretical studies, he dealt intensively with the traditional idea of art with the aim to reform it, to understand it in a new manner. His whole museum work bases on this new idea of art, one could even say that his museum reform represents the attempt to put his art historical theories into practice. Samuel Cauman wrote in his Dorner biography, that for him the art museum expresses in all its appearances his art philosophy.¹⁰⁸ In *Überwindung von Kunst* his art theoretical main work, Dorner calls the art museum in Hannover "a laboratory for the new philosophy of the art history."¹⁰⁹

The importance of art history in Dorner's work can only be shortly hinted here; however, for a better understanding of his museographical conception and for the further argumentation in this study it is important to give a brief information about his thinking. He developed an idea of art which met the needs of the fundamental change of art from the end of the 19th century. In the beginning of his art theoretical main work *Überwindung der Kunst* he described the difficulties to find the right words, to grasp the core of his new art theory: according to him his work could be called *Die Selbstveränderung der Kunst* ("The self-transformation of the art").¹¹⁰ This formulation clarifies already the important main features of his theory. Dorner was convinced, that "art" is fundamentally not a fixed on the surface changeable state, but a sequence of

¹⁰⁸ Samuel Cauman, *Das lebende Museum – Erfahrungen eines Kunsthistorikers und Museumdirektors: Alexander Dorner*. Hannover: 1960, p. 50.

¹⁰⁹ Alexander Dorner, *Überwindung der „Kunst“*. Hannover: 1959, p. 19.

¹¹⁰ Cf.: Dorner, *Op. cit.*, 1959, p. 18.

explosive evolutionary processes in which this state dissolves. The art as an unchangeable notion developed only from a series of ideas which had nothing to do with “art.” The changes in art are so fundamental, that one cannot speak about an essential identity of this phenomenon. Ultimately it turns out to be unreasonable to call everything equally “art,” as this change reached such a degree of transformation, that the term “art” cannot be stretched further without still ceasing to mean something. Dorner’s thought about the change of the art developed against the background of the artistic revolution of the Abstraction, especially of the Constructivism or rather the Suprematism. The abstraction represents for Dorner the significant turning point in the art history, in which the term “art” has been applied hitherto, in the sense of his theory becomes questionable. He followed on El Lissitzky’s theoretical statements, who was in his 1922 essay *Überwindung der Kunst* convinced that the term ‘art’ was rather pointless for the works of Constructivism. With the immaterial painting the arts reached in the conventional sense its end. The term “art” lost its sense. El Lissitzky proposed for the description of the new artistic phenomenon, which engage in the requirements of the new era introduce a term in which the end of the previous art resonates: *Proun*.

“Der Name Proun bedeutete für uns die Station auf dem Weg der schöpferischen Gestaltung der neuen Form, die aus der Erde wächst, die mit den toten Körpern des Bildes und der Künstler gedüngt ist.”¹¹¹

Dorner took up the thought of dissolution of the art in the 20th century as a central motive of his art philosophy. He did not content himself to put the term art in quotes and did not decide to use a new term for the art after the art like El Lissitzky did. Dorner’s thought processes of the dissolution or at least relativisation of the *Kunstbegriff* is for the context of this survey of great interest. They meet in lot of different ways the key issues of this work about a possibility of an art museum in a time after the “art.” Thus, the artwork no longer functions as a purely aesthetic object, but conveys a sensual experience, acquiring a new meaning and, therefore, the meaning of the concept of art itself changes.

The artwork, which corresponds to a limited *Kunstbegriff* or rather the understanding of autonomous art became an aesthetic object. Ernesto Grassi calls such museum setting the

¹¹¹ “The name Proun meant for us the station on the way of creative shaping of the new form growing from the earth fertilized with the dead bodies of the image and the artists” (translated by the author), Lissitzky 1922, quoted from: Norbert Nobis, *El Lissitzky 1890 – 1941 – Retrospektive. Sprengel Museum Hannover*. Frankfurt a. M. and Berlin: Verlag Ullstein 1998, p. 71.

“expression of the aesthetic attitude.”¹¹² Out of the constellation of the juxtaposition arises the encounter form between artwork and spectator which is of great meaning for this context: the autonomous artwork is aesthetically perceived by the distanced spectator. The encounter of the autonomous artwork and the recipient will be called here as a *sensual-aesthetic experience*. The art, which is based on an autonomous *Kunstabgriff*, and which is perceived aesthetically, will further be called *experience-art*. Hence, when the work of art influences the viewer, an aesthetic experience is created. This can be described with various adjectives. In Heidegger’s sense, the objects of art are not of the world, but produce the world. Art, then, are not objects of cognition, but reveal the world in which cognition first becomes possible. In his 1935-37 essay *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger comments on the work of art thus:

“ [...] So wäre, denn das Wesen der Kunst dieses: das Sich-ins-Werk-Setzen der Wahrheit des Seienden. Aber bislang hatte es die Kunst doch mit dem Schönen und der Schönheit zu tun und nicht mit der Wahrheit. Diejenigen Künste, die solche Werke hervorbringen, nennt man im Unterschied zu den handwerklichen Künsten, die Zeug verfertigen, die schönen Künste. In der schönen Kunst ist nicht die Kunst schön, sondern sie heißt so, weil sie das Schöne hervorbringt. Wahrheit dagegen gehört in die Logik. Die Schönheit aber ist der Ästhetik aufbehalten. ”¹¹³

That is truth: in a content-divided world and to man as such. In this fashion, if the world discloses its existence in art; an artistic event reveals the world for Heidegger. An event of art and art as experience can be distinguished by their relation to the world. If the work of art exists as an object, then the recipient stands opposite it. Heidegger claimed that art is not in this world, but rather it opens the world. What Heidegger meant when he said this was that the artwork is where the world is actually located. The recipient is not any longer confronting it but rather “in it.” Everything there is and happens, that is what the term 'world' means to Heidegger. Instead of a place where man lives in other words, but in an ontological sense. This is what being-in-the-world is. There are three structural elements to *In-der-Welt-Sein* (Being-in-the-world). Heidegger does not explain what the world is, but names what happens. The name of what

¹¹² Cf.: Ernesto Grassi, *Die Theorie des Schönen in der Antike*. Köln: 1980, p. 97.

¹¹³“Thus, the essence of art would be this: the putting into work of the truth of being. But up to now art has been concerned with beauty and the beautiful and not with truth. Those arts that produce such works are called the fine arts, in contrast to the handicraft arts that produce stuff. In the beautiful arts, it is not the art that is beautiful, but it is called so because it produces the beautiful. Truth, on the other hand, belongs to logic. Beauty, however, is reserved for aesthetics.” (translated by the author). Martin Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes", in: *Holzwege*. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1980, S. 21-37, here p. 21. *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1960.

world means remains around the field of its actions and effects. To explain Heidegger's terminology would go beyond the scope given here. What is important for the present analysis is the fact that the art event reveals its reality to the viewer. Art therefore not only has an aesthetic effect, but also creates meaning and in this way, man can recognize their role in the world.

This principle is important for this study because it assumes that Kunsthallen developed into a special medium where exhibitions would convey an idea, a concept, by means of the artworks. In contrast to museums, apart from exceptional cases as the short-lived experience of the Kabinett des Abstrakten in Landesmuseum Hannover, Kunsthallen would not educate about the arts, but by means of art. In Heidegger's terms, the reception of art is a subject-oriented, sensual, understanding act, he presents an understanding of art that opposes that of the art museum. Art becomes autonomous by abandoning its existence as an aesthetic object. This also means that this art is no longer only sensually-experiential, which is why the role of the viewer changes. He is no longer only a sensually perceiving recipient. Heidegger's concept of the event is important for this thesis because the event is the opposite of the aesthetic experience. In the previous explanations, it was pointed out that the art museum had forced and institutionalized the separation between art and life, thus making the work of art an autonomous object of aesthetic experience. Conversely, this means that this institution can only function if this understanding of art and aesthetic reception exist. This is where the concept of a Kunsthalle comes in because it does not function through aesthetic experience, but in the sense of Heidegger, through the event. The present study builds on the fact that Kunsthalle is more compatible with the developing modern concept of art and that it can function as a medium by means of the expanded concept of art.

5 Modern paradigms inspired by Kunsthallen

The modern avant-gardes had a lasting influence on art institutions and became the founders of the present exhibition concepts. As previously mentioned, the innovative director Alexander Dorner demonstrated a keen interest in the work of contemporary artists during his tenure. To incorporate their ideas into the Landesmuseum in Hanover, he extended invitations to select artists, inviting them to create displays of modern art that could be integrated within the museum's arrangement of historical galleries. Dorner departed from the conventional view of the museum as a tool for educating visitors about art, instead conceiving it as an informational institution that would illustrate the evolution of the human spirit through artistic endeavors. He

transformed the static art-historical temple into a dynamic institution. Dorner gave important impulses in the museum culture in the 20th century as his concept of museum gets closer in many points to the idea of a museum as a place of experience. He reorganised the collection in Hanover and developed in close cooperation with artists new presentations forms, which were appropriate with the new developments in the arts. He succeeded to continue his work at the museum after the national-socialistic takeover until he had to emigrate to the USA in 1936, where he continued his work.

There, Alfred Barr Jr. would take his mantle as uppermost modern curator in a cultural context ripe for such influence. Following the impact of the Armory Show in 1913 on the American art scene, which was dominated by European art and its aesthetic theories, new art museums flourished in America. Many benefited from President Roosevelt's New Deal government, which aimed to discharge the consequences of the Great Depression, as a series of programs, projects, and reforms between 1933 to 1936. One of these was the Federal Art Project (FAP), which helped artists to work for public institutions. That means the FAP was supposed to support American art to develop. During and after World War II many immigrants came to the U.S.A., among them avant-garde artists from Europe, which was destroyed by the war, fascism and its idealistic combination of aesthetics and society lost its validity. The U.S. experienced an economic boom after the war and, in conjunction with European immigrants, it appears that one possibility is to reinvent pure American art. In the mid-1950s, Abstract Expressionism prevailed as genuine American art. The institutional epitome of this canon of modernity would be the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. The concept of modernity finds its profound significance within the framework of MoMA. Although the term itself lacks precise definition, its meaning relies heavily on the ideas and characteristics associated with modernity. Broadly used to refer to art produced from approximately 1870 onward, the term "modern" had served as part of a series of designations denoting chronological order; but for Barr "modern" aimed to signify the new and progressive in contrast to "old" art.¹¹⁴

As a matter of fact, most American museums during that period predominantly focused on historic art, thereby evading the task of defining what modern art truly encompassed. The very name "Museum of Modern Art" suggests that such institution in New York was dedicated to the exploration of modern art. However, this presented an inherent challenge, as modernity is characterized by its perpetual state of renewal. Consequently, this implies that MoMA should continually adapt and transform its collections and exhibitions to keep on with the evolving

¹¹⁴ Jesús Pedro Lorente, *The Museums of Contemporary Art: Notion and Development*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011, p. 152.

nature of modernity. Gertrude Stein commented on this conflict that the MoMA could not be a museum and be modern. This assertion underscores the inherent tension between the conventional notion of a museum, which preserves and presents historical artifacts, and the dynamic nature of modernity, which is constantly pushing the boundaries of artistic expression and innovation. Alfred H. Barr wanted to write and expand a linear history of the development of art on the one hand, but on the other hand, in keeping with the museum's name, he wanted a constant renewal. Older works of art should be replaced by newer ones. For this purpose, a period of 10 years was set at first, but later extended to 50 years. In a fundraising brochure, Barr defined the term "modern art" as:

*"Modern art" is a relative, elastic term that serves conveniently to designate painting, sculpture, architecture, and the other visual arts, original and progressive in character, produced especially within the last three decades but including also pioneer ancestors of the nineteenth century.*¹¹⁵

Through its endeavors, MoMA pioneered the model of modernism and concurrently elevated various art forms to the same stature as painting. One of MoMA's most significant contributions was the establishment of dedicated departments for painting, sculpture, drawing, printmaking, and architecture, along with the recognition and promotion of photography and industrial design as esteemed artistic disciplines. Another important innovation was to offer a wide range of educational opportunities. As an educational center, the museum was to actively communicate and educate about art. MoMA wanted to offer temporary exhibitions, but also have its own collection. The controversy between "modern" and "contemporary" and "European" and "North American" art developed and with it a conflict between collectors and artists. MoMA bowed to the rich collectors, since its functioning depended on their support. For the museum's continued success, Barr planned for growth, but he also wanted to remove some from the collection. He was willing to exchange modern avant-garde art for abstract expressionist works by Pollock.

Abstract Expressionism successfully became the legitimation for the USA to become leading power in the international art scene. To keep its identity and authority modernism should not be affected by external factors, but should rather be self-interested and create its own, ideal, and subjective system. This system became dominant, and its regulations were generally accepted and institutionalized in the political and economic system. From its inception, MoMA

¹¹⁵ Alfred J. Barr quoted from: Jesús Pedro Lorente, *Op. cit.*, 2011, p. 153.

distinguished itself from other museums in the city by its proximity to the business sector, which, in turn, influenced its mode of operation. Rather than primarily engaging with artists, MoMA aimed to function as a business entity within Manhattan. Consequently, the museum adopted advertising methods from the commercial world, utilizing print and radio media as well as organizing private events.¹¹⁶ This again led to a change within the art institution itself. As the institutions were influenced by the dominant modernist cultural concept, they restructured from hierarchy to network. This standardized concept soon began to exclude other art practices. During the war and in the post-war period, the MoMA devoted itself mainly to travelling exhibitions. Above all, they were a very suitable format for quickly and safely establishing the institution. But the traveling exhibitions also played an important role in the national and international expansion of American cultural policy. Nelson Rockefeller, who was on the Board of Committees at the MoMA and, at the same time, in the Office for Inter-American Affairs in Washington during the war, commissioned the museum with temporary exhibitions that were to travel through Latin America.¹¹⁷

Another influential figure in New York modern art scene was Marcel Duchamp, who put in an indirect way but significant effect the art system into question. Duchamp did not fulminate against the museums like the futurists; he underwent its structures by showing artworks, which were the exact opposite of what the bourgeois art accepted as art. His criticism of the bourgeois exhibiting praxis, to which also the museal presentation belong happened with his *readymades*. He isolated the objects from their everyday context und presented them as art in the art institution. In that way he confused the already effective principles of the bourgeois art scene, the principle of the created original and the principle of the clear division of life sphere and art sphere. By putting a conventional, industrially produced object by attaching a signature into the museum he called it art. By that he convulsed the familiar relation between spectator and artwork, the understanding of art and by that the whole exhibiting situation. The autonomous realm of the art and the museum is suspended. With Duchamp's *readymades* the borders of art and everyday life fall.

*“Duchamp brachte nicht die Kunst in den Alltag, sondern, den Alltag und seine Gegenstände in die Kunst und ihre museal abgedichtete Zirkulationssphäre.”*¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ In 1933, the museum director Alfred J. Barr hired a full-time publicist to actively shape and cultivate MoMA's institutional image. Cf. Jesús Pedro Lorente, *Op. cit.* 2011, p. 148.

¹¹⁷ Jesús Pedro Lorente: *Op. cit.*, p. 181.

¹¹⁸ *“Duchamp did not bringt the art into everyday life, but the everyday life and its objects into art and its museum sealed circulation sphere.”* (translated by the author), Walter Grasskamp: *Op. cit.*, 1981, p. 62.

Duchamp entered the closed realm of bourgeois museum institutions and underwent their authority by exhibiting a pissoir. In a certain sense it was not even an exhibition but an exhibiting performance. The art object, which was until that moment obviously the centre of an exhibition and of all museum's actions (collecting, preserving, exhibiting, mediating) and it became in that way questionable. For the first time the question "what is art?" was raised in the holy halls of those institutions whose self-conception hitherto based on its indubitability. The exhibition venue itself and the museum are problematised by putting non-art-foreign objects into the art sphere. The artist directs the attention to the presentation frame and its relation to the artwork: in what extent is the value of an artwork dependent that the frame in which it is shown is taken by the public, as an art space. The effect of Duchamp's readymades shows that the museum does not function like a neutral art case, in which art is stored and presented. What is more decisive is if the object is seen as an artwork or not. In Duchamp's case the complexity of the constellation between spectator and concept art becomes obvious. Viewing art is not a passive consumption of the aesthetic shine of art objects. In an installation of 1942 Duchamp thematises the direct relation between spectator and artwork. Duchamp stretched in the exhibition *First papers of Surrealism* (1942) a string through the whole exhibition room so the visitors could hardly enter and walk through.¹¹⁹ The exhibition itself was relatively conventional. There were paintings and drawings of the Surrealism of the European avant-garde. But Duchamp made this exhibition situation impossible with his installation which he called *A Mile String*. The artworks were partially stretched so much that it was not possible to watch the other artworks. With his stretchings Duchamp confused the whole exhibiting situation. The visitors with their bourgeois reception expectation must have felt to be in the wrong place and unavoidably wonder which role they played in this situation. The exhibition venue as a space for art lost with Duchamp its obvious function rules and became an unusual and difficult space. It is obvious that in such an exhibition situation the art is only an indirect topic of presentation. The exhibition frame is in the centre itself, the relation between the spectator and art itself. And by that the spectator becomes a part of the exhibition. The visitor does not experience primarily the art but him or herself.

Duchamp's artworks are subtle and at the same time highly a differentiate analysis and criticism of the museum institution. His artistic statements are not destructive and warlike but constructive and playful. By putting everyday objects into the art context, he plays on the one

¹¹⁹ Cf.: Calvin Tomkins, *Eine Biographie*, Munich: 1999, p. 388.

hand with the difference of art and everyday life and on the hand with the museumization of everyday life. Those games can only function as long as the museum stays in its traditional structures and thus the difference between art and non-art remains unchanged. Werner Hoffman says at this point that those gestures of presentation of the readymades in the museums are an essential prerequisite.¹²⁰ With his exhibition installation Duchamp leads the visitor out of his previous situation to the artworks and its presentation frame and forces him to perceive himself and the reception frame which is the museum: making aware through making it impossible of the familiar.

With this form of reflexive awakening with the so far hermetical museum institution, Duchamp lays the foundation for the development of the modern art museum.¹²¹ There were always doubts whether the museum is the right place for the presentation of art. Here it is important to raise the question: What is art which needs to be shown? Where does the need come from to show art, to exhibit art? How was art before? Was it called art before that? How did the art develop with knowing about being exhibited? A question would be if artworks can unfold their effect outside of the context they were created for. Is the museum a good space for art or is it a dying space?¹²² Importantly, this shift in perspective also encompasses the physical space in which the artwork is situated. Curators began to recognize that artworks not only occupy physical space but also shape and define it. Consequently, the curation of the exhibition space itself became a critical aspect of intellectual conceptualization. This development originated with European curators, notably Dorner, who can be considered precursors to the modern curator.

But let us resume the chain of thoughts of the previous chapter in which it was shown that for Dorner the creative forms of expression developed in such a manner that the traditional Kunstbegriff finally becomes useless. The modernistic view on art looks at great paintings made by creative geniuses and are eternally valid. Therefore, art has an ahistorical essence. To the arts one can count the *Cave of Lascaux*, *The Nightwatch* by Rembrandt or Andy Warhol's

¹²⁰ Quoted from: Wieland Schmied, "Der Auftrag lautet Gegenwart. Gedanken zu einem erweiterten Museum", in Gerhard Bott, *Das Museum der Zukunft*. Cologne: Du Mont, 1970, p. 248-255, here p. 249.

¹²¹ This was followed in the artistic way by Marcel Broodthaers and in the curatorial way by Michael Fehr. Duchamp's examination with the art institutions proved as very complex and multi-layered. This inconsistency and contradiction in the attitude to museums is a characteristic sign for lot of artists in the 20th century. On the one hand the museum is for them and their work a desirable place, in which it will be decided if they go down in art history or not. On the other hand, it embodies the bourgeois traditions and values to whom it declared a war. Only a few artists dealt with this discussion about the museum. Some of those artistic museum projects had a sustainable influence on the development of the museum in the 20th century. Two of those important artistic museum concepts, were Marcel Broodthaers and Joseph Beuys. Museum critique is as old as the museum institutions itself.

¹²² For museum critique see also: Grasskamp 1981, Sheehan 2002, 207f, Kravagna 2001 (Christian Kravagna, *Das Museum als Arena – Institutionskritische Teste von KünstlerInnen*. Köln: 2001)

Campbell Soup Cans. This inspired André Malraux, whose imaginary museum consists of art works which can be mechanically reproduced and are in that way subjected to a discursive practice which is art history. That means that what we understand as art is a product of the museum and the art historical discipline. The idea that art is autonomous and detached from everything that makes it a part of art history is what modernism teaches us. However, this traditional notion of the passive spectator has been overshadowed by an expanded spectrum of experiences facilitated through physical interaction and active participation by the recipient. The reception of art has been widely researched. Works of art are no longer just objects, but encompass an active process. The role of artists has been redefined, becoming service providers who facilitate experiential encounters rather than simply producing cultural artifacts. This reassessment of values has deconstructed the traditional understanding of the artwork as art object and icon and has led to a new understanding of artistic practice.¹²³ The artists new task is not to create art-objects anymore but to design material, tools and spaces through which the public will be involved into an experience process. The development of the public itself presents art as an undertaking of collaboration that is based on the active involvement and participation of those who receive it. Through its active participation and by becoming a part of the artistic scene, the individual receives an insight into himself and is able to experience his own intellectual depths. Within this new public, the distinction between traditional artistic genres will vanish ordering every artwork to communicate directly with the public. And so, reality, as it presents itself to us, will become the scene of an artistic meeting. In the new artistic reality, the human element will be infinitely more substantial.

In that aesthetic debate, the most influential and authoritative art critic in America was Clement Greenberg. In his essay *Avant-Garde and Kitsch* (1939) Greenberg had set the first pillars of his theory on modernism. He defined the avant-garde as a cultural phenomenon, which derived from the innovative artistic practice itself. He said, however, that there is an opposite to the avant-garde which he called *kitsch*. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the art in America was very much rooted in European culture. Nevertheless, he declared in *The Decline of Cubism* (1948) that Cubism was dead and released American art from its European heritage. He reflected on modernism and avant-garde by promoting Abstract Expressionism in the United States and influenced in that way the structure of the art museum as well. His formalist theory was meant to discard all concomitant practices in order to keep modernist art as such. In *Modernist Painting* (1960) Greenberg found the quintessence of modernism: Abstract

¹²³ Cf.: Oskar Bätschmann, „Der Künstler als Erfahrungsgestalter“, in: Jürgen Stöhr: *Ästhetische Erfahrung heute*. Köln: 1996, p. 248-281, here p. 254.

Expressionism. With the new American avant-garde established in the Abstract Expressionism, the modernism became American. What for Greenberg was *kitsch* and for Adorno *culture industry* (Adorno 1991 [1947]) can be subsumed as cultural mass-productions, which in turn were degraded as “low art”, and as such set apart from “high art”. Greenberg declared that “each art had to determine through its own operations and works, the effects exclusive to itself.”¹²⁴ Art was to confine itself to its own immanent practices and evolve purely within this frame of effects “exclusive to itself” and by that refuse external manipulations. Painting would be bounded by the flat surface of the canvas and treated colors; sculpture would keep with traditional methods. To become modernist, eternally new, Greenberg demanded art to be traditional, that is autonomous. In mid-1960s Greenberg declared America the new center of culture, embodied by the modernism. New York’s Museum of Modern Art was the epitome, which became the world model.

However, traditional American museums have been resistant to this paradigm shift, whose influence in Europe should not be exaggerated. With the booming economy in post-war Germany, the first museum of modern art was the Museum am Ostwall, built in 1947, whereas the main input would be the Neue Nationalgalerie opened in West Berlin in 1968. Lorente only cites these examples together with several other museums, especially in France and Italy, on the wake of the Americanization that ensued after the implementation of the Marshall Plan. Nevertheless, the process of establishing museums dedicated to contemporary art lagged, until the inauguration of the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris within the Palais de Tokyo in 1955. Also, the economic expansion in Britain resulted in the emergence of novel museum structures and so fostered the interest of newly emerging art enthusiasts with an inclination not only towards Abstract Expressionism but also other artistic movements. Some nonconformists founded temporary exhibition venues, exemplified by the establishment in London of the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in 1948, the inauguration of the Hayward Gallery in 1968, and the founding of the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford in 1969.¹²⁵ All of them were following the model of Kunsthallen, which had originally inspired the first years of MoMA and had regained momentum in Central Europe.

In the art of Germany, the era of National Socialism and the war brought horribly devastating trials. In its own way, though, some rose from their own ashes. This is most clearly manifested in the fate of modern art in humans and animals. When in 1947 Franz Große-Perdekamp, the

¹²⁴ Clement Greenberg and John O’Brian, *Clement Greenberg. The Collected Essays and Criticism*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993, p. 86.

¹²⁵ Jesús Pedro Lorente: *Op. cit.*, 2011, p. 212.

future director of the Kunsthalle Luzern, invited artists from the Rhineland-Westphalia region to exhibit their works and encouraged them to form a collective, they established the artists' group "junger westen" one year later, comprising painters such as Gustav Deppe, Thomas Grochowiak, and Emil Schumacher as well as Heinrich Siepmann, Hans Werdehausen, and sculptor Ernst Hermanns. The increasingly abstract visual language of this group was contemporary testimony to the spirit of these industrial districts on either side of the Rhine. In 1948 the "Kunstpreis junger westen" was established by the city of Recklinghausen, initially awarded for outstanding achievements on an annual exhibition of the group and their guests. Since 1956 the kaleidoscope of names among the awardees traces a small history of German art from 1945 to the present, while the artworks acquired from them form a focal point in the Städtische Kunsthalle's collection. In early 1949 there arose a plan to make exhibition use of the Hochbunker located near the central railroad station, an idea stimulated no less by the aim of incorporating visual art into the Ruhrfestspiele, founded in 1947. Initially intended as a provisional solution, with the hope of moving to a larger setting as prosperity increased, the former bunker still occupies the place of the municipal exhibition rooms today. Although, at first it was planned to open with an exhibition by junger westen, scheduling conflicts made sure that this could not happen. As an alternative to this plan, the inaugural art exhibition of the Ruhrfestspiele took place from June 21 to July 30, 1950, after five years war. Entitled "Deutsche und französische Kunst der Gegenwart – Eine Begegnung" (German and French Contemporary Art - An Encounter), it featured artists from the pre-war generation such as Beckmann, Dix, and Nolde in Germany, Chagall, Matisse, and Picasso in France. As well as representatives from the younger French generation like Hans Hartung and Pierre Soulages or German painters including Dix and Nolde. Junger westen thus made a name for themselves on the international stage and the works of HAP Grieshaber, Georg Meistermann, and Emil Schumacher. The artists' group junger westen provided continuous support for German art after 1945, changing the Ruhr into a center of Informel and the Kunsthalle Recklinghausen as one of Europe's most advanced centers of contemporary art. Meanwhile, the socially and aesthetically daring exhibitions curated by Franz Große-Perdekamp, his successor Thomas Grochowiak, and his deputy Dr. Anneliese Schröder caused a sensation nationwide. For instance, at the Ruhrfestspiele in 1952 the emphasis was on "Mensch und Form in unserer Zeit," bringing art into such close proximity with everyday objects as chrome toasters and washing machines. In 1955 an exhibition displaying icons, showed Eastern Church art, laying the foundation for the later establishment of the Icon Museum. Furthermore, the Kunsthalle presented "Synagoga" in 1960/61, exhibiting a significant collection of Jewish reliquaries and ecclesiastical ornament

even before diplomatic relations between Germany and Israel were resumed. Visitors from the world over were attracted to Recklinghausen. Since then, the exhibition program of Kunsthalle Recklinghausen is directed at artists after 1945, with an emphasis on contemporary especially, across media.¹²⁶



Figure 22 Kunsthalle Recklinghausen

¹²⁶ Particular attention is always paid to the recipients of the Kunstpreis "junger westen." The institution remains dedicated to promoting and presenting the richness and diversity of artistic expressions from the mid-20th century to the present day. Cf. <https://kunsthalle-recklinghausen.de/kunsthalle/geschichte> (03.08.2023).



Figure 23 Kunsthalle Recklinghausen

The Swedish Lunds Konsthall, open to the public in 1957, has maintained its steadfast commitment to showcasing and mediating contemporary art since its inception, marked by the inaugural exhibition “Swedish Contemporary Art.” With a dual focus on international themes and local sensitivities, the institution aligns itself with Lund’s identity as a university city rich in cultural activities. Lund is situated in a progressive region, alongside major cities such as Copenhagen and Malmö, creating a dynamic environment for contemporary cultural expression. The Lutheran Church of Sweden plays an active role in the city’s contemporary art scene, facilitating regular collaborations between Lunds Konsthall and both the university and the cathedral. Moreover, the institution engages with other prominent exhibition venues in Lund, including Skissernas Museum, Galleri Aura, and Kulturen in Lund. Lunds Konsthall’s core mission is to serve as a platform for the contemplation and discourse of contemporary art, underscored by an ethos of consistent experimentation. Designed by architect Klas Anselm, Lunds Konsthall’s architecture exudes a harmonious blend of elegance and strength, evoking associations with industrial and scientific buildings. Spanning approximately 650 square meters, the exhibition space comprises interconnected rooms on two floors, featuring two spacious halls with soaring eleven-meter-high ceilings, connected to smaller galleries within an

open-plan configuration around an atrium, occasionally utilized as additional exhibition space.¹²⁷



Figure 24 Lunds Konsthall

¹²⁷ With aspirations of becoming a significant player in the international contemporary art arena, the institution operates to thorough professional standards in both its exhibitions and public programs. Simultaneously, it is also interested in being a factor in new artistic creation and academic research, recognizing the complexity that this entails and the contemporary art need for risk, cultivating all these competences essential to interact with contemporary society. To fulfill its mission, the institution presents an annual six to seven exhibition program, usually curated in-house, but occasionally produced in collaboration with other institutions, as independent projects or as multicentric projects. As a Kunsthalle, Lunds konsthall shows to a great extent living artist, mostly with new works and a mixture of already established artists and artists on the rise in order to create a very diverse and vibrant exhibition program. To assure a good working conditions and context for the invited artists and collaborators, the exhibition program is planned at least one year ahead. Lunds konsthall has dedicated itself to the public art, who has made it an indefinite task to lead and coordinate the public art projects in Lund. An disciples of the long-standing Swedish tradition, Lunds konsthall ensures that one percent of the costs of constructing or profess building for public use, as well as their restoration, are allocated to artistic investment of each building project's budget. Lunds konsthall subscribes to a strategic location and select the art by a officer from different city departments and a expert group made up of the director of Lunds konsthall, the curator of public art, the museum of design and the elected of the city artistic scene -in order to make desiccated location of the installations and to assure the transparency, practitioner and weight. The institution seeks to keep up an open and engaging dialogue with its public, defined by a generous programming, clearness, and completeness. It has opted for a wide-ranging approach to mediating the exhibitions to the public through truly contemplated organized and manipulated exhibitions, well-edited and easily accessible textual documentation in catalogs, public Guided Tours, film interviews with exhibitions artists and wide-ranging public conversations, in order to thrust the intellectual discussion of the contemporary art. These public conversations go frequently on in collaboration with specialists from different disciplines also an academic, with the ambition to enlarge the public, cultural and intellectual. <https://lundskonsthall.se/en/about-lunds-konsthall/our-history> (16.07.2023)

The traditional role of Kunsthallen as spaces for the collection and sale of artworks shifted away from commercial endeavors towards the more culturally and educationally oriented - the directions which laid the ground for the later development of the role of the curator. The value of art underwent a significant shift – not exclusively being judged on its material and conceptual worth, its aesthetic qualities, or its sublimity. The value of art was now also determined in its ‘context’ to the viewer. The ‘viewer’ too was marked as becoming more complex and individual, of being in possession of their own ‘mental sensitivity’ – who could judge art in an evaluative spectacle of subjectively and interpretation. There was therefore no common consciousness or ‘language of signals’ that could be deciphered between viewers. First, the new viewer had to learn that the idea of ‘naturalism’ in the arts need not be confined to traditional mediums like canvas or sculpture – art could designate reality itself. However, as well as this, the new viewer was granted the possibility of interacting with the ‘work’ itself, something that had been previously disallowed for her. Modernism was a challenge to the ability to curate. These movements challenged traditional artistic practices and sought to redefine the role of art in society. Curators responded by reconceiving exhibitions and embracing new aesthetic values. The focus shifted towards addressing aesthetic problems and engaging with the evolving artistic practices and concepts. The triumph of modernism also brought about a shift in the curator’s role from being a mere organizer of exhibitions to a facilitator of artistic experiences. Exhibitions began to move beyond the mere contemplation of artworks and embraced the idea of immersive experiences. The curator became responsible for creating a meaningful and engaging environment for the audience, encouraging active participation and interaction with the artworks. Moreover, as Kunsthallen became platforms for cultural exchange and collaboration, curators played a crucial role in facilitating international connections and showcasing artists from different backgrounds and countries. They became mediators between artists, audiences, and the broader art world, fostering dialogue and cross-cultural understanding.

The traditional notion of the museum, which had emerged in the 19th century as a place where the spectator comes to contemplate artworks and learn about history, underwent considerable upheaval insofar as the spectator came to be seen less as a passive onlooker and more as an active participant. The spectator became a participant, a performer, and an integral part of the open work of art. Art became an experience that varied in accordance to the individual and the art world began to open itself to everyday life, just as everyday life became a part of art. Art did not necessarily have to take place within a museum; it could become enmeshed in everyday life or engage with public space. Art became a producer of experiences that changed the

spectator, offering the museum visitor a new outlook on everyday life, inciting critical reflection among the public, and as “exhibition art,” which moved out of the institutions and sought out new venues, such as public spaces or virtual realms, that would allow for the combination and the immersive characteristics that art increasingly embraced. Experience and engagement thus gave way to the aesthetic of the process. The historical development of the curator within Kunsthallen thus traces the evolution of the art world from a concern with commercial issues to assuming educational and curatorial responsibilities. As this history unfolded, curators moved from the organization of exhibitions to their more active involvement in shaping of the art world, fostering dialogue between artists, and areas new and engaging publics. The next chapter discusses how the counter-culture limited the boundaries of the reception frame and consequently the artwork.

Speaking of contemporary art institutions that challenge traditional paradigms, the Kunsthalle Bratislava stands out as a notable example. Founded in 1958 within the historic House of Arts, was designed by Slovakian architect Miloš Chorvát. The building was completed in 1965 and is characterized by its design, which was specifically intended for the presentation of visual arts. With its elongated hexagon shape and characteristically low height, the building makes use of natural light coming in through the roof of the central hall and the windows on the side walls. The main façade, strikingly characterized by lateral slats, regulates the incoming light and shapes the external appearance of the building.

As a state-funded cultural institution without its own collection, the Kunsthalle focuses on the presentation of contemporary art and strives to create new dialogical paths between different geographical or political positions. In addition to the temporary exhibition dramaturgy, the institution focuses on collaborations with other institutions, interdisciplinary relationships and the mediation of discursive and learning exchanges. Its aim is to be an inclusive, collaborative space of engagement between amateurs and professionals, although serious upheavals in Slovakian art policies have somehow jeopardized its future development.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ The resignation in January 2024 of director Jen Kratochvíl and the takeover of administration by the Slovak National Gallery mark a significant moment in the history of the Kunsthalle, reflecting concerns about the state of cultural freedom in the country. The Kunsthalle, known for its inclusive policies and programs that embrace themes such as feminism, queer culture and migration, now faces new challenges as it continues to uphold its values and remain a space for artistic and social dialogue <https://kunsthallebratislava.sk/en/about-us/> (20.02.2024)

6 Crisis of modernity: new experimental spaces

The Americanization of Western Europe led to the establishment of museums of modern and contemporary art. However, this development came under mounting criticism. Among the critics were growing numbers of young people, intellectuals, and artists, who viewed it with increasing skepticism. 1968 marked a significant turning point. It was the “moment” when the movement in 1968 began in Paris, quickly escalating into nationwide protests. As with students further abroad, their grievances were many: this included their struggle against unemployment, consumer society, and the American war in Vietnam. The art world participated in these struggles. It utilized its artistic means and questioned this nexus of privilege and war. Organizations such as the Art Workers Coalition (AWC) and the Guerilla Art Action Group confronted MoMA, accusing it of ever-mounting elitism and of hegemonically transforming the world of museums. The political situation of the civil rights movement in the U.S, in Vietnam and the social events of the time resulted in a crisis of the western paradigm in the Cold War at large. It led to a criticism of social constructs, to new opinions. Counter-movements emerged, such as anti-Vietnam, women’s emancipation and human rights protests. They criticized the processes and manner by which the modernist ideas were disseminated at the same time. In the art world, this resulted in a fundamental questioning of the ever-ambient Greenbergian modernism. The activities of the countermovement raised a certain awareness of this absoluteness in the museological field. To recognize this meant also to criticize the selection of the collected and exhibited objects.

The museographical canon of modernity had enshrined a fixed presentation format within pristine white rooms. This modernist mode of display, known as the White Cube, involved removing any elements that could distract from the pure spatial experience. Such structural format of the museum was still widely accepted as the “white cube” was seen as “neutral.” Furthermore, American cultural imperialism quickly adopted unpolitical and hedonistic Pop Art as its means, and Pop Art became very popular among collectors. Pop Art appropriated the aesthetics of mass media and expressed the experience of commerce. The inclusion of consumer objects opened up aesthetic possibilities beyond modern high art. The adaptation of mass culture reinforced the understanding of art as cognition and experience. As described above, Fried’s critique of Minimalism was also a new interpretation of the artwork. As the object of a situation, this kind of art includes the art object and the recipient. The new participatory relationship between the work and the recipient is determined by the temporal, visual and spatial situation of perception. The rejection of the autonomy of the work of art led to the destruction of the aesthetic norms of modernism and made the recipient an integral part of the work. This

led to a shift from product aesthetics to consumer aesthetics and at the same time to the undermining of modern logic. Pop Art worked with images of entertainment from the mass media. This cultural transfer to entertainment explains according to Sontag, the opening to sensual pleasure that lies in the recognition of style. The seriousness of modernity has been displaced by the enjoyment of experience.¹²⁹ However, this led to the displeasure of other artistic movements. According to their critical nature, their objectlessness as well as their difficulty in exhibiting, this mainly concerned happenings, action art, land art, Fluxus movement, conceptual art, and minimalism. For this reason, artists of these movements initiated their own alternative art exhibition spaces to show their art.

Although Minimal Art could be seen as the peak of Greenberg's theory, he rejected it and the context of its display as well as the resulting spectatorship. In that way Minimal Art disputed the structural organization of the modernist museum. In his essay *Modernist Painting* Greenberg had claimed that "good" art could draw attention to itself by being pure and thus make an experience. Being pure in this context means that art should limit itself to its genre and not refer to the empiric world, according to Greenberg, who said art had to stay two-dimensional as to create a third dimension would create an illusion and thus an external reality.¹³⁰ However, a paradox comes up here, as everything exists in a three-dimensional space. When artworks are positioned in that space, they create space by themselves. Greenberg however, neglected the spectator, and claimed that space would be only created through, "recognizable entity," which means the human body. Greenberg wrote that the illusion created by old Masters was one in which "one could imagine oneself walking" whereas the "illusion created by the Modernist painter can only be seen into; can be traveled through, literally or figuratively, only with the eye."¹³¹ That means that Greenberg does not even consider the human body to experience art, but reduces the aesthetic experience to the existence of the artwork and the eye. In that way he ignores the space, but also creates a distance between spectator and artwork. According to Brian O'Doherty the modernist gallery is arranged so that "eyes and minds are welcome; space occupying bodies are not – or are tolerated only as kinesthetic mannequins for further study."¹³² This raises the question of the aesthetic experience in the modernist art space. Michel Fried claimed it must be instantaneous to avoid the "theatrical," which he used to characterize Minimal Art. In his essay *Art and Objecthood* (1967) he explained that art would degenerate

¹²⁹ Cf.: Robert Dunn, "Postmodernism: Populism, Mass Culture, and Avant-Garde", *Theory, Culture & Society* Vol.8 (1991): pp.111-135, here p. 120.

¹³⁰ Clement Greenberg and John O'Brian, *Op. cit.*, 1993, p. 86.

¹³¹ Clement Greenberg and John O'Brian, *Op. cit.*, 1993, p. 90.

¹³² Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986, p. 15.

by becoming “theatrical”. As Greenberg’s student Fried was convinced, that art should be referring to itself. Therefore, Donald Judd’s concept of “real space” was unacceptable for him. The “real space” in Minimal Art included the human body and could therefore not be seen as modernist. Fried described this space as “theatrical”. This led to the assumption that Minimal Art could not be exhibited in modern art museums. Fried said “that the whole category of theatricality (...) is all about a problematic of the spectator.”¹³³ According to him the artwork must have the “right relation to the spectator;” in other words: the spectator must keep a certain distance, otherwise the aesthetic experience would be loaded with drama. The spectator would then not perceive anymore, but experience. As Lorente describes the MoMA offered this requirement by not having “windows in the rooms where the paintings were displayed – an internal wall covered the thermolux façade – and, except in the upper sculpture gallery, there were no nineteenth-century skylights either. Each individual work, at a specific distance from the rest, was lit by a luminous aura coming from directional spotlights-carefully placed that intimate atmosphere so peculiar to the MoMA: the face-to-face encounter between the viewer and the work of art was unhindered by distractions.”¹³⁴

But the Minimal Art did include the spectator and builds upon the relation to the body, as it directly transmitted to its understanding. That means that Minimal Art wants the presence of the spectator to be cognized. The important fact here is that the spectator changes his or her role. From a passive receiver he or she turns into an active participant in the experience process. Minimal Art was not theoretically constructed by the space, but it did define the exhibition space by its formal presence. Therefore, it could not exist in the modernist art museum and began to expand outside the museum. O’Doherty postulated that “space now is not just where things happen; things make space happen.”¹³⁵ With the monumentality of Minimal Art, the concept of “site specificity” became known. According to Minimal Art artists, art must integrate all the contextual elements of its being. It should negate its inner autonomy and align itself with the exterior. This means on the one hand involving the viewer and on the other hand the spatial context. Because a site-specific object cannot simply be moved from one place to another, it can be claimed that this object has no autonomy regarding its space. Everything in that space becomes a component of the work of art. However, because modernist space limited the art content, the integration of Minimal Art into modernist space was not possible. Because of its monumentality, Minimal Art could not be properly perceived in a modernist small space. Thus,

¹³³ Cf.: Frances Colpitt, *Minimal Art. The Critical Perspective*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990, p. 89.

¹³⁴ Jesús Pedro Lorente, *Op. cit.*, 2011, p. 165.

¹³⁵ Brian O’Doherty, *Op. cit.*, 1986, p. 39.

the museum had no place for Minimal Art, and it had to look for new places outside. Looking for “site-specific art” the role of alternative spaces grew up. The modernist museum was frowned upon by the counter-movements as an ideologically limiting institution, because with its closed structure it would exclude certain art movements. Consequently, the museum was losing its status as a place of the arts, as a place that pretends what art is, how it must be to be immortalized and conserved. The fact that alternative spaces did not see themselves as an opposition, but as an alternative, which believed there were other possibilities for discourse outside the museum, should be clearly emphasized.

Artists began to conceive their own exhibition spaces in New York in the late sixties. These could be found in old factory buildings or studios, for example. Developed and organized by artists, the aim of these new exhibition venues was to break through the ideological guidelines of the museum and free the artist and the creative process. Initiated by outsiders of the system. The publication *Alternative Art New York 1965-1985* compiles a collection of essays that examine the resistance to the commercial art scene during this period.¹³⁶ The rise of alternative art spaces during the 1970s in the U.S. was based on cultural and economic factors as well as some models, which focused on artists and markets that conventional museums and galleries were generally not interested in, that advanced their beginnings. Alternative spaces enabled flexibility for new and experimental art and contribute a site in which to show art not accepted by the majority of the audience. When alternative art spaces spread in the United States, they decentralized the then contemporary art scene.¹³⁷ The artists were free to try out new models of display especially of political art by giving them the freedom to use and transform the physical space. The attention of alternative art spaces was especially paid to artists, which were ignored by the established institutions. They could support artists and were more open to new art. By that they helped to disperse the art, redefine art exhibitions, the role of the curator, and art itself. They correlated with progressive political movements in the U.S. In that way these alternative art spaces left freedom for creative expression and were rather based on artists than on objects or the market. This shows the vacuum in the artworld, which was ignored by the elite system established by museums and galleries. Some of these spaces were found by curators, which departed from accepted institutions such as Linda Shearer at Artist Space or Jeanette Ingberman at Exit Art.

Functioning as “service organizations” they offered display and working space for artists based on a collective model. This support, functioning network-like, brought the advantage of mutual

¹³⁶ Julie Ault, *Alternative Art New York 1965-1985*. Minneapolis: University Minnesota Press, 2002.

¹³⁷ Brian Wallis, “Public Funding and Alternative Spaces”, in: Julie Ault, *Op. cit.*, 2002, p. 161– p. 181, here 162.

exchange of ideas. This again, says Patton, gives the artists full control over their presentation of their works. He says that those spaces gave freedom to innovative ideas, they would not built-up collections and were non-commercial. Lucy R. Lippard concludes in her essay *Biting the hand: Artists and Museums in New York since 1969* in *Alternative Art New York 1965-1985* that artists wanted to keep control over their artworks and distribution. In that way artists could create a context for art and critique and to influence the established institution structures. However, these organizations became more and more confronted with institutionalization of themselves through planning and documentation systems which correspond to the structure of funding application system. The concept, or rather the idea of what culture is, underwent many changes in the second half of the 20th century. Small so-called alternative art spaces, which in the 1960s and 1970s opposed the museum and gallery scene, the struggle for funding and for paying visitors was arbitrary, as they had to be financed only by state support or the founding members. However, as neoliberalism continued to spread in North America, the situation for the cultural sector changed dramatically, which led to commercialization and the deregulation of the public sector. This meant cuts in financing in the cultural sector and a significant increase in private investment in art institutions. Although neoliberalism and private influence in North American art museums was already present before the 1960s, the situation became acute in the 1980s. As these informal organizations were mostly internally structured from loose collectives to not-for-profit models they were not qualified for public funding. In the beginning of the 1970s these exhibition projects began to institutionalize with the support of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The NEA aimed to democratize the art scene by supporting small organizations which later on would face critical times.¹³⁸ Alternative spaces allowed artists during this period to challenge traditional notions of art and the authority of museums and galleries. Conceptual art prioritized the idea or concept over the physical object, leading to a questioning of what art truly represents. This shift in perspective also expanded the artistic practices beyond the confines of institutional spaces, as exemplified by happenings such as Kaprow's outdoor events. The transitory nature of these happenings defied the traditional exhibition model, raising questions about the role of museums as custodians of static objects.

¹³⁸ In the early 1990s, after dramatic censorship activities, the NEA and other governmental support for alternative spaces declined and they were forced to reorganize their economic base to include a much higher portion of funds from private foundations, corporations, and individuals. However, they soon began to struggle for economic support. Therefore, alternative spaces had to either finance themselves through fundraising, contributions, or they changed their structures into not-for-profit models. During this time, alternative spaces came under political pressure and became institutionalized and were forced to submit to the organizational structures of the government and strict application procedures to become professional spaces. From this it can be concluded that they were not only competing in the favor of public funds, but also for the financial help of private investors. Brian Wallis, *Op. cit.*, 2002, p. 161– p. 181, here 163.

In Europe as well, the status of “alternative spaces” changed from the mid-sixties onwards, especially following the example of Harald Szeemann (1933-2005), who was a curator and director of the Kunsthalle Bern from 1961-1969. He changed the way of exhibiting by working closely with artists. His exhibitions engaged with the narratives of art history and explored areas outside the visual arts. In his Museum of Obsessions, he collected material for and from his exhibitions. One of his most famous exhibition, *Der Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk* from 1983, dealt with the modernist aesthetic of Gesamtkunst. The term *Gesamtkunstwerk* goes back to German Romanticism and Richard Wagner. In it, a unity was to be created between the different arts. The fusion of music, space, theatre, dance, and color was to create a continuity of all artistic elements and thus abolish the hierarchy of the arts and fill the entire space. This concept of unification and fusion allowed for an abolition of the traditionally structured narration and stage. Instead, an accessible space was designed. This exhibition was intended to depict the interrelationships between the arts from the beginnings of modernism to the present. An idealistic concept that, in a sense, aspires to an anti-historicism. The work of art became a means of expressing reality and thus Szeemann was able to bring music, theatre, and architecture together.

The resurgence of anti-institutionalism in the contemporary art world raises important issues around the relationship between art, everyday life, and the roles of art’s institutions. The notion of art as a democratic and inclusive experience entails the breaking down of art’s traditional exclusivity and the solicitation of visitors’ participation and engagement. But a retrospective analysis would show that the demands made over the years to unify art and life encountered limitations, particularly in achieving the unification of art and life. The drive towards democratization has persisted within the realms of art. But within art theory and scholarship it is considered to be a self-referential concept: for all art is conservative or avant-garde. Art, unlike everyday practice, has the freedom for critical self-awareness. It is its ability to maintain a critical distance from life that allows it the possibility to function as a critique of society. Were it to completely merge with the activities of everyday life it would lose the very critical perspective necessary for its own examination and critique of society and would become entirely obsolete. Consequently, despite resistance and anti-institutional movements, art has developed to the point where new platforms for display are required. Presenting art without reducing it to a mere exhibition object necessitates the provision of a conceptual venue.

The Kunsthalle became a suitable framework and possibility for art to manifest itself in this manner. In light of the diverse types of contemporary institutions, it becomes evident that they must be prepared to adapt to the evolving requirements of art. The question at hand is not

whether anti-institutional demands are feasible, as they may not be fully realizable. Rather, the focus lies in how institutions respond to these demands while recognizing the constant change inherent in art and the ever-shifting present. The significance of institutions is characterized by their networks and exhibition practices. Thus, the compatibility and merging of art and life prove to be challenging. Art requires a new venue to function effectively, as it is not solely a spectacle but also seeks to be experienced and lived. The Kunsthalle emerged as a new element in the art world, providing a space where art can happen and find its place. Unlike a museum the Kunsthalle does not inform the public *about* art but *through* art. Art is no longer an object anymore but rather a subject. Moreover, the emergence of spatial experimentation and conceptual artworks from the 1960s onwards necessitated new approaches for the presentation and understanding of art. By encouraging direct encounters with art and placing art itself at the forefront, late modern Kunsthallen would embody this shift in perspective offering a distinct approach to the presentation and appreciation of contemporary art.

In many ways, that seems to be the case with Kunsthalle Düsseldorf. Founded in the 19th century, the Kunsthalle, has adopted a new identity over the decades, reflecting a series of curatorial decisions and exhibition choices that include the development of the influential “Prospect” series from 1968 to 1976. This not only brought the Kunsthalle to the prominence that allowed the entry of so many international artists into the European art market but helped to make Düsseldorf itself an international art city. The Kunsthalle sees itself as an institution that mediates contemporary art, one that would help to reveal the original and enduring continuities in the continuing discourses of art making. At its core, the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf remains dedicated to its mission of encouraging engagement with contemporary art, which embodies immediacy, expressive capabilities, and active involvement in societal discourses. It achieves this mission by placing contemporary artistic tendencies and positions at the forefront of its program, while simultaneously establishing meaningful connections to historical and local contexts.



Figure 25 Kunsthalle Düsseldorf

With its inauguration in 1967, the new building of the Kunsthalle by the architects Beckmann and Brockes, resolved its precast concrete components in terms both formal and conceptual; it became a significant and highly visible sign within the city. The architectural context of the building thus plays a major role in our understanding of the continued architecture of this institution. The Kunsthalle has stood, since its establishment at Grabbeplatz, as an independent institution, together with the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, in an institutional structure composed of two independent organizations operating under one roof. This institution set itself apart from the other museums of Düsseldorf both in terms of its appearance and, especially, in its conceptual framework. As a space for temporary exhibitions only – and without a collection – it has put current artistic tendencies and positions central to its

programming. Simultaneously, it establishes meaningful connections with historical and local contexts, fostering a dynamic interplay.¹³⁹



Figure 26 Kunsthalle Nürnberg

Drawing on the transformative nature of the Kunsthalle as a platform that engages participants actively and fosters an immersive experience, our exploration now turns to the Kunsthalle Nürnberg, which exemplifies a parallel trajectory in the development of contemporary art institutions. The Kunsthalle can be traced back to the 19th century, but its modern-day development started in 1969 with the establishment of the Kunsthalle that presented contemporary art, closely tied to the work of the Municipal Art Collections and the Fränkische

¹³⁹Since its reopening in 2002, the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf has continued its tradition of hosting a diverse range of international contemporary art and associated discourses. The institution actively fosters the development of innovative exhibition and communication formats. In addition, the Kunsthalle has introduced the exhibition series "Seitenlichtsaal," providing a platform for emerging and lesser-known artistic voices, including recipients of the Karl Schmidt-Rottluff Scholarship <https://www.kunsthalle-duesseldorf.de/informationen/geschichte/> (06.05.2023)

Galerie. The evolution of the Municipal Art Collections and, subsequently, the Kunsthalle, had always been characterized by dynamics and alterations, including the loss of artworks, relocations of collections, and structural changes over the decades. The inauguration of the Künstlerhaus in 1910 had marked a pivotal moment for the presentation of art in Nuremberg, then during the 1920s and 1930s the collections underwent a period of significant restructuring, elimination, and acquisition of works in an effort to establish a qualitatively superior and modern selection, even though it was sometimes viewed as conservative.¹⁴⁰ After the war and the end of the Nazi regime, Nuremberg's art and cultural scene revived. Dr. Ernst Günter Troche performed a crucial role after being charged by the American military governments with the task of supervising the Germanic National Museum, as well as Nuremberg's numerous galleries and art collections. Although much damage was done to the works and some were lost outright, the Franconian Gallery building was put back into use by the end of 1945. Moreover, an exhibition was organized as early as 15 December 1945. This was followed by a period of reconstruction, despite many challenges, particularly due to the poor structural condition of some facilities and a lack of resources. Despite resistance and setbacks from war and political revolution. The Kunsthalle Nürnberg has continued to adapt and reinvent itself. After the war, art exhibitions gradually multiplied and collections either changed or were improved by the occasional purchase. Following the war, the Kunsthalle Nürnberg and the municipal art collections began to adopt new policies and methods for dealing with the art they handled. This especially applies to the post-1948 period when a special committee, made up of city officials

¹⁴⁰ This phase is formed by a number of discrete events for instance, exhibitions, especially the Albrecht Dürer Jubilee Exhibition in 1928, and changes in the leadership of the art collections, which saw the (building up) and the (restructuring), as well as diverse and active promotion of local artists. There have already been one or two special exhibitions that gave testimony to this kind of work, like when in early 1930s the Fränkische Galerie was brought into being. But this period of growth was significantly cut off by the political change of 1933. . The onset of the Nazi dictatorship in Germany. As leading figures of the Nazi movement, these changes would shape the picture of art life in Nuremberg. We can see this not only in the visual arts but also in other aspects such as music or theatre. The Kunsthalle Nürnberg represents a significant and opposite position as well as contradictions. The Kunsthalle Nürnberg was subject to tight control and censorship for having been one of Germany's many cultural institutions during the Nazi years, 1933-1945. Shultz and Stahl played an important role in reshaping artist associations and cooperatives as well as in the "purging" from municipal art collections of works considered "degenerate." Modern artworks, which were both confiscated and defamed by displaying them in exhibitions intended to dim. This process involved confiscating modern as well as older works; exhibitions were mounted to lessen the value of such objects by showing them in an unfavorable light. In the course of this suppression and ideological reorientation, art and culture became instruments of Nazi propaganda. However, at the same time many important works from museum collections were retrieved out of the fire; they were destroyed or sent abroad. Whether in terms of the artworks that went missing or the standards of morality and culture themselves, the losses were devastating. They have left a Scar on the municipal collections that remains deep to this day. Exhibitions in the Nazi age all had a strongly "authentically German" and "deeply Franconian" line, suppressing all works that didn't conform to Nazi ideology. With the outbreak and during the course of the Second World War, the Kunsthalle suffered several problems which included occasional closures and the transfer of its art works. In addition, its facilities the Franconian Gallery and the Norishalle were damaged but they survived. These two parts still make up part of the Nuremberg city art-and-cultural scene. Cfr. Ellen Seifermann and Michael Diefenbacher, *Op. cit.*, 2003, p. 47.

and representatives from the world of high culture. Among other things, laid the groundwork for the purchase of art works and the administration of the municipal art collections. It aimed primarily to acquire both high-quality art works by various artistic factions and at the same time to bring life back into the artistic landscape of Nuremberg after the ravages and losses of the Second World War.¹⁴¹ Nuremberg's art and cultural scene developed throughout the rest of the 20th century, adapting, and changing its face with many exhibitions and activities. This created a compromise between presentation-preservation policies for local art and an openness to ideas from afar. Since the 20th century Nuremberg's art scene has become a place which becomes livelier, is nurtured and made accessible to a wide public, even under difficult circumstances. Various strategies were also pursued to publicly display parts of the municipal art collection, while simultaneously supplementing and expanding the collection through targeted purchases. Cooperation with other institutions, such as the Germanic National Museum, was also a means of presentation and preservation for collections. Hence, the history of the Kunsthalle Nürnberg is characterized by strong support for local artists and traditions, and yet also by a gradual opening to new modern art movements. All in all, it shows the spirit of the postwar period and beyond in promoting and exhibiting works. In the 1960s, far-reaching decisions were made, such as lending major works of 19th-century painting to the Germanic National Museum and founding a "19th Century Gallery" there in 1965. Following this, an agreement was reached between the city and museum closer to the reality and signed in 1968 which also brought about the opening of an Art Education Center. The rest of the 1970s, with Dr. Hermann Glaser in cultural affairs and preparation being made for the Dürer Year in 1971, brought an unforgettable change to Nuremberg. Moreover, this period also saw a thorough reconsideration of Nuremberg's Museum landscape including in 1969 the establishment of a special Office and attention paid to the Albrecht Dürer House regarding the presentation and research on Dürer. Dietrich Mahlow, who founded the Kunsthalle Nürnberg in 1967, should be especially mentioned. He brought international contemporary art to Nuremberg via Kunsthalle and also laid the groundwork for a future museum collection. By contrast, he was instrumental in the

¹⁴¹ In the post-war years, under the constraints of structural and financial problems substantial effort was made to expand the art collections and open them up to a wide public. To this end exhibitions were organized, themes chosen and the idea carried off with equal success to a broader audience or to microcosms of society. They worked closely with various artists' associations, and from the propagation of the Franconian Art Exhibition in 1956, an established platform for Franconian artists was set up. At the same time, the Nuremberg art scene was torn between traditional and innovative, national and international currents. By contrast to Schwemmer's emphasis on Franconian art and local artists in the 1950s and 1960s, when organizing retrospective and thematic exhibitions, Dr. Ludwig Grote brought international, modern art to Nuremberg and expanded the range of works displayed. Various perspectives on art were opened to the people, and a multitude of forms created. Cfr. Ellen Seifermann, Michael Diefenbacher, *Op. Cit.*, 2003, p. 60.

linkage of exhibitions, research, and public relations at the “Institute for Modern Art Nuremberg” which he founded. He also promulgated topics about contemporary art in newspapers and periodicals, while his peers raised challenges and criticism over his efforts. Even though Mahlow faced many obstacles in his endeavours, he significantly contributed to changing Nuremberg’s image as just a provincial artistic place by his innovative vision. Under his leadership, the Kunsthalle Nürnberg shifted its focus from a regional-Franconian approach to one of supra-regional-international aspiration, featuring exhibitions of both classical and modern artists and adhering to a conceptual exhibition practice. Mahlow paid particularly close attention to sparking an interest in art and the enjoyment thereof, considering the pedagogically instructive as well as the reflective. Particularly in the turbulent years of the 1960s and 1970s, the Kunsthalle Nürnberg was a vibrant focal point for cultural exchange and art in West Germany. This new institutional form of interment in the depths of art-scientific research and artistic practice had been signified by the collaboration with the Institute for Modern Art Nuremberg. By virtue of its “From Collage to Assemblage” Projects that broke disciplinary boundaries - like Presentations such as “The Thing as Object” - and looked at interactions between different forms media. Furthermore, the focus was not solely on established art forms: “Comic Strips” aimed to discuss new, not yet fully accepted art forms and to advance their recognition in the art world. The Kunsthalle tied Nuremberg even more closely to the outside world by bringing together local and foreign artists and institutions across national lines. Moreover, Mahlow wanted to make Nuremberg a central German center for modern art through projects like the “Biennale Nuremberg”. This failed due to financial and organizational difficulties, but the project is altogether representative of the forward and novel spirit, which animated Mahlow and Kunsthalle Nuremberg. From the moment of its establishment, there has always been one guiding principle: art is not elitist but should be for all the people to enjoy. Mahlow, and the Kunsthalle with him, regarded art as an organic part of human life and experience that fosters reflection and molds our consciousness. Mahlow, and the Kunsthalle with him, viewed art as an integral part of human life and experience that contributes to reflection, change of consciousness, and creative inspiration, thus sustainably shaping the art and cultural history of Nuremberg and beyond.¹⁴²

During its history, Nuremberg's Kunsthalle hosted a varied group of exhibitions and intercultural dialogues. Its development was closely linked with the leadership of people such as Reiner Kallhardt, Dietrich Mahlow, and Curt Heigl. During Mahlow’s tenure, the institution

¹⁴² Ellen Seifermann, Michael Diefenbacher, *Op. Cit.*, 2003, p. 67-102.

was thus a forum for the debate and presentation of virtually every artistic expression, trying to bring art to a wider audience. “Dürer macht's möglich” (Dürer makes it possible) is the slogan that summed up his ideas about the Kunsthalle. Heigl, taking a more pragmatic stance, established a program that could outlast such major events as Documenta or the 1972 Olympics. As Heigl showed, it was also important to see different artistic forms in process from a global aspect, so that the viewer could see both older and modern art forms in new ways. For diverse art-history periods and styles, such as those of Johannes Itten, Richard Lindner, Georg Karl Pfahler, Niki de Saint Phalle, and Jan Schoonhoven -insights into these artists' creative worlds were made available to visitors. Not only did Heigl enable engagement with artists and movements, but he also arranged interdisciplinary as well as international dialogues such as on the former Eastern Bloc and China. In terms of content, both art and socio-political considerations were at issue. Following that under Lucius Grisebach's leadership, a whole host of artists were represented, and political events found their way into exhibitions. In a society full of turmoil and change, Nuremberg's Kunsthalle spent the entire 20th century gradually solidifying itself as a modern art centre.¹⁴³

Established in 1969, the founding of the Kunsthalle Rostock marked a significant milestone in the cultural landscape of the city. Originating from the vision and commitment of local artists, art enthusiasts, and cultural institutions, the establishment of the Kunsthalle Rostock aimed to provide a dedicated space for the presentation, appreciation, and discourse of contemporary art. The founding of the Kunsthalle Rostock emerged within a specific historical and socio-cultural context. During the late 1960s there was an intensifying demand for artistic experimentation, a boost in educational exchange and the democratization of art generation. Against this backdrop, the establishment of the Kunsthalle Rostock reflected a broader movement towards decentralizing art institutions and fostering local artistic communities outside of major urban fabrics.

The exhibition history of the Kunsthalle Rostock began as a rich tapestry of artistic expressions, encompassing various mediums, themes, and conceptual frameworks showcasing

¹⁴³ Particularly following the transfer of the city's art holdings to the Neues Museum in 1997. With the inauguration in 2000 of the Neues Museum in Nuremberg, which focuses on international contemporary art, the Kunsthalle's responsibilities were redefined and adapted to continue providing a significant contribution to the art scene. Eva Meyer-Hermann infused the program with her vision of a Kunsthalle acting as a nexus between artists and the public, presenting innovative formats that stimulated discussion and reflection. Amid financial and political challenges, the dedication of supporters and activists succeeded in preserving the Kunsthalle as a pertinent institution in Nuremberg's art scene. The Kunsthalle navigates through the fluctuating currents of art, remaining committed to both history and contemporary development, underscoring its multidimensional role in art and culture. This also reflects the development of the city of Nuremberg itself, transitioning from a "desiccated" cultural scene to a resurging cultural metropolis, actively shaping and exploring both its historical and contemporary narratives and perspectives. Cf. Ellen Seifermann, Michael Diefenbacher, *Op. Cit*, p. 39.

contemporary art in all its diverse forms, including painting, sculpture, photography, video art, installation, performance, and interdisciplinary practices. The exhibition history of the Kunsthalle Rostock reflects its dedication to presenting both local and international artists, fostering cross-cultural dialogue to reflect the shifting paradigms of contemporary art.¹⁴⁴



Figure 27 Kunsthalle Rostock



Figure 28 Kunsthalle Rostock

¹⁴⁴ The Kunsthalle Rostock's founding principles of accessibility, artistic exploration, and community engagement have remained at the core of its mission, allowing it to establish itself as a vibrant and dynamic cultural institution in the region. Cfr. <https://www.kunsthallerostock.de/en/kunsthalle-rostock/ueber-uns> (13.07.2023).

The example of the Kunsthalle Tübingen which concludes this section was founded in 1971 through the financial commitment of Paula Zundel and Dr. Margarete Fischer, the daughters of Robert Bosch. The functional building was erected in the northern new district of the university town which offered ideal lighting conditions. Under the direction of Prof. Dr. Götz Adriani the Kunsthalle established in the 1970 an ambitious and continuous exhibition program which soon made it internationally renowned. The qualities of the program were: continuous alternation of modern and contemporary art, featuring significant artists such as Franz Erhard Walther, Joseph Beuys, Sigmar Polke, and Richard Serra at an early stage of their successful international careers.¹⁴⁵



Figure 29 Kunsthalle Tübingen

¹⁴⁵ Consequently, the Kunsthalle was transformed into a nonprofit foundation. In addition to the pioneers of classical and post-war modernism, the Kunsthalle has continued to present outstanding contemporary artists, including Anselm Reyle, Karin Kneffel, Evan Penny, and Santiago Sierra. Cf. <https://kunsthalle-tuebingen.de/ueber-uns/gruendung-und-geschichte-kunsthalle-tuebingen/> (02.08.2023)



Figure 30 Kunsthalle Tübingen

In these and other cases, the politically demanded aim to attract and involve more visitors changed the legitimacy of cultural institutions in that period. The audience was counted and became the object of city rivalries and cultural criticism. The relationship between visitors and exhibited objects was analysed by sociologist Heiner Treinen to show the “structural interests in exhibited objects” and he found there were different visitor groups: scholars, those involved in the art production and trade, and the educated middle class. Each of these groups has specific motivations and interests when each comes to museum exhibitions, because of their social positioning and within the art world.¹⁴⁶ Treinen noted that the education of the different visitor groups plays an important role in understanding museum work. However, these are formed differently. According to Treinen, it will therefore not be possible to gain recognition from the public through audience-related exhibition activities that appeal to controversial values in the population in the future either. At the time when politicians in the 1970s demanded more visitor orientation, the actual museum work was hardly influenced by the public. But at least modern art halls became spaces where art was actively experienced and happened in the present, while museums continued to serve as repositories for archiving and exhibiting historical artworks.

¹⁴⁶ Heiner Treinen, “Museum und Öffentlichkeit“, in: Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, *Denkschrift Museen: zur Lage der Museen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Berlin*. Bonn, 1974, p. 21-38, here p. 22ff.

The Kunsthalle, with its emphasis on the ephemeral and the experiential, would engage with art as a dynamic and living subject rather than a static object.

7 Postmodernism and its urban/architectural dilemmas: from Frankfurt to Vienna

The term “postmodernism” encompasses several cultural areas, including art, social structures, politics and lifestyles. In his analysis, Daniel Bell presents the transition from modernism to postmodernism from a perspective rooted in the Protestant work ethic. He describes the transition from work-oriented discipline and conformity to a mass culture centered on the pursuit of pleasure and self-fulfillment through consumption. This transition is characterized by a tendency towards individualization and the blurring of boundaries between art and life. Bell notes that the postmodern mindset demands that what was once confined to the realm of fantasy be realized in real experiences. In other words, the permissibility of artistic expression extends to the realm of everyday life. Jean Baudrillard contributes to this understanding with his book “Simulacres et Simulation” (1981) by introducing the concept of the “simulacrum” to describe this phenomenon. Cultural influences go beyond the artistic realm and permeate aspects such as economics, education, and politics.

Daniel Bell's analysis highlights the transition from a work-oriented society to one driven by pleasure-seeking consumption and self-actualization, blurring the boundaries between art and life. Baudrillard's concept of the “simulacrum” summarizes the idea that what is permissible in artistic expression extends to everyday experiences. This reflects the complexity of postmodern culture and its impact on contemporary society.¹⁴⁷ It's supposed to embody postmodern capitalism as consumer capitalism. It was not bought for practical benefit any longer, but because they simulated happiness for their consumer. Another characteristic of postmodernism is that it has gone from an economy of production to an economy of information and services. Consequently, lifestyles, identities, symbols, and opinions are changed. And with the excessive production and supply of services, everything can be “cultural.” The consequence of this is the commodification of human beings. People become dependent and submissive. Optimization is an everyday occurrence for postmodern people, which means that the best option is always chosen. It is therefore about the best cost-benefit ratio. This decision-making process is always evaluative and therefore normative. To make the best decision, the consumer must be aware of all the conditions and consequences of this decision so that he can get the best out of it for

¹⁴⁷ Jean Baudrillard, *L'échange symbolique et la mort*. (1976); Simulacrum is an image, appearance and illusion. In the age of simulation, sign and reality become increasingly indistinguishable.

himself. Some decisions are objectively measurable, others are subjective. This principle of utility has become deeply rooted in our society and its way of thinking. Exhibition institutions are subject to this logic also because this serves the optimization of the corporate structure in which they are located in the first place. The then-emerging model of the entertainment-oriented art institution in the 1980s shifted the institution's focus away from didacticism, tying it instead to the spectacularized, mediatic representation of art. Against the background of Adorno's critique of the culture industry, these popular-cultural museums were denigrated for their supposed manipulation of needs as well as for their lack of intellectual depth. The concept of the "entertaining museum," has been condemned from various points of view, by liberal intellectuals and conservative camp followers alike. Adorno and Horkheimer's "Dialectic of Enlightenment" describes how the culture industry appropriates and decontextualizes its audience by adapting to the structures of mass-produced goods.¹⁴⁸ As a result, the audience adapts its needs to the choices and possibilities presented by the culture industry, ultimately reducing itself to a passive object seeking mere relaxation. The focus is not solely on art, but rather populist policies and the transformation of public space to attract tourists. The culture-industry audience cultivates its own needs in such a way as to adapt itself to its conditions, to the products the industry furnishes. The audience is an industry not a product of it. The emphasis here is no longer on art per se but rather on the policies of populism and mass-culturalization of the public domain for the attraction of tourists.

The development of post-modernism is seen here as a structural concept, which evolved with the influence of the economic system. Post-modernism rejected progress as a model. This continuation of the narrative was no longer possible, for the historical achievement of postmodernism lay in the reintroduction of the traditional repertoire of forms was reintroduced, and thus the end of the linear form of historiography. Under such circumstances it seems that post-modernism in the arts is incapable of a new aesthetic creation of form because imitation is its essential principle. Post-modernism announces a new era without determining the result substantially.¹⁴⁹ Historically, it was the avant-garde movement which broke through the limitations of art by breaking down the medium through extension. When this occurred, the medium is incorporated into art in a conceptual extending of art. More incompatible anti-media are attempted to be incorporated into art. Postmodernism, on the other hand, breaks off the

¹⁴⁸ Horkheimer and Adorno 1943, quoted from: Frank-Olaf Brauerhoch, „Identität und Identitätsmanagement am Beispiel der „Metropol“ Frankfurt am Main“, in: *Lebensverhältnisse und soziale Konflikte im Neuen Europa*. 26. Deutscher Soziologentag (1992). Sektionen und Arbeits- und Ad-hoc-Gruppen. Edited by Heiner Meulemann and Agnes Elting-Camus, Opladen, 1993, p. 386-389, here, p. 55.

¹⁴⁹ Cf.: Andreas Kilb, "Die allegorische Phantasie – Zur Ästhetik der Postmoderne", in: Christa Bürger and Peter Bürger, *Postmoderne – Alltag, Allegorie und Avantgarde*. Frankfurt a. M.: 1987, p. 84-113, here p. 87.

historical claim of the avantgarde and per the negation of the artistic medium, leads to the separation of medium and work, thereby producing a new freedom of the art-communication system. The use of pre-existing media is established, imparting a plethora of styles subsisting within a single work, symbolizing the “aesthetic pluralism” emblematic of postmodernism. Not only are styles that have existed utilized to contrive a work, but also, the reintroduction of the medium is not the termination of anti-artworks, rather the “dimension of their character.” Hence, the advent of the open artwork. With the resurgence of media, so too are the conditions of art reception transformed. The rejection of the medium by art, hence, does not serve as an escape from a communication system, no longer able to be externally controlled. The newfound autonomy of art lies in that contingent relationship between work and medium, where the connection of the two is neither essential (as in modernity) nor excluded (as in post-modernity) for the existence of the artwork.

Postmodern art practices arise as a response to the isolation experienced by art within modernism. Post-modernism is not a term which defines an epoch. Rather it is a term which is connoted culturally and politically. The deconstruction of the modern claim to universality and formalism determines the post-modern practices.¹⁵⁰ In the context of how art functions within late capitalism it becomes essential to juxtapose the debate about the historical avant-garde and postmodernism. Late capitalism is marked by an overwhelming predominance of commodification and market forces, which has a substantive impact on the formation, circulation, and reception of art. The historical avant-garde sought to transgress the historical boundaries of art in order to dismantle the institutional and commercial cartographies that stunted art’s possibilities. By expanding art’s media elements and embracing anti-media, the avant-garde sought to come to terms with the commodification of art in late capitalist societies and its assertion reflected a desire to break free from the art world’s defined borders and mechanisms. Later, postmodernism took to a different path. Postmodernism is marked by a flight from the historical insistence of the avant-garde and the rejection of its media, where they no longer constitute media for the artwork. It is here, where the work and its medium are dissociated from one another that the concept of artistic autonomy is contested. In a late capitalist environment, this move allows for a greater scope to incorporate disparate styles and elements, where the proliferation of diverse styles and elements may be read against the grain as a response to the endemic commodification of art. Here, the reintroduction of the art medium is not one of a return to traditional artistic practices, but one of an inflection that underscores

¹⁵⁰ Cf.: Douglas Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism*, Cambridge: MA/London 2002, p. 163.

the contingency and fluidity of the medium-work relationship. This open-endedness reflects the changing dynamics of late capitalism, where the connection between art and its medium is no longer seen as necessary or excluded for its existence. Instead, it becomes contingent on the artist's intentions and the context of reception.

Postmodernism in architecture imitates styles without giving meaning to the new work. The representation of the past through the pastiche leads to the "loss of historicity." Depthlessness, pastiche and the fragmentation of the subject are, according to Jameson, parts of a consumer culture. Postmodernism is therefore a consumer product, which he epitomized in the postmodern characteristics of the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles. It would not adapt to its surroundings but replace its surroundings. It wants to be a total space, a world unto itself that cultivates a new collective behavior. For Jameson, the Bonaventure Hotel represents an allegory of the total hyperspace of the global market dominated by global corporations of late capitalism.¹⁵¹

One of the most influential analysts of postmodernism, Hal Foster, presents in his seminal work, "Bad New Days: Art, Criticism, Emergency," a multifaceted critique of contemporary art institutions, articulating concerns that are central to understanding the complexities of the art world in the current era. Foster's analysis is rooted in a profound apprehension about the commodification of art. He posits that art institutions increasingly operate under the aegis of market dynamics, where the cultural, aesthetic, and critical values of art are often subordinated to its commercial viability. This commodification, Foster argues, not only diminishes the intrinsic value of art but also reorients its purpose and significance within society. Furthermore, Foster critically assesses the phenomenon of institutionalization in artistic practices. He posits that this trend has led to a certain level of homogeneity in the art that is exhibited and supported by these institutions. Radical or challenging works, which do not conform to the established norms, are frequently marginalized, thereby stifling diversity and innovation in artistic expression. A key aspect of Foster's critique is the role of art institutions in mediating the relationship between art and societal dynamics. He contends that these institutions often exhibit a reluctance to engage robustly with social and political themes. This tendency, according to Foster, results in a disjunction between art and the broader social and political discourses, relegating art to a position of neutrality or disengagement from pressing global issues. The notion of "emergency" is a recurring theme in Foster's discourse, where he examines the response of art institutions to various forms of crises—be they economic, political, or

¹⁵¹ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press 1991, p. 39.

ecological. Foster critiques the often inadequate or superficial engagement of these institutions with urgent societal issues, suggesting a need for a more profound and meaningful response from the art world. Foster also addresses the state of criticism within the art community. He observes a decline in rigorous critical discourse, attributing this to the commercial pressures that art institutions face. This diminishment in critical engagement, he argues, not only undermines the role of criticism in fostering artistic innovation but also impinges upon artistic freedom. Lastly, Foster critically engages with the ethnographic turn in contemporary art. He interrogates whether this trend represents a genuine transformation in artistic practices or merely serves as a cosmetic change, allowing institutions to project an image of progressiveness and diversity without effecting substantial alterations in their *modus operandi*. In essence, Foster's critique is a profound examination of the intersection between art, its institutional frameworks, and broader societal dynamics. He challenges the prevailing practices and approaches of contemporary art institutions, urging a re-evaluation of their roles, responsibilities, and the impact they have on the art world and society at large.

At the heart of Hal Foster's critique is a profound concern regarding the commodification of art within institutions. Foster articulates that the intrinsic values of art —cultural, aesthetic, and critical— are often eclipsed by commercial interests. This commodification leads to a scenario where art's economic value supersedes its artistic significance, potentially limiting the freedom and range of artistic expression. Foster views this trend as a key characteristic of contemporary art institutions, contributing to a market-driven approach that undermines the true essence of art.¹⁵² In contrast, Grigar's article presents an alternative perspective on art institutions. Although she does not directly address issues of commodification, the focus of her article on the reach of these institutions to shape aesthetic experiences and engage a public suggests a more hopeful view of the role of art institutions. In this portrayal, art institutions are able to function as producers of a participatory environment and as deliverers of an educational experience. This position suggests that Grigar shares a belief in art institutions' potential to deliver an experience to viewers that is much richer and deeper than an interaction as dealer of art as an economic commodity. Nowhere is this contrast between two readings clearer than in their conclusions for viewer engagement. In the alternative view, Foster critiques a scenario in which the art has become more about the art market and less about an expression of culture or society and therefore more about an engagement with an audience that is genuine than contrived. The second emphasizes viewer engagement and suggests that art institutions could

¹⁵² Hal Foster, *Bad New Days*, London, New York: Verso, 2017.

have a potential to bring the viewer into a deeper engagement with the artwork that is at a slant from the extent that it might have a commercial value as art. This in turn might offer a more nuanced view that does not put the value of the art solely on its marketability but the extent that it can reach into the audience and affect them. To summarize, while Foster's critique is focused on the conflict between artistic and commercial values, foregrounding the hegemony of the market within the art institution, Grigar's article opens an understanding of another dimension of art institutions. In focusing on the consumable environments that are produced by and for them and the extended publics that they can engage, she offers a more hopeful suggestion of what art institutions can potentially be. In doing so, this alternative perspective points to a much more balanced and meaningful way for art institutions, art and the people who engage with it to intersect. And this layering of perspectives leaves us with a picture of the contours of the complexities and contradictions in the contemporary world of the art.¹⁵³

It is evident that museums serve as reflections of a society's cultural self-image. The objects chosen, the way they are exhibited, the research that is made, and the principles of classification point to the constants and values of dominant sectors and therefore the way leading individuals in the administration industry constructing a picture of the museum. It should be obvious that museums are primarily institutions whose mission it is to preserve cultural assets and cultural heritage, but who change shape frequently to that of a mass-media, aimed to convey and iterate information to a broad public.

For the engagement with an audience interested in the present, a new sphere of activity of the museum opens; these new practices are tied to new discourses.

Crimp claims here that the analysis and the goals were shifted, but only afterwards. His collection of essays *On the Museum's Ruins* is primarily concerned with aesthetic theory and the museum as Power-Knowledge-Complex in the sense of Foucault. Furthermore, he is concerned with the question of how the institution can establish social relations between artwork and viewer. According to Crimp, the 1980s were marked by neo-conservative tendencies, which manifested themselves in the opening of painting and sculpture on the art market. Crimp sees this as an attempt to restore the autonomous work of art. Art of the 1960s and 1970s that questioned production, distribution, reception and the mechanisms of the institution was almost completely suppressed. Crimp uses the term "exhibition art" and "exhibition politics" here, referring to institutional tendencies to suppress discussions about radical politics. According to Crimp, art practices that did not conform to the idealist aesthetic

¹⁵³ Ewa Grigar, "Inventing the New Art World: On Art Institutions and Their Audience", <https://doi.org/10.18778/1733-8069.17.3.07>

or modernity were excluded or even adapted, serving to homogenize history in order to “hide the history of ruptures in modernist aesthetic development.”¹⁵⁴

It is important to recognize that regardless of the determination of the historical avant-garde, the inspirational pressure exerted upon artists that aimed at challenging the restraints of dominant art and art institutions was undermined by a concerted conservative backlash. Its project was taken up however within the countercultural context of the United States by postmodernism, which attempted a reintegration of the arts into everyday life. Hence, along with other meanings, “post”-modernism refers to a social process as well, one that does so in an ambivalent manner. This project of postmodernism found real support in new museum and exhibition models and corresponding aesthetic theories and critiques that emerged during that period, which were, in turn, the secure condition of the thriving of postmodernist artistic practices. Thus, it is also possible to say that in context, postmodernism won out over the dominant modernist paradigms of art.

It is crucial to recognize that cultural innovations, no matter how novel and striking they may appear, do not emerge in isolation. Rather, they are the result of cumulative learning processes and informed by preceding socio-cultural developments. In this regard, the American manifestation of postmodernism had its own prehistory, as noted by Douglas Crimp. “The practices I claimed as postmodernist seemed to me to continue the unfinished avant-garde project.”¹⁵⁵ Peter Bürger highlights that in bourgeois society, the arts were relegated to a position of separation from and lack of integration with everyday praxis and its associated purposes.¹⁵⁶ This separation was reinforced by specific educational practices and the utilization of art as a mechanism for class-based distinction. While the imagery found in advertisements and commercial media was closely tied to social objectives, the bourgeois arts demanded autonomy from such objectives. By existing apart from practical life, the arts became a space where unmet needs and critical impulses could find expression, as they were otherwise unattainable within the constraints of everyday existence. This separation from practical life allowed the arts to preserve and embody essential human values. By imaginatively contributing to an alternative vision of a better existence, the arts provided a means for the educated bourgeois to alleviate their desire for concrete change. Within this separate realm, individuals were able to explore their potential under conditions that strictly maintained the boundaries between art and everyday life, ensuring their respective spheres remained distinct. In this

¹⁵⁴ Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins*. Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1993, p. 270.

¹⁵⁵ Douglas Crimp: *Op. Cit.*, 1993, p. 19.

¹⁵⁶ Cf.: Peter Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde* Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2017, p.69.

context, the historical avant-garde movements sought to address the limitations of bourgeois art, disconnected from practical life. Their efforts were driven by a desire to break down these barriers, blur boundaries, and reintegrate the arts into the fabric of everyday existence. This aspiration for a more integrated and socially engaged artistic practice laid the groundwork for the subsequent emergence of postmodernism, particularly in the American context, where countercultural movements and their associated ideologies fostered a renewed focus on the convergence of art and life. The distance of autonomous art towards the everyday praxis has a certain factor of non-binding character and ineffectiveness. The function of the art world as an instrument of social distinction is visible from the structure and organization of the museums. A century back, principles in the exhibition design asserted which are still valid: the paintings were isolated and displayed in front of a plain wall to make it accessible as individual artworks for the visitor. Through that they were robbed by their historical context and the inner connection of art history faded. Since that, museums are willing to sacrifice the history to the aesthetic.¹⁵⁷ The organization of the museal display does not only have an aesthetic function but also a social. It mediates affiliation to the educated and exclusion to the lower classes. In those “bourgeois temples” prevails an atmosphere in which the world of art stays in the same contrast to the world of everyday life as the sacral to the profane. In addition to that the untouchability of the art works, the solemn silence, the ascetic puritanism of the uncomfortable and equipment, the splendid celebration of the decoration contributes to the art reception.¹⁵⁸ This arrangement is connected to the self-awareness of the bourgeois-class, which insists on their exclusive rights, without coming into conflict with the ideal of the formal democracy. Because an artwork requires specific disposition or predisposition it talks only to those who meet the requirements.

Lyotard in *La condition postmoderne* (1979) proclaims the “end of the grand narratives,” replaced by individual narratives and identities. There is no longer any general truth, but equal, opposed perspectives. Creating better conditions for the failed revolutions caused disappointment with revolutions and the possibility of a liberated society beyond the capitalist economy. Frederic Jameson formulates his criticism of modernism differently: contrary to Lyotard’s “pro-modernist postmodernism” as a rejection of violence and power, Jameson’s “anti-modernist postmodernism” is a rejection of the people and the emancipation movements of modernity. On the one hand, postmodernism sees itself as a critique of modernity, of the legitimizing function of its “grand narratives” of progress. However, postmodernism does not

¹⁵⁷ Cf.: Sheehan, *Op. cit.* 2002, p. 273.

¹⁵⁸ Cf.: Pierre Bourdieu, *Zur Soziologie der symbolischen Formen*, Frankfurt a.M.: 1974, p. 199.

see itself as anti-modernism, but rather criticizes those views, ideologies and approaches to solutions that no longer function in postmodernism. Reality can no longer be grasped in terms of modernity. Postmodernism does not define any statements about man and his environment.¹⁵⁹ Whether in theory or reality there are no limits, no motions toward an end - it is indefinite. Indeed, the variety of goals now exceeds one, and dispute over it will continue deeply divided. Postmodern reality does not provide stability, authority, and center. Postmodern critique of the world focuses on how social changes from modernity affect people. Therefore, the subject does not create statements on its own; its articulation depends on conventionally based rules of grammar. So, statements are not directly produced as desired by their subjects because these can only function within a linguistic system. Ultimately only language can grasp the world - but it must be said that language does not reflect a prelinguistic reality; rather, it has already been constructed linguistically. However, language does not give a full and undistorted access to reality. In brief, consciousness is an illusory construction, a product of the limitations of perception and the inability to see reality as a whole.

Postmodern discourse began with its systematic emergence in the United States, first and foremost as a critique of literary modernity. The postmodern art elaborated in its terms had just begun to engage a nascent crisis characterized by the erosion of the boundaries separating high culture from mass or popular culture. The discourse of postmodernity is about calling into question the verifiability of any truth-story, at least those born of the philosophical ideals of the Enlightenment. It is a skepticism about the promises of Enlightenment thought, especially that aspect identifying the free and independent subject as the repository of sovereignty. Postmodern discourse calls the very idea of absolute, universally valid truth into doubt and it sees that knowledge, especially in the form of truth-claims, is not knowledge or true at all but historically and culturally contingent. It undermines the very foundations of reason, with the aim of uncovering the limits of truth, for there would always seem to be that possibility of bias, of coercion or at the very least, of persuasion in every present ordering of knowledge. By challenging the certainties of modernity and engaging with a diversity of perspectives, postmodern discourse, Crimp explains, encourages a critical re-evaluation of master narratives and proposes alternative modes of attention and understanding. The more common view of postmodernism is that it emerged precisely because of the rejection of the politicized and materialized practices of the 1960s and 1970s and the re-emergence of art usable for the market. Walter Grasskamp supports the hypothesis that post-modernism did not bring to the fore

¹⁵⁹ Van der Loo & van Reijen, *Modernisierung. Projekt und Paradox*. München: 1992, p. 257.

anything new but made obsolete the art museum organized by stylistic epochs.¹⁶⁰ In defense of the post-modernism, he states that it focuses on the open potentials of art history. The museum and academic subject of art history arranged works of art as a steady, chronological development. The idealistic hanging by schools or nationalities sought to present Western culture as the epitome of successful governance based on the supremacy of the bourgeois class. The policy of Ronald Reagan (1981-1989) encouraged the privatization of cultural activities and cut state funding for cultural promotion. The budget of the National Endowment for Arts has not been able to recover since that time, reaching its original budget before the Reagan Era. It becomes clear that the attempt to portray postmodernism requires several points of view. Politically, capitalism has emerged as an economic system. However, this does not mean that it is successful. Here, the lack of self-reflection of capitalism becomes conspicuous, but instead, criticism of the “worse” system is exercised. Therefore, the next study cases will deal with the cultural consumption of the postmodern subject. It is directly related to the functioning of the market, which in turn influences the postmodern exhibition institution. The consumption of culture is determined by the given media. In postmodernism, consumption means self-realization and suggests to the subject belonging and stability. The regularity of postmodernism follows the economy, which is an unregulated market.

With the historical development of art institutions, museums have taken on the role of research and educational institutions. They have also been economic drivers that have strengthened the local businesses and cultural tourism. Museum shops have established themselves as meaningful and particularly cultural shopping experiences, trying to appeal to an even larger audience. In recent years, museums have also begun to take on a social and community function by offering services that are not part of their remit. These are, for example, museum restaurants with a view or merchandising articles. In addition, there is the challenge of the increasing virtualization of exhibition techniques, the exhibition program, and the museum space.

Building upon the discussion, it is evident that contemporary Kunsthallen function as cultural consumption sites and sources of entertainment, attracting visitors who actively seek experiential encounters. These institutions contribute to the commodification of art, whereby visitors engage with artworks primarily as objects of aesthetic pleasure or as symbols of social distinction and prestige. This process of commodification is an inherent characteristic of the late capitalist system, is engaged by many cultural products. However, it is important to recognize that Kunsthallen themselves are not free from the pervasive influence of late

¹⁶⁰ Cf.: Walter Grasskamp, *Ist die Moderne eine Epoche?* Munich: 2002, p. 57.

capitalism. These institutions encounter various challenges pertaining to financial sustainability, sponsorship, and market demands. Striking a delicate balance between retaining the integrity of art and ensuring economic viability becomes the central challenge for Kunsthallen. They also try to sustain their analytical and independent stance within the capitalist system.

For Kunsthallen, ways of financing, sponsorship and market-driven considerations feature as key topics that are negotiated with ongoing care - on the one hand in order to guarantee financial stability, and on the other, to retain at least some of the critical artistic practices and independent perspectives they aim to foster. These institutions, then, find themselves in the paradoxical situation of being at once a product of the late capitalist paradigm, and trying to figure out where and how they can and must create meaning for, about and through art vis-a-vis the systemic context surrounding them - the fact of commodification and market forces. In striving for this delicate balance and in acknowledging the challenges, Kunsthallen might indeed be considered as vital part of the broader context of the situation, that is, in the world of art in late capitalism. The connection of art and business is as old as the history of art itself. However, in Germany, this relationship has been subject to critical scrutiny, contrasting with the more accepting stance in the United States. It is often perceived as potentially detrimental to the integrity of art. But in the present, the growing demands on cultural offerings have meant that the non-commercial standpoint funding major cultural institutions is no longer in a position to guarantee the economic underpinning of the arts. New financing concepts and a positive consideration of economic strategies and marketing methods related to art thus became increasingly imperative. The Kunsthalle model specifically breaks with the tendency towards conservation associated with the traditional museum, to launch time-limited presentations. Kunsthallen, organizing exhibitions primarily aimed at facilitating sales, establish a fundamentally distinct relationship with viewers, aligning with the evolving conceptualization of art. The emergent art sought not conservation but rather the experience of occurrence. The initial Kunsthallen exhibitions consistently bore commercial motivations. They were organized with the dual purpose of providing public accessibility to contemporary art while also facilitating subsequent sales. Kunsthallen, through their conjunctural, short-term presentations, would be a kind of proving ground also for the viability of a particular artistic position within the market.

Discussing the entwined relationship between art and economics, Fredric Jameson in his 1991 publication *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, explained how the cultural industry has adapted to the transformation of its artifacts into commodities, contending that art products such as films and exhibitions have to be in demand if they are to survive,

necessitating the constant production of new cultural commodities, and thereby pointing to the general spread of capitalism in cultural production, thereby illustrating the ways in which economic forces enter into the realm of artistic expression. Foregrounding Jameson's framework, Rosalind Krauss explained the concept of cultural logic in her 1990 essay *The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalist Museums*. She contended that cultural logic operates as a controlling mechanism that shapes the organizational structure of art institutions. Moreover, she highlighted the growing influence of private supporters through art foundations, sponsorships, and other forms of patronage.¹⁶¹ Krauss argues that this phenomenon explains the corporate appearance of the larger museums. Through the need to capitalize its society patronage, the institution of contemporary art has undergone a peculiar process of industrialization. An industrialized museum, writes Krauss, needs to follow the logic of mass and capital in its market engagement. The industrialized museum is simply another name for the amusement park, in which uniform design enables reproducibility.¹⁶² Moreover, museums are engaged in an intricate dance with corporations, absorbing design exhibitions, shops, and sponsorships that at times blur the lines between impartial exhibition and corporate endorsement. Moreover, she highlighted the growing influence of private supporters through art foundations, sponsorships, and other forms of patronage. Lastly, weaving themselves into societal and cultural threads, museums exhibit not only things but may also critique the ties between objects, societal norms, and cultural shifts. Through such actions, they reveal how culture and commerce have become intertwined in our lives - a kind of mirror reflecting impacts and implications of objects and design on society and culture, thereby solidifying their role as essential cultural entities in a globalized, digitized world. Over the past few decades, museum designs have undergone changes. In particular, those of a corporate type like the Fondation Cartier in Paris, the Hypo-Bank Kulturstiftung in Munich, and the Generali Foundation in Vienna give evidence of hybrid spaces also taking on cultural stories beyond simple corporate art collections. Compared to the traditional corporate art museums or collections, these mixed-use museums are not only a forum for their programs and exhibition strategies, but they also embody a much larger diversity in offerings. They must also negotiate the public-private-government mix, as government, cultural and corporate priorities are becoming entwined and blurring boundaries. Especially worth noting are institutions such as the Generali Foundation, which takes a crossing of political and social dialogue, seemingly making an advancement in

¹⁶¹ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press 1991, p. 56.

¹⁶² Rosalind E. Krauss, "The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum," *October* 54 (1990): p 3–17, here p. 17.

corporate as opposed to public museum narratives. The consideration shown to the Foundation's director, Sabine Breitwieser, by well-known artists and exhibitionists hints at possible changes in the way such museums will be seen.¹⁶³ Krauss continued to develop her analysis by considering how the private sector affects the kinds of art collections that are produced in the art world. She described these collections as assets that can be returned to the market through deaccessioning. This point emphasizes how the private sector has transformed the nature and function of art collections within the market-driven art ecosystem.

Overall, Jameson and Krauss's examples illuminate the deep-seated ways in which capitalism permeates our cultural world: webs of relations between structures of economy, institutions of art and the places where cultural good are produced, distributed and consumed. Krauss calls it the museal principle, but although she gives museums as her example, it applies as much to Kunsthallen, which have ever felt considerable pressure in the postmodern world to attract high visitor quotas - where the original function was to put culture into the reach of a class of people who did not have it, it has been replaced by a numerical one: as many people as possible. Kunstvereine, which were not primarily concerned with collecting, preserving, and researching art, but rather with increasing membership and enhancing the visibility of contemporary art, achieved greater success with their temporary exhibition format. Moreover, securing sponsorship for temporary exhibitions proved comparatively easier. Historically, these art associations openly conducted sales exhibitions of contemporary art, reinforcing their commercial character, which subsequently garnered unfavorable perceptions. Nonetheless, the temporality inherent in these exhibitions consistently provides a fresh incentive for visitors to engage with the Kunsthalle, maintaining ongoing relevance and interest. The shift from emphasizing the democratization of art access to an emphasis on visitor numbers has influenced the goals and strategies of these institutions. Art associations, driven by their focus on promoting contemporary art and attracting more members, have found success through their temporary exhibition formats, which also facilitate sponsorship acquisition. However, the commercial nature of these associations has contributed to negative perceptions. Nevertheless, the temporary nature of the exhibitions ensures a continual stream of new reasons for audiences to visit the Kunsthalle, sustaining its cultural significance. Alternative spaces now find themselves trapped in a struggle for financial support, from investors and the claim to be an alternative organization.

¹⁶³ Mark W. Rectanus, "Globalization. Incorporating the Museum", in: Sharon MacDonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2006, p. 381-397, p. 384.

Art's role in contemporary urban development and its entanglement with the organizational and entrepreneurial life of cities is examined by Vilstrup Holm and Beyes. In recent years, artistic endeavors and organizational pursuits in urban worlds have converged in novel ways at the intersections of art, aesthetics, and entrepreneurship in what has been comprehensively referred to as the "entrepreneurial city" and the "creative city." The latter concepts underscore the increasing significance of art and aesthetics for the social organization and innovation of urban orders. Artistic endeavors are increasingly implicated in the strategic planning of urban development, including in processes of place branding, creative class formation, and neighborhood aestheticization, to position art and artists as pivotal purveyors of the experiential and affective dimensions of urban life, adding to the attractiveness and vibrancy of the city space. Such trends have been met reciprocally by artists' active engagement with and intervention in the delicate dance between art, aesthetics, and urban innovation, thereby reflecting and critiquing the multifarious ways in which artistic process bear upon the organizational life of emergent urban orders. Thus, the growing importance of art in shaping the urban landscapes and experiences conveys the more expansive trend in and through which art becomes not just aesthetic but an ontological constituent of the entrepreneurial and creative urban orders, intertwining the very organization, experience, and perception of cities.¹⁶⁴ Museums architecture and urban planning objectives go hand in hand.

A postmodern referential case could be Frankfurt and the establishment in 1986 of Schirn Kunsthalle, a building that would enable the city to show "major exhibitions." Hilmar Hoffmann, who had a decisive influence on the city of Frankfurt as head of the cultural department from 1970 to 1990, had envisioned it as part of the Museumsufer. In 1980, an overall plan of cultural venues was developed on behalf of the city council, redefining its purpose as a cultural and leisure destination in the city center. Independent museum buildings were strategically planned along the banks of the Main river, fulfilling specific urban planning functions. These museums were allocated to designated squares within the urban axis system, serving as aids for city organization and orientation.

¹⁶⁴ Holm, Ditte Vilstrup and Timon Beyes, "How art becomes organization: reimagining aesthetics, sites and politics of entrepreneurship", *Organization Studies*, vol. 43, (2), 2022, p. 227-245. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840621998571>



Figure 31 Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt



Figure 32 Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt

Furthermore, they aimed to bridge the Main, connecting Sachsenhausen with Frankfurt City. The planning of the Museumsufer and its museums primarily considered urban planning leading to the insertion or redesign of museums to align with the city's urban planning model, resulting in a division of specialized museums along the Museumsufer. The social model was replaced by a magnificent model. However, in order to be able to enjoy and perceive the new cultural landscape the appropriate needs must first be created, and the exclusivity of this experience should also remain in this place. The Museumsufer was planned as an exclusive cultural zone. Culture was used here to propagate the image of upscale living in the district next to the banks of the Main. This also promoted the gentrification of the Sachsenhausen district. In addition, emphasis was placed on spectacular architecture by well-known architects. The connection between a museum and its audience is established through the content and presentation of its exhibitions. The exhibition's format and design also contribute to the visitor's reception and experience. The level of comprehension and engagement with the exhibition is influenced by the visitor's existing knowledge about the subject matter and the underlying concept of the exhibition. A certain level of prior knowledge is necessary for the recipient to fully grasp and appreciate the exhibition's intended message and artistic intent. On the site of today's Kunsthalle stood the so-called Schernen –stalls of the Frankfurt butchers' guild. After the city

center was destroyed in 1944, the area between the cathedral and the Römer remained undeveloped until 1981. Hilmar Hofman, who took over as head of the cultural department in Frankfurt, worked out various possibilities for the cultural use of the Römerareal. Initial ideas presented an audio-visual communication center. In 1971, however, it was decided to rebuild the Römerbergzeile true to the original and the idea for the communication center was shelved. Due to the building development, the area available for cultural use was reduced, so that a new plan had to be drawn up. Hilmar Hoffmann launched the Frankfurter Museumsufer project and today's Schirn Kunsthalle was built on the site between the cathedral and Römerberg. The Schirn was intended to bring something new to the cultural life of the city. In 1979, a competition was held for the design, which was won by BJSS (Dietrich Bangert, Bernd Jansen, Stefan Scholz, Axel Schultes).¹⁶⁵ Construction began in 1983 and was paid for entirely from public funds. In 1984, the city founded an operating company –Kulturgesellschaft Frankfurt mbH– whose sole shareholder was the City of Frankfurt. According to the wishes of the city council, the Schirn Kunsthalle and the Theater am Turm (TAT) were to be connected and a department for science and art was to be set up for cultural affairs in the office. This arose from the idea of being able to offer a mutually coordinated cultural program in the form of thematic or other forms of cooperation in the city. At the end of the 1980s, the Künstlerhaus Mousonturm was established.¹⁶⁶ The building complex includes the 14th century cathedral, the Römerbergzeile at the rear and an archaeological garden with remains from the Carolingian and Roman periods.¹⁶⁷ Despite objections from experts that the space was too small and the problem that the archaeological garden between the cathedral and the Römer could neither be built on nor roofed over, the building was opened in 1986 by Christoph Vitali as the first director. The city of Frankfurt supports the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt and is also its client. In addition, it is supported by donors from the business world, foundations and the Verein der Freunde der

¹⁶⁵ The authors of the 1979 museum development plan saw the construction of the new museum buildings as opening new fields in Frankfurt's museum landscape. Although institutional cooperation between the new institutes was desired to create a cultural context, the individual institutes are increasingly separating themselves. In the further conception of the museum scene in Frankfurt, the possibilities for institutional cooperation were not realized. This became clear when defining the tasks of the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt. According to the authors of the 1979 museum development plan, the Schirn Kunsthalle was to become a central exhibition hall that was to be encouraged by municipal museums to undertake joint projects.

¹⁶⁶ Laura J. Gerlach, *Der Schirnerfolg. Die „Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt“ als Modell innovativen Kunstmarketings. Konzepte-Strategien.Wirkungen.* Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2007, p. 16.

¹⁶⁷ The Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt was built between the Römer and the cathedral where butchers used to sell their wares at open stalls, so-called Schranken or Schirnen. This is where the name Schirn comes from. During the Second World War, the old town was almost completely destroyed and nothing was built there for 40 years until it was decided to build the Schirn Kunsthalle on this very site. The architects Bangert, Jansen, Scholz & Schultes designed a 140m long and 10m wide building complex, between the cathedral and the Römer. The building was modernised in 2002 and adapted to current climate protection conditions in 2016. <https://www.schirn.de/en/m/schirn/#history> (21.04.2020, 22:23)

Schirn. The concept of the operating company envisaged a three-pillar principle for the Schirn. The Schirn's main task was to bring important international exhibitions to Frankfurt. In addition, the Schirn was to curate its own exhibitions that could be sold to other exhibition houses. In addition, the Schirn was to be able to accommodate special exhibitions of the municipal museums due to its large space. Although admission was free in the other museums, the Schirn introduced an entrance fee. Because of its legal form, it had to earn a certain amount from admission fees. Under Hofmann's involvement, as with all other cultural institutions, the city paid for the Schirn's expenses in full. When he stepped down as head of the department of culture, the cultural budget was severely cut, and the admission-free museums had to charge admission fees. In 1994, the association Kulturgesellschaft Frankfurt mbH began to dissolve. The Off-Tat (former department for other cultural activities), the Tat was incorporated into the Städtische Bühnen. From then on, the Kulturgesellschaft consisted only of the Künstlerhaus Mousonturm and the Schirn until 2002 when the Mousonturm separated from it. The Kulturgesellschaft was then renamed Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt GmbH. The managing director and director of the Schirn at that time was Max Hollein. His predecessor and successor to Vitali was Hellmut Th. Seemann. Under the direction of Max Hollein from 2011 - 2018, the Schirn Kunsthalle distinguished itself as an exhibition house of 19th and 20th century and contemporary art, and the presentation distinguished itself more clearly from the museum. Today, the Schirn is a municipal institution under private law with only one shareholder, the City of Frankfurt. The supervisory board of the Schirn Kunsthalle GmbH is the magistrate, which is made up of political representatives of the city government. The chairman of the supervisory board is the respective head of the department of culture. The director, with a contract as managing director of the GmbH, of the Schirn is responsible for the operation and budget planning and the acquisition of funds. In addition, the director is responsible for the program. Its sole place of activity is the Schirn building, which is leased in its entirety to Schirn Kunsthalle GmbH. There is also an administration and accounting department. The Friends of the Schirn Kunsthalle e.V. association is important to mention. In addition to the Friends Association on the board, the Board of Trustees supports the management. Through the networking of the Board of Trustees, the Schirn can more quickly and easily establish contacts with people, companies and institutions that are important for the realization of a project. Like the Freunde der Schirn Kunsthalle, the Board of Trustees is organized on a voluntary basis. Most of the people involved are from the business sector and are active in Frankfurt's political and cultural scene. This acquisition of sponsoring partners makes the Board of Trustees very important for the success of fundraising. Each member of the Board of Trustees supports the

implementation of the umbrella projects with their own companies or through their mediation. Admission to the Board of Trustees takes the form of financial support. As the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt does not have its own collection, it concentrates on temporary art exhibitions. These are intended to address current themes and are dedicated to contemporary as well as classical modern art. The interpretation of the theme is to be worked out from a new perspective. Not all exhibitions concepts are as innovative as this, but it is by virtue of this that they have gained various publics. The exhibition archive of the Schirn Kunsthalle also demonstrates that the institution has always been committed to contemporary, subjective pertinent presentations. As an example, the institution's over 50 artists exhibition in 2006 themed "Die Jugend von heute" that engaged with the youth from the Western world in their works. Such multi-perspectival presentations often avoid coming to a head at all. In addition to following these curatorial currents in contemporary art, the Schirn Kunsthalle has regularly endeavored to look at modernism from a contemporary perspective. An example of this is die 2015 exhibition "Künstler und Propheten. Eine geheime Geschichte der Moderne" by the likewise art historian Pamela Kort that looked at the co-functioning of the works of specific such as Karl Diefenbach, Gustav Nagel und Friedrick Muck-Lamberty for the first time and thus counter-exemplarily provided new approaches to the modern. The contextualization of art history within the individual life presents an alternative to the undialectical way that for example the politics of cultural memory often vibrates in the institution, thus implementing the contemporary context. Thus, the Schirn Kunsthalle, as an institution, secures itself identification value and position in the everyday. In the presentation of different perspectives, the Kunsthalle can resonate authentically with its visitors, also about the extent that, for example, they themselves diagnosticate pressing political topics and thereby realize contemporaneity in all its facets and artistic practices.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ In addition to its exhibition-focused endeavors, the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt also operates the Schirn Magazine, providing a platform for regular discussions on current topics from an artistic perspective. Through these initiatives, the institution aims to foster a comprehensive and accessible approach to engaging with art, emphasizing the significance of art in contemporary society. To provide a modern and engaging mediation and communication program, the institution offers various interactive features such as play and learning trails, the Minischirn (a dedicated space for children), and the Digital, which serves as the institute's own digital platform. The Digital, accessible prior to visiting the exhibition, serves as an informative resource that enables visitors to familiarize themselves with the exhibition content. Through the integration of multimedia elements encompassing images, sounds, and text, the Digital facilitates a dynamic and immersive experience, thereby expanding the possibilities for presentation and depiction.



Figure 33 Kunsthalle Emden

Financial reform with a happy ending in Frankfurt could be rounded off with evidence of successful stabilization. The Kunsthalle Emden, established in 1986, has been maintained by the patronage of Henri Nannen, the famous editor-in-chief of STERN magazine, and his later wife, Eske. He played a major part in founding this institution with his well-known art collection devoted primarily to classical modernism. In addition, a significant art gift from Gallerist Otto van de Loo from Munich helped the Kunsthalle expand even further. This more than doubled the institution's display of contemporary art. The institution's exhibition programs are carefully tailored to the unique characteristics of its art collection. The Kunsthalle Emden, despite being one of only a few museums under private auspices in Germany, is truly self-supporting at a notable level. Despite its notable level of self-financing as one of the few museums in Germany under private management, the Kunsthalle Emden continues to rely on continuous financial support from the State of Lower Saxony and the City of Emden to sustain its current scale of operations. Alongside the various practices and decorations adopted for art and culture in the Kunsthalle Emden, modernization and computerization plans also fall in the array. The site also incorporates museum climate and building facilities that meet international standards, from the perspective of an environmentally friendly museum. The comprehensive

exhibition buildings of the Emden Stadtgraben are artistically integrated with their green surroundings. After thoughtfully conceived additions and modernizations by various famous architects, the institution has further consolidated itself as a landmark of architecture and culture in the city.¹⁶⁹



Figure 34 Kunsthalle Emden

Architecture, so central in postmodern discourses, combined with economic matters, would also be the main features to consider regarding the Rotterdam Kunsthall, for which start-architect Rem Koolhaas was entrusted with the task of conceptualizing the design for the present-day

¹⁶⁹ Larger exhibitions, undertaken approximately every two years, enjoy even broader reach, drawing up to 120,000 visitors, even during colder months. Among its numerous accolades, the Kunsthalle Emden is particularly celebrated for its extensive and diverse art education offerings, grouped under “Kunst Aktiv,” which encompass theoretical and hands-on artistic experiences, showcasing the institution's commitment to evolving with modern museological standards. Through diverse means, such as communal art exploration, dialogues, and creative workshops, the Kunsthalle Emden hones the senses, heightens sensory experiences, and fosters conscious art perception, continuously adapting these programs to meet contemporary demands. The institution's artistic profile is a dynamic and ever-evolving reflection of its rich collection holdings. <https://kunsthalle-emden.de/geschichte> (02.08.2023).

location on the Westzeedijk¹⁷⁰. Yet by the time Rotterdam Kunsthall opened its doors in 1992 public subsidies had drained. As a result, the Kunsthall took on the responsibility of curating its own exhibitions, showcasing a diverse range of art and cultural exhibitions.



Figure 35 Rotterdam Kunsthall

¹⁷⁰ His initial proposal, known as the Kunsthall Hoboken Draft Plan (27 April 1988), envisioned a structure that appeared to float above the ground, supported by six broad pillars, with an entrance positioned on the Westzeedijk. Wim van Krimpen appointed inaugural director of the Kunsthall, rejected Koolhaas' original design for various reasons, including the desire for a larger exhibition area and a greater number of walls for displaying artworks. Consequently, Koolhaas embarked on the design of Kunsthall II based on a revised set of requirements. Through the collective efforts and unwavering dedication of all parties involved, the Kunsthall was ultimately completed in 1991, featuring an entrance positioned halfway up the ramp. Cf <https://www.kunsthall.nl/en/about-kunsthall/building/history-kunsthall/> (07.05.2023).



Figure 36 Rotterdam Kunsthall

An integral part of the local and international art scene, the Kunsthall Rotterdam cannot escape the wider trend of corporatization that has come to characterize the art world in many respects. Conceived as an architectural platform for experimental and avant-garde art, challenging traditional notions of art and seeking to attract new and diverse audiences, its modus operandi has had to adjust over time to meet the new demands and realities of an art world increasingly focused on the imperative of commercial viability and audience engagement. In an attempt to square this circle between the pressures of financial sustainability and the primacy of audience appeal, the Kunsthall Rotterdam has embraced various elements of the corporate sector, be it through a strategic resort to marketing strategies in search of ever greater visitor numbers, the cultivation of corporate sponsorships and partnerships, or the adoption of certain commercial practices in the running of the Kunsthall itself. However, the corporatization of the Rotterdam Kunsthall has not been without its challenges and criticisms. Critics argue that the institution's focus on commercial objectives may compromise its artistic and cultural independence. The concern is that the pursuit of financial viability and market-driven strategies may lead to a homogenization of artistic expression and a prioritization of popular, commercially appealing exhibitions over more experimental or challenging artworks. In sum, the history of the Rotterdam Kunsthall serves as a kind of synecdoche for the transformation of art institutions in general in that it has been forced to adapt as best it can to meet the new corporate imperatives of the art world. Encountering challenges as well to which it may not be fully reconciled, it appears perhaps more certain than ever that audiences and communities will either be sought and found in corporate terms or will not be provided at all. A further reflection on the emergence

of blockbuster exhibitions moreover suggests yet an additional way in which the Kunsthal and other museums that were unprepared for the recent flood of visitors may have discovered a new strategy with which they now can accommodate them, these by considering how to rethink and revalue their permanent collections in light of the accidental success of these blockbuster or temporary exhibitions. Other typically postmodern dialectics oppose deconstructivist architectures to the reuse of historic buildings offering an unparalleled challenge for artistic experimentation. This curatorial focus assumed a singular role in some Swiss Kunstshallen. Kunsthalle Arbon opened 1993 in the former halls of a metalware manufacturer. The distinctive skylight hall, with roughly 500 sqm of exhibition space, has given shape to programs of site-specific installation concepts which respond to an old industrial building which is located close to Lake Constance and far from major urban centers. Often young or emerging artists have here been gave their first major solo exhibition, alternate with established artists for whom the historic building located on Grabenstrasse, within the area of the former city moat, an ensemble planned and executed by the entrepreneur Friedrich August Schädler in the 1920s and 1930s. The Kunsthalle Arbon receives financial support from the public sector, including the City of Arbon and the cultural promotion of the canton of Thurgau.¹⁷¹ A further 12 years later, in 1996, the Verein Luzerner Ausstellungsraum created Kunstpanorama in the Bourbaki building in Luzern, as Kunsthalle Luzern is now referred to. The characteristic collection of semi-elliptical exhibition venues made of glass is intentionally used and talked about in the contemporary art shows of the establishment that originated as a symbol of diverse and contemporary artistic expression in the heart of the city, as the center for active networking.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ The Kunsthalle Arbon is a member of the Association of Swiss Museums (VMS) and the Association of Swiss Institutions for Contemporary Art (VSIZK). As a nonprofit organization, the Kunsthalle Arbon is financially supported by the City of Arbon and the canton of Thurgau; however, they also rely on contributions from our community of art-interested patrons to ensure their exhibition and art education programs. <https://kunsthallearbon.ch/ueber-uns/> (03.08.2023).

¹⁷² Long-term partnerships with other cultural institutions alternate with one-time guest projects. Kunsthalle Luzern houses the Dokumentationsstelle BASIS, featuring approximately 200 portfolios of Central Swiss artists. The Dokumentationsstelle provides public access and offers insights into the current local art scene with its diverse range of artistic expressions. As an institution deeply engaged with contemporary art, Kunsthalle Luzern serves not only as an exhibition space but also as a dynamic platform for cultural exchange, creativity, and exploration. Cfr. <https://kunsthalle-luzern.ch/geschichte.html> (03.08.2023).



Figure 37 Kunsthalle Arbon

The politics of reuse and resignification of historic buildings for contemporary art gave rise to another postmodern foundation in Austria. They go back to 1983, when Wolfgang Denk - first founding director of the Kunsthalle Krems - started realizing exhibition projects in the Minoritenkirche in Krems. At the same time, the decision was made to utilize the building of the former tobacco factory, constructed in 1852. Located in an urbanistically distinguished position in front of the Kremser Tor of the historic Steiner Altstadt, with a view of the Danube, the Kunsthalle Krems on a site of approx. 1,400 m² of ground space and with facilities offering approx. 1,400 m² of exhibition space, was realized by the architect Adolf Krischanitz. The renewal and conversion of the tobacco factory was undertaken from 1994 to 1995 and the new exhibition hall was created within the building's existing framework. The Kunsthalle Krems opened on March 31, 1995 under the guidance of its founding director Wolfgang Denk. The first exhibition in the new institution, "Wasser & Wein," was presented in May of the same year, curated by the distinguished art historian Werner Hofmann. Thus, the Kunsthalle Krems launched an ambitious program at the point of origin of an extensive museum boom that would lead to the present density of museums and Kunsthallen in Austria. This program evolved from art after 1945, with an emphasis on contemporary works. The institution's trajectory has been

characterized by its commitment to showcasing diverse and thought-provoking exhibitions to a broad audience, contributing significantly to the thriving cultural landscape of the region.¹⁷³



Figure 38 Kunsthalle Krems

In the same year, in 1992, Kunsthalle Wien was transformed from a provisional container building into the postmodern landmark of the Viennese art and exhibition scene. Emerging as the audacious architectural intervention that it was, the yellow container, designed by Adolf Krischanitz, inscribed itself in the cityscape and the discourse on contemporary art practices. A second significant expansion took place in 2001 when Kunsthalle Wien moved to its new main building in the Museumsquartier, a former farmyard stables from which the Winter Riding Hall has been left to host the institution, designed by the architects Ortner & Ortner. It was the year of institutional consolidation and expansion, a symbolic statement of Kunsthalle Wien's new existence as a permanent exhibition house for contemporary art. Its transformation in an adaptive reuse, which retained the original structure with a contemporary annex, was the offspring of its union with the new architecture, a harmonious balance of history and modernity that would be commensurate with its mission to inscribe contemporary art within the continuum of its history and contexts. The institution's history of exhibitions stands as a testament to its commitment to extend and deepen the frontiers of contemporary artistic practices beyond Vienna and to locate and dissect, with an open-minded exhibitionary focus, their socio-political

¹⁷³ <https://www.kunsthalle.at/de/museum/geschichte> (03.08.2023)

genealogies. Its curators have earned a reputation for dedicating their exhibitions with great care to an agonistic reading of the socio-political ramifications of contemporary art practices. Stressing equally the importance of critical research in contemporary art practices and the cultivation of alternative praxes in contemporary art systems, Kunsthalle Wien has been a tireless advocate of fresh talents and of new geographies, as of underrepresented narratives and theologies that they thematize. In an ongoing series of multidisciplinary events, which have included symposia, performances, and discussions, Kunsthalle Wien has played host to an uninterrupted series of debates and has allowed contemporary art practices to reflect not merely an intellectual interface with cultural and philosophical formations, but also an actual interface with them. Its historical commitment to dialogism and the reification of the public is an indication of its dedication to public discourse and public pedagogy. Embracing an expansive program of intellectual exchange, Kunsthalle Wien has assumed a pivotal role in promoting contemporary art's multifaceted dialogues and its confluence with broader societal dynamics.¹⁷⁴



Figure 39 Kunsthalle Wien

¹⁷⁴As an institution for international contemporary art and critical discourse, it strives to provide a platform for artistic expression, reflection, and dialogue that extends beyond dominant power centers, inviting engagement with diverse geographies, histories, and knowledge forms. By contextualizing contemporary art within its societal and political contexts, Kunsthalle Wien contributes to the ongoing discourse on the impact of postmodern culture on contemporary society and the arts. Cfr. <https://kunsthallewien.at/ueber-uns/> (03.08.2023).

8 **Kunsthallen in the contemporary art system of the 21st century**

When examining the recent development of art institutions, their sociological characterization becomes paramount. Art institutions are not neutral spaces but are embedded within larger power structures. Sociological perspectives enable to examine the power dynamics within these institutions, including issues of representation, access, and ownership. They are spaces where art is exhibited, discussed, and interpreted, making them influential in the construction of cultural identities and narratives. Sociologists have traditionally argued that the creation of cultural products, including art, doesn't fundamentally differ from other social activities. This perspective acknowledges that the common idea of art as the private creation of great minds who don't care for society and its conventions simply does not exist. Instead, it holds that even art, like other social practices, exists within a specific constellation of social relations, groups, and institutions. A prominent example of this viewpoint can be found in Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the field of cultural production. This theory insists that art institutions, like other social institutions, as set in a broader social context: they are shaped by and in turn remodel society. Therefore, they are not isolated entities creating art out of thin air but are actually integrated parts of the social fabric, interacting with and influenced by diverse social forces and structures.¹⁷⁵ Rubio reactivates a sociological tradition that began in the early 20th century, which emphasizes relations, practices, and institutions over the 'creativity' of individual artists. This strand, strongly aligned with Bourdieu's theory of the field of cultural production, enables us to demystify the artistic process, embedding it in the complex web of relations, groups, and institutions. It transforms the romantic figure of the artist as solitary genius into an operator thoroughly entangled within the dynamics of society. It invites us to see institutions of contemporary art not as rarified enclaves but as profoundly social. Rubio and Silva redirect the sociology of art, which had asked mainly how art becomes autonomous from ordinary objects and practices, toward the active role of artworks in shaping social identities and practices. According to his perspective, art is not just a mirror or reflection but an active actor in the field of cultural production. In the view of this approach, artworks and cultural artifacts are active agents within contemporary art institutions; they interact and influence the ground's cultural and social landscapes. In this broadening of the sociological understanding of art institutions, these are not simply seen as passive social repositories or indeed as autonomous, neutral spaces. Rather, these are participants in cultural dialogues and social constructions. This shift has occurred in the sociology of art, this time to examine how artworks and in particular, art

¹⁷⁵ Fernando Domínguez Rubio, "The material production of the spiral jetty: a study of culture in the making", in: *Cultural Sociology* (2), vol. 6, 2012, p. 143-161. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975512440226>

institutions in the field of contemporary art are active in the construction of social worlds and subjective identities. This perspective is distinct from one that looks at the social effects of works of art or examines artworks, as reflections of pre-existing social relations. This perspective understands that cultural artifacts, including artworks, play a dynamic role in producing subjective identities and social practices. This sociological perspective argues that these artifacts mediate knowledge and that it is through artifacts that we come to know, interpret, and understand the social world. This shift marks a significant change to understanding the role and function of art institutions in contemporary art. No longer merely repositories or reflectors, the art institutions of contemporary art participate in the contemporary, cultural and social landscape.¹⁷⁶ Thus Roose, Daenekindt and Roose Marka have stressed the complex interplay between art and external societal factors, particularly in the context of contemporary art. They criticize the “modernist” distinction between autonomy and heteronomy in art, drawing upon Bourdieu’s perspective of art being entangled with “ideological illusions.”

In the new millennium the landscape of contemporary art and its institutions has evolved, complicating the once clear “modernist” distinction between autonomy and heteronomy. This perspective suggests that in the modernist era, art was often seen as an independent realm, uninfluenced by external societal or political factors. Bourdieu’s view, considering art as entangled with “ideological illusions” where artists and consumers deny the influence of external, non-aesthetic factors on art creation and appreciation, used to fit well within such modernist framework. However, applying this view after postmodernity is more challenging. In the contemporary context, the interplay between art and external factors is more openly acknowledged and complex. This shift reflects a deeper understanding of how contemporary art institutions are not isolated from the broader societal and cultural influences but are actively engaged with and shaped by these external forces. As a result, the role and definition of art institutions in the contemporary art world involve a more nuanced recognition of the interdependence between art and its external environment.¹⁷⁷

In essence, the aim of this final chapter is to elaborate on art as a social practice embedded in societal structures, to recognize the active role of art in shaping social realities, and to understand the evolving relationship between art and external influences in the contemporary

¹⁷⁶ Fernando Domínguez Rubio and Elizabeth B. Silva, “Materials in the field: object-trajectories and object-positions in the field of contemporary art”, in: *Cultural Sociology* (2), vol. 7, 2013, p. 161-178. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975512473287>

¹⁷⁷ Henk Roose, Willem Roose, and Stijn Daenekindt, “Trends in contemporary art discourse: using topic models to analyze 25 years of professional art criticism”, in: *Cultural Sociology* (3), vol. 12, 2018, p. 303-324. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975518764861>

world. These points of view are integral to the contemporary understanding of art institutions and underline their multi-layered role in the wider cultural landscape. In his system theory, Luhmann established that there is no direct communication between different subsystems. External influences are perceived as a stimulus within the respective system. Accordingly, this stimulus is perceived by the filter inherent in the system, and this in turn determines the view to the outside. The system has only its own methods to perceive its environment. This means that the work of art is an expression of what the art system perceives through its programs - a construct of perceivable reality. In this way, then, these stimuli are “processed.” The work of art is the result of this process, which in turn is interpreted by the other subsystems. Luhmann sees the main function of art in contingency. Since the transformation of hierarchical society, the differentiation of the subsystems has been important for the functioning of society. As a result, the perception of reality has changed. Connected with this is also the process of individualization, which influences personal perception. Thus, a social consensus on values and norms has become more difficult. Every individual has his own truth. However, this pluralism creates a certain disorientation and lack of perspective. Art takes up the complexity of multiple perspectives and unites them. Here, it becomes clear that several interpretations of the world are possible and in that way the complexity of the social order becomes visible. As a second function of art Luhmann sees the regulatory constraints in the realm of the possible.¹⁷⁸ According to him, art makes it possible to create a certain order in a complex world. The work of art becomes a structure of forms that either fits or not according to the code. All forms have to fit together, thus the function of art for Luhmann on the one hand as a proof of contingency on the other hand the order of perceptible chaos. Each subsystem has a specific function in society, is operationally closed and is nevertheless dependent on the other subsystems. It follows that its equilibrium between these subsystems must prevail in order for the structure of society to be in harmony. If art is to show contingency, then the other subsystems are dependent on this orientation. The art system reflects society. It shows what society had become involved in when it differentiated functional systems and thus left them to autonomous self-regulation. From the perspective of Luhmann’s system theory, art has a character of reflection and representation for contemporary society.

Contemporaneity played an important role in shaping the landscape of art institutions. The term itself is a multifaceted concept that defies easy generalization. As Terry Smith describes in *Contemporary art and contemporaneity* (2006) this resistance stems from a history of moving

¹⁷⁸ Niklas Luhmann, *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt a.M.: 1995, p. 238 f.

away from essentialist theories, exclusivist narratives, and imposed historicism. The relief from these constraints has led to a celebration of the open field of artistic expression, where pluralism and contemporaneity dominate. However, this pluralism is somewhat illusory. Contemporary art is shaped by the actions of artists and supporting organizations, which have entrenched certain responses and tendencies that oscillate between closure and openness. It is characterized by a dynamic and ever-expanding nature, marked by diverse artistic practices such as new media, digital imagery, immersive cinema, national identifications, and neo modernism. The implications of these practices are more acute awareness than contemporary engagement, but they resist universal claims and celebrate the end of an era of exclusionary dominance, according to Smith. From a broader perspective, two prominent reactions can be identified in the discourse on visual art, particularly in the major art distribution centres. However, this is a reflection on contemporary experience with a keen awareness, but with no claim to universality - according to Smith. This contradiction points to a quasi-central mainstream that is strangely incoherent and contains the infinite diversity of current practices.¹⁷⁹ Smith describes that contemporary art is shaped by the actions of artists and supporting organizations, and it often challenges conventional boundaries of art forms and viewer engagement.

To be contemporary is to interact with the psychic, social, cultural, and political contexts in which art is executed. It conveys the feeling that when the earth is divided into “first” and “second,” or “third” and “fourth,” it is as obsolete and detrimental as cartography can be. A changing curatorial world is indicated in the case of Documenta 11 (2002), whose significance lies in pointing a finger at Western-centric narratives and willingly embracing diverse points of view. Contemporary art is a new form of modernism, or the modernist tradition taken to heart. It as well continues to modernize. As a topic of study, contemporary art lies beneath the many forces that dominate the art world. In complex structures and postmodern styles you may find traces of narrative quality in order to satisfy a quest for belonging. This complexity manifests itself in productions like those of Matthew Barney and Shirin Neshat, for whom culture, society, and personal concerns form the very stuff of life. Smith seeks a middle path between two opposing forces: the enduring force of modernist formalism and a more dynamic, guerrilla-like approach that acknowledges the socio-cultural and political contexts of art creation. This tension reflects the ongoing shift in art practice and theories.

According to Smith, contemporaneousness refers not to a particular period but is rather in a continuous state of flux. Smith traces the difference between “modern” and “contemporary,”

¹⁷⁹ Terry Smith, “Contemporary art and contemporaneity”, *Critical Inquiry* 32, Summer 2006, p. 681-707, here p. 683.

taking the term historically. Strictly speaking “modern” once meant filling time in a way; that is to say, it was used as a measure of fullness. This definition lasted into medieval times. But St. Augustine’s concept of time, in which at a single time there exists only past, present, and future events was subsequently added to. Broadly speaking modernity has its own complete story, spread over hundreds or tens of years: while “modern” carried connotations such as innovation, past, and future, with artistic trends at that time being remarkably varied. However, “modern” aged and consolidated. The word itself became a period of modernization that was to last forever. By contrast, once a default for “modern,” “contemporary” now has its own distinct significance. Boris Groys points out that while modern art was forward-looking and often dismissed the present, contemporary art redefines this by acknowledging the power of the present. In the 1980s, the movement away from modernism’s future-oriented state of mind was initiated, an inclination that may also be observed in names of galleries, museums, academic courses, and other cultural structures. “Contemporary,” in this usage, becomes a marker of current plurality rather than a mere continuation of the modern.

Contemporaneity is intrinsically linked to our current age, marked by diversity, altered perceptions of time, and pervasive inequity. In fact, the only permanence of the contemporary may be its impermanence, something akin to that which Jacques Derrida concept of *l’avenir* (the future or to come) — a ceaseless state of becoming, where the future is always at hand yet constantly unforeseeable. This is a past that is never past. Contemporary art, then, might be seen to reside, as Smith suggests, in the present as our own age, marked by diversity, altered perceptions of time, and pervasive inequity. These are not mere passing symptoms of a deeper stability as Charles Baudelaire might have written of the marks of modernity, but constitute, rather, the volatile center of the contemporary. After modernity and postmodernity, they may be understood as coterminous with our own time. The suggestion here is that there can be no single, all-encompassing narrative or theory that could do justice to the contemporary’s vast and multiplying differences.¹⁸⁰ The discussion about defining art, especially in the realm of contemporary works, is complex and evolving. Contemporary artworks often divert attention from their sensory qualities to convey deeper messages, challenging established notions of what art is or the artist’s role, or offering social commentary. This shift complicates traditional approaches to defining art, such as Monroe Beardsley’s aesthetic-focused definition, which views art primarily as an arrangement intended for aesthetic experience. His perspective seems

¹⁸⁰ Terry Smith, “Contemporary art and contemporaneity”, *Critical Inquiry* 32, Summer 2006, p. 681-707, here p. 704.

less applicable to contemporary art, which may not prioritize aesthetic appeal as its primary function.

In response to the limitations of traditional definitions, new approaches have emerged. One procedural definition suggests that the status of art might be grounded in the kind of process by which objects are brought into the world or chosen for inclusion within the artworld. Other, hybrid definitions attempt to combine this procedural orientation with a more substantive account of the range of roles or functions that art might perform. Still others aim to develop wider-ranging theories of art, theories focused on describing what art is in the most inclusive and flexible way possible – a task which fundamentally requires moving beyond the sort of traditional model that aims to provide strict conditions necessary and sufficient for identifying something as a work of art. This recent history of theorizing about art is an apt mirror to the dynamic and multi-faceted nature of contemporary art itself: one characterized by the fact that art can now have any number of different ultimate purposes and be created according to any number of very different kinds of processes.¹⁸¹ The complexity of art's exact definition is made obvious by the changing nature of the field. It notes that contemporary works of art often move away from relying on sensory experiences to relay messages and social commentary. As a result, conventional definitions of art — such as art's main purpose being aesthetic, as outlined in Monroe Beardsley's philosophy — don't fit these works as they may not make beauty their chief focus. Consequently, we're seeing different definitions such as process-oriented ones where creation and selection reign supreme, as well as hybrids that merge those process ideas with an artwork's functional value. The art theories themselves also often expand to describe this mix of parts, not to say the numerous roles a work can take on. The term "contemporary" in the art world, of course, does not merely mean art which is happening in the present. It comes with a value attached to it which is often used in essences of praise. This value-laden aspect of "contemporary" is somewhat masked by its basic meaning of being current. However, if the art world were to embrace a perpetual state of "contemporary," this would lead to one of two contrasting scenarios. On one hand, it could spell the end for many artists worldwide who are currently trying to create and showcase their work, as the term contemporary inherently implies a certain level of selectivity and exclusivity. On the other hand, it could lead to the complete erasure of such quality-based distinctions.

If all art becomes contemporary, period, such that every work is marked within no ascertainable period, then we're reaching the point at which contemporary means nothing: a term completely

¹⁸¹ Irvin, Sherri and Julian Dodd, 2017. "In advance of the broken theory: philosophy and contemporary art", *Journal of Aesthetics and art Criticism* (4) <https://doi.org/10.1111/jaac.12412>

vacuous of any meaning, unable to differentiate one work or period from another. This is reflective of the layered implications of how the art world values and categorizes art under the banner of “contemporary,” as Dan Karlholm describes in *After contemporary art: actualizing and anachrony*, where the term implies more than just the time of creation, but also includes a value judgement and ideological significance. What’s at stake, ultimately, in the art world taking on the permanent title of “contemporary forever” is two-fold: it could ultimately serve to marginalize many artists around the globe who are striving to work and exhibit their art “now,” where the term concurrent will always be implicitly selective, perhaps marked by a quantity standard or set of criteria. Yet, it could also render the term itself wholly ephemeral if everything is made to be contemporary, as its qualitative distinctions dissolve and we are left with a term incapable of making any significant differentiations between the competing artwork of any aesthetic period. Such a condition might simply reflect, in essence, the nuanced and often complex implications of labelling art as contemporary, which is not merely a reference to the timing of the art’s creation but also an indicator of its perceived value and relevance.¹⁸²

In his essay *Existential urgency: contemporaneity, biennials and social form* (2016) Peter Osborne argues that the age of the biennial has emerged as a key moment within a certain contemporary of art. The biennial form is the large-scale international exhibition that has proliferated since the late 1980s. The biennial has expanded from being hosted by a handful of so-called ‘first world’ cities to their current number – conservatively estimated 175. In this proliferation, the biennial has replicated the post-1989 expansion of capitalist social relations, with a shift from nationalist or regionalist formations to a globalisation, or geopolitical totalisation that now encompasses the globe. These biennials are marked, according to Osborne, by two primary features: artistic ‘contemporaneity’ and geopolitical ‘globality’. These are what today concurrent global conditions – dominated by the spread of transnational capital – require: a new temporality of contemporaneity, or the coming together of socially disparate times.¹⁸³ And it is as the temporal product of globalization that contemporaneity exerts its hold, as the temporal dimension of global modernity, one that surpasses the sequential succession of one historical stage by another, snaking its way through the modern in complex and often contradictory ways, reshaping as it goes, both modern and contemporary conceptual frameworks. It serves, in other words, as the cultural expression of the time of capital, signaling the fragmented temporal unity of a globally extended modernity. In the realm of art history, the

¹⁸² Karlholm, Dan, “After contemporary art: actualization and anachrony”, in: *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* (2016), vol. 25, no.51, p. 35 – 54. <https://doi.org/10.7146/nja.v25i51.25155>

¹⁸³ Peter Osborne, “Existential urgency: contemporaneity, biennials and social form”, *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* (49-50), 2016, p. 175-188, here p. 176.

emergence of “the age of the biennial” represents a significant historical periodization, positioning the biennial as the first category of a nascent global art history. This categorization embodies the theoretical ambition of providing comprehensive artistic coverage of the globe, akin to a world system of art. The biennial form, therefore, becomes the dominant element within this system, influencing and being influenced by other art institutions like museums, galleries, and art fairs. The biennial form is characterized by its periodic occurrence, projecting an open-ended, serial continuity that envisions a progressive saturation of the world with biennials. This proliferation, while indicative of an ambitious expansion, also introduces complexities and contradictions within the institutional reality of biennials.

Following Tony Bennett’s notion of the “exhibitionary complex” of the 19th century, we could argue that our current art world is increasingly defined by the temporal designation of the biennial, representing a multifaceted and contradictory institutional reality. The biennial form has become dominant today and influences other art institutions like museums, galleries, and art fairs. However, it is not without its contradictions, as it is caught between socio-political questioning and its role in corporate and municipal development projects. It is caught between its socio-political questioning and its role in corporate and municipal development projects. This tension leads to a crisis within the biennial form, resulting in intensified self-historicization and curatorial poetics that distance from direct social-political thematics. The recent development of “bienniology” as a proto-sub-discipline of art history reflects this self-reflexive turn in biennial discourse. The tension within the biennial form has led to intensified self-historicization and curatorial poetics. Contemporary art within the context of biennials engages geopolitically with global contemporaneity, reflecting the internal fracturing and multiplicity within global transnational capitalism. In his essay *Entering the Flow: Museum between Archive and Gesamtkunstwerk*, which was published in the January edition on the platform e-flux in 2013, Groys describes the relation between the *flow* and cultural constructs like the museum, the archive and the internet and the resulting approaches to art. As Groys explains, the museum functions as a resting-place of art history. It keeps memory down, keeps forgetting at bay and takes itself now and then, for history. This museum, for Groys has a fundamental role as an attempt to arrest time. Ultimately, according to Groys, the fundamental function of the museum is to resist time - to bloom as a memory of humanity. Every material object is finite, but where does that leave us within the flow characterized as global and historical? Everything belongs to the *flow*; here, humans can enter the *flow* in two ways: on the one hand, physically; and, on the other, as cultural conservations. The body ages and dies. This is the natural material *flow* of the body. Conversely, the material art object does not totally so, it stays

as a memory — first, it becomes an art object that is ‘archived’, insomuch as it is synonymous with administrative database. The result, of course, is that the body and its cultural representation become desynchronized. Engineered together by contemporary collectivity, these unpredictable tensions create a fissure within the flow that is perennially worked over: once, by those who do not want what exists and who do not want to be. The movement to destroy these two identical desires is the movement to destroy art museums and the art system. Nevertheless, this is not the death of art nor is it the death of the museum. On the contrary, this is the birth of the museum. To be more precise, it is the birth of a new museum. This radical aestheticism aimed not for the destruction of the museum, but for the constitution of a new museum; the desirable archetype for the avant-garde would be the museum as a stage on which the exhibition of the non-contemporaneity of biological time and art’s time is re-performed. The institutional format of this avant-garde is what might best be described as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. For him this also means the resynchronization of human’s finite nature and its cultural representation. The contemporary equivalent would be, as Groys claims, the “curatorial project.” Here, Groys makes a point that is a decisive point for this research on the differences between the museum and the Kunsthalle. He sees the main difference between a traditional exhibition and a curatorial project in the treatment of the space.

While the space in a traditional exhibition is indefinite and anonymous, the space in a “curatorial project” is determined and definite. In the traditional exhibition the artwork is treated as an eternal entity – so the space is seen dependent on the artwork, as an “accidental station where the immortal artworks take a temporary rest from their wanderings through the material world.”¹⁸⁴ This would mean that the space is neglected and the visitor, hence, would not play a role in the spatial usage. The installation on the other hand includes the artwork and, through that, creates a space which the visitor can enter. Groys also claims, that the curatorial project rather corresponds to the idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* than the traditional exhibition as it “instrumentalizes all the exhibited artworks and makes them serve a common purpose that is formulated by the curator.” The artworks turn to objects of the stage installation. This new arrangement puts the artworks into relation to each other, to the recipient and to the space that affects how the artworks are perceived. That would make the space of the museum from a rigid and contemplating walk-through path change into a diversely usable stage, which would bring the *Gesamtkunstwerk* into the *flow*. The aim of those installations would then be to make art

¹⁸⁴ Boris Groys, “Entering the Flow: Museum between Archive and Gesamtkunstwerk“, in: *e-flux journal* (December 2013, nr. 50). URL: <http://www.e-flux.com/>, search query “Boris Groys: Entering the Flow” (27.02.2018).

fluid and “to synchronize it with the flow of time.” This means to make space accessible space where an event takes place, where art is happening in the moment when the recipient enters it. It is crucial to note that Boris Groys’s analysis primarily pertains to museums, specifically the distinction between *traditional* and *contemporary* museums. He emphasizes that the role and function of museums have evolved over time, differentiating between the display of permanent collections and curated projects. This shift in understanding highlights the transformative nature of concept art, which is perceived as a means of communication rather than a static object of contemplation. This conceptualization activates the spectator, as the artwork becomes a conduit for dialogue and interaction. The role of the curator is to re-contextualize the artwork, staging it in a manner that does not isolate it from its historical context, since many of these artworks were primarily created for the purpose of exhibition and staging. Consequently, the artworks are instrumentalized to serve a higher purpose, aligning with the conceptual vision of the curator. Within contemporary art institutions, the artworks establish correlations with one another, collectively forming an accessible art space. In contrast, the classical museum tends to negate the spatial aspect of art, thereby creating a distinct divergence in their approach to the presentation and interpretation of artworks.

In the light of this, art institutions face new challenges in the 21st century. Traditional museums, whose calling was to act in the public interest and preserve and spread human achievements, have seen their significance and legitimacy wane amid doubt and criticism. Traditional museums, which have been seen in the past as repositories of civic values, have experienced a decline in their significance and legitimacy. The increasing commodification of culture has led to the measurement of success based on visitor numbers and revenue generation, with art and culture being leveraged for city image campaigns. Supported by social and political factors that emphasize individual experiences, the corporatization tendencies have transformed museums into consumer-oriented entities. This trend is particularly evident in global corporate institutionalism, exemplified by renowned institutions such as the Guggenheim Museum and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The corporatization of a museum like the Museum of Modern Art is accompanied by the establishment of a management hierarchy and the appointment of executives from the business world to the museum board, to say nothing of the construction of consumer areas, etc. in the museum premises. Thus, we have the beginnings of a shift of focus from art in the direction of blockbuster exhibitions, non-artistic events, sponsorship arrangements, and a tendency to inspire to immerse the audience’s attention in the form of visitor numbers. While larger museums exhibit strong corporatization tendencies,

smaller institutions are likely to face challenges in the long run.¹⁸⁵ In any case, traditional art institutions increasingly assume the role of cultural centers catering to the masses, fostering the consumption of artistic products. Rather than engaging directly with the artwork itself, visitors become engrossed in the spectacle surrounding the artwork. Through the application of new presentation techniques enabled by digital technologies, as well as the incorporation of institution-branded media and shops, the artwork acquires an increasingly pronounced product-like nature, thereby endowing the exhibition venue with a renewed identity. Blockbuster exhibitions are promoted akin to commercial films, employing posters and embracing spectacle and mass entertainment within the institution's confines. The business sector has permeated the museum sphere, with exhibitions marketed as shows that yield predictable profits for sponsors. The commodification of culture has thus infiltrated cultural institutions, manifesting in standardized methods and mass production reminiscent of the consumer goods industry. Exhibition venues, through the marketing of artworks, have somehow transformed into commercial entities. With the inclusion of in-house cafes, shops, and auditoriums, these institutions actively promote the consumption of culture. They host dinners, concerts, and award ceremonies, constructing a brand that can be monetized, as exemplified again by the Guggenheim Museum, also characteristic of a mercantile approach in its global expansion, establishing branches in diverse locations. Museums, which once served as spaces for the collection and display of artworks, have undergone an evolution, adapting to the demands of the business world. In 2013 Claire Bishop published her book *Radical Museology*. Building on Jameson's and Krauss's research, Bishop contends that museums and their collections are elevating the status of private collections with their new role in society.¹⁸⁶ This led to more and more private individuals building their own museums and thus establishing and influencing themselves in the cultural sector. Bishop described the cultural logic in such a way that museums and private markets would not be mutually exclusive.

¹⁸⁵ Cf.: Andrea Fraser: „A Museum is not business. It is run in a businesslike fashion“, in: Nina Möntmann: *Art and its Institutions*, Black Dog Publishing, London 2006, p. 86–98, here p. 89.

¹⁸⁶ Bishop, Claire, *Radical Museology or, "What's Contemporary" in Museums of Contemporary Art?* London: Koenig Books, 2014, p. 61.



Figure 40 Kunsthalle Würth

The discourse around this subject leads to the debate of what distinguishes the two facilities: Museum Würth and Würth Kunsthalle. Museum Würth was founded in 1991 as an important space for the exhibition of the Würth Art Collection and has since undertaken the mission of presenting a diverse array of works of art that includes, predominantly, painting, sculpture, and installations from the 20th and 21st centuries. The Museum Würth seeks to present and disseminate the diverse and complex artistic practices of contemporary artists in order to engage in a constant dialogue between the artist and the public. Its exhibitions are the result of a dynamic review of the thematic, technical, and conceptual diversity of postmodern art. In this way, Museum Würth endeavors to become active in the cultural context and in the discourse of postmodernism. In doing so, it actively contributes to the cultural landscape and discourse surrounding postmodernism. In contrast, the Museum Würth 2 represents a distinct facet, known as the Kunsthalle Würth. Opened in 2013, this museum diverges from the traditional exhibition model by focusing primarily on presenting themed group exhibitions. Unlike the Museum Würth, which predominantly showcases artworks from the Würth Collection, It will allow the Museum Würth 2 to engage more flexibly and with multiple perspectives with postmodern art and to adapt more directly and immediately to the pertaining cultural context and to the demands and expectations of a young audience in a dynamic and open atmosphere. Museum Würth and Museum Würth 2, by providing alternative spaces for the reflection, pleasure, and spreading of art works in and by postmodern culture, contribute to the functions of art that assigns postmodern society: as an offer in an open and permanent dialogue with society that is open to all types of public and with art, against all the different concepts that exists of it, under the diverse forms it can take, to any of the artistic practices in postmodern time. This aspaces of conservation, research and presentation of art and as the provision of a space for the reception, preservation, and presentation of works of art. Thus, a worldwide

wholesaling group lends its support to the comprehension and enjoyment of art beyond cultural or national borders, in the consciousness and for the enjoyment of the diverse works of art and the diverse themes and artistic practices, and of the dialogue and the debates and discourses of art of its own time.¹⁸⁷



Figure 41 Kunsthalle Würth

Traditionally, Kunsthallen have been privately managed institutions; this is less often the case today. The Kunsthalle of the Sparkasse Leipzig, for instance, is linked to a corporation. The Kunsthalle der Sparkasse Leipzig is on the grounds of one of the oldest locations of the Sparkasse in Leipzig. For its 175th anniversary, the Sparkasse Leipzig opened its Kunsthalle February of 2001. Purchased by the bank in 1914, the building functioned as the main branch of the Sparkasse—continuing to do so even after the Second World War—until 1950 when it was expropriated; after returning to the possession of the Sparkasse in 1994, the building was extensively restored. Located in the annex from 1924, the KunstHalle galleries occupy 352 square meters. directly on the banks of the Pleißemühlgraben.¹⁸⁸

The St. Annen Kunsthalle which was founded in 2003 incorporated the fragmentary remnants from the St. Annen Monastery, including the powerful octagonal pillars, arches, and arch niches, as well as the enclosing walls. It was destroyed in 1843 by a fire that also consumed the

¹⁸⁷ <https://kunst.wuerth.com/kunst/Ausstellungsorte/Kunsthalle-W%C3%BCrth/Kunsthalle-W%C3%BCrth.php> (01.05.2023).

¹⁸⁸ Over the years, the Kunsthalle has presented more than 40 exhibitions, showcasing not only collections owned by the savings bank but also thematic special exhibitions tracing the development of art in Leipzig over the past 70 years. Currently, the focus is being expanded to include regional emphases. In addition to its exhibition program, the Kunsthalle offers weekly events to complement its activities <https://www.kunsthalle-sparkasse.de/die-kunsthalle.html> (03.08.2023).

church and parts of the St. Annen Monastery during a time of its use as a poorhouse, workshops, and penitentiaries. With the help of public funds the monastery was built up again, but the church lay in ruins and was totally pulled down in 1875. Today, the historic remnants are an essential part of the impressive Kunsthalle St. Annen, constructed in 2003 on the site of the old church.¹⁸⁹ The Possehl Foundation generously gifted the Kunsthalle to the Hanseatic City. Consequently, Lübeck finally acquired modern exhibition spaces of the highest technical and aesthetic standard for displaying contemporary art, both for the permanent collection of contemporary art and for temporary exhibitions.



Figure 42 Kunsthalle Vogelmann

¹⁸⁹ With the architects Ingo Siegmund and Georg Konermann-Dall at the helm, the Kunsthalle St. Annen received for its architectural renaissance of the old church structure the main prize of the Federal Association of German Architects Schleswig-Holstein upon completion for the remarkably successful synthesis of the old and the new. For the memory of the church destroyed 150 years ago is preserved in harrowing beauty. The memories of the building are emphasised in order to oppose repressing them. This philosophy of history as opposed to negation is seamlessly integrated: the new structure is embedded within the old walls, but it presents itself as free-standing modernist, modernity as it were, of its time and of the past. The result is a universal and unique articulated building. The exterior appears homogeneous and monolithic, revealing as it does approximately 1000 square meters of exhibition space without any apparent segmentation; on the inside, however, it forms an enthralling spatial sequence full of surprising spatial perspectives as one moves through rooms of very different proportions distributed across four levels. The use of bare exposed concrete is a contemporary explanation of historic church space without becoming a pastiche, continuous through both the historic brickwork in the apse, and through the continuation of the former church layout on the upper floors, with these new rooms in the former side also containing an art café and a well-stocked art shop. An open inner courtyard as summer foyer serves as the communicative centre, staying here is explicitly recommended for visitors. At its entrance, opened by Philibert, the portal to the former church decorated with Lothar Fischer's figure pair "Adam" and "Eve" warmly welcomes art enthusiasts and pilgrims alike. Cfr. <https://kunsthalle-st-annen.de/geschichte> (03.08.2023).

A third case in point are the Kunsthalle Vogelmann, which since 2010 has presented in Heilbronn the visual arts in all its diversity and variety from the 19th century to the present day in a continuous stream of changing exhibitions to accompany the representation of the region's cultural and natural history in the Museum im Deutschhof. Named for an art-loving Heilbronn entrepreneur Ernst Franz Vogelmann (1915–2003) and his foundation, which substantially funded the construction of the facility, the Kunsthalle Vogelmann hosts three to four shows a year whose themes are guided by three thematic emphases: inclusive presentations covering the entire spectrum of three-dimensional art in precious and semi-precious metals and major works in paper, glass and textiles by important artists from the 19th and 20th centuries; modern photography's appearance from surprise to polarization between applied and fine art; and little-known modern and contemporary art, making known the heir-platforms of their creators where for decades the works of artists like Hans Purrmann, Käte Schaller-Herlin and Mathilde Vollmoeller-Purrmann have resided.¹⁹⁰



Figure 43 Bonniers Konsthall

¹⁹⁰ <https://museen.heilbronn.de/kunsthalle-vogelmann/ueber-die-kunsthalle-vogelmann/profil.html> (03.08.2023).

An example of a private arranged Kunsthalle today is the Bonniers Konsthall, a venue for international and contemporary art located in Stockholm's center.¹⁹¹ Established in 2006, this institution of note positions itself as a place for Swedish as well as international art. It is a Kunsthalle that in fact lives its mission of supporting the creation of art as much as it is a podium for contemporary art. Significantly, the institution produces not only its own program of exhibitions, but also collaborates with other institutions of art, reflecting a commitment to the development of art as much as to that of cultural exchange. The Bonniers Konsthall originated from the Maria Bonnier Dahlin Foundation, established by Jeanette Bonnier in memory of her daughter, Maria Bonnier, in 1985. As a non-profit institution, it is owned by the Bonnier Group, a media conglomerate whose publications operate in over fifteen countries, and thereby represents the on-going cultural patronage of the family itself, as well as its media enterprise. Architecturally striking, the iron-clad transparent structure was designed by Johan Celsing Arkitektkontor to house the venue. It is a low building of just ground and first floors situated in a 5-story building. When the Bonnier Group acquired the building, it committed to setting aside 50% of its space for the Kunsthall's use. This space includes the exhibition space, library, music, event and reading rooms. The remainder of the building is occupied by other Bonnier Group enterprises, and the main Bonnier Group edifice is located adjacent to the Kunsthalle. Elgh explains that in case of Bonniers Konsthall, the main financial sustenance comes from the Bonnier Group, meaning that the Kunsthalle often commissions works that are exclusively made for the exhibitions. It however faces challenge when it comes to storing and taking care of the artworks, due to a staff that isn't big enough; emerges then the need of selling some of the works – non-market - to return them to the artists, on the grounds that artists were specifically doing something for the Kunsthalle context. Positioning itself as a significant institution of the cultural and social life, Bonniers Konsthall stands out among others for a number of reasons: a program that includes both international and local shows, as an established institution and a popular art venue, it serves as a meeting place with a pedagogical perspective. It is where contemporary art can be taken as a focus of the institution. That launches the legitimacy of a Kunsthalle that can actually show different aspects of what is on our walls and in our minds today. Bonniers Konsthall then states its goal: catching up with the 21st century through a program of both young talents and established internationals, with an ongoing guest studio program and a foundation prize for young Swedish artists. Mainly, the programming should be various and should show different perspectives and themes for as big and

¹⁹¹ All information on the founding and ongoing organisation of Bonniers Konsthall emerges from an interview with the then curator Caroline Elgh on 26.10.2021.

heterogeneous audience: an exhibition examples of the formats can be found in *Laura Lima, Pilvi Takala or Dora Garcia, I Always Tell the Truth*; the shows of the winners of the Maria Dahlin Foundation Prize will be exhibited. In addition, the Kunsthalle produces exhibitions on a specific social or sociological theme. These include *Brazilian Art and Film From the 1960s and 1970s, The Image of War* or *A Trip to the Moon*.

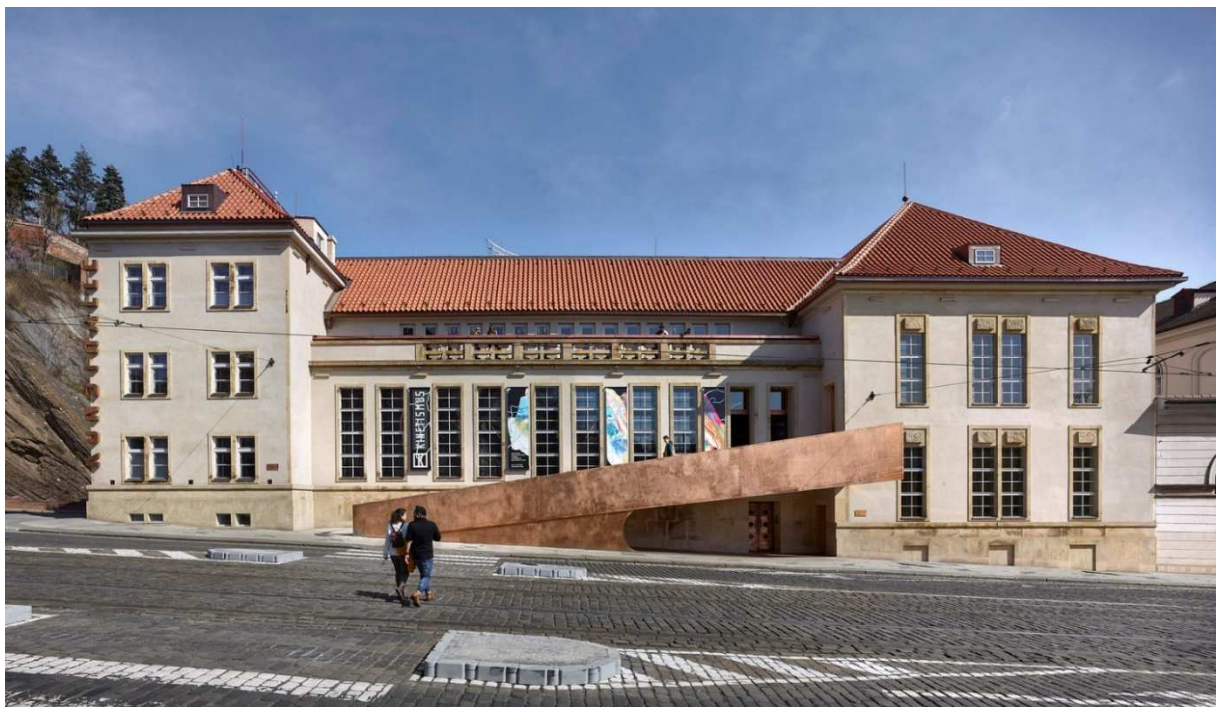


Figure 44 Kunsthalle Praha

In keeping with such precedents, established in 2015 by The Pudil Family Foundation in Prague as a non-governmental organization, Kunsthalle Praha presents itself as a mass medium for contemporary art. This Kunsthalle is an independent exhibition space which engages as broad a public as possible, and serves as a locus for discourse between art and society, a site for artistic exploration, critical dialog and cultural exchange. The Kunsthalle has taken on increasingly multiple functions beyond its traditional roles of collecting and exhibition in the post-modern era. Through exhibitions, educational programming, public lectures and through an array of digital initiatives, Kunsthalle Praha seeks to render contemporary art more accessible, relevant and comprehensible to the widest possible public, while it also presents itself as a mediating and facilitating connective tissue for artistic discourse. In collaboration with artists, curators and with local and international cultural institutions, the Kunsthalle Praha is determined to create a diverse and lively cultural ecosystem. Such collaborations offer a means by which the Kunsthalle Praha can promote interdisciplinary approaches, making it possible for visitors to

engage with contemporary art. Through its commitment to accessibility, inclusivity, interdisciplinary collaborations, and the integration of digital platforms, the institution strives to bridge the gap between art and society, fostering an artistic discourse that resonates with diverse publics. By embracing its role as a mass medium, the Kunsthalle Praha endeavors to make contemporary art an integral component of public life and cultural engagement.¹⁹²

As Kunsthallen continue to transform and develop, one can see how they are redefining art exhibition practice. In the contemporary era, Kunsthallen play multiple roles within the art world and the broader socio-economic context. As intermediaries, they link artists to the art market providing a space for emerging artists to present their work, gain visibility, and potentially develop connections with collectors, curators, and galleries. As such, Kunsthallen are the testing ground for artists who aim at recognition and success within a capitalist art world. The corporatization of art institutions comprises the progressive integration of entrepreneurial and market-oriented strategies and mechanisms in the operations of these institutions. However, this seems to be a more global trend whereby art institutions are incorporating a panoply of practices and techniques to redesign their operational frameworks and structures, taking corporate commercialization, management strategies, professionalization, and partnerships with corporate entities. This transformation of our museums and Kunsthallen is of course subject to much debate – for efficiency and financial sustainability is crucial to the preservation and accessibility of an art collection. However, the challenge remains that the excessive focus on commercial aspirations may perhaps compromise the cultural and intellectual independence of museums and Kunsthallen in the city. In the end, the dynamism that is emerging reflects the way that institutional Kunsthallen are becoming more deeply woven into our everyday existence, while urban museums are increasingly reflecting social patterns.

Kunsthallen, in contrast, have increasingly in recent years adopted multidisciplinary approaches that blur the lines between the visual arts, performance, installation and new media – becoming sites for a variety of activities including artist talks, workshops and public programs aligned with their function as cultural hubs, participating in the social fabric of their community and promoting discussion around contemporary art. As stages of contemporaneity, Kunsthallen play a crucial role in providing artists a platform to articulate their ideas, perspectives and concerns. Through their exhibitions and programs, Kunsthallen encourage viewers to reflect on the complexities of the contemporary world and challenge preconceived notions. As they always did, Kunsthallen contribute today to the development and evolution of contemporary art

¹⁹² <https://www.kunsthallepraha.org/en/about-us> (07.05.2023).

practices. By supporting emerging artists, providing residencies, and commissioning new works, they nurture creativity and foster artistic innovation. Kunsthallen serve as incubators for experimentation allowing artists to explore new artistic frontiers. In addition to showcasing established and emerging artists, Kunsthallen also serve as platforms for interdisciplinary collaborations. They foster connections between artists, curators, scholars, and diverse communities, facilitating the exchange of ideas. This interdisciplinary approach enriches the artistic discourse and the exploration of new artistic possibilities. Kunsthallen also actively engage with their audiences, offering educational programs, workshops, artist talks, and guided tours. By facilitating direct interactions between artists and viewers. Through these programs, Kunsthallen aim to demystify contemporary art, making it accessible and relevant to a broader audience.

No wonder that Terry Smith optimistically defines a Kunsthalle as:

*“...a physical location for the regular exhibition of freshly-made works by living artists, chosen by those artists, or by a curator or team of curators working closely with them, addressed entirely to the immediate, contemporaneous relevance of the work – its pure contemporaneity, we might say – with no intention of building a collection, or of making a statement of art historical continuity. Rupture, discontinuity, change, and the release of new energy: these are the watchwords.”*¹⁹³

The question now arises as to what position the Kunsthalle occupies in today’s art world. However, if one looks at the entire contemporary art scene, it becomes clear that Kunsthallen are only one element in the expanded art system. Terry Smith calls this “Contemporary Visual Arts Exhibitionary Complex,” where all elements learn from each other as they strive to be contemporary and therefore strive for constant change.¹⁹⁴ According to him, an example of this is the phenomenon that artists act as curators and curators act as artists. Therefore, it makes no sense to look for an exact definition of what an art gallery is. All forms, be it a museum, a gallery, an alternative space, or virtual exhibition spaces can function parallel to each other and influence each other. The objects displayed in the museum embody a historical memory, serving as testimonies to their time. This refers to an important function of the museum, linked to the so-called “museum effect.” If the objects are witnesses that possess and convey

¹⁹³ Terry Smith, “Kunsthallen as Quasi-Independent Art Spaces: A historical and Global Perspective”, in: Peter J. Schneemann, *Localizing the Contemporary. The Kunsthalle Bern as a Model*. Zurich: JRP Ringier Kunstverlag AG, 2018, p. 67-90, here p. 70.

¹⁹⁴ Terry Smith, *Op. cit.*, here p. 82.

information, then they become instruments of communication between what they are and what they convey. It is therefore a question of the relationship between materiality and mediality. Through this selection of the objects to be exhibited, a subjective selection takes place on the one hand, but also a change in the function of the object. By integrating the object into the museum, it is detached from its original context and inserted into a new structure. The function of the museum is to reclassify the objects, to stage them, to re-contextualize them. Depending on the intention of the display, the object can be placed in different contexts and thus address different themes. The shift in meaning that occurs through the repositioning of objects creates a need for interpretation. However, it must be mentioned here that even during the production of contemporary artworks in the 21st century, an exhibition of art institution is the target. This shift in the meaning of objects in exhibitions is created by strategies such as comparisons, juxtapositions, or chronologies. The interpretation of a theme or problem influences the positioning, staging and mediation strategy.

The instructive presentation methods in exhibitions have receded in favor of (mass media) staging. Exhibitions convey less, but the corresponding catalogues have become larger. The more demanding visitor can thus make up for the lack of education that exhibitions can no longer impart. The criticism of museums is that audience behavior is only seen as a reaction to the products of the culture industry. They function as platforms for the presentation and promotion of contemporary art, offering spaces for artists to exhibit their works that embody and respond to the intricacies of the capitalist system. Through their curated exhibitions and events, Kunsthallen foster environments for dialogue and discourse, urging viewers to interrogate prevailing narratives of late capitalism and engender fresh perspectives.

The commodity-aesthetic presentation techniques would deprive the recipient of the exhibited object as a source of critical and aesthetic experience. The observation of development trends of a political and cultural character as well as macroeconomic tendencies are of great importance for art institutions. Just like business enterprises, they are also marked by the capitalist system, in which failure is harmful. The purpose of presenting art is no longer in itself, because raising money has become the primary business, because without strong funding, art cannot be exhibited. As a result, what used to be a pure art sector has increasingly become an amalgamation of several leisure activities. Moreover, state-funded institutions are pitted against private ones. The difficulty that these institutions must overcome is, on the one hand, to strengthen art and culture and, on the other hand, to profile culture as a leisure activity.

Culture becomes a product. The exhibitions in the Kunsthallen are aimed at a specific audience with a selection of themes, which means that culture is created for the audience. However, this

does not mean that the audience orientation aims to produce adapted products as entertainment, but culture is something that is conveyed through communication with the recipient. The product of the art institution is only realized through dialogue with the viewer. In this context, however, the term product does not mean material product, but as an exhibition it is a service. This is supported with goods and services. This means the mediation program, workshops or lectures that convey the core product to specific target groups. Merchandising articles and catalogues are also produced for each exhibition. Although these are not services, they are products to support them.

It can therefore be summarized that the product culture completes itself through reception. The potential consumer is confronted with a wide range of leisure activities. An increased cultural and leisure offer can also be observed, which tries to attract consumers with experiences. The products and services of Kunsthallen are seen as cultural leisure activities. In addition, it should not be forgotten that Kunsthallen are not only fighting with other venues for the attention of the public, but also for the favor of sponsors. Thus, the distinguishing features between Kunsthallen and museums necessitates a nuanced understanding of how each institution conceptualizes, interacts with, and presents contemporary art and themes. Traditionally, museums were perceived as custodians of history, repositories for a variety of artefacts spanning different eras, including but not limited to contemporary works. Their role goes beyond the exhibition of art; museums are involved in the preservation, study, and interpretation of their collections, providing a historical continuum that connects the past with the present. In contrast, the term Kunsthalle refers to exhibition spaces that are primarily dedicated to the presentation of contemporary art. In contrast to museums, Kunsthallen are not burdened with conservational tasks or historical representation, which allows for a stronger focus on the immediacy and fluidity of contemporary artistic expression. The concept of contemporaneity in these institutions is not only a reflection of the temporal novelty of the artworks, but also an examination of the themes, techniques and discourses that define the current artistic milieu. For museums, contemporaneity means a careful balancing act –the integration of contemporary art into a broader historical narrative, while for the Kunsthalle it means a focused reflection of the current artistic zeitgeist, often with a future-oriented approach. Eventually, the concept of contemporaneity, which describes not only the temporal proximity to the present but also the reaction to the dynamics of the current cultural, social and artistic landscape, must be emphasized as a special distinguishing feature between art galleries and museums. Engaging with the domain of contemporary art necessitates an understanding of its intrinsic linkage to the zeitgeist within which it is produced. Art, in its form, transcends aesthetics, representing a

necessary medium for societal dialogue. As a reflective surface of societal norms, art is an issue provocateur, challenging conventions and saying that which others do not want to say. Art is the elixir of socio-cultural transformation—the medium of dialogue, encapsulating collective consciousness and marking the barometer of the times in which we find ourselves living. Contemporary art is a response of the times, a direct reflection of the complexities, challenges and paradigms of contemporary society and an offering of a multi-vocal lens through which we may view the state of our global collective. With the integration of contemporary art into the spaces art institutions and galleries inhabit they have undergone a significant change in roles. They have become participants; they become dynamic arenas for the exhibit and critical dialogue surrounding the issues critical to the style and condition of the contemporary global, adjoining to the imperative of the time in exhibiting contemporaneity. They are now interactive environments, having evolved from static exhibition spaces that historically regarded the art and objects displayed within as artifacts, and not as the medium itself. Like the traditional mass media were central in the formation of, and ultimate say in the method of contemporary culture, so too have the art institutions and galleries have become to cultural exchange and public perception. With the incorporation of contemporaneity into fundamental ethos, art galleries and similar institutions have become active players in the media landscape, both influencing and being influenced by the societies they serve. These institutions have become conduits through which contemporary issues, ideas and artistic expressions are disseminated to a wider audience. Contemporaneity, as embodied in the age of the biennial, is central in shaping what the art institution is today; it means an interconnected art world throughout the globe, in which traditional temporal barriers are challenged, and diverse artistic practices co-exist. Here is where the original function of the Kunsthalle may be resumed, namely the exhibition and sale of contemporary art with an international overlap. The innovation and difference between Kunsthalle and museum as such is the contemporaneity. Kunsthallen, characterized by their transient and initially regionally focused exhibitions, underscore a culture of display that accentuates contemporaneity, diverging from the traditional exhibition norms prevalent in museums. Kunsthallen focused on contemporary art, that of their time and place. Their exhibitions tended to run a short-term course and featured the possibility of a dynamic and ever-evolving presentation of artworks. This approach not only reflected and still reflects the current artistic trends and societal themes but also fosters a sense of immediacy and relevance. In contrast to the historical breadth often found in museums, Kunsthallen focus on the pulse of the contemporary art world, highlighting regional and current artworks, which may also be available for purchase. With Kunsthallen's commercial orientation, art presentation was

broadened. The potential making works for sale influenced how art was curated and displayed in a way that differed from the museum. Museums, traditionally, are centered on the conservation, preservation, and scholarly research of artworks. Their exhibitions are curated with a long-term perspective, aiming to educate and provide historical context to the viewers. And so, this approach results in a more static presentation, often chronicling different time periods and styles. In contrast, Kunsthallen were originally commercial in nature. The art world benefited from a certain accessibility. Artworks in Kunsthallen were often presented in a manner that accentuated their marketability and appeal to contemporary buyers. However, this commercial aspect not only influenced the selection of works but also determined how they were presented, making them more familiar and accessible to contemporary viewers. It is the Kunsthalle that also enables a more varied rotation of exhibitions allowing content to be kept fresh and in step with current trends in art. With the postmodern interest of the public in the present, a new sphere of activity is opening up for the Kunsthalle. Unlike the museum, which was built as an institution of the past Kunsthallen were able to establish a relationship with the present. However contemporary things also require a medium because the present is short-lived. Museums at their origin tried by means of a universalist approach to present the human environment. This includes such as the cabinets of curiosities in the 16th and 17th centuries. However, the Kunsthalle has considerably changed with exhibiting contemporary objects. But the way items are arranged still plays an important part in comprehending life. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this apparent objectivity is ultimately only an endeavor following its principles of composition. The world is not only a matter of interpretations of relationships, but also meaning constructions.

From a museological standpoint, the displayed artifacts of a museum hold a deep memory of history. Testimonies of their age, they form the mediality of the museum. Seen as testimonies transmitting information from their inherent nature to the message conveyed, they become instruments of communication between materiality and mediality. Open as elements of this mediality, the choice of objects for display is a subjective moment. Objects are withdrawn from their use and turned into onlookers; they become status symbols. The museum's role then becomes one of reclassification, theatrical staging, and recontextualization of these objects. Depending on the curatorial intent, an object may be embedded in varying contexts, thereby engaging with diverse thematic narratives.

The new way in which the exhibition space reconfigures the objects leads to a shift in their meanings, which in turn requires interpretive engagement. It is essential to keep in mind that even in the production of contemporary art of the 21st century, the eventual exhibition of the

work by an art institution is a powerful influencing factor. A reconfiguration of the significance of the objects within an exhibition is done through strategies such as comparative analysis, juxtaposition, and chronological ordering. The interpretation of a theme or issue will condition the placement and presentation of the objects and the mediation scheme of the exhibitions, shaping the understanding and engagement of the viewer to the exhibition. This is exactly what institutionalized exhibitions and the art trade turned into an artistic revolution that established modernism in the 20th century. Modern art broke out of the state-run art academies and juries to develop its own institutional system and art market. The autonomous exhibition and art trade institutions of modernism would have made the new kind of art, the conventional modes of representation in painting, unthinkable. Modern art through its exhibition institution developed its own supremacy in the art scene and in particular attracted younger artists. In this respect art developed freely without being determined by an aesthetic paradigm, inherited from the past. Art is freed and has its own institutional and commercial field. It is also what restored modernity after the Second World War. The new relationship between contemporary art and economy. Kunsthalle became a symptom of our contemporary culture.

9 Conclusions

To conclude the findings of this thesis, let us return to the aim set up in the introduction. In order to tackle the complex question of how Kunsthallen have shaped and influenced the artistic landscape, both locally and internationally, a structured and comprehensive analysis of Kunsthallen, their origins, characteristics, and their change through time was established. Further focus was put on the distinction - or rather the shifting dynamic - between Kunsthallen and museums to identify the defining characteristics of Kunsthallen that persisted through time. Historically, art associations and museums have played a decisive role in the emergence and development of a public art system since the 18th century. Since traditional museums turned into a sovereign form of art education and conservation, they were not seen as a neutral presentation venue for artworks. Because of the social shifts, the idea of the Kunsthalle emerged in the 19th century, which, as Terry Smith indicates, marks the first of three stages of development in the history of Kunsthallen. In the aftermath of the Enlightenment and the industrialization, the social structures of western European countries drastically changed. Not only did the political system change, but democratization also spread through all threads of the social fabric. Ordinary people not only realized they had a voice that mattered, but also that they were individuals who were able to take part in education and even engage with art. Art

should no longer be reserved to the noble people and churches, it became an interest of the growing middle class. The German Bildungsbürgertum formed associations, the Kunstvereine, to organize their members' growing appetite for art. These Kunstvereine introduced Kunsthallen as exhibition venues for artists and meeting places for their members.

Run and financed by the bourgeoisie, Kunsthallen were a modern breed of art institutions. In contrast to the established museums, Kunsthallen worked at arm's length from the state or patron and focused on exhibiting contemporary art. In the founding phase of the Kunsthallen, their main function was to promote regional artists and make contemporary art accessible to a wider audience, for example by exhibiting works of art that were intended for sale. Kunstvereine and Kunsthallen played a crucial role in democratizing access to owning art, as they implemented uniform membership fees and art lotteries, they facilitated egalitarian engagement with artworks, transcending traditional social hierarchies. Any member could win artworks in a raffle, so the Kunstvereine quite literally put art into the common men's hands and living rooms. This model significantly increased membership and exhibition attendance, thereby fulfilling the goal of expanding contemporary art's reach to a broader audience.

The new method of distributing art resulted in a departure from artists' reliance on traditional patronage systems, as they began creating works for a more anonymous market. Their new target audience was a mass of common people; no longer was it possible or necessary to cater to the taste of the patron. Consequently, artworks became objects of economic calculation, with market dynamics playing an increasingly influential role in artistic creation. Artists, who were formerly bound to certain motives and exhibition practices experienced more freedom when they no longer had to fit their art into the rigid corset of museums, churches, and palaces – the usual venues of presentation for artists in the previous centuries. Since the representational function of art loses its meaning, artists became free to interpret the world to their own understanding. This allowed artists to incorporate a greater diversity of artistic expressions and encouraged experimentation and the formation of genuinely new approaches to creating art. One notable aspect that has persisted from 19th century Kunsthallen is the diverse range of objects, installations, and performances exhibited and preserved in these spaces.

The avant-garde during the 19th century moved away from the idea that art culminated in a preservable object and lay the focus on the process and context of creation. This also redefined the role of artists, transforming them into service providers who facilitate experiential encounters rather than producers of artifacts. In the wake of this trend, artists started writing (and reading) manifestos to explain their motivations to the public, making them more accessible and forming a deeper connection between visitors, artists, and artwork. Presenting a

finished object was no longer the only method of exhibiting art, so art became more than creating a finished object. With their raising success, Kunsthallen -initially functioning as extensions of Kunstvereine- eventually evolved into autonomous entities. These Kunsthallen kept their salient feature in their focus on exhibiting works by living artists, instead of enshrining heritage from a distant past. Kunstvereine were still of central importance for structuring the respective art system and for facilitating inter-systemic communication.

The Kunsthalle in Basel exemplifies these early stages of this development. Through its ever-changing exhibitions a variety of artists was presented to a broad audience, sparking competition among them. The artists chased for the new style, the new idea that could enhance their standing in the undiscovered market. Exhibitions and sales were the main drive of Kunsthallen during the first half of the 19th century, whereas in the second half they also included more programmatic shows with a certain educational requirement on art history. Directors of museums and Kunsthallen recognized the need to increase the involvement of the public in art education. This approach also shows how the boundaries between Kunsthallen and museums were always fluid, as the educative methods of guided tours and lectures rather belong to the realm of museums. Still, the art education movement emerged with the aim to educate society through arts and sports. With this movement the idea to democratize access to art and cultural heritage, which was defining for Kunsthallen, became mainstream and subsequently influenced the work of museums and state-owned institutions. The artists moved towards merging art and practical life, which art museums strictly separated by concept, thereby creating an internalization of taste that spread a new aesthetic view in everyday life. As shown in this thesis, this new approach reflected the philosophical studies of Dörner and Heidegger. The Kunsthalle does not function through aesthetic experience (like a museum), but through the event. The visitors turn from mere spectators of objects to individuals who engage thoroughly with the art, who internalize it with more than just their eyes.

The two World Wars disrupted everything in Europe, including the art world. Many artists and creative avant-gardists fled Europe and ended up in the USA, which became the new focal point of the artworld. The idealism of creating an aesthetic society crumbled in the face of the harsh reality of fascism and war. Following Dörner's ideas, the Museum of Modern Arts in New York pioneered the model of modernism and helped elevating the status of different art forms besides paintings, by incorporating sculpture, drawing, printmaking, architecture, photography, etc. in its collections and exhibitions. The MoMA was clearly inspired by Kunsthallen and it was regarded as the epitome of the new centrum of modern art in the 1960s: the USA. Museums took up these trends and tried to follow MoMA's lead in reinventing what a museum is and how

it is not only a physical space occupied by works of art, but rather a space that is shaped and defined by art. This development brought forth the establishment of modern and contemporary art museums and Kunsthallen all over western Europe.

Terry Smith marks the beginning of the second phase of the history of Kunsthallen during the 1960s. The second phase relates to the transformation influenced by “late modern art becoming contemporary”. The term ‘contemporary’, and subsequently the feature of ‘contemporaneity’, plays an important role in the ontology of Kusthallen, as it serves to be one of their most distinct features. The 1968 movement brought a fresh wind through peaceful protest into the politics and social structures, which was accompanied by a breeze of revolution in the arts who took their part in criticizing privilege and war. For Kunsthallen, this resulted in a significant shift in the curatorial approach and the type of artworks displayed, reflecting the evolving artistic sensibilities and cultural narratives of the time. Kunsthallen began to showcase more experimental and avant-garde works, moving beyond the regional focus to embrace broader, international perspectives. This period marked the beginnings of Kunsthallen as spaces for critical engagement and artistic innovation, aligning with the global trends in the art world. In this stage, Kunsthallen diversified their role, becoming multifaceted platforms for presenting contemporary art. They were no longer just venues for Kunstvereine or regional art promotions but had evolved into dynamic spaces that played a significant role in the global art discourse. While traditional Kunsthallen primarily focused on accumulating artworks for sale, their role shifted away from commercial endeavors toward an educational orientation, which in turn laid the groundwork for the emerging function of the modern curator. The assessment of artworks underwent a notable transformation as well. Their value was no longer judged solely based on their conceptual or material worth, aesthetic qualities, or sublimity. Instead, their worth was determined by their connection to the recipient. The conventional concept of the museum, which had originated in the 19th century as a space for visitors to observe art objects and learn about history, underwent significant changes as the role of the spectator evolved to become an active participant rather than a mere voyeur. The spectator became a participant, a performer, and an integral part of the open work of art. Art became an experience that varied from person to person. The art world opened itself to everyday life, and conversely, everyday life became intertwined with art. Art no longer necessarily needed to be confined within the walls of a museum; it could actively engage with public spaces. Art emerged as a creator of experiences, capable of offering the visitors new perspectives on everyday life and stimulating critical reflection among the public.

Another important trend of this second phase was a further democratization of exhibiting art, as more artists began to conceive their on-exhibition spaces like old factory buildings or studios. Since museums mostly adapted the methods of Kunsthallen, the complete independence from curators and institutions by abandoning any middleman or official building marked a new - more radical- approach to autonomous artistic work. Hereby artists gained full control over their works and the presentation of them, which resulted in greater creative freedom. These new exhibition venues were usually non-commercial and did not intend to build up a collection.

With the growing competition among the different exhibition venues, counting visitors became the standard measurement for success, though this goes against the idea of putting the individual visitor and their experience into the focus, as it reduces them to a number in a statistic with no qualitative measurement of their experience. In turn, politicians demanded that museums aim to attract and involve more visitors, which changed the legitimacy of art institutions in that period. The audience was counted on and became the object of city rivalries and cultural criticism. The visitors can be separated into three major groups: scholars, individuals involved in art production or trade, and the educated middle class. When politics demanded more visitor orientation in the 1970s, the actual museum work was still independent from the public, the classics remained the classics. Kunsthallen on the other hand became spaces where art was actively experienced and happened in the present moment, while most museums continued to archive and exhibit historical artworks. The Kunsthalle, in its emphasis on the ephemeral and the experiential, engaged with art as a dynamic subject rather than a static object and was therefore well-suited for this shift.

In the new millennium the landscape of contemporary art and its institutions has evolved, complicating the once clear 'modernist' distinction between autonomy and heteronomy. This perspective suggests that in the modernist era, art was often seen as an independent realm, not influenced by external societal or political factors, whereas it now involves a more nuanced recognition of the interdependence between art and its external environment. The third phase, according to Smith, saw Kunsthallen becoming integral components of what he terms the 'visual arts exhibitionary complex', which is the entirety of art exhibiting venues, including Kunsthallen, museums, biennials, self-organized spaces, etc. The focus of Kunsthallen on temporary exhibitions and their inherent adaptability positioned them as experimental spaces, allowing them to respond to the changing relationships between art, institutions, and audiences. This adaptability has enabled art to evolve into an active domain of social significance, reflecting and responding to contemporary societal issues and trends. The growing utilization of preexisting media by artists is recognized, giving rise to diverse styles coexisting within a

single work, thereby exemplifying the characteristic of “aesthetic pluralism” emblematic of postmodernism.

The hierarchies of society became less relevant, the differentiation of the mainstream into various subsystems has been important for the functioning of society. As a result, the perception of reality has changed, the process of individualization, which influences personal perception, made it more difficult to find a social consensus on values and norms. Every individual bears their own truth. However, this pluralism led to disorientation and lack of perspective. The art system reflects society. Art takes up the complexity of multiple perspectives and unites them. Through art, it becomes clear that several interpretations of the world are possible, thereby visualizing the complexity of the social order. However, this pluralism proved to be somewhat illusory, as contemporary art is shaped by the actions of artists and their supporting organizations, which have entrenched certain responses and tendencies that oscillate between closure and openness.

Concerning art theory, this shifts complicated traditional approaches to defining art, such as Monroe Beardsley's aesthetic-focused definition. Art was primarily viewed as an arrangement intended for aesthetic experience. His perspective seems less applicable to contemporary art, which may not prioritize aesthetic appeal as its primary function. Hybrid definitions combine the process orientation with functional aspects, considering art's ability to perform certain roles or functions. Furthermore, there's a shift towards developing broader theories of art, that aim to describe what art is in a more inclusive and flexible manner, moving away from rigid definitions that provide strict criteria.

In terms of management, the influence of corporate structures on the policies and practices of Kunsthallen is significant. Directors are typically responsible for operational and budgetary planning, fundraising, and program curation. Marketing, press, and public relations departments play a crucial role in engaging audiences and promoting exhibitions. Financial sustainability is a key consideration for Kunsthallen, which relies on diverse revenue streams, including admission fees, catalogue sales, merchandise, memberships, venue rentals, sponsorships, and private donations. Collaboration between the corporate and cultural sectors has become increasingly prevalent, with companies using art and culture as part of their communication and branding strategies. As a result, the audience is no longer primarily viewed as an integral part to giving meaning to the presented artworks, but rather as a mass of walking wallets. The process of curation of artworks is not primarily guided by aesthetic or conceptual values but by their ability to draw tourists and visitors to the venue. This, of course, also impacts the creation of art. The original goal of Kunsthallen, to enable a broader audience to engage with culture

still shines through, but it has mostly been replaced by the quantitative metric of attracting as many visitors as possible. Kunstvereine, not primarily concerned with collecting, preserving, and researching art, but rather with increasing membership and enhancing the visibility of contemporary art, achieved great success with their usual temporary exhibition format. Additionally, securing sponsorship for temporary exhibitions was comparatively easier.

Foster critically assessed the institutionalization in artistic practices. This trend has led to homogeneity in the art that is exhibited and supported by these institutions. Radical or challenging works, which do not conform to the established norms, are frequently marginalized, thereby stifling diversity and innovation in artistic expression. The concern is that the pursuit of financial viability and market-driven strategies may lead to a homogenization of artistic expression and a prioritization of popular, commercially appealing exhibitions over more experimental or challenging artworks. Foster even calls for a reevaluation of the roles of exhibition venues, their responsibilities, and the impact they have on the art world and society at large. In the same vein Crimp claims the museum as a discursive system is in a qualitative crisis, even during the “museum boom”. He argues that the de-radicalisation of avant-garde art would strengthen idealistic and autonomous artwork. This in turn would go hand in hand with the museum boom, which would be because the art production of the time fitted well in museums. These two developments would coincide with the beginning of postmodernism.

A contemporary Kunsthalle is a site of cultural consumption and one for entertainment, where it brings people together for new experiences regularly. These institutions actively contribute to the commodification of art, whereby visitors engage with artworks primarily as objects of aesthetic pleasure or as symbols of social distinction and prestige. Art develops its meaning more through its position in art history or its marketability than in legitimacy or value. Then, temporary exhibitions in Kunsthalle test out how well an artistic position performs in the market. The true heroes are not artists at the peak of practical skill within their field - but those who attract the most visitors. This can be measured and assessed more easily than such things as artistic skill levels; and today the private sector has the biggest say in what art gets collected - since the works and collections of today are not just pedestals for prestige but also assets whose value can be realized when economic times are tough.

Artistic projects are increasingly seen as integral to urban development strategies, involving place branding, nurturing creative classes, and aestheticizing neighbourhoods. This trend positions art and artists as key contributors to the experiential and affective qualities of urban life, enhancing the appeal of city spaces. In summary, one could say that the significance of art in shaping urban landscapes and experiences is steadily growing, and it points to a broader trend

where art is not only seen as an aesthetic decoration but also as a crucial factor in the development of urban areas, influencing how cities are organized, experienced, and perceived. Kunsthallen thus became pivotal in shaping contemporary art trends and practices, influencing the direction of artistic discourse and innovation. Running parallel to this evolution was the changing nature of Kunsthallen's financing and governance. Initially supported and financed by the bourgeoisie, these institutions gradually sought independence from state control, aligning more closely with private interests and market forces. This shift allowed greater flexibility and autonomy in their program and operations, enabling them to respond more actively to the changing dynamics of the art world. The foundational role of Kunsthallen, however, remained consistent throughout these phases. They continued to serve as platforms for promoting contemporary art, providing exposure to emerging artists, and making avant-garde art accessible to wider audiences. The evolution of Kunsthallen mirrored the broader shifts in societal values and artistic practices, adapting to the changing needs and expectations of artists, audiences, and the art market.

In the evolving landscape of visual arts, Kunsthallen and museums represent two distinct yet interrelated institutional models. While museums are traditionally anchored in the preservation and historical curation of artworks, Kunsthallen have emerged as dynamic, contemporary spaces dedicated to showcasing current artistic practices. This distinction is rooted in their genesis, which marked a pivotal moment in the institutionalization of contemporary art as a distinct field within the art world. Unlike museums, Kunsthallen are characterized by their responsiveness to the evolving nature of contemporary art. This necessitated the development of new systems of expertise, judgment, and practices tailored to the dynamic nature of contemporary art. Consequently, Kunsthallen diverged from the classical museum model, adopting a more experimental and exploratory approach.

The distinction between museums and Kunsthallen is not only evident in their exhibition styles and focus but also in their organizational structures and approaches to community involvement. The primary distinction between museums and Kunsthallen lies in their organizational models: museums typically follow a top-down management structure, while Kunsthallen are characterized by a more grassroots, bottom-up approach, reflecting their divergent methods of art curation and community involvement. Museums, traditionally seen as top-down institutions, have represented a form of officialdom or authority in the art world. Their approach has often been curator-centric, where the expertise and decisions of museum professionals have guided the exhibition and interpretation of artworks. Conventional museums, often viewed as top-down institutions representing bureaucracy, were not always conducive to the development and

presentation of art. This led to the emergence of an alternative space, evolving parallel to the traditional museum.

In contrast, Kunsthallen were conceptualized as bottom-up institutions. They were frequently founded and operated by societies, offering greater organizational independence and flexibility in the art world. This has led to a significant shift in the way museums operate, moving towards a model that is more responsive, collaborative, and inclusive of diverse voices and perspectives. This shift can be seen as a transition from a traditional top-down approach to a more inclusive and community-oriented bottom-up approach, mirroring the fundamental principles that Kunsthallen have embodied from their inception. However, as stated above, some Kunsthallen nowadays have become big players in the art market and have changed to corporate like entities and are organized just as hierarchical and profit driven. They still do not represent the state's agenda and views, but the curation process serves the purpose of increasing visitor numbers, sponsors, and revenue. Despite that, Kunsthallen are still known for their experimental and transient exhibitions, which often respond directly to current artistic trends and societal issues. This approach has naturally fostered a more interactive and participatory environment for visitors, aligning with the contemporary art's ethos of challenging traditional boundaries and encouraging dialogue.

Compared to traditional museums, Kunsthallen have often been more flexible and adaptive, focusing on contemporary art and its immediate relevance to current societal and cultural dialogues. This focus inherently demands a more dynamic relationship with the audience and the art community. The increasing role of visitors and the broader community in setting the agendas of museum institutions is a critical aspect of this evolution. Museums are reorienting their attention from solely focusing on collections to prioritizing visitor experience and engagement. This transition involves valuing community voices and expertise, acknowledging the importance of diverse perspectives in shaping the understanding and appreciation of art. This bottom-up approach emphasizes the role of the audience not just as passive recipients of art but as active participants in the art dialogue. Community involvement in museums now extends beyond mere visitation; it encompasses active participation in curatorial decisions, educational programs, and even in the creation of art. This trend reflects a broader societal shift towards inclusivity and democratization in cultural institutions, where diverse voices and experiences are recognized and valued, in this way the museums have adapted the methods and ideals of the Kunsthallen.

The evolving concept of leadership within art museums reflects a significant shift in how these institutions approach their roles and responsibilities in the art world. The focus was primarily

on curatorial authority, with decisions about exhibitions and collections being made by a small group of museum professionals. This approach often resulted in a singular narrative being presented, with little room for alternative perspectives or community involvement. However, contemporary trends in museum leadership are moving towards more responsive and collaborative structures that value and integrate community voices and expertise. The application of network governance and collaborative leadership in curatorial practice is an approach that involves developing exhibitions based on collaborative management, and community-based methods. In this way, these exhibitions become not just a presentation of art, but a platform for different narratives and perspectives that reflect the diverse experiences and backgrounds of the community. Leadership in this context is redefined as the impact a museum has on its communities and, more importantly, the impact these communities have on the museum. The move towards a more inclusive and collaborative approach in museums is a response to the growing awareness of the need for cultural institutions to more closely reflect and be integrated into the communities they serve. By applying these strategies, museums can become spaces that not only exhibit art, but also foster dialogue, and interconnectivity between different groups.

The transformation in management approaches within art institutions reflects broader changes in the cultural landscape, where the emphasis is increasingly on inclusivity, community engagement, and the visitor experience. This evolution is evident in the shift from traditional top-down management styles to more inclusive and community-oriented bottom-up approaches, particularly in museums. Their historic top-down model focused heavily on collections and their preservation, often overlooking the role and influence of the broader community and the diversity of visitor experiences. In contrast, Kunsthallen, from their beginning, adopted a more progressive approach, emphasizing contemporary art and engaging directly with living artists and current art movements. This orientation naturally led to a more dynamic and responsive model of operation, one that was more attuned to the shifting currents of the art world and the needs and interests of the public. The contemporary shift in museum management aligns more closely with the Kunsthallen model. Museums are increasingly reorienting their focus away from collections and towards visitors, emphasizing community involvement and inclusivity.

Alongside this shift towards community engagement, there is also an emerging trend of managerialization within museums and Kunsthallen. This trend emphasizes a service quality management approach, focusing on enhancing the visitor experience, operational efficiency, and the overall quality of services provided. Managerialization in the cultural sector involves

adopting practices and strategies from the corporate world, emphasizing metrics, outcomes, and visitor satisfaction. These changes in management approaches underscore the evolving nature of art institutions.

The impact of community involvement is significant, as it influences how museums and Kunsthallen operate and strategize. By actively involving diverse community groups, these institutions become more reflective of the societies they serve, fostering a sense of ownership and relevance among their audiences. The managerialization aspect brings a focus on the quality and effectiveness of the services offered by these institutions. This approach can lead to improved visitor experiences, more efficient use of resources, and potentially greater financial sustainability. However, it also raises questions about the balance between commercial objectives and the traditional educational and cultural missions of these institutions.

On the other hand, Kunsthallen are also experiencing transformation through digital engagement, which has significantly impacted their audiences and operations. Both institutions are adapting to new management paradigms. The institutions embrace digital platforms, social media, and online initiatives to reach broader audiences beyond the physical limits of the exhibition space. Underlining the idea that Kunsthalle is not just a room but a mass medium that reaches people on other channels than just by physical attendance.

In conclusion, museums serve as reflections of a society's cultural self-image and a preservation as well as canonization of cultural heritage. Meanwhile, the selection of what is displayed, the manner of presentation, the research conducted, and the principles guiding the classification process adhere to the perspectives and values of the influential individuals shaping the museum's narrative. It is crucial to recognize that the fundamental concern of museums lies in the preservation of cultural heritage and assets, while simultaneously adapting to serve as mass mediums that engage and educate the public.

In the academic analysis of art presentation and understanding, the foundational principles that underpin these processes are crucial, as they shape how art institutions are perceived and legitimized within a given society. Museums, as quintessential institutions in modern societies, exert substantial influence on collective and individual perceptions of history and culture. In contrast, Kunsthallen, known for their bottom-up structure and flexibility, often pursue innovative directions in art display and interpretation. Museums provide a structured, hierarchical approach to art and cultural representation, guiding visitors through a historical narrative that illustrates temporal progression and highlights evolutionary developments in various fields. They are intertwined with the evolution of nation-states and the concept of culture, offering a physical manifestation of a nation or community's unity and autonomy.

Through their exhibits, museums present tangible representations of aesthetic, ethical, political, and historical values. In juxtaposition, Kunsthallen typically adopt a more experimental and fluid approach, focusing on the diverse and evolving nature of contemporary art. While museums serve as custodians of history and culture, Kunsthallen emphasize the ongoing development and plurality of artistic expression. Culture is not primarily understood as an accumulation and interpretation of artifacts from the past, but as an active process of creation and engagement in the present. This perspective furthermore moves away from viewing art merely as a reflection of social causes or relations, instead highlighting its dynamic role in cultural production. A transformative approach, as it positions artworks and cultural artifacts as active agents within contemporary art institutions, influencing and shaping cultural and social landscapes.

Objects within museums transform upon becoming exhibits, holding complex relationships to similar items outside the museum and their previous states before collection. These items, embedded within narratives and contexts, raise questions about the nature and significance of museum objects. This discourse occurs within a changing network of fields, professions, and institutions, especially examining the relationships between art history and museology. It involves exploring the semiological aspects of (art) objects and the psychological and dramaturgical experiences of viewers in museum and art historical contexts.

The evolving dynamics of art institutions highlight a shift towards greater inclusion of visitors, and community in the conceptualization and presentation of art. This trend is particularly evident in the transformation of today's art galleries into mass mediums, which actively engage diverse audiences in the cultural discourse. In this context, the role of visitors has become increasingly central to the functioning of both museums and Kunsthallen. These institutions are now reconceptualizing their approaches to ensure that they not only display art but also facilitate meaningful interactions between the art and its audience. This transition is marked by a growing emphasis on participatory experiences, where visitors are no longer mere spectators but active contributors to the interpretative process. Art institutions are evolving into spaces where community engagement and societal issues are foregrounded, reflecting the contemporary ethos of inclusivity and accessibility.

Museums are broadening their scope to include contemporary societal narratives, thus connecting historical art forms with current social dialogues. Kunsthallen, on the other hand, continue to push the boundaries of contemporary art presentation, often serving as platforms for avant-garde and experimental art that resonates with current societal themes. Both types of institutions are increasingly focused on creating exhibitions and programs that reflect and

respond to community needs and interests, thereby enhancing their relevance and impact within society. These institutions now reach broader audiences through various channels, including digital platforms, which have expanded their accessibility and influence. This evolution positions both museums and Kunsthallen as vital spaces for public engagement, where diverse voices and perspectives are welcomed. The inclusion of societal and community elements in art presentation and interpretation signifies a paradigm shift in the art world, acknowledging the importance of art as a medium for social discourse and change. In summary, the contemporary art institution, be it a museum or a Kunsthalle, is embracing a more inclusive and interactive approach.

The audience plays a crucial role in shaping the character and functioning of both Kunsthallen and museums. Each institution forms its own distinct audience, thereby becoming a medium in its own right. In the contemporary landscape, alongside traditional mediation programs such as guided tours, discussions, or workshops, the virtual space has assumed increasing importance. The era where analogue encounters with art were sufficient has passed, prompting Kunsthallen to adapt by enhancing their digital presence. Kunsthallen like the Schirn Kunsthalle are at the forefront of this digital evolution. Through platforms like Schirn Mag and a curated online program, they not only prepare visitors for exhibitions but also independently engage online visitors with informative content. This approach is a testament to the changing landscape of art engagement, where physical presence is complemented by digital interaction. However, it is noteworthy that other Kunsthallen have yet to fully embrace digitalization to the same extent. The application of new presentation techniques enabled by digital technologies, as well as the incorporation of institution-branded media and shops, gave the artwork an increasingly pronounced product-like nature, thereby endowing the exhibition venue with a renewed identity: in-house cafes, shops, and auditoriums are examples of the ways these institutions actively promote the consumption of culture. They host dinners, concerts, and award ceremonies, constructing a brand that can be monetized, but also hiding the actual artwork behind several layers of commercial fluff.

These art institutions position themselves as educational spaces, shaping cultural perspectives and contributing significantly to regional character and tourism. Visitor numbers are often regarded as a key indicator of an institution's success. The rising visitor numbers, often referred to as the 'museum boom,' have been documented by the Institute for Museum Research (IfM) in Berlin. This institution, although named after museums, also encompasses other exhibition houses, including those not strictly identified as museums. The IfM defines museums based on the presence of a collection and the presentation of objects with cultural, historical, or scientific

objectives. Exhibition houses, in contrast, are characterized by the lack of a permanent collection and focus primarily on temporary exhibitions. The shift in visitor numbers is not only a reflection of increased interest in museums but also indicates the inclusion of more institutions in surveys. It's important to note that art museums represent a significant portion of these statistics. This trend towards inclusivity in the survey mirrors the broader expansion of the art exhibition landscape.

Kunsthallen, emerging directly from the bourgeoisie, have historically been venues for entertainment rather than solely educational or morally exemplary culture. As exemplified by institutions like the Baseler Kunstverein, their origins are rooted in providing entertainment. In the contemporary context, Kunsthallen are increasingly adopting cost-conscious approaches, seeking new financial resources, and implementing new management and marketing strategies. They recognize visitors as customers and orient their programs towards audience preferences, adding cultural events such as awards and lectures to their offerings. This evolution reflects the growing need for Kunsthallen to balance artistic integrity with financial sustainability and audience engagement, demonstrating their adaptability in a rapidly changing cultural landscape. The contemporary art world has seen a significant influence from consumer culture, marking a departure from the traditional notion of art's autonomy. This convergence has led to the development of the cultural industry, where art is increasingly intertwined with everyday life. Consequently, the functioning of art institutions, including museums and Kunsthallen, has evolved in response to this industry's dynamics. The term "Kunsthalle" has broadened in scope, reflecting its adaptability and evolution alongside the cultural industry. This flexibility in definition and function aligns with the industry's broader trends and influences.

Looking to the future, the identity and purpose of art exhibition institutions in the 21st century are likely to diverge from traditional models focused on architectural grandeur or market-driven collections. The longstanding principle of integrating "art and life" continues to evolve, influenced by the democratization of art and a shift towards entertainment. Institutions are expected to act increasingly as mediators of values, with the presentation of art playing a pivotal role in shaping world views. Art, inherently political due to its human-made nature, constructs narratives by including certain perspectives while excluding others. Historically, the Kunsthalle was distinguished from the art museum primarily by its focus on temporary exhibitions. However, the lines between Kunsthallen and museums have blurred, rendering traditional categorizations less relevant. Both types of institutions now often function similarly, regardless of whether they possess a collection.

The key differentiator is no longer the presence of a collection but the underlying aims and objectives. All Institutions now prioritize attracting larger audiences, which can sometimes overshadow the emphasis on artistic quality. This shift stems from art's transition to a more autonomous realm, free from traditional patronage, and responsive to the demands and influences of the market. As art institutions navigate this new terrain, their strategies and approaches will continue to evolve, balancing artistic values with the realities of the cultural industry and audience expectations.

Conclusiones

Al recapitular los resultados de esta tesis, volvamos al objetivo planteado en la introducción. Para abordar la compleja cuestión de cómo las Kunsthallen han configurado e influido en el panorama artístico, tanto local como internacional, se ofreció un análisis estructurado y exhaustivo de las Kunsthallen, sus orígenes, características y su evolución a lo largo del tiempo. Además, se hizo hincapié en la distinción -o más bien en la dinámica cambiante- entre Kunsthallen y museos para identificar las características definitorias de las Kunsthallen que han persistido a lo largo del tiempo. Históricamente, las asociaciones artísticas y los museos han desempeñado un papel decisivo en la aparición y el desarrollo de un sistema de arte público desde el siglo XVIII. Desde que los museos tradicionales se convirtieron en una forma soberana de educación y conservación del arte, no se consideraron un lugar neutral de presentación de obras de arte. La idea de la Kunsthalle surgió debido a los cambios sociales en el siglo XIX que, como indica Terry Smith, marca la primera de tres etapas de desarrollo en la historia de las Kunsthallen. Tras la Ilustración y la industrialización, las estructuras sociales de los países de Europa occidental se alteraron drásticamente. No sólo cambió el sistema político, sino que la democratización se extendió por todos los hilos del tejido social. La gente corriente no sólo se dio cuenta de que tenía una opinión que importaba, sino también de que eran individuos capaces de participar en la educación e incluso dedicarse al arte. El arte ya no debía reservarse a la nobleza y las iglesias, sino que se convirtió en asunto de interés de la creciente clase media. El Bildungsbürgertum alemán formó asociaciones, las Kunstvereine, para colmar el creciente apetito por el arte de sus miembros. Estas Kunstvereine introdujeron las Kunsthallen como lugares de exposición para los artistas y de encuentro para sus miembros.

Dirigidas y financiadas por la burguesía, las Kunsthallen eran un tipo moderno de instituciones artísticas. A diferencia de los museos institucionales, las Kunsthallen trabajaban al margen del Estado o los mecenas y se centraban en la exposición de arte contemporáneo. En la fase

fundacional de las Kunsthallen, su principal función era promocionar a los artistas regionales y hacer accesible el arte contemporáneo a un público más amplio, por ejemplo exponiendo obras de arte destinadas a la venta. Las Kunstvereine y las Kunsthallen desempeñaron un papel crucial en la democratización del acceso a la posesión de obras de arte, ya que al implantar cuotas de socio uniformes y loterías de arte, facilitaron el compromiso igualitario con las obras de arte, trascendiendo las jerarquías sociales tradicionales. Cualquier socio podía ganar obras de arte en una rifa, de modo que las Kunstvereine ponían literalmente el arte en las manos y salas de estar del común de los mortales. Este modelo aumentó significativamente el número de socios y la asistencia a las exposiciones, cumpliendo así el objetivo de poner el arte contemporáneo al alcance de un público más amplio.

El nuevo método de distribución del arte supuso un alejamiento de la dependencia de los artistas de los sistemas tradicionales de mecenazgo, ya que empezaron a crear obras para un mercado más anónimo. Su nuevo público objetivo era una masa de gente corriente; ya no era posible ni necesario satisfacer el gusto del encargante. En consecuencia, las obras de arte se convirtieron en objetos de cálculo económico, y la dinámica del mercado desempeñó un papel cada vez más influyente en la creación artística. Los artistas, que antes estaban atados a determinados motivos y prácticas expositivas, experimentaron una mayor libertad cuando dejaron de tener que encajar su arte en el rígido corsé de museos, iglesias y palacios, los lugares habituales de presentación de los artistas en los siglos anteriores. Al perder sentido la función representativa del arte, los artistas se vieron libres para interpretar el mundo a su propio entender. Esto permitió a los artistas incorporar una mayor diversidad de expresiones artísticas y fomentó la experimentación y la formación de enfoques genuinamente nuevos para crear arte. Un aspecto notable que ha perdurado de las Kunsthallen del siglo XIX es la diversa gama de objetos, instalaciones y representaciones expuestas y conservadas en estos espacios.

Los pioneros modernos del siglo XIX se alejaron de la idea de que el arte culminaba en un objeto conservable y se centraron en el proceso y el contexto de la creación. Esto también redefinió el papel de los artistas, transformándolos en proveedores de servicios que facilitan encuentros experienciales en lugar de productores de artefactos. Siguiendo esta tendencia, los artistas empezaron a escribir (y leer) manifiestos para explicar sus motivaciones al público, haciéndolos más accesibles y creando una conexión más profunda entre visitantes, artistas y obras de arte. Presentar un objeto acabado ya no era el único método de exponer arte, así que el arte se convirtió en algo más que crear un objeto terminado. Los artistas avanzaron hacia la fusión del arte y la vida práctica, que los museos de arte separaban estrictamente por concepto, creando así una interiorización del gusto que difundió una nueva visión estética en la vida

cotidiana. Con su creciente éxito, los Kunsthallen -que al principio funcionaban como extensiones de los Kunstvereine- acabaron convirtiéndose en entidades autónomas. Estos Kunsthallen mantuvieron su característica principal en la exposición de obras de artistas vivos, en lugar de consagrar el patrimonio de un pasado lejano. Los Kunstvereine seguían teniendo una importancia fundamental para estructurar el sistema artístico respectivo y facilitar la comunicación intersistémica.

La Kunsthalle de Basilea ejemplifica las primeras etapas de este desarrollo. A través de sus exposiciones, siempre cambiantes, se presentaba una variedad de artistas a un público amplio, lo que desataba la competencia entre ellos. Los artistas buscaban el nuevo estilo, la nueva idea que pudiera mejorar su posición en un mercado aún por descubrir. Las exposiciones y las ventas fueron el principal motor de las Kunsthallen durante la primera mitad del siglo XIX, mientras que en la segunda mitad también incluyeron muestras más programáticas con un cierto requisito educativo sobre historia del arte. Los directores de museos y Kunsthallen reconocieron la necesidad de aumentar la participación del público en la educación artística. Este enfoque también muestra cómo las fronteras entre Kunsthallen y museos siempre fueron fluidas, ya que los métodos educativos de visitas guiadas y conferencias pertenecen más bien al ámbito de los museos. Aun así, el movimiento de educación artística surgió con el objetivo de formar a la sociedad a través de las artes y el deporte. Con este movimiento, la idea de democratizar el acceso al arte y al patrimonio cultural, que era definitoria de los Kunsthallen, se generalizó e influyó posteriormente en la labor de los museos y las instituciones estatales. Los artistas avanzaron hacia la fusión del arte y la vida práctica, conceptos que los museos de arte separaban estrictamente, creando así una internalización del gusto que difundió una nueva visión estética en la vida cotidiana. Como se muestra en esta tesis, este nuevo enfoque reflejó los estudios filosóficos de Dörner y Heidegger. La Kunsthalle no funciona a través de la experiencia estética (como un museo), sino a través del evento. Los visitantes pasan de ser meros espectadores de objetos a individuos que se involucran profundamente con el arte, que lo internalizan con algo más que sus ojos.

Las dos guerras mundiales trastornaron todo en Europa, incluido el mundo del arte. Muchos artistas y vanguardistas creativos huyeron de Europa y fueron a parar a Estados Unidos, que se convirtió en el nuevo centro neurálgico del mundo del arte. El idealismo de crear una sociedad estética se desmoronó ante la dura realidad del fascismo y la guerra. Siguiendo las ideas de Dörner, el Museo de Arte Moderno de Nueva York fue pionero en el modelo del modernismo y contribuyó a elevar el estatus de otras formas de arte además de la pintura, incorporando a sus colecciones y exposiciones la escultura, el dibujo, el grabado, la arquitectura, la fotografía, etc.

El MoMA se inspiró claramente en las Kunsthallen y fue considerado el epítome del nuevo centro del arte moderno en la década de 1960: Estados Unidos. Los museos hicieron suyas estas tendencias e intentaron seguir el ejemplo del MoMA para reinventar lo que es un museo y cómo no es sólo un espacio físico ocupado por obras de arte, sino más bien un espacio configurado y definido por el arte. Esta evolución dio lugar a la creación de museos de arte moderno y contemporáneo y Kunsthallen por toda Europa occidental.

La década de 1960 marca según Terry Smith el inicio de la segunda fase de la historia de las Kunsthallen. Esa segunda fase se refiere a la transformación influida por el arte moderno tardío que se convierte en contemporáneo. El término "contemporáneo", y posteriormente el rasgo de "contemporaneidad", desempeña un papel importante en la ontología de las Kunsthallen, ya que constituye uno de sus rasgos más distintivos. El movimiento de 1968 trajo un viento fresco a través de la protesta pacífica en la política y las estructuras sociales, que fue acompañada por una brisa de revolución en las artes que tomaron su parte en la crítica de los privilegios y de la guerra. Para las Kunsthallen esto supuso un cambio significativo en el enfoque curatorial y el tipo de obras expuestas, reflejo de la evolución de las sensibilidades artísticas y las narrativas culturales de la época. Las Kunsthallen empezaron a mostrar obras más experimentales y vanguardistas, superando el enfoque regional para abarcar perspectivas más amplias e internacionales. Este periodo marcó el inicio de las Kunsthallen como espacios para el compromiso crítico y la innovación artística, en consonancia con las tendencias globales del mundo del arte. En esta etapa, las Kunsthallen diversificaron su papel, convirtiéndose en plataformas polifacéticas de presentación del arte contemporáneo. Dejaron de ser meras sedes de Kunstvereine o promociones artísticas regionales para convertirse en espacios dinámicos que desempeñaban un papel importante en el discurso artístico mundial. Mientras que las Kunsthallen tradicionales se centraban principalmente en acumular obras de arte para la venta, su función se alejó de los esfuerzos comerciales y se orientó hacia la educación, lo que a su vez sentó las bases de la nueva función del comisario moderno. La evaluación de las obras de arte también experimentó una notable transformación. Ya no se juzgaban únicamente por su valor conceptual o material, sus cualidades estéticas o su sublimidad. En su lugar, su valor se determinaba por su conexión con el receptor. El concepto convencional de museo, que se había originado en el siglo XIX como espacio para que los visitantes observaran objetos de arte y aprendieran sobre historia, experimentó cambios significativos a medida que el papel del espectador evolucionaba hasta convertirse en un participante activo y no en un mero mirón. El espectador se convirtió en participante, intérprete y parte integrante de la obra de arte abierta. El arte se convirtió en una experiencia que variaba de persona a persona. El mundo del arte se

abrió a la vida cotidiana y, a la inversa, la vida cotidiana se entrelazó con el arte. El arte ya no tenía por qué encerrarse en las paredes de un museo, sino que podía participar activamente en los espacios públicos. El arte surgió como creador de experiencias, capaz de ofrecer a los visitantes nuevas perspectivas sobre la vida cotidiana y de estimular la reflexión crítica entre el público.

Otra tendencia importante de esta segunda fase fue una mayor democratización de la exposición de arte, ya que cada vez más artistas empezaron a concebir sus espacios de exposición como antiguas naves industriales o estudios. Dado que la mayoría de los museos adaptaron los métodos de las Kunsthallen, la total independencia de comisarios e instituciones al abandonar cualquier intermediario o edificio oficial marcó un nuevo enfoque -más radical- del trabajo artístico autónomo. De este modo, los artistas adquirían pleno control sobre sus obras y la presentación de las mismas, lo que se traducía en una mayor libertad creativa. Estos nuevos espacios expositivos solían ser no comerciales y no pretendían crear una colección.

Con la creciente competencia entre los distintos lugares de exposición, el recuento de visitantes se convirtió en la medida estándar del éxito, aunque esto va en contra de la idea de poner al visitante individual y su experiencia en el punto de mira, ya que lo reduce a un número en una estadística sin ninguna medición cualitativa de su experiencia. A su vez, los políticos exigieron que los museos se propusieran atraer e implicar a más visitantes, lo que cambió la legitimidad de las instituciones artísticas de la época. Se contaba con el público y éste se convirtió en objeto de rivalidades entre ciudades y de crítica cultural. Los visitantes pueden dividirse en tres grandes grupos: eruditos, personas relacionadas con la producción o el comercio de arte y la clase media culta. Cuando en los años setenta la política exigió una mayor orientación al visitante, la labor museística propiamente dicha seguía siendo independiente del público, los clásicos seguían siendo los clásicos. Por otro lado, las Kunsthallen se convirtieron en espacios donde el arte se experimentaba activamente y sucedía en el momento presente, mientras que la mayoría de los museos seguían archivando y exponiendo obras de arte históricas. La Kunsthalle, con su énfasis en lo efímero y lo experiencial, se relacionaba con el arte como un sujeto dinámico y no como un objeto estático, por lo que era idónea para este cambio.

En el nuevo milenio, el panorama del arte contemporáneo y sus instituciones ha evolucionado, complicando la antaño clara distinción "moderna" entre autonomía y heteronomía. Esta perspectiva sugiere que en la era moderna, el arte se consideraba a menudo un ámbito independiente, no influido por factores sociales o políticos externos, mientras que ahora implica un reconocimiento más matizado de la interdependencia entre el arte y su entorno externo. En la tercera fase, según Smith, las Kunsthallen se han convertido en componentes integrales de lo

que él denomina el "complejo expositivo de las artes visuales", que es el conjunto de lugares de exposición de arte, incluidas las Kunsthallen, los museos, las bienales, los espacios autoorganizados, etc. El hecho de que las Kunsthallen se centraran en exposiciones temporales y su inherente adaptabilidad las situó como espacios experimentales, lo que les permitió responder a las cambiantes relaciones entre arte, instituciones y público. Esta adaptabilidad ha permitido al arte evolucionar hasta convertirse en un ámbito activo de significación social, que refleja y responde a los problemas y tendencias de la sociedad contemporánea. Se reconoce la creciente utilización de medios preexistentes por parte de los artistas, lo que da lugar a la coexistencia de diversos estilos dentro de una misma obra, ejemplificando así la característica de "pluralismo estético" emblemática del posmodernismo.

Las jerarquías de la sociedad perdieron relevancia, la diferenciación de la corriente dominante en varios subsistemas ha sido importante para el funcionamiento de la sociedad. Como resultado, la percepción de la realidad ha cambiado, el proceso de individualización, que influye en la percepción personal, hizo más difícil encontrar un consenso social sobre valores y normas. Cada individuo tiene su propia verdad. Sin embargo, este pluralismo provocó desorientación y falta de perspectiva. El sistema del arte refleja la sociedad. El arte recoge la complejidad de las múltiples perspectivas y las une. A través del arte, se pone de manifiesto que son posibles varias interpretaciones del mundo, visualizando así la complejidad del orden social. Sin embargo, este pluralismo ha resultado ser algo ilusorio, ya que el arte contemporáneo está moldeado por las acciones de los artistas y las organizaciones que los apoyan, que han afianzado ciertas respuestas y tendencias que oscilan entre la cerrazón y la apertura.

En cuanto a la teoría del arte, estos cambios complicaron los enfoques tradicionales para definir el arte, como la definición centrada en la estética de Monroe Beardsley. El arte se consideraba principalmente una disposición destinada a la experiencia estética. Su perspectiva parece menos aplicable al arte contemporáneo, que puede no priorizar el atractivo estético como función principal. Las definiciones híbridas combinan la orientación al proceso con aspectos funcionales, considerando la capacidad del arte para desempeñar determinados papeles o funciones. Además, se está produciendo un cambio hacia el desarrollo de teorías más amplias del arte, que pretenden describir qué es el arte de una manera más inclusiva y flexible, alejándose de las definiciones rígidas que proporcionan criterios estrictos.

En términos de gestión, la influencia de las estructuras corporativas en las políticas y prácticas de los Kunsthallen es significativa. Los directores suelen ser responsables de la planificación operativa y presupuestaria, la recaudación de fondos y la elaboración de programas. Los departamentos de marketing, prensa y relaciones públicas desempeñan un papel crucial a la

hora de atraer al público y promocionar las exposiciones. La sostenibilidad financiera es un aspecto clave para las Kunsthallen, que dependen de diversas fuentes de ingresos, como las entradas, la venta de catálogos, los productos, las afiliaciones, el alquiler de locales, los patrocinios y las donaciones privadas. La colaboración entre los sectores empresarial y cultural es cada vez más frecuente, y las empresas utilizan el arte y la cultura como parte de sus estrategias de comunicación y marca. En consecuencia, el público ya no se considera una parte integrante que da sentido a las obras de arte presentadas, sino más bien una masa de carteras ambulantes. El proceso de selección de obras de arte no se guía principalmente por valores estéticos o conceptuales, sino por su capacidad para atraer a turistas y visitantes al lugar de celebración. Por supuesto, esto también afecta a la creación artística. El objetivo original de las Kunsthallen, permitir que un público más amplio se comprometa con la cultura, sigue brillando, pero ha sido sustituido en su mayor parte por la métrica cuantitativa de atraer al mayor número posible de visitantes. Las Kunstvereine, que no se dedican principalmente a coleccionar, conservar e investigar el arte, sino a aumentar el número de miembros y mejorar la visibilidad del arte contemporáneo, lograron un gran éxito con su formato habitual de exposiciones temporales. Además, conseguir patrocinio para las exposiciones temporales era comparativamente más fácil.

Foster ha evaluado críticamente la institucionalización de las prácticas artísticas. Esta tendencia ha conducido a la homogeneidad del arte que exponen y apoyan estas instituciones. Las obras radicales o desafiantes, que no se ajustan a las normas establecidas, suelen quedar marginadas, ahogando así la diversidad y la innovación en la expresión artística. La preocupación es que la búsqueda de la viabilidad financiera y las estrategias impulsadas por el mercado puedan conducir a una homogeneización de la expresión artística y a dar prioridad a las exposiciones populares y comercialmente atractivas sobre las obras de arte más experimentales o desafiantes. Foster pide incluso que se reevalúen las funciones de los lugares de exposición, sus responsabilidades y el impacto que tienen en el mundo del arte y la sociedad en general. En la misma línea, Crimp afirma que el museo como sistema discursivo se encuentra en una crisis cualitativa, incluso durante el "boom de los museos". Argumenta que la desradicalización del arte de vanguardia fortalecería las obras de arte idealistas y autónomas. Esto a su vez iría de la mano del boom museístico, que se debería a que la producción artística de la época encajaba bien en los museos. Estos dos acontecimientos coincidirían con el inicio del posmodernismo. Una Kunsthalle contemporánea es un lugar de consumo cultural y de ocio que reúne periódicamente a personas para vivir nuevas experiencias. Estas instituciones contribuyen activamente a la mercantilización del arte, por la que los visitantes se relacionan con las obras

de arte principalmente como objetos de placer estético o como símbolos de distinción y prestigio social. El arte desarrolla su significado más por su posición en la historia del arte o su comerciabilidad que por su legitimidad o valor. Entonces, las exposiciones temporales de la Kunsthalle ponen a prueba el rendimiento de una posición artística en el mercado. Los verdaderos héroes no son los artistas en la cima de su habilidad práctica dentro de su campo, sino los que atraen a más visitantes. Esto puede medirse y evaluarse más fácilmente que los niveles de habilidad artística, y hoy en día el sector privado es el que más influye en el arte que se colecciona, ya que las obras y colecciones de hoy en día no son sólo pedestales de prestigio, sino también activos cuyo valor puede materializarse en tiempos difíciles para la economía.

Los proyectos artísticos se consideran cada vez más parte integrante de las estrategias de desarrollo urbano, que incluyen la creación de marcas de lugar, el fomento de clases creativas y la estetización de los barrios. Esta tendencia sitúa al arte y a los artistas como elementos clave que contribuyen a las cualidades experienciales y afectivas de la vida urbana y aumentan el atractivo de los espacios urbanos. En resumen, podría decirse que la importancia del arte en la configuración de paisajes y experiencias urbanas no deja de crecer, y apunta a una tendencia más amplia en la que el arte no sólo se considera una decoración estética, sino también un factor crucial en el desarrollo de las zonas urbanas, que influye en cómo se organizan, experimentan y perciben las ciudades. De este modo, los Kunsthallen se han convertido en elementos fundamentales en la configuración de las tendencias y prácticas artísticas contemporáneas, influyendo en la dirección del discurso y la innovación artísticos.

Paralelamente a esta evolución, se produjo un cambio en la naturaleza de la financiación y la gobernanza de las Kunsthallen. Inicialmente apoyadas y financiadas por la burguesía, estas instituciones buscaron gradualmente la independencia del control estatal, alineándose más estrechamente con los intereses privados y las fuerzas del mercado. Este cambio permitió una mayor flexibilidad y autonomía en sus programas y operaciones, permitiéndoles responder más activamente a la dinámica cambiante del mundo del arte. Sin embargo, el papel fundacional de los Kunsthallen se mantuvo constante en todas estas fases. Siguieron siendo plataformas de promoción del arte contemporáneo, dando a conocer a artistas emergentes y haciendo accesible el arte de vanguardia a un público más amplio. La evolución de las Kunsthallen reflejó los cambios más amplios de los valores sociales y las prácticas artísticas, adaptándose a las necesidades y expectativas cambiantes de los artistas, el público y el mercado del arte.

En el cambiante panorama de las artes visuales, las Kunsthallen y los museos representan dos modelos institucionales distintos pero interrelacionados. Mientras que los museos se han centrado tradicionalmente en la preservación y conservación histórica de las obras de arte, las

Kunsthallen han surgido como espacios dinámicos y contemporáneos dedicados a mostrar las prácticas artísticas actuales. Esta distinción tiene su origen en su génesis, que marcó un momento crucial en la institucionalización del arte contemporáneo como campo diferenciado dentro del mundo del arte. A diferencia de los museos, las Kunsthallen se caracterizan por su capacidad de respuesta a la naturaleza cambiante del arte contemporáneo. Esto exigió el desarrollo de nuevos sistemas de experiencia, juicio y prácticas adaptados a la naturaleza dinámica del arte contemporáneo. En consecuencia, los Kunsthallen se apartaron del modelo museístico clásico y adoptaron un enfoque más experimental y exploratorio.

La distinción entre museos y Kunsthallen no sólo es evidente en sus estilos de exposición y enfoque, sino también en sus estructuras organizativas y enfoques de la participación de la comunidad. La principal distinción entre museos y Kunsthallen radica en sus modelos organizativos: los museos suelen seguir una estructura de gestión de arriba hacia abajo, mientras que las Kunsthallen se caracterizan por un enfoque más de base, de abajo hacia arriba, que refleja sus métodos divergentes de comisariado artístico e implicación de la comunidad. Los museos, considerados tradicionalmente instituciones jerárquicas, han representado una forma de oficialidad o autoridad en el mundo del arte. Su enfoque se ha centrado a menudo en el comisariado, donde la experiencia y las decisiones de los profesionales del museo han guiado la exposición y la interpretación de las obras de arte. Los museos convencionales, a menudo considerados instituciones jerárquicas que representan la burocracia, no siempre favorecían el desarrollo y la presentación del arte. Esto llevó a la aparición de un espacio alternativo, que evolucionaba en paralelo al museo tradicional.

En cambio, las Kunsthallen se concebían como instituciones *from the bottom up*. Con frecuencia son fundadas y gestionadas por asociaciones, lo que ofrece una mayor independencia organizativa y flexibilidad en el mundo del arte. Esto ha provocado un cambio significativo en el funcionamiento de los museos, que han pasado a un modelo más receptivo, colaborativo e integrador de diversas voces y perspectivas. Este cambio puede considerarse una transición de un enfoque tradicional descendente a un enfoque ascendente más integrador y orientado a la comunidad, que refleja los principios fundamentales que los Kunsthallen han encarnado desde su creación. Sin embargo, como ya se ha dicho, algunos Kunsthallen se han convertido en grandes actores del mercado del arte y se han transformado en entidades de tipo corporativo, organizadas de forma jerárquica y con ánimo de lucro. Siguen sin representar la agenda y los puntos de vista del Estado, pero el proceso de comisariado sirve para aumentar el número de visitantes, patrocinadores e ingresos. A pesar de ello, las Kunsthallen siguen siendo conocidas por sus exposiciones experimentales y transitorias, que a menudo responden directamente a las

tendencias artísticas y los problemas sociales del momento. Este enfoque ha fomentado de forma natural un entorno más interactivo y participativo para los visitantes, en consonancia con el espíritu del arte contemporáneo de desafiar los límites tradicionales y fomentar el diálogo. En comparación con los museos tradicionales, las Kunsthallen han sido a menudo más flexibles y adaptables, centrándose en el arte contemporáneo y su relevancia inmediata para los diálogos sociales y culturales actuales. Este enfoque exige intrínsecamente una relación más dinámica con el público y la comunidad artística. El papel cada vez más importante que desempeñan los visitantes y la comunidad en general en el establecimiento de las agendas de las instituciones museísticas es un aspecto fundamental de esta evolución. Los museos están reorientando su atención, pasando de centrarse únicamente en las colecciones a dar prioridad a la experiencia y el compromiso de los visitantes. Esta transición implica valorar las voces y la experiencia de la comunidad, reconociendo la importancia de las diversas perspectivas a la hora de dar forma a la comprensión y apreciación del arte. Este enfoque ascendente hace hincapié en el papel del público, no como mero receptor pasivo del arte, sino como participante activo en el diálogo artístico. La implicación de la comunidad en los museos va ahora más allá de la mera visita; abarca la participación activa en las decisiones curatoriales, los programas educativos e incluso en la creación de arte. Esta tendencia refleja un cambio social más amplio hacia la inclusividad y la democratización en las instituciones culturales, donde se reconocen y valoran las diversas voces y experiencias; de este modo, los museos han adaptado los métodos e ideales de las Kunsthallen.

La evolución del concepto de liderazgo en los museos de arte refleja un cambio significativo en la forma en que estas instituciones abordan sus funciones y responsabilidades en el mundo del arte. La atención se centraba principalmente en la autoridad curatorial, y las decisiones sobre exposiciones y colecciones las tomaba un pequeño grupo de profesionales del museo. Este planteamiento solía dar lugar a la presentación de una narrativa singular, con escaso margen para perspectivas alternativas o la participación de la comunidad. Sin embargo, las tendencias actuales en el liderazgo de los museos están evolucionando hacia estructuras más receptivas y colaborativas que valoran e integran las voces y la experiencia de la comunidad. La aplicación de la gobernanza en red y el liderazgo colaborativo en la práctica curatorial es un enfoque que implica el desarrollo de exposiciones basadas en la gestión colaborativa, y en métodos basados en la comunidad. De este modo, estas exposiciones se convierten no sólo en una presentación de arte, sino en una plataforma para diferentes narrativas y perspectivas que reflejan las diversas experiencias y procedencias de la comunidad. En este contexto, el liderazgo se redefine como el impacto que un museo tiene en sus comunidades y, lo que es más importante, el impacto que

estas comunidades tienen en el museo. La evolución hacia un enfoque más integrador y colaborativo en los museos responde a la creciente concienciación sobre la necesidad de que las instituciones culturales reflejen más estrechamente a las comunidades a las que sirven y se integren en ellas. Aplicando estas estrategias, los museos pueden convertirse en espacios que no sólo expongan arte, sino que también fomenten el diálogo y la interconectividad entre distintos grupos.

La transformación de los enfoques de gestión en las instituciones artísticas refleja cambios más amplios en el panorama cultural, donde cada vez se hace más hincapié en la inclusión, la participación de la comunidad y la experiencia del visitante. Esta evolución es evidente en el paso de los estilos de gestión descendentes tradicionales a enfoques ascendentes más integradores y orientados a la comunidad, sobre todo en los museos. Su modelo histórico descendente se centraba en gran medida en las colecciones y su conservación, pasando por alto a menudo el papel y la influencia de la comunidad en general y la diversidad de experiencias de los visitantes. En cambio, las Kunsthallen adoptaron desde el principio un enfoque más progresista, haciendo hincapié en el arte contemporáneo y comprometiéndose directamente con los artistas vivos y los movimientos artísticos actuales. Esta orientación condujo naturalmente a un modelo de funcionamiento más dinámico y receptivo, más adaptado a las corrientes cambiantes del mundo del arte y a las necesidades e intereses del público. El cambio actual en la gestión de los museos se asemeja más al modelo de las Kunsthallen. Los museos están reorientando cada vez más su atención de las colecciones a los visitantes, haciendo hincapié en la participación de la comunidad y la inclusión.

Paralelamente a este cambio hacia la participación de la comunidad, también está surgiendo una tendencia a la gestión en los museos y Kunsthallen. Esta tendencia hace hincapié en un enfoque de gestión de la calidad del servicio, centrado en mejorar la experiencia del visitante, la eficiencia operativa y la calidad general de los servicios prestados. La gestión en el sector cultural implica la adopción de prácticas y estrategias del mundo empresarial, haciendo hincapié en los indicadores, los resultados y la satisfacción de los visitantes. Estos cambios en los planteamientos de gestión subrayan la naturaleza evolutiva de las instituciones artísticas.

El impacto de la implicación de la comunidad es significativo, ya que influye en el funcionamiento y las estrategias de los museos y las Kunsthallen. Al implicar activamente a diversos grupos de la comunidad, estas instituciones reflejan mejor las sociedades a las que sirven, fomentando un sentimiento de pertenencia y relevancia entre su público. La gestión se centra en la calidad y eficacia de los servicios que ofrecen estas instituciones. Este enfoque puede mejorar la experiencia de los visitantes, hacer un uso más eficiente de los recursos y

aumentar la sostenibilidad financiera. Sin embargo, también plantea interrogantes sobre el equilibrio entre los objetivos comerciales y las misiones educativas y culturales tradicionales de estas instituciones.

Por otro lado, los Kunsthallen también están experimentando una transformación a través de la participación digital, que ha repercutido significativamente en su público y sus operaciones. Ambas instituciones se están adaptando a nuevos paradigmas de gestión. Las instituciones adoptan plataformas digitales, redes sociales e iniciativas en línea para llegar a un público amplio, más allá de los límites físicos del espacio expositivo. Se subraya la idea de que la Kunsthalle no es sólo una sala, sino un medio de masas que llega a la gente por otros canales distintos de la mera asistencia física. En conclusión, los museos sirven como reflejo de la autoimagen cultural de una sociedad y como preservación y canonización del patrimonio cultural. Mientras tanto, la selección de lo que se expone, la forma de presentación, la investigación realizada y los principios que guían el proceso de clasificación se adhieren a las perspectivas y valores de las personas influyentes que dan forma a la narrativa del museo. Es crucial reconocer que la preocupación fundamental de los museos reside en la preservación del patrimonio y los bienes culturales, al tiempo que se adaptan para servir como medios de comunicación de masas que atraen y educan al público.

En el análisis académico de la presentación y la comprensión del arte, los principios fundacionales que sustentan estos procesos son cruciales, ya que conforman el modo en que se perciben y legitiman las instituciones artísticas dentro de una sociedad determinada. Los museos, como instituciones por excelencia de las sociedades modernas, ejercen una influencia sustancial en las percepciones colectivas e individuales de la historia y la cultura. Por el contrario, los Kunsthallen, conocidos por su estructura ascendente y su flexibilidad, a menudo persiguen orientaciones innovadoras en la exposición y la interpretación del arte. Los museos ofrecen un enfoque estructurado y jerárquico del arte y la representación cultural, guiando a los visitantes a través de una narración histórica que ilustra la progresión temporal y destaca los avances evolutivos en diversos campos. Se entrelazan con la evolución de los estados-nación y el concepto de cultura, ofreciendo una manifestación física de la unidad y autonomía de una nación o comunidad. A través de sus exposiciones, los museos presentan representaciones tangibles de valores estéticos, éticos, políticos e históricos. En yuxtaposición, las Kunsthallen suelen adoptar un enfoque más experimental y fluido, centrándose en la naturaleza diversa y evolutiva del arte contemporáneo. Mientras que los museos custodian la historia y la cultura, las Kunsthallen hacen hincapié en el desarrollo continuo y la pluralidad de la expresión artística. La cultura no se entiende principalmente como una acumulación e interpretación de artefactos

del pasado, sino como un proceso activo de creación y compromiso en el presente. Además, esta perspectiva se aleja de la visión del arte como mero reflejo de causas o relaciones sociales, para destacar su papel dinámico en la producción cultural. Se trata de un planteamiento transformador, ya que sitúa las obras de arte y los artefactos culturales como agentes activos dentro de las instituciones artísticas contemporáneas, que influyen en los paisajes culturales y sociales y les dan forma.

Los objetos de los museos se transforman al convertirse en objetos expuestos, manteniendo relaciones complejas con objetos similares fuera del museo y con sus estados anteriores antes de ser recogidos. Estos objetos, integrados en relatos y contextos, plantean interrogantes sobre la naturaleza y el significado de los objetos de museo. Este discurso se produce dentro de una red cambiante de campos, profesiones e instituciones, examinando especialmente las relaciones entre la historia del arte y la museología. Implica explorar los aspectos semiológicos de los objetos (artísticos) y las experiencias psicológicas y dramáticas de los espectadores en contextos museísticos e histórico-artísticos.

La evolución de la dinámica de las instituciones artísticas pone de relieve un cambio hacia una mayor inclusión de los visitantes y la comunidad en la conceptualización y presentación del arte. Esta tendencia es especialmente evidente en la transformación de las galerías de arte actuales en medios de masas, que implican activamente a públicos diversos en el discurso cultural. En este contexto, el papel de los visitantes se ha vuelto cada vez más central en el funcionamiento tanto de los museos como de las Kunsthallen. Estas instituciones están reconceptualizando sus planteamientos para garantizar que no sólo exhiben arte, sino que también facilitan interacciones significativas entre el arte y su público. Esta transición está marcada por un creciente énfasis en las experiencias participativas, en las que los visitantes dejan de ser meros espectadores para contribuir activamente al proceso interpretativo. Las instituciones artísticas se están convirtiendo en espacios en los que la participación de la comunidad y las cuestiones sociales se sitúan en primer plano, reflejando el espíritu contemporáneo de inclusión y accesibilidad.

Los museos están ampliando su campo de acción para incluir narrativas sociales contemporáneas, conectando así formas artísticas históricas con diálogos sociales actuales. Las Kunsthallen, por su parte, siguen ampliando los límites de la presentación del arte contemporáneo, sirviendo a menudo de plataformas para el arte vanguardista y experimental que resuena con temas sociales actuales. Ambos tipos de instituciones se centran cada vez más en crear exposiciones y programas que reflejen y respondan a las necesidades e intereses de la comunidad, aumentando así su relevancia e impacto en la sociedad. Estas instituciones llegan

ahora a un público más amplio a través de diversos canales, incluidas las plataformas digitales, que han ampliado su accesibilidad e influencia. Esta evolución posiciona tanto a los museos como a las Kunsthallen como espacios vitales para el compromiso público, donde se acogen diversas voces y perspectivas. La inclusión de elementos sociales y comunitarios en la presentación e interpretación del arte supone un cambio de paradigma en el mundo del arte, que reconoce la importancia del arte como medio para el discurso social y el cambio. En resumen, las instituciones de arte contemporáneo, ya sean museos o Kunsthalle, están adoptando un enfoque más integrador e interactivo.

El público desempeña un papel crucial en la configuración del carácter y el funcionamiento tanto de las Kunsthallen como de los museos. Cada institución forma su propio público, convirtiéndose así en un medio por derecho propio. En el panorama contemporáneo, junto a los programas de mediación tradicionales, como las visitas guiadas, los debates o los talleres, el espacio virtual ha adquirido una importancia creciente. La era en la que los encuentros analógicos con el arte eran suficientes ha pasado, lo que ha impulsado a las Kunsthallen a adaptarse potenciando su presencia digital. Centros como el Schirn Kunsthalle están a la vanguardia de esta evolución digital. A través de plataformas como Schirn Mag y un programa en línea comisariado, no sólo preparan a los visitantes para las exposiciones, sino que también atraen de forma independiente a los visitantes en línea con contenidos informativos. Este enfoque es un testimonio del cambiante panorama del compromiso artístico, en el que la presencia física se complementa con la interacción digital. Sin embargo, cabe señalar que otras Kunsthallen aún no han adoptado plenamente la digitalización en la misma medida. La aplicación de nuevas técnicas de presentación posibilitadas por las tecnologías digitales, así como la incorporación de medios y tiendas con la marca de la institución, confirieron a la obra de arte un carácter de producto cada vez más pronunciado, dotando así al lugar de exposición de una identidad renovada: las cafeterías, tiendas y auditorios internos son ejemplos de las formas en que estas instituciones promueven activamente el consumo de cultura. Organizan cenas, conciertos y ceremonias de entrega de premios, construyen una marca que se puede monetizar, pero también ocultan la obra de arte real tras varias capas de palabrería comercial. Estas instituciones artísticas se posicionan como espacios educativos, configuran perspectivas culturales y contribuyen significativamente al carácter regional y al turismo. El número de visitantes suele considerarse un indicador clave del éxito de una institución. El creciente número de visitantes, a menudo denominado "boom de los museos", ha sido documentado por el Instituto de Investigación de Museos (IfM) de Berlín. Esta institución, aunque lleva el nombre de museos, también engloba otras casas de exposiciones, incluidas las que no se identifican

estrictamente como museos. El IfM define los museos basándose en la presencia de una colección y la presentación de objetos con objetivos culturales, históricos o científicos. Las casas de exposiciones, por el contrario, se caracterizan por la ausencia de una colección permanente y se centran principalmente en exposiciones temporales. El cambio en el número de visitantes no sólo refleja un mayor interés por los museos, sino que también indica la inclusión de más instituciones en las encuestas. Es importante señalar que los museos de arte representan una parte significativa de estas estadísticas. Esta tendencia hacia la inclusión en la encuesta refleja la expansión más amplia del panorama de las exposiciones de arte.

Las Kunsthallen, surgidos directamente de la burguesía, han sido históricamente lugares de entretenimiento más que de cultura exclusivamente educativa o moralmente ejemplar. Como ejemplifican instituciones como el Baseler Kunstverein, sus orígenes se remontan a la oferta de entretenimiento. En el contexto contemporáneo, las Kunsthallen adoptan cada vez más enfoques conscientes de los costes, buscan nuevos recursos financieros y aplican nuevas estrategias de gestión y marketing. Reconocen a los visitantes como clientes y orientan sus programas hacia las preferencias del público, añadiendo a su oferta actos culturales como premios y conferencias. Esta evolución refleja la creciente necesidad de las Kunsthallen de equilibrar la integridad artística con la sostenibilidad financiera y el compromiso del público, demostrando su adaptabilidad en un panorama cultural en rápida evolución.

El mundo del arte contemporáneo ha experimentado una importante influencia de la cultura de consumo, lo que supone un alejamiento de la noción tradicional de autonomía del arte. Esta convergencia ha dado lugar al desarrollo de la industria cultural, en la que el arte está cada vez más entrelazado con la vida cotidiana. En consecuencia, el funcionamiento de las instituciones artísticas, incluidos los museos y las Kunsthallen, ha evolucionado en respuesta a la dinámica de esta industria. El término "Kunsthalle" ha ampliado su alcance, reflejando su adaptabilidad y evolución junto a la industria cultural. Esta flexibilidad en la definición y la función se alinea con las tendencias e influencias más amplias de la industria.

De cara al futuro, es probable que la identidad y la finalidad de las instituciones de exposiciones de arte en el siglo XXI se aparten de los modelos tradicionales centrados en la grandeza arquitectónica o las colecciones impulsadas por el mercado. El antiguo principio de integrar "arte y vida" sigue evolucionando, influido por la democratización del arte y el giro hacia el entretenimiento. Se espera que las instituciones actúen cada vez más como mediadoras de valores, y que la presentación del arte desempeñe un papel fundamental en la formación de las visiones del mundo. El arte, inherentemente político debido a su naturaleza humana, construye narrativas incluyendo ciertas perspectivas y excluyendo otras. Históricamente, la Kunsthalle se

distinguía del museo de arte principalmente por su enfoque en exposiciones temporales. Sin embargo, las fronteras entre los Kunsthallen y los museos se han difuminado, lo que resta relevancia a las categorizaciones tradicionales. En la actualidad, ambos tipos de instituciones suelen funcionar de forma similar, independientemente de que posean o no una colección.

El factor diferenciador clave ya no es la presencia de una colección, sino los fines y objetivos subyacentes. Todas las instituciones dan ahora prioridad a atraer a un público más amplio, lo que a veces puede eclipsar el énfasis en la calidad artística. Este cambio se debe a la transición del arte hacia un ámbito más autónomo, libre del mecenazgo tradicional y sensible a las exigencias e influencias del mercado. A medida que las instituciones artísticas naveguen por este nuevo terreno, sus estrategias y planteamientos seguirán evolucionando, equilibrando los valores artísticos con las realidades de la industria cultural y las expectativas del público.

10 Appendix

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