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Putting sculpture on show/ Exposer la sculpture : conclusion

Cecilia Hurley-Griener

The creative act is but one, albeit the most essential one, of the episodes in an artwork's life. Long privileged as a subject of study by art historians, the work's conception and translation into form have historically attracted much scholarly attention and inspired many lengthy and erudite texts. More recently, however, art historians have begun to pay increasing attention to the other stages in a work's life, following its departure from the artist's studio, and thus to the forces that continue to shape a work over the years, decades, centuries or millennia following its creation. The history of restoration, of the reproduction of the work of art, of copies and fakes, of the collections it has passed through, of its reception and critical fortune have, for example, proved rich fields of research over the last few years, and have provided rich perspectives.[1] Amongst these various themes and approaches is one that is particularly interesting for us in the context of the study day entitled "Exposer la sculpture", namely museum and collection history and more especially the history and theory of display.[2] The role – and the power – of a museum display in the perception of a work of art are increasingly recognized, to such an extent that one author recent suggested that "To learn what it is to lead the life of a work of art, we need to understand museums.[3]" Maybe, however, we need rather to understand that the museum is one of the important actors, and to integrate it into a more ambitious biography of the artwork at various stages of its life, given that the museum is "just one component that must be considered.[4]"

In an article on the question of the relationship between sculpture and photography, Jean-René Gaborit pointed out the dangers inherent in the photography of works of art. Not so much in terms of the physical risks that the act of photography could engender, but rather in terms of what we might call the conditions of perception. Gaborit's argument was that if optimal lighting conditions are not in place when the photography of an artwork is taken, the resulting image will be poor. This could then in turn have a negative impact on the work's place in the canon of sculpture: "Pour poser brutalement le problème, on pourrait avancer le principe suivant : la qualité reconnue d'une sculpture est en rapport direct avec la qualité des photographies qui en ont été prises et publiées.[5]" The same, claimed Gaborit, using some carefully chosen examples to prove his point, can be said of a sculpture that is badly framed in a photograph.[6] It is surely not impossible to imagine that, by analogy, these caveats could then

1. See the paper by Malcolm Baker in this issue of the *Cahiers*.
2. Among recent works on display see: David Carrier, *Museum scepticism: a history of the display of art in public galleries*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2006 ; Victoria Newhouse, *Art and the power of placement*, New York, Monacelli Press, 2005 ; James Putnam, *Art and artifact: the museum as medium*, London, Thames and Hudson, 2001 ; Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The power of display: a history of exhibition installations at the Museum of Modern Art*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 2001 ; *Claquemurer, pour ainsi dire, tout l'univers : la mise en exposition*, Jean Davallon dir., Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou Centre de création industrielle, 1986; *Narrative spaces: on the art of exhibiting*, Herman Kossmann, Suzanne Mulder, Frank den Oudsten eds, Rotterdam, 010 Publ., 2012 ; Julia Noordegraaf, *Strategies of display: Museum presentation in nineteenth- and twentieth-century visual culture*, Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, 2004 ; Charlotte Klonk, *Spaces of experience: art gallery interiors from 1800 to 2000*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009; *Contemporary cultures of display*, Emma Barker ed., New Haven, Yale University Press, 1999 (*Art and its histories*, 6) ; Jérôme Glicenstein, *L'art : une histoire d'expositions*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2009 (*Lignes d'art*). For a survey article examining the question and recent publications see François Mairesse and Cecilia Hurley, "Éléments d'expologie : Matériaux pour une théorie du dispositif muséal", *Médiatropes*, 3, 2, 2012, pp. 1-27 (http ://www.mediatropes.com/index.php/Mediatropes/article/view/16896/13886) (consulted : 1.3.2016).
3. D. Carrier, *Museum skepticism*, *op. cit.* note 2, p. 4.
4. Such is the opinion of Sean M. Ulmer, "Museums in transition: thoughts from an empiricist", *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 41, 2, Summer 2007, pp. 4-11, p. 5.
5. Jean-René Gaborit, "Le miroir trompeur", *Sculpter-photographier*, conference acts, Louvre, Michel Frizot and Dominique Païni dir., Paris, Marval, 1993, pp. 25-31, p. 26 ; Jenny Feray, "Photographier la sculpture : variations autour du document photographique", *Nouvelle revue d'esthétique*, 1, 3, 2009, pp. 135-142.
6. J.-R. Gaborit, *op. cit.* note 5, p. 27.

be applied to the museum. How far will poor lighting conditions or the wrong choice of position for a work – a painting hung too low, a small sculpture lodged on a console high up on a wall – prove detrimental to the visitor's judgement of a work of art? The museum may not be the sole and absolute purveyor of truth in matters of the artistic canon as some authors would lead us to believe, but it is certainly a very influential actor.[7]

In an important and thought-provoking article written only a few years ago, Kirk Savage pointed out that American sculpture had not attracted much scholarly attention.[8] Often neglected, "obsolete" to a certain extent, sculpture would seem to be the poor relative when compared with her more fortunate sister arts.[9] Savage then examines some of the early history of this apparent general disinterest, which he feels marks the museum world as much as the scriptural discourse. Only public spaces are, in his view, to a certain extent spared. This echoes comments in a similar vein, albeit some thirty years ago, in France. In 1986, France celebrated a "sculpture year".[10] At least one author pointed out that this renewed attention paid to sculpture came none too early, commenting on the lack of good sculpture displays in France: "Hormis les lieux voués à quelques privilégiés, leur propre atelier parfois, les musées de sculpture demeurent rares dans l'hexagone. Les expositions de sculpture étaient tout aussi rares dans de tels lieux, voire complètement absentes.[11]" The situation has gradually improved since then, and accompanying the increased attention paid to sculpture and its display in mainly European museums – both monographic and general – there has been a series of interesting works on the questions of sculpture and its display in the museum, albeit essentially in the Anglo-Saxon world and not in such great number as the works on the display of the other fine arts.[12]

In the context of this increasing attention paid to sculpture and its display, it was appropriate that the study day held at the Musée Rodin to mark its re-opening after three years of closure for restoration, renovation and reorganization of the collections should be entitled "Exposer la sculpture". Over the course of the day a number of scholars offered insights into historical and contemporary exhibitionary practice in sculpture collections, illustrating their comments with reference to European and American museums. Despite the wide range of examples cited and of methods and approaches exemplified, a number of central themes emerged from the various contributions, which can for simplicity's sake be summed up in a series of decidedly laconic questions: "what?", "with what?", "how?" and "for whom?" Clearly it is not easy – nor indeed is it advisable – to treat these propositions as entirely discrete and hermetic. As will be seen over the following paragraphs, the choice of objects, the way in which they are presented, the discourses which accompany them and their intended publics are all interrelated aspects of the same essential question and statement which is at the heart of the present study: sculpture and its displays.

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7. For the idea that the museum holds very extensive sway over our aesthetic education see for example Lynne Munson, "Revising the Museum", *Academic Questions*, 13, 1, March 2000, *Symposium: Universities, the Arts, and Popular Culture*, pp. 52-59, here p. 53: "So we rely on the art museum as we do the compiler of the literary canon – giving it the authority to choose for us the best examples of man's aesthetic efforts."
8. Kirk Savage, "The Obsolescence of sculpture", *American Art*, 24, 1, Spring 2010, pp. 9-14.
9. *Idem*, *Ibidem*, p. 9.
10. *La sculpture du XIXe siècle, une mémoire retrouvée : les fonds de sculpture*, conference acts, École du Louvre, Paris, April 1986, Paris, La Documentation Française, 1986, (*Rencontres de l'École du Louvre*) ; *La sculpture française au XIXe siècle*, cat. d'exp., Paris, Galeries Nationales d'Exposition du Grand Palais, 10.4-28.7.1986, Paris, Éditions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1986 ; Antoinette Le Normand-Romain *et al.*, *La sculpture : l'aventure de la sculpture moderne : XIXe et XXe siècles*, Genève, Skira, 1986 (*Histoire d'un art*) ; Geneviève Bresc-Bautier and Anne Pingeot, *Sculptures des jardins du Louvre, du Carrousel et des Tuileries*, Paris, éditions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1986 (*Notes et documents des Musées de France*, 12) ; A. Pingeot *et al.*, *Catalogue sommaire illustré des sculptures : Musée d'Orsay*, Paris, Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, 1986.
11. Étienne Fouilloux, "Sculpture moderne ou sculpture du XXe siècle ?", *Vingtième Siècle, revue d'histoire*, 14, April-June 1987, *Dossier : Masses et individus*, pp. 90-100, here pp. 90-91.
12. Johannes Siapkas and Lena Sjögren, *Displaying the ideals of Antiquity: the petrified gaze*, London, New York, Routledge, 2014 (*Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies*, 15) ; *Sculpture and the museum*, Christopher R. Marshall ed., Farnham, Ashgate, 2011 (*Subject/object: new studies in sculpture*) ; Can Bilsel, *Antiquity on display: regimes of the authentic in Berlin's Pergamon Museum*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012 (*Classical presences*).

The first question is ostensibly the easiest. What should the museum be putting on show? Admittedly the answer will depend to a great extent on both the nature of the museum and its ambitions, be it a monographic or a studio museum, a universal, a fine art or an archaeological museum.[13] There are, nonetheless, some problems which are faced by almost all collections: which works should be on permanent display, and which ones should be kept in the reserves? Changes in taste, recent discoveries and attributions, new acquisitions all have an effect on the decisions that are taken. Some objects fall out of favour, others are rehabilitated after a lengthy period of neglect. Here we can quote one example of this which can now be seen in the Musée Rodin. Among the objects that have been offered a new existence in the museum's refurbished rooms are the artist's plaster casts. Far from being negligible and secondary creations, or copies of his finished works, they actually represent essential stages in his creative process, on which he could test his ideas.[14] Placing them in the galleries offers us a glimpse into and a better comprehension of the birth and the development of the artwork under the artist's hands, of the evolution of his plastic language. It is true that recent years have witnessed increasing attention being paid to the collections of casts after the antique which were such an important feature of nineteenth-century collections and artistic teaching, but had often been relegated to the reserves if not destroyed.[15] Less common, however, is to accord the same attention to the plaster casts which were part of an artist's creative process.[16]

"With what" or alongside which other works should sculpture be exhibited? Once again the answers will depend on the museum, its collections and its ambitions: no one answer will suit all museum collections. A review of practices over past centuries shows this very clearly.[17] Traditional chronological groupings would tend – much on the model of painting collections also – to suggest that works should be organized by school or region and roughly at least by period and by date. Such, for example, was the solution chosen by the South Kensington Museum at the beginning of the twentieth century, or the Louvre during the second half of the nineteenth century.[18] At times, however, some museum directors followed a bolder path. Such was the case of Caspar Reuvens, director of the Museum of National Antiquities in Leiden during the early decades of the nineteenth century. In a bold scheme for an ideal museum of antiques he placed Javanese sculptures in the centre of the entrance or introductory hall, close to examples of classical antiquity.[19] Sculpture can also be presented in the company of other arts. The various artistic manifestations of a period can be gathered together into one room which offers a microcosm of a period's or a region's styles: Wilhelm von Bode experimented with these *Stilräume* (style rooms) in Berlin at the turn of the twentieth century, and some decades later they were adopted by the Victoria and Albert.[20] Or sculpture can be displayed in conjunction with just one of its sister arts – painting. The paragone – the struggle for artistic pre-eminence between the two arts theorized during the Italian Renaissance – was

13. This same remark applies to all of the questions; for a lengthier analysis of the criteria which come into play, see the opening paragraphs of G. Bresc's article in this issue of the *Cahiers*.
14. For a comparison with other artists: Johannes Myssok, "The gipsoteca of Possagno: from artistes studio to museum", *Sculpture and the Museum*, *op. cit.* note 12, pp. 15-38 ; *idem*, "Modern sculpture in the making : Antonio Canova and plaster casts", *Plaster casts: Making, Collecting and Displaying from Classical Antiquity to the Present*, Rune Frederiksen, Eckart Marchand eds, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2010, pp. 269-288; Sharon Hecker, "Shattering the mould: Medardo Rosso and the poetics of plaster ", *idem*, *ibidem*, pp. 319-329.
15. See Baker's comments on this in his paper in this issue of the *Cahiers*.
16. On this see: J. Myssok, "The gipsoteca of Possagno", *op. cit.* note 14.
17. See Baker's paper in this issue of the *Cahiers* for a wide survey of the literature and also of exhibition practices, and see also Bresc's contribution here on the Louvre.
18. See Baker's and Bresc's contributions in this issue of the *Cahiers*.
19. Mirjam Hoijtink, *Exhibiting the past: Caspar Reuvens and the museums of antiquities in Europe, 1800-1840*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2012 (*Papers on archaeology of the Leiden Museum of Antiquities*, 7), pp. 144-145.
20. C. Bilsel, *op. cit.* note 12, pp. 152-156. See Baker in this issue of the *Cahiers*.

put on show in a number of Early Modern and Modern collections.[21] Nowhere, however, was it used to more brilliant and memorable effect than in one of the most emblematic exhibition spaces in Western art history, the Florentine Tribuna. Here for centuries, antique sculpture and modern paintings shared a space; more particularly, here in the room that was to become known as the "Room of Venus", the *Venus de Medici* and Titian's *Venus of Urbino* captivated visitors, but left them wondering about the relative merits of the painterly and the sculptural arts. The paragone may have fallen out of favour gradually over the nineteenth century, for a number of reasons, but it is now one of the central themes in the Dresden Albertinum, most conspicuously so in the sumptuous Klingersaal.[22]

The two first questions – "what?" and "with what?" – seem to lead quite naturally to the third in our series of interrogations, namely the "how?" The new museography of the Musée Rodin as explained by the architect, Dominique Brard, exemplifies many of the currents of thought at the moment, from the use of colours in an attempt to provide a suitable backdrop for works in marble, plaster, clay and bronze to the delicate question of the lighting effects which permit optimal viewing conditions.[23] Innovative solutions – the use of a revolutionary lighting system and the preparation of a custom-made paint colour for the museum – have been found to the questions which are so important for those planning a museum display, and which oblige us to revisit and revise some of our common beliefs and generally accepted ideas, such as the hegemony of the white cube.[24] Many other factors also need to be taken into account, including the use of socles and vitrines.[25] But the "how" of museum display is not merely a question of colours, lights, pedestals and vitrines.

The museum may well not be a book, as Geneviève Bresc reminds us, but there is a textual component whose importance cannot be underestimated.[26] More delicate is the question of how much text should be included in the museum: too much and the visitor will spend more time reading than looking, too little and the visitor can feel that the museum's pedagogical role is jeopardized.[27] Equally intriguing nowadays are the attempts that have been made to find alternatives to textual explanation. One such experience, described here, is the gallery recently created in the Musée Bourdelle, described as "La sculpture sur le bout des doigts,

21. On the paragone see: Paul Oskar Kristeller, "The modern system of the arts: a study in the history of aesthetics", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 12, 1951, pp. 496-527 & 13, 1952, pp. 17-46 ; Jean Hagstrum, *The sister arts: the tradition of literary pictorialism and English poetry from Dryden to Gray*, Chicago and London, Chicago University Press, 1958 ; Claire Farago, *Leonardo da Vinci's Paragone: a critical interpretation with a new edition of the text in the Codex Urbinas*, Leiden, Brill, 1992 ; Jacqueline Lichtenstein, *La tache aveugle* : *essai sur les relations de la peinture et de la sculpture à l'âge moderne*, Paris, Gallimard, 2003. For the nineteenth century see: Claire Barbillon, *Le relief, au croisement des arts du XIXe siècle*, Paris, Picard, 2014 (*Questions d'art et d'archéologie*), pp. 143-216.
22. See Astrid Nielsen's contribution in this issue of the *Cahiers.* On the troubled history of the paragone in the museum during the nineteenth century, see: Cecilia Hurley, "La présentation du paragone dans les dispositifs muséaux au XIXe siècle", *Les Idoles entrent au musée*, conference acts, Paris, École du Louvre, 10-12 June 2014, Berlin/Paris, Akademie Verlag/École du Louvre, (forthcoming).
23. Jean-Jacques Ezrati, *Éclairage d'exposition : musées et autres espaces*, Paris, Eyrolles, 2014.
24. Charlotte Klonk, "Myth and reality of the White Cube", *From museum critique to the critical museum*, Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius and Piotr Piotrowski eds, Farnham, Ashgate, 2015, pp. 67-79 ; Markus Brüderlin, "Die Aura des *White Cube* : der sakrale Raum und seine Spuren im modernen Ausstellungsraum", *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 76, 2013, pp. 91-106 ; Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the white cube: the ideology of the gallery space*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999 (1st ed.: 1976-1988).
25. See the comments by Dominique Brard in this issue of the *Cahiers*. See also : Rem Koolhaas, "The socle and the vitrine", *Serial/portable classic: the Greek canon and its mutations*, Salvatore Settis, Anna Anguissola, Davide Gasparotto eds, Milano, Fondazione Prada, 2015, pp. 199-204 ; Nicholas Penny, "The evolution of the plinth, pedestal, and socle", *Collecting sculpture in early modern Europe*, conference acts, 7-8 February 2003, Washington, N. Penny and Eike D. Schmidt eds, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2008 (*Studies in the history of art*, 70), pp. 461-481 ; *Display and displacement: sculpture and the pedestal from Renaissance to post-modern*, Alexandra Gerstein ed., London, Holberton, 2007 ; Étienne Jollet, "Présenter la sculpture : les supports des statues en France à l'époque moderne", *Revue de l'art*, 154, 2006, pp. 13-37; Isabel Garcia Gomez, *Le soclage dans l'exposition* : *en attendant la lévitation des objets*, Dijon, OCIM, 2011 ; *Sculpture and the vitrine*, John C. Welchman ed., Farnham, Ashgate, 2013 (*Subject/object: new studies in sculpture*).
26. See Bresc's contribution in this issue of the *Cahiers*.
27. Marie-Sylvie Poli, *Le texte au musée : une approche sémiotique*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2011 (1st ed : 2002) ; *Textes et public dans les musées*, Hana Gottesdiener ed., *Publics et musées*, 1, 1992.

une salle dédiée aux techniques de la sculpture".[28] Which in turn begs the question of the importance of touch (and the other senses) in the museum, an institution in which one sense, sight, seems always to have been privileged.[29] Interesting new perspectives are hereby opened up, as was seen for example at the Tate in summer 2015 with the Tate Sensorium project.[30]

Space is at a premium in most institutions, both in the galleries and in the stacks; coupled with this are increasing calls, in the name of accountability, research and transparency, for museums to make ever larger swathes of their collections readily available to the public. One solution to this problem has been the integration into the exhibition spaces of what is called open storage, glass depots, visible stacks. The denomination may vary but the principle is essentially the same: to offer in a compact area a large number of objects. They are presented as if in storage: a much denser arrangement than can normally be seen in galleries, but with sufficient information to allow the visitor to make sense of what they are seeing. Thus the boundaries between the galleries, in which the visitor can wander, and the reserves, traditionally the territory of the curator only, are increasingly being blurred. As one commentator has recently observed, "L'utopie de réserves visitables ou d'un continuum entre le musée et les réserves au nom de la communication semble renaître aujourd'hui : le Schaulager construit par Herzog et de Meuron à Bâle pour, comme l'indique son néologisme, 'entreposer pour montrer', est accessible aux chercheurs et met à leur disposition les œuvres de la Fondation Emanuel-Hoffmann, créée en 1933, qui ne sont pas exposées dans les musées municipaux. Son récent programme d'expositions montre que cette réserve, à la physionomie spectaculaire d'abri chtonien, tend à devenir un musée.[31]"

The Schaulager is a rather particular example of this phenomenon, since it is in fact an independent building. In the Albertinum in Dresden, however, the glass reserves have been set up in the galleries themselves.[32] There are recent precedents for this type of storage, including of course the Pompidou Centre, with its kinakothèques, or the Tour de Verre at the musée du quai Branly.[33] As has been pointed out, this section of the museum ("réserves accessibles") "inaugurait une révolution muséale en offrant au public curieux la possibilité d'accéder à d'autres œuvres que celles exposées sur les cimaises. L'expression 'supermarché de la culture' vint alors naturellement sous la plume de journalistes, à la fois pour désigner la facilité d'accès au Centre et l'abondance de l'offre.[34]" But there had of course been earlier examples of storage in the museum galleries, even if it had generally been restricted to ethnographic, applied arts or archaeological collections, the most notable example being the Pitt Rivers in Oxford.[35] The long-term effects of this are still being debated. While there are felt to be considerable advantages for researchers, who have facilitated access to larger numbers of objects, there are

28. http://www.bourdelle.paris.fr/fr/la-sculpture-sur-le-bout-des-doigts-une-salle-dediee-aux-techniques-de-la-sculpture (consulted 1.3.2016). See the contribution by Amélie Simier and Colin Lemoine in this issue of the *Cahiers*.
29. The question is increasingly being debated. See, for example: *The power of touch: handling objects in museum and heritage contexts*, Elizabeth Pye ed., Walnut Creek, Calif., Left Coast Press, 2007 ; *The multisensory museum: cross-disciplinary perspectives on touch, sound, smell, memory, and space*, Nina Levent and Alvaro Pascual-Leone eds, Lanham, Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield, 2014 ; *Touch in museums: policy and practice in object handling*, Helen Chatterjee ed., Oxford, Berg, 2008. For a historical perspective see: Fiona Candlin, "Museums, modernity and the class politics of touching objects", *idem*, *ibidem*, pp. 9-20 ; Constance Classen, "Museum manners: the sensory life of the early museum", *Journal of Social History*, 40, 4, 2007, pp. 895-914.
30. http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/display/ik-prize-2015-tate-sensorium (consulted 1.03.2016).
31. Dominique Poulot, *Musée et muséologie*, Paris, La Découverte, 2009, p. 25.
32. See A. Nielsen's contribution in this issue of the *Cahiers*.
33. Madeleine Leclair, "La musique et ses instruments au musée du quai Branly", *La Lettre de l'OCIM*, 112, 2007, pp. 30-39.
34. Bernadette Dufrêne, "Monument ou *moviment* ?", *Les cahiers de médiologie*, 7, 1, 1999, pp. 183-191, here p. 186.
35. Alison Petch, "Notes on the opening of the Pitt Rivers Museum", *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, 19, 2007, *Feeling the Vibes: Dealing with Intangible Heritage: Papers from the Annual Conference of the Museum Ethnographers Group Held at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, 18-19 May 2006*, pp. 101-112, p. 108.

those who question whether it will not have a deleterious effect on the exhibition medium.[36]

The fourth of our laconic questions was "for whom?" Whilst none of the papers addressed the subject directly, the question of the audiences for permanent and temporary exhibitions was implicit in all of them. Displays and display techniques are chosen or refused, tested and adopted or rejected for a number of reasons. And one of these is their aptitude to transmit ideas, to communicate a message. Be it the story of an artist's life, the account of his creative impulses and their translation into form, or the early history of a collection and its formation, the display should allow the public to comprehend the discourse. The arrangement of the works in the gallery spaces, their proximity with other works of art, the accompanying scriptural discourse; all these elements should enable all visitors to appreciate the works on show both individually and as part of an "exhibitionary complex".[37]

Not all critics are happy to accept the above statements, and many are less than complimentary about the museum, going so far as to denigrate it and its work. The list of critics is lengthy and the metaphors varied: the museum can be a cemetery, a jail, an asylum.[38] In late summer 2015, the British artist Banksy claimed that "a museum is a bad place to look at art[39]". Over one hundred and fifty years before him, in 1861, Théophile Thoré had ventured to suggest that museums do not exist at a time when art is healthy, and that museums are cemeteries for art.[40] One century later, Bob Dylan echoed this sentiment, asking for art to be moved to restaurants, dime stores or gas stations.[41] If the museum does not kill the work of art, then it silences it by removing it from its original context and thus divesting it of its meaning. It can in fact maintain a documentary function, but little more. Such is the theory, for example of Zbyněk Zbyslav Stránský who when defining the "musealium" – or museum object – stated that it is an "object separated from its actual reality and transferred to a new, museum reality in order to document the reality from which it was separated[42]". With this in mind, a

36. Bettina M. Carbonell, "The syntax of objects and the representation of history: speaking of 'Slavery in New York'", *History and Theory*, 48, 2, *Historical Representation and Historical Truth*, 2009, pp. 122-137, pp. 123-124. For the risks to the exhibition see: Michelle Henning, "Legibility and Affect: Museums as New Media", *Exhibition Experiments*, S. Macdonald and P. Basu eds, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007, pp. 25-46. On the other hand, B. M. Carbonell would seem to suggest that inventive exhibition design will not be threatened by this type of display: "Although it is perhaps the most static of exhibition modes, since objects are taken out of hidden storage and crowded into glass cases arrayed in closely packed rows, visible storage allows for an uncanny recirculation of history in the lifeworld of the viewer." See : B. M. Carbonell, "The afterlife of lynching: exhibitions and the re-composition of human suffering", *Mississippi Quarterly*, 62, 1-2, 2008-2009, pp. 197-215, p. 213.

37. *Art and its publics: museum studies at the millennium*, Andrew McClellan ed., Malden, MA, Blackwell Pub., 2007 (*New interventions in art history*) ; Andrew Dewdney, David Dibosa, Victoria Walsh, *Post critical museology: theory and practice in the art museum*, London, Routledge, 2013, pp. 46-74 ; Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, *L'amour de l'art : les musées d'art européens et leur public*, Paris, Minuit, 1966 ; Dennis Kennedy, *The spectator and the spectacle: audiences in modernity and postmodernity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009 ; *Musées, connaissance et développement des publics*, conference acts, Paris, 6 April 2004, Paris, Direction des musées de France, 2005 ; *Musée et service des publics*, conference acts, Paris, École du Louvre, 14-15 October 1999, Paris, Direction des musées de France, 2001.

38. D. Carrier, *op. cit.* note 2, p. 58 ; Anthony Vidler, "The space of history: modern museums from Patrick Geddes to Le Corbusier", *The architecture of the museum: symbolic structures, urban contexts*, Michaela Giebelhausen ed., Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2003, pp. 160-182, here pp. 160-164 ; Didier Maleuvre, *Museum memories: history, technology, art*, Stanford Calif., Stanford University Press, 1999.

39. In a rare interview given to the *Guardian* newspaper: http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/aug/21/banksy-dismaland-art-amusements-and-anarchism (consulted 1.3.2016).

40. Théophile Thoré, *Salons de W. Bürger, 1861 à 1868*, 2 vols, Paris, Vve J. Renouard, 1870, 1, p. 84.

41. *Dylan on Dylan: the essential interviews*, Jonathan Cott ed., London, Hodder, 2007, p. 54: "Great paintings shouldn't be in museums. Have you ever been in a museum? Museums are cemeteries. Paintings should be on the walls of restaurants, in dime stores, in gas stations, in men's rooms. Great paintings should be where people hang out."

42. Zbyněk Zbyslav Stransky, "Metologicke otazky dokumentace soucasnosti", *Muzeologicke sesity*, 5, 1974, pp. 13-43, p. 32. See also Peter van Mensch, "Methodological museology: or towards a theory of museum practice", *Objects of knowledge*, Susan M. Pearce ed., London, Athlone Press, 1990 (*New research in museum studies*, 1), pp. 141-157, pp. 144-145. For a stimulating discussion of the afterlives of works of art, through their incorporation into collections and, by extension, the museum, see Salvatore Settis, "Des ruines au musée : La destinée de la sculpture classique", *Annales.* Économies*, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 48, 6, 1993, pp. 1347-1380.

closing round table, with the intentionally provocative title "De-contextualizing sculpture" ("Décontextualiser la sculpture").[43]

Despite the rich variety of subjects discussed and of methods and approaches adopted, the study day could not hope to offer more than a series of selective answers to a relatively reduced number of questions. Certain forms of sculpture were not included in our debates. As a result, the vexed question of the status of Land art and its distinctive characteristics and requirements could not be examined; nor could the contemporary debate surrounding modern-day site specific sculpture be analysed. Some recent research, drawing inspiration from anthropological models, in terms of the importance of performance or agency, focus increasingly on the visitors and their reactions. The works' performativity, the viewers' reactions, the agency of the works (in a Gellian perspective which encourages consideration of what has been defined as "human-thing engagement or entanglement") could all be brought into an analysis of the museum's display.[44] In one recent article the polarity between two human forms in the gallery – what has recently been described as the active viewers and the passive statues – has been posited as a possible fruitful subject of research.[45]

The various approaches outlined in the articles in this issue, combined with other perspectives (some of which are mentioned in the preceding paragraph) may aid us in revisiting our museum displays and better appreciating them, which may in turn help us in rendering sculpture less "obsolete" and in attempting a critical analysis and exploration of museum and gallery displays, their practices and their effects.[46] Maybe then we shall find arguments to counter the criticism of museums and their exhibitionary practices as exemplified in the following text by the American artist Robert Smithson:

"Museums, like asylums and jails, have wards and cells – in other words, neutral rooms called 'galleries'. A work of art when placed in a gallery loses its charge, and becomes a portable object or surface disengaged from the outside world. [...] Once the work of art is totally neutralized, ineffective, abstracted, safe, and politically lobotomized it is ready to be consumed by society. All is reduced to visual fodder and transportable merchandise. Innovations are allowed only if they support this kind of confinement.[47]"

43. This is not included in this issue of the *Cahiers*. The speakers were: Antoinette Le Normand-Romain, Claire Barbillon, Bruno Gaudichon and Sophie Jugie.
44. For the "human-thing engagement or entanglement", see: Şule Can, "Talk to it: memory and material agency in Arab-Alawite (Nusayri) community", *Practicing Materiality*, Ruth M. Van Dyke ed., Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 2015, pp. 33-55, here p. 52.
45. David Getsy, "Acts of stillness: statues, performativity, and passive resistance", *Criticism*, 56, 1, winter 2014, pp. 1-20. See also the article on agency by Caroline van Eck, Pieter ter Keurs and Miguel Jon Versluys in the last issue of the *Cahiers*: Caroline van Eck, Miguel John Versluys, Pieter ter Keurs, "The biography of cultures: style, objects and agency. Proposal for an interdisciplinary approach", *Cahiers de l'École du Louvre : recherches en histoire de l'art, histoire des civilisations, archéologie, anthropologie et muséologie*, 7, 2015, pp. 2-22.
46. See K. Savage, "The Obsolescence of sculpture", *op. cit.* note 8 and S. M. Ulmer, "Museums in transition", *op. cit*. note 4.
47. Robert Smithson, "Cultural Confinement", *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, Nancy Holt ed., New York, New York University Press, 1979, pp. 132-133. The statement first appeared in 1972 for the documenta 5: R. Smithson, "Kulturbeschränkung", exh. cat., *documenta 5 : Befragung der Realität Bildwelten heute*, Harald Szeemann ed., Kassel, Neue Galerie Schöne Aussicht, Museum Fridericianum, Friedrichsplatz, 30.6.-8.10.1972, Kassel, Verlag documenta, 1972, section 17, pp. 74-75.

L'auteur

Membre de l'équipe de recherche HDR et chercheuse rattachée aux collections spéciales à l'Université de Neuchâtel en Suisse, Cecilia Hurley Griener a soutenu au sein de cette dernière une thèse consacrée aux *Antiquités nationales* d'Aubin-Louis Millin et leur place dans les cultures antiquaires et patrimoniales en France à la fin du XVIII^e^ siècle (*Monuments for people*, Brepols, 2013). Elle a ensuite défendu son HDR, intitulée *Le musée comme livre* à l'Université Lumière Lyon II, avec un mémoire inédit sur les salles de chefs-d'œuvre dans la culture muséale en Europe au cours du XIX^e^ siècle. À l'École du Louvre, elle enseigne l'histoire des dispositifs muséographiques. Elle travaille aussi sur des catalogues, ayant co-édité avec Claire Barbillon *Le Catalogue dans tous ses états* (École du Louvre / Documentation française, 2015). Elle s'intéresse également à l'histoire de la peinture au XIX^e^ siècle, participant actuellement à une exposition consacrée à Maximilien de Meuron et l'art de son temps.