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Sentimental Museography

Barnaby Drabble* & Federica Martini**

Abstract

This article explores the affective significance of three curatorial projects realized between the 1960s and the early 1980s, plucked from a still un-assembled history of exhibitions in which collections of ever-day objects form the starting point for emotional, imaginative and at times narrative reflections on museology. The activities of the authors of these 'museums' can be seen as working somewhere between social and personal histories, between high and low culture, between private and collective memory, and between nostalgic and impulsive registers. Some commentators have termed them artists' museums, but they are not exclusively assembled by artists. Others have filed them under institutional critique, even though in many ways they refer not to the modern museum, but back to its precursors; the Wunderkammer and Kunstkammer of the pre-rational age. This paper is written in the context of renewed interest in exhibition experiments substituting institutional museum visions with curatorial individual narratives and fictional acts. It considers, by way of an analysis of the three selected projects, how atypical collections and the narratives they convey configure affect. We argue that the deinstitutionalizing voice in these projects, which rephrases the activities of collecting and curating as, at once, subjective, convivial and sentimental, opens up possibilities for new communities of feeling and sensibility.

Keywords: Modern Art, Contemporary Art, Alternative Museums, Artists' Collections, Exhibition History, Curating, Affect, Wunderkammer, Institutional Critique.

Collection, narrative and sentiment

Exhibition historians looking to the past to better understand where the curatorial meets the affective are faced with considerable challenges. The first of these is our intrinsic inability to witness first-hand viewer activity in the exhibitions of the past or indeed to reflect on our own subjective experiences of these exhibitions. When present in an exhibition, the researcher can experience the atmosphere and intensity established through the interaction of objects, site and visitors that make up an exhibition moment. Looking back on exhibitions they have visited they can summon up memories, moods and emotional states. But, to assess affect through documentation, with its tendency towards the objective and descriptive, is difficult.

In addition to this, when it comes to artists' museums and, particularly, in those collecting low-cultural artefacts, the sentimental interaction is elicited by the interplay between official history and individual nostalgia in the placing of the everyday ephemera, at the level of the artistic object. In museums made by artists,

affect is all about contiguity as part of this process; is elicited by the juxtaposition of subjective, daily materials with the notion of art or by the exhibition of art within a domestic context. However, though artist's museums may appear as oddities in the history of institutional exhibition making, the importance of the affective turn they employ can be seen as significant in a broader understanding of curatorial theory and exhibitions history. The importance of contiguity, not only in regard to objects but also to concepts, can be witnessed in the shift of the recent years, from a focus on the curator (as institutional role) and curating (as profession) to 'the curatorial' (as a space of intended and unintended relations) (Rogoff & Martinon, 2009).

In an interview with sociologist Nathalie Heinich, Harald Szeemann prefigures this reconsideration of how we might "sentimentally" understand the making and reception of exhibitions: "For me the job of exhibition maker and its context cannot renew themselves if not in intimacy, and an equal social value can be found in something fragile and intimate as

opposed to a violent explicative claim (...)” (Heinich 1995). Taking to heart Szeemann’s call to the intimate, and applying it to the reflection on artists’ museum –what we are left to reconstitute if we wish to oppose the rational exhibition paradigm based, as art historian Donald Preziosi proposes, on the indexical and metaphorical juxtaposition of objects (Preziosi 1999) – is the special configuration of the affective sphere created by the exhibition itself.

A second challenge in this exercise is avoiding confusion about what a turn towards the affective might actually connote in artists’ museums. In this sense, avoiding generalization and differentiating between the personal (feelings and emotions) and the pre-personal and autonomic (affect) is important, as Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg suggest in the introduction to their reader on affect theory: “Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces – visceral forces beneath, alongside or *generally other* than conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion...” Yet, this ‘beyond’ is always only short-lived as no theory of affect can talk about this difference without understanding the necessary entanglement of affect and emotion.” (Seigworth & Gregg 2010: 1). Applied to the investigation of artists’ museums, the “short-lived beyond” relates to the quality of the sources that can be used to support research. Beyond the objects and works present in the exhibition and the photographs, films and videos, that most frequently document these, the task of (re)assessing artists’ museums requires an engagement with first-hand accounts, artists’ and curators’ memoirs, personal anecdotes and other subjective, even fictional, evidence. We have to imagine ourselves back into these situations and speculate on affects, and we are forced to use, somewhat counter intuitively, intellectual tools to address an extra-intellectual phenomenon.

A third observation concerns the debate about art’s experiential constitution of knowledge vs. its explicit engagement with intellectual content; is a nuanced one. The exhibiting of modern and contemporary art, and more specifically its display within official and unofficial museums, often elicits responses outside aesthetic norms and traditions. As Walter Grasskamp proposes in one of the first studies of artists’ museums, besides showing undeniable connections with the *Wunderkammer* and *Kunstkammer* tradition,

artists’ museums experience a specific and particular shift in the 20th century within the practice of the collage, where the activity of juxtaposing found objects within a specific frame, brought the previously distinct activities of the collector and the artist together (Grasskamp 1979; Gamboni 2010). In this context, the artistic agency conferred to objects collected in artists’ museums occupies a specific role. These collections are often of unusual, unclassifiable, everyday or low-cultural objects that do not have an inherent, artistic value, but that become expression of an artistic sensibility through the act of being collected. Over the past ten years many of these museums have, in turn, been collected by institutional museums and this process of absorption raises questions about the kind of knowledge they produce – more experiential, engaging with intellectual content or both.

With these challenges in mind we turn to three curatorial projects, plucked from a still un-assembled history of exhibitions in which collections of ever-day objects form the starting point for emotional, imaginative and, at times, narrative reflections on museology. The activities of the authors of these ‘museums’ can be seen as working somewhere between social and personal histories, between high and low culture, between private and collective memory and between nostalgic and obsessive registers. Some have termed them artists’ museums, but they are not exclusively assembled by artists. Others have filed them under institutional critique, but in many ways they refer not to the modern museum, but back to its precursors: the *Wunderkammers* and *Kunstkammers* of the pre-rational age.

A forerunner, in this sense, was Harald Szeemann’s series of exhibitions at the Kunsthalle Bern in the late 1960s, *Puppets*, *Raw Art* and *Ex-Votos*, and his exhibition experiments in 1970s including *Bachelor Machines*, *Monte Verità* and the exhibition in his apartment *Grand Father: A Pioneer Like Us*, the latter of which is looked at in more detail in this article. Their contents ranging from theatrical props and therapy documents to popular comics and family keepsakes, these exhibitions made manifest the affective drive of the impassioned collector and called on the associative power of folk artefacts.

In a similar fashion, artist Daniel Spoerri and historian Marie-Louise von Plessen’s *Musées Sentimentales*, the first flush of these staged respectively in Paris, Cologne and Berlin, in the

late 1970s and early 1980s, brought into question the scientific paradigm at play in institutional museums and in relation to their specific sites, reconsidered the place of emotions in the acts of collection and display. Spoerri's artistic interest in the intensity of the everyday combined here with von Plessen's eye for historical anomaly producing a series of exhibition experiments that retold the official story of each city, often in bizarre, provocative, unreliable and humorous ways.

More recently, *The Museum of Innocence* opened by writer Orhan Pamuk in 2011, has provided yet another example of context-based museum displays linking personal narratives and community micro-histories. Istanbul, between the 1950s and 1970s, is at the centre of Pamuk's literary collections. The same goes for *The Museum of Innocence*, which the author developed at the same time as the novel of the same name (Pamuk 2008), a fictionalised material homage paid by the protagonist Kemal to his lover, Füsun, eight years after she commits suicide. The Museum displays Kemal's memories of her and of their love story in the 1970s, while, on another level, acting as a Museum of the author's love story with Istanbul.

The personal approaches brought along by these "sentimental museums" in terms of their explorations of the possibilities to expand relation to space and site, through personal and narrative means, builds analogies with the notion of the autobiographical collection. Whether relating to a family member, to a city or to characters plucked from a novel, these projects explore the potential of the 'memorial' with all of its subconscious nostalgic facets. Specifically, they reintroduce the urge to include individual biographies "in and of the museum" as a way to counteract the 19th-century institutional goal to represent the world in an objective way (Hill 2012). Importantly, the sentimental museums implicate their collector subjects and introduce us to their vital, urgent pleasures, rather than proposing the displays as the work of an invisible, sanguine, institutional hand. These exhibition experiments invert the 19th century museal urge to exclude the body and its affects, they foreground the whimsy and impulse of collecting, evoke the intimate former life of the objects they display and provoke the visitors to address their own ongoing body-object-body immersion in the world. The pedagogical model of distance and received

learning is replaced here by a sensual proximity, duplicity and interchangeability. As such, these are not really experiments in showing, but in living and as such spaces in which "the pathology of a body meets the pedagogy of an affective world" (Seigworth & Gregg 2010: 1).

The 19th Century Museum and its Affects

The shift from the chaotic wondrous accumulation of the 18th century Wunderkammer to the rigorous, classified collection of the modern museum occurred as an effect of the secularisation of history, at a time when museums emerged as art and historical artefacts were deprivatized (Maleuvre 1999). The illusion of objectivity established and cemented by the Museums at this time, and with it the concept of the grand and unifying narrative of history (specifically that of the nation state) is underwritten by a specific shift in affects. Within museums, art became an object of historical expertise, controlled by newly established academies and institutes. More to the point, this "bracketing of art into the autonomous sphere of museums, complements the movement that hands art over to the expertise of historical science, to the investigations of historiographic study and the minutiae of scholarship" (Maleuvre 1999).

In Tony Bennett's *The Birth of the Museum* (Bennett 1995) and his article 'The Exhibitionary Complex' (Bennett 1996) that presents a number of the ideas explored in the book, he cites Nicholas Pearson's study *The State and The Visual Arts* (Pearson 1982) which interests him due to its focus on the way political ideology was transmitted to publics through the medium of exhibition. Looking at the nineteenth century, Pearson describes the state's role in terms of 'hard' and 'soft' approaches in the promotion of art and culture; the hard: 'a systematic body of knowledge and skills promulgated in a systematic way to specified audiences.' The soft, on the other hand, working 'by example rather than by pedagogy; by entertainment rather than disciplined schooling; and by subtlety and encouragement' (Pearson 1982: 35, cited in Bennett 1996).

Whether hard or soft, the 'complex' that Bennett observes at work in the Museum of the 19th century is, in a Foucauldian sense, disciplinary. The Museum is a space of the production of a new subjectivity, that of the subject coerced through the promise of

becoming 'cultured' to adopt a specific set of behaviours, associated now with bourgeois societal norms. Marion Von Osten provides us with a stark illustration of how affect is tied up in this shift, in her analysis of a cartoon by Honoré Daumier depicting a workig-class man and woman visiting an exhibition. Coming across a classical sculpture depicting a female nude, the woman is shocked and embarrassed, responding as if confronted with a real naked woman. Von Osten sees Daumier's commentary as revealing in three ways.

"First of all, 'she' is not capable of performing the act of reflection necessary in order to encounter art: rather, the drawing portrays her as a signifier of that group of the population which is incapable of distinguishing art from the objects and acts of everyday life. Secondly, she is not only incapable of making this distinction because she lacks the necessary background knowledge, but for the very reason that 'she' identifies with the figure, with the figure's nakedness... Thirdly, it is her identification, triggered by the figure depicted, which bars her from achieving the status of a 'suitable viewer'. For whereas 'he' knows to judge depictions of women as pure art and according to aesthetic criteria, she is deprived of the role of interpretation by virtue of her gender affiliation." (Von Osten 233).

If in pre-modern museums the main concern was to provoke, wonder and surprise, the modern museum attempts to "extricate itself" from the chaotic accumulation of spectacular objects presented in fairs and commercial exhibitions of natural wonders, in order to respond to the political task to educate the crowd. Absorbed by academia and the historiographic/scientific paradigm, the 19th century notion of museum did not represent artists' works, but mainly an art historical vision of art (Preziosi 1999).¹

The isolation of the museum of contemporary art from the everyday became a central focus of the work of many important artists at this time. In order to open up the exhibition space, one notable artistic and

curatorial strategy was the introduction of collections of low mass folk or popular artefacts, frequently related to vernacular cultural traditions, which speak of specific places and times and relate to another, pre-museal space of exhibition, be it the fairground, the sideshow or the carnival.

Harald Szeemann and his Grandfather

The enormous scale of the documenta 5 exhibition, and the overload of organizational work connected to it, made its curator, Harald Szeemann, desire to make "a very intimate exhibition". After the Kassel experience, in 1974, Szeemann was based in Bern, on the third floor of a building at the Gerechtigkeitsgasse. There he lived for some months while he was working in that very space on the exhibition *Grossvater – Ein Pionier wie wir* (Grandfather, a pioneer like us), dedicated to his grandfather Etienne. As Szeemann recalls, the arrangement of the artefacts for the show went on continuously, animated by the wish "not to turn the props into works of art, but rather [in finding] a form that would enable [his] interpretation of a life to become an exhibition" (Bezzola & Kurzmeyer 2007). Based on the personal collection, cumulated by his grandfather over the years, the show included tools, souvenirs and other ephemera related to his profession and life, including engravings, decorations from various associations, log books, stamps, badges, photos, verre eglomisé pictures. This panoply of objects, put together and preserved by Etienne Szeemann—Hungarian immigrant, hairdresser and "obsessive collector"—was presented in Harald's apartment along with furniture pieces and documents (Grammel 2005).

Besides witnessing the biography and success story of a Hungarian immigrant who moved to Switzerland in the 19th century, the collection on show presented itself as a time-capsule of kitsch and absurd objects from the early 1900 that looked like a "Kienholz's environment". If Szeemann's grandfather was presented as a collector, his grandson's curatorial position was compared in the press to one of exhibition maker and document manager (Bezzola & Kurzmeyer 2007). But we could imply, considering the personal approach of the text accompanying the exhibition, that somehow Szeemann also acted as the novelist of the show, that follows the narrative path of his grandfather's main biographical phases, similar

¹ The chronological breaks proposed throughout the 19th century by new distinctions between the art of the past and the art of the present derived from the tradition of periodical exhibitions devoted to present art in institutions such as the Salon Carré du Louvre in Paris and the Royal Academy of Arts in London (Lorente 2014). Yet, the 19th century museum of the art of the present remained mainly inaccessible to the experimental artistic trends and pedagogical in its relation to its audience; attitudes that would be critically debated by artists and museum directors alike in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

to a *bildungsroman* or coming of age story. In the text, Balthasar Burkhard's photographs of the selected objects frame the assumption that in the grandfather's experience life equalled art. Within this narrative, the objects stand for a life and act as witnesses to the fictionalisation of an immigrant experience: a man "Little like Napoleon, decent, enchanting, bulky, and stubborn all at once, he fought his way through the world" (Szeemann 2007), a self-taught professional who compulsively collected objects from his professional environment and life, talking about a system that is disappearing. The subjective nature of what he was engaged in was clear to the curator, as Joanna Szupinska identifies:

"Szeemann is careful to clarify that the exhibition is neither meant to be a literal representation of how his grandfather lived, nor an exact retelling of his life story, but rather an interpretation of an atmosphere, attitude, and a life lived. At a remove from the reality of the grandfather's experience, the grandson could only attempt to offer his own perspective. He covered the walls of the rooms with advertisements and framed pictures, he placed mannequins in unlikely arrangements that rendered them assemblages, and he piled books and diaries on tables for visitors to peruse." (Szupinska 2010)

The art historian and critic Walter Grasskamp makes a connection between Szeemann's exhibition and a comparable project by the artist Christian Boltanski in 1973, about which he declared: "I should like you to exhibit in one room of your museum all the objects that surrounded a person during his lifetime and which, after his death, remain as witnesses of his existence. These objects, ranging for example from the handkerchiefs used by the person to the wardrobe which stood in his room, should all be displayed in show-cases and carefully labelled" (Grasskamp 1979). Szeemann's grandfather exhibition and Boltanski's collections, observes Grasskamp, were not put together as such, but rather exist as an arrangement of that which remains after the person's death. Inherently, they are without specific order or significance, but the exhibition or installation transforms them into a collection, and in the process attributes an emotional significance, directed by the exhibition maker and completed by the visitor. Szeemann made no attempt to edit what he had received from his

grandfather, preferring to fill the apartment where he staged the show with all the material that he had.

"I have included everything here, for even you should know what snake fat is good for, how to dress the hair of an emperor, how to throw marble cake from the window of a train, what to do when jealous colleagues, in the middle of the night, build a brick wall covering the entrance to your business..." (Szeemann 2007)

When Szeemann resigned from his job as director of the Kunsthalle Bern, in 1969, and invented the new job of the independent exhibition maker, he established his own intangible Agency for Intellectual Guest Labour. The agency with its motto 'from vision to nail' was a manifesto and a conceptual tool with which, in time, Szeemann began the journey back to his father and grandfather. His *Grandfather* exhibition, its elevation of a hairdresser to heroic status and in the process, its elements of emotional autobiography shows a specific gesture. Far more than any curator preceding him, Szeemann sought to connect curatorial work to life, rather than to professional antecedents or institutional requirements.

At the time of his most radical experiments in Bern, Szeemann was convinced that institutional exhibition-making had lost its way and become tied to an ill-fitting agenda of informing the public about art, where, in his eyes a much more extensive social function was possible. In 1972, he and a group of colleagues and experts came together under the auspices of the ICOM (International Council of Museums) to discuss their work in a meeting entitled 'Problems of the museum of contemporary art in the West.' In the report of their meeting, published as a special issue of the *Museum* journal and compiled by Szeemann himself, he summarises their convictions: "To put it bluntly, the ideal museum would be the one that was closed by the authorities" (Szeemann 1972). The board of experts were in agreement that the Museums had failed to adapt to changing times and imagined a future museum as a speculative co-production space for a community of feeling, thinking subjects: a space not of objects, but of people, not of objects, but of processes and relationships.

Yet, Szeemann's exhibition of his grandfather's possessions adamantly avoids being 'about' art, or indeed about any one

'thing', 'theme' or 'figure'. Etienne Szeemann is present in his absence, but the exhibition is not really about him. Rather, as Szeemann correctly claims for his work, the aim here is to foster a non-literal, atmospheric, attitudinal practice, and this appears closer to devotional than what we would normally associate with curatorial. The exhibition is 'renewed' as an affective space of unresolved and processual resonance.

Daniel Spoerri, Marie-Louise von Plessen and their Musée Sentimentales

The exhibition concept of the Musée sentimental originates from the Swiss artist Daniel Spoerri who developed the idea and approach in collaboration with the German cultural historian Marie-Louise von Plessen. The first 'museum' was created in 1977, and the most recent in 2011.

The first Museum came about when Spoerri was invited by Pontus Hulten (the first director of the Pompidou) and Jean Tinguely to propose something for the labyrinthine installation *Crocodrome*, which Tinguely was creating with Bernhard Luginbühl for the opening of the Pompidou Centre in Paris. Spoerri's contribution eventually took the form of two projects, the first of these, *Boutique Abberante* led to the second, *Le Musée sentimental de Paris*. The Boutique, in keeping with earlier concepts by Spoerri, took the form of a display of editioned or original everyday objects, which were donated by the artist's friends and sold at low prices, with benefits going to charity. Spoerri requested objects of no clear artistic value and the products on display included one of Marcel Duchamp's shirts, and a series of chewed gum from the then renowned theatre-director Roland Topor.

In an interview with Anke Te Heesen, von Plessen remembers a conversation provoked by these objects in which they discussed how the stores of the city's museums were undoubtedly full of similar strange material; curiosities, objects of little value and uncatalogued material. With Spoerri and Hulten excited by the idea, she began to approach the Museums and Archives of Paris to find the collection of what the three of them were already imagining as an alternative museum of the city. Amongst the objects she uncovered were a single hair from the bow of Paganini's violin, and the keys to the Bastille. While Von Plessen took the role of 'treasure-hunter,' Spoerri and Tinguely were primarily

involved in the dis(play) and juxtaposition of the objects in vitrines within the space. Von Plessen also researched the small text fragments that accompanied the objects, these almost exclusively consisting of carefully selected citations from primary sources.

Soon after the Paris exhibition, von Plessen and Spoerri were approached by Wulf Herzogenrath, the then director of the Kölnischer Kunstverein, to repeat the experiment in Cologne. They agreed and launched the project as a collaboration with students of the Fachhochschule für Kunst und Design, where Spoerri was a professor. The exhibition took place from March 18 to April 29, 1979. Von Plessen describes their role in the project as a key change from the situation in Paris, as it immediately opened out the project to a first circle of collaborators beyond the couple themselves (Te Heesen & Padberg 2011). Their local knowledge was also of significant importance to her as, unlike in Paris, she had little idea of Cologne's culture, history and traditions. The students were asked to select themes of importance to people living in Cologne, and then locate objects in relation to these, at which point Von Plessen and Spoerri discussed and edited the selection, with Spoerri overseeing the installation in the Kunstverein.

The second innovation of importance for the project in Cologne was the decision to pursue an encyclopaedic logic in the arrangement of the objects for exhibition. The display structure, in reference to the classical museum format, consisted of a series of cabinets, vitrines and free-standing objects arranged alphabetically by theme. In some cases this resulted in absurd juxtapositions and an often awkward de/re contextualization alongside their alphabetic neighbours. These included a display of church relics shown alongside objects from Cologne's largest sex shop.

The first of these cabinets, 'A', was devoted to Konrad Adenauer, Cologne's most famous son and revered post-war chancellor of Germany. In place of any reference to his political work, von Plessen and Spoerri exhibited a pair of rose clippers and a full Indian chief's headdress, the latter exhibited above a press photograph of Adenauer wearing the same, his face crinkled in amusement. Von Plessen explained the choice:

"Everyone knew that he bred roses, so there were the rose clippers... and then naturally a visual explosion, especially for the beginning of

the exhibition: an Indian Headdress with eagle feathers, that he had received as a gift, in remembrance of Buffalo Bill, from the 'United Indian Tribes' of the USA. These were really strong objects - juxtapositions, from small to big, from fine to rough. Valuable things were exhibited too, but not in the sense of artistic value." (Te Heesen 2011: 20 trans.)

The 'Adenauer-Vitrine, in particular', she observed in the same interview, 'touched the hearts of the Cologne public'. Adenauer, often referred to as 'der Alte', 'the old one' was normally depicted as stony faced and known for his firm handed guidance of Germany out of the depression of the second world war but here, through a reminder of his love of roses and a momentary transformation into an Indian chief, his memory provokes delight.

Far more concretely than in Paris, Von Plessen and Spoerri explored the singularity of the objects selected for display, and their ability to provoke emotions, either through an initial jolt of recognition, or through their associations with informal stories, shared memories and oral history – they termed these “gefühlsojekte” (literally: feeling-objects). In respect to this, Spoerri has commented on the differing meanings of the word sentimental in French and German – where the French translates quite literally as ‘of the senses or emotions’ in German the term has a more negative association, suggesting something overly-emotional or nostalgic. On this discrepancy Te Heesen argues that the more emotive meaning in German is actually best suited to the Museums, given Spoerri’s tendency to push the objects towards humorous or absurd anecdotes and dramatic connections.

Spoerri himself often doubted if, given the local nature of the stories told, people from outside the city where the sentimental museum was created would enjoy the experience of a visit. In fact, this aspect of the specificity and partiality of the exhibitions appears to have appealed to both the artist and his audiences – as if they shared a secret. However, in one case, Spoerri’s question of access was answered in a surprising and revealing way. Spoerri himself recounts a conversation with the American-Korean artist Nam June Paik who had visited the show in Cologne (Allen). When asked what he thought of the exhibition Paik reputedly replied ‘Wonderful exhibition. Never saw so many old women laughing.’ Paik’s reply, whether faithfully

remembered or just part of a rolling repertoire of anecdotes is indicative of Spoerri’s affective intentions, the contiguity of *gefühlsojekte* opening up space for responses unusual to the Museum, the laughter of old women becoming in turn an object of wonder.

In 1981, Spoerri and von Plessen co-organised *Le Musée sentimental de Prusse* at the Berliner-Museum, hosted by the Berliner Festspiele and supported by the DAAD Berlin Artists-In-Residence programme. The Berlin exhibition, which ran from the August 16 to November 15, 1981, was of particular interest because it existed in contrast to a major historical exhibition, the weighty historical survey ‘Preussen. Versuch einer Bilanz’ (Prussia. An Attempt to Take Stock), which took place at the same time in the newly-reopened Martin-Gropius-Bau. Working again with a team of students, Spoerri and von Plessen came up with 178 keywords which related to Berlin’s faded Prussian past and which were organized alphabetically: from ‘Adler’ (eagle) to ‘Zwangschloss’ (double-bit key). Hundreds of artefacts – tourist trinkets, stuffed birds, embroideries, cigarette cases, horse saddles, memento salt shakers, even potato hoes – were collected for the key words and displayed in provocative combinations.” (Allen, 2011)

Unlike in Cologne, the Berlin exhibition could not be seen as a stand-alone, as it was so clearly in conversation with historical survey. Von Plessen claims that the press at the time were, to her surprise, critically impressed by the impact of the more playful *Musée Sentimental*, which continued the alphabetic hang and humorous juxtapositions of its Cologne predecessor. Originally intended as a lighter appendix, she perceived a shift of attention and a moment at which it was understood, particularly by Berliners, as an alternative to the larger exhibition. The aims were modest and no attempt was made at sweeping master narratives, leading to a different level of viewer engagement; laughter, recognition, identification, rather than detached interest. For Von Plessen this renegotiation of the viewers’ expectations of the Museum object, by selecting it for the feelings it could produce and the stories it could conjure up, was to be the most significant legacy of the *Musée Sentimental*.

Orhan Pamuk's Museum of Innocence

The collecting act is a constant motif in the novels of Orhan Pamuk, in *Istanbul: Memories of a City*, the sitting rooms of his family apartment are described like museums:

"Sitting rooms were not meant to be places where you could hope to sit comfortably; they were little museums designed to demonstrate to a hypothetical visitor that the householders were Westernised. A person who was not fasting during Ramazan would perhaps suffer fewer pangs of conscience amongst these glass cupboards and dead pianos than he might if he were sitting cross-legged in a room full of cushions and divans. Although everyone knew it as freedom from the laws of Islam, no one was quite sure what else Westernization was good for. So, it was not just in the affluent homes of Istanbul that you saw sitting-room museums; over the next fifty years you could find these haphazard and gloomy (but sometimes also poetic) displays of Western influence in sitting rooms all over Turkey; it was only with the arrival of television in the 1970s that they went out of fashion" (Pamuk, 2003).

The 'sitting room museums' of Pamuk's memory, kitsch, haphazard, gloomy and awkwardly attempting to be western are clearly both inspiration and caveat for the author's own museum project, the Museum of Innocence, which emerged as a physical space in conversation with the characters and objects taking form in his novel. They have in common the accumulation of objects of dubious aesthetic value and relate to the same domesticity, the museum filling a house in a residential part of Istanbul. But the latter is demanding in other ways, being both the product of a fictional character's obsession with his dead lover and the product of a novelist's obsession with detail. The curatorial concept revolves around cabinets which respond to the sections of the book, but Pamuk is adamant to remind visitors that not only do you not need to read the book to view and understand the displays, but that the process of collecting was as important as that of writing, with objects happened upon in back street bazaars or gifted by his readers finding their way into the book.

One exhibit, in particular, appears as a key to understanding the Museum's affective register: a wall of cigarette butts, their ends stained with crimson lipstick, carefully pinned like rare butterflies, dated and annotated with

anecdotes alluding to their heritage. These, we are led to believe were all smoked by the novel's female protagonist Füsün, now gathered and catalogued by Kemal, in a seeming attempt to keep the memories of their encounters alive. The cigarette, the lips, the very act of smoking, of waiting and of life lived combine here with the enormity of the collection: over 4000 spent cigarettes.

In the book, Kemal recounts his encounter with a space that must also have been familiar to Szeemann, Spoerri and von Plessen:

"During my last days in Paris, with Füsün's birds on my mind, and a bit of time to kill, I went to the Musée Gustave Moreau, because Proust had held this painter in such high esteem. I couldn't bring myself to like Moreau's classical, mannered, historical paintings, but I liked the museum. In his final years, the painter Moreau had set about changing the family house where he had spent most of his life into a place where his thousands of paintings might be displayed after his death, and this house in due course became a museum, which encompassed, as well, his large two-story atelier, right next to it. Once converted, the house became a house of memories, a "sentimental museum" in which every object shimmered with meaning. As I walked through empty rooms, across creaking parquet floors, and past dozing guards, I was seized by a passion that I might almost call religious. (I would visit this museum seven more times over the next twenty years, and each time as I walked slowly through its rooms I felt the same awe.)" (Pamuk 2009)

Conclusion: Putting the 'Wunder' back in the 'Kammer'

In Szeemann's experiments and the Musées Sentimentales of von Plessen and Spoerri along with other 'artists museums' of the 1960s and 1970s, the reference to the Wunderkammer emerges in the form of an atemporal approach to artistic research, which is based on accumulation more than on organization and selection (Lugli 1986). Parallel to consumer culture of the time, when non-organized and unselective accumulations of everyday objects acquire the status of collections, the emergence of the Wunderkammer model in contemporary art exhibitions seems to support the validity of non-systematic approach to knowledge, as opposed to the selective approach of the scientific museum (Belk 1995, Lugli 1986).

Besides mainly referencing, both negatively and positively, the emerging pop culture and its global outreach, the inclusion of folk materials in contemporary art exhibitions challenges the notion of otherness/sameness and author position that constitute the basis of the art historical canon.

In all the examples discussed in this article, we find material that appears to belong to the tradition of the 'hobby' collector within popular culture; the collector of souvenirs, memorabilia, and tourist knick-knacks (Stewart 1994, Belk 1995). Arguably, the collections include these kinds of objects with the deliberate aim of bringing into question the temporality of the contemporary art museum – its focus on the present – and the dialectics between personal and official history. This logic could in fact also be applied to art history, as John Ruskin's Saint-Georges Museum at Walkey (UK) and Warburg's Mnemosyne prove, but that stayed nonetheless relegated in the realm of artistic practices (Didi-Huberman 2011).

Further to the foundation of the first professional museum association in York in the 1880s, the related *Museums Journal* (1901) involved museum professionals in a first classification and assessment of different museum typologies. In the survey, a hierarchical priority is attributed to Museum National, defined as “the most comprehensive of all,” followed by other specialized institutions such as the museum artistic; the museum scientific; the museum scholastic; the museum educational; the museum technological; the museum municipal; the museum personal. Interestingly enough, the survey opens with the notion of the “museum personal”, defined as the museum where “the ideas and tastes of the individual are expounded” (*Museums Journal*, 1901).

Heir of the cabinet of curiosity, the idea of the “museum personal” is deeply connected, in the 19th century European collecting mode, with Romantic logics (Pearce 1995). In this specific museum typology, conserved in the original collector's house and being significantly linked to the display s/he has arranged, we also see the emergence of the tension between the private and public dimension of the “personal museum” project. As Higonnet observes, these museums developed particularly between the 1890s and the 1940s, in partial response to the impersonality of the new national and civic

galleries, as well as a consequence of the opening to the new public accessibility of collections (Higonnet 2010). In contrast to the objectivising agenda of the large museums, the personal museum would maintain the taste for the juxtaposition of fine and applied arts, contextualizing the artwork along with functional every-day objects or tools. The collection plan of the personal museum was also always intimately connected with the genius loci of the site where the objects are gathered and exhibited, as well as with the collector biography (Gamboni 2010, Higonnet 2010).

In general, museum collections are based on the architectural independence acquired by the artwork from the Prince's Wunderkammer, where they played a decorative role. In the fine arts museum, based on the Vienna Belvedere Gallery principle, artworks are meant to display art history and are consequently arranged chronologically and by school – the stereotype underlying this shift is the passage from the chaos of the Wunderkammer to the order of the museum. One of the rules of the Wunderkammer is, as their name says, wonder. To obtain that, they play on variations of scale; they mix up different orders – the animal, the mineral and the vegetable; they contain monstrous elements; they work with the absurd and surreal. From the contemporary viewpoint, we can see that the activity of going back to the Wunderkammer as an exemplary site of the alchemy between art and science is also indebted to the Post-modern positions emerging in the 1970s, and particularly their challenge of the distinction between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture (Pearce 1992). In this context, Grandfather, the *Musées Sentimentales* and other examples from this time should be seen as precursors to the post-modern fluidity required of museums with regards to material culture, while Pamuk's Museum in Istanbul is a piece of nostalgic resistance to this.

Playing with the museum's metaphorical potential and reclaiming a pre-modern affective register, these sentimental museums challenge the opposition between masterpiece/artefact; between art history/personal history; museum as the site for authenticity/rubbish as the place for inauthentic popular culture. Through including in their collections, the spurious masterpiece and the fake or fictionalised artefact, they also re-frame the rigid relationship between objects, museums and their publics.

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Biographical Notes

Dr. Barnaby Drabble is a curator, writer and researcher with a focus on contemporary art and particularly experimental and avant-garde exhibition history and curatorial theory. Since 2009, he is a part of the faculty of the MAPS Master Program at ECAV. He has curated numerous independent projects including exhibitions, screenings, discursive events and events in the public space. In 2010 he was awarded a PhD by the visual and cultural studies department of the Edinburgh College of Art for his research into participatory exhibitions. The research and archiving project, *Curating Degree Zero*, co-initiated with Dorothee Richter in 1998 - 2008 has attracted attention for its role in assisting research into alternative approaches to exhibition making of the past 15 years. Since 2009 Drabble is managing editor of the *Journal for Artistic Research*, the first peer-reviewed journal for the identification, publication and dissemination of artistic research.

Federica Martini, PhD, is an art historian and curator. She was a member of the Curatorial Departments of the Castello di Rivoli Museum of Contemporary Art, Musée Jenisch Vevey and Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts/Lausanne. Since 2009, Martini has been head of the Master programme MAPS at the ECAV/Ecole cantonale d'art du Valais/Sierre, and is part of the collective standard/deluxe, Lausanne. In 2015-16 she was a research fellow at the Istituto Svizzero di Roma. Together with Elise Lammer she initiated the Museum of Post-Digital Cultures (2012-ongoing) and with Julie Harboe she conceived the SARN booklets, an editorial series on artistic research. Recent publications include: *"My PhD is my art practice. Notes and insights on the art PhD in Switzerland"* (with P. Gisler, 2017); *Vedi alla voce: traversare* (2016); *Publishing Artistic Research* (with B. Drabble, 2014); *Open Source and Artistic Research* (with B. Drabble, 2014); *Tourists Like Us: Critical Tourism and Contemporary Art* (with V. Mickelkevicus, 2013); *Pavilions/Art in Architecture* (with R. Ireland, 2013); *Just Another Exhibition: Stories and Politics of Biennials* (with V. Martini, 2011).