Guest Column: Exhibition Practices

MIEKE BAL

WHAT THE PUBLIC GETS TO SEE OF MUSEUMS IS IN THE EXHIbitions in which their holdings are presented; beyond the archival functions of conservation, categorization, and restoration, this presentation is at the heart of museums as cultural institutions. Until a few decades ago, exhibitions were predictable in format and structure. Visitors attended monographic and period exhibitions to be instructed and to enjoy themselves according to the old adage of *utile dulci*. Every exhibition was an episode in a traditional conception of the management of art's relation to the public. Curators were also conservators; they studied, preserved, and categorized art objects and presented a selection of these according to the knowledge acquired. The space in which the objects were presented was kept as neutral as possible, so as not to disturb the viewer.

Although this format is well-worn and recognizable, it is no longer the exclusive one. In the past few decades we have seen many exhibitions that continued, modified, and confirmed the practice of self-conscious, creative curating.[1] Through famous exhibitions in the 1980s and 1990s by Rudi Fuchs, Harald Szeemann, Catherine David, and many others, the museum-going public has been confronted with the retreat of the white cube and, in its place, the creation of something like a Gesammtkunstwerk of a specifically designed combination of artistic objects, sometimes with the building and the spaces therein as active participants. Examples are David's *Documenta X*, Szeemann's collective exhibition at the Venice Biennale, and, one of my favorites, the series that made visitors rediscover the splendors of the graphic arts department at the Louvre, called Parti pris, organized by Régis Michel in the 1980s and 1990s.[2]

As the title of this series indicates, Michel invited guest curators—artists such as Peter Greenaway but, more frequently, intellectuals

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such as Jacques Derrida, Hubert Damisch, and Julia Kristeva—to present their points of view in exhibitions that were personal and partial and offered a provocative integration of intellectual and artistic thought. Typical for such an intellectual approach, the tangible trace of these exhibitions is a series of beautifully produced books with significant texts. The general conception underlying this curatorial practice includes three issues: the undoing of the autonomy of the art object and subsequently an emphasis on the dependency of the object on conditions of presentation; the notion that visual art, just like philosophy, has a way of thinking; and the end of the white cube. It also signifies the end of the near monopoly of art history and its focus on chronology. As a consequence, the best of these exhibitions stages a dialogue between the art and the viewer as thinker in which the art has its own power to speak, and speak back.[3]

Once the apparent autonomy of art is exposed for what it is—an illusion—all manner of "impurities" come to the fore. For instance, art after modernism self-consciously deployed synesthetic mixtures of media, appealing to more than just the eye. Additionally, artistic and philosophical, material and aesthetic conditions have become overt elements of art itself. As a result, the thoughts art articulates in its own way become framed and addressed by discourses surrounding the exhibition and interfering with it. This might be a bit bewildering for visitors used to the more classical formats. In this essay, I develop ways of thinking about such innovative exhibition practices that make them easier to grasp, evaluate, and enjoy on their own terms.

It is perhaps as an endorsed consequence of this discursive porosity of the exhibition space that such creative exhibitions are frequently structured and sometimes even presented in terms derived from other media. These are conceptual metaphors invoked to discriminate between innovation and chaos. For instance, exhibitions might be structured like poems or like narratives; theater and film are also possible metaphors. The point of such metaphors is not an invasion of visual art by language but a serious engagement with the way art is already discursive as much as it is visual.[4]

I am interested in the deployment of conceptual metaphors that compare exhibitions to other discourses of art forms and in what it tells us about current conceptions of art. These metaphors indicate the exhibition's "impurity" and hence the need to abandon the kind of visual essentialism that resists discursive influence and multisensorial mixtures. I am interested, that is, in probing how such metaphors stimulate curators and critics to continue their reflections on how art is best—most adequately and most openly—presented to the public, a public that deserves both the greatest help to make sense of art and the greatest freedom to do with art as it pleases.[5]

Implicitly and sometimes explicitly, curators use such metaphors to invent novel coherences for shows that do not fall back on predictable models. In this essay I will explore the potential contribution as well as the risks of a few of these conceptual metaphors. I will mainly draw from two exhibitions that have struck me as particularly effective in exploring new formats. The goal of this exploration is to demonstrate the usefulness of such analytic language through an explanation of the unique achievements of a few landmark exhibitions. In the process I also aim to continue the more general reflection on exhibition practice beyond the art-historical paradigm of chronology, movements, and monographic presentations.

Poetic Exhibiting

Literary models have frequently been invoked in attempts to conceive and subsequently explain innovative exhibitions. Rudi Fuchs, for example, called his interventionist exhibitions "couplets," using a name derived from poetics to characterize what can be considered visual

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poems because of their regular contrasts and repetitions (Blotkamp). This poetic model attunes the visitor to the various grounds of repetition that, in turn, foreground difference: in style, color, scale, theme, medium, and, indeed, thought. Beyond such specific associations, poetry also evokes the idea of subtlety, nuance, and sensory effect, which, I imagine, Fuchs wished to foreground as well.[6]

Thus, fringe repetitions derived from rhyme and assonance, along with metaphor and metonymy, the two privileged figures of poetry, are useful tools to build up the coherence that ensembles require after the demise of the predictable art-historical coherence of chronology. Two examples from Michel's series can illustrate poetry's favorite tropes. Kristeva's exhibition *Visions capitales* in the Louvre in 1998 was entirely based on the metaphor of its title. The unusual but illuminating metaphor, which conflated the vision incarnated in the genre of the portrait with the theme of beheading so frequent in Western mythology, brought to the art gathered in the Hall Napoléon a philosophical reflection on a level uncommon in art exhibitions of such great popular appeal. Like Kristeva's show, Derrida's *Mémoires d'aveugle*, shown seven years earlier in the same venue, exploited an ambiguity of its concept, this time to establish a metonymic relation between an artistic issue (the limitations of sight) frequently represented in history painting and drawings and an epistemic one (the limitations of the possibility of knowledge). Thus, the exhibition offered in-depth thought on the traditional bond between knowledge and seeing, ruptured the commonly assumed causal determinism between the two, and insisted on the importance of memory in both.

In this vein, the notion that an exhibition is a form of poetry becomes a principle of creative curating and thus a conceptual metaphor that encourages fresh thought about what it is curators do with art and how, as a result, visitors can engage with the art along lines different from the usual ones. In a culture where art stands for innovation and for the exploration of the not yet known, poetry is an appropriate metaphor, not because art is a form of poetry but because it shares with poetry the qualities that make its artistic qualities most visible.

The wall as frame can be compared to the schemata of rhyme and rhythm that have dominated traditional poetry and against which experimental, free verse has revolted. But to see how the metaphor works, it seems most productive to consider how the best classical poetry managed its effects by slight transgressions within traditional confinements. When Paul Verlaine wrote the famous line "il pleure dans mon cœur comme il pleut sur la ville," he both exploited to the hilt and broke the rules of grammar while reinforcing those of poetry, thus elevating poetry above the rules of language (10). The phrase "il pleut" shows the possibility of impersonal sentences—sentences without a subject. The appropriateness of extending this structure to crying, the most personal of actions, cannot be denied in this line. Grief as impersonal, the line tells us, goes beyond the subject. This makes grief ongoing like the relentless rain, inscribing it in a cosmic temporality beyond the subject's grasp. This duration is evoked by the interior rhyme of the thrice-repeated *eu* sound. The reader immediately understands all this as right.

Racine's dramatic infractions of the rhythm of his classical verse are famous cases of a different kind of infringement, this time on the frame itself. With this notion of poetry in mind, one could make sense of the pleasure one extraordinary, albeit "simply" monographic, exhibition afforded. In the summer and fall of 2004 an unexpected encounter between two great Belgian artists from both ends of the twentieth century and both ends of the stylistic scope of visual art appeared at first sight to be a study in contrast. A retrospective of Marthe Wéry's contemporary abstract paintings, curated by Pierre-Olivier Rollin and exhibited in Victor Horta's art nouveau

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building in Tournai, was much more than that. It left me bewildered and fascinated.

Wéry's series of nine paintings in reds called *Les neuf journées* is comparable to poetry like Verlaine's line (fig. 1). This resemblance is accomplished through the paintings' different hues and tones and the way they vary in scale and, most important—both among them and within each—in their layering of paint and the transparency that opens the works up to a third dimension of depth. Consider the situation of walls imposing



FIG. 1
Four panels from Marthe Wéry, *Les neuf journées*, 1982. Acrylic on canvas, nine panels, each 200 x 96 cm. Collection Communauté Française de Belgique. Photo © Philippe De Gobert.

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frames like the rules of grammar. Consider, then, these monochrome paintings as harmoniously composed series of different but still matching rectangular formats, hung so as to enhance, not mitigate, their differences.

Because of the meticulous display, every gallery became an artwork. The paintings in *Les neuf journées* occupied a space on the second floor that is, exceptionally in the building, asymmetrical. For this kind of monochrome series, an asymmetrical frame constitutes a challenge. If we consider the walls as frames, equivalent to a language's structure laid down in grammar, then an asymmetrical hanging is both in harmony and, almost inevitably, in disharmony with the grammar here. This subtle wavering between obedience to rules and transgression is comparable to Verlaine's exploitation and transgression of grammar: the building, or the curator, offers a frame that deviates from the rule the building has established. The curator-cum-artist responded not by adapting but by enfolding the paintings within the wall space, enhancing the latter's grammatical deviation by slightly modifying the hanging of the other, more rule-obedient walls. The hanging of the series, in the end, established a tension with the particular wall the series occupied, which in turn was in tension with the other walls. But, conforming to the subtlety of poetry, this tension was slight, and light. The overall sense of the poetic was not damaged but enhanced.

Poetry as metaphor is appropriate not only for exhibitions of abstract art. A second memorable exhibition was the one the Toronto-based collector Ydessa Hendeles curated in the Haus der Kunst in Munich in 2002–03, titled *Partners* and devoted to the complex relationship between the German and the Jewish peoples. This sensitive topic was addressed in such subtle and complex ways that the curator can be said to have offered high-level thought through the selection and arrangement of the art. In her straightforward, ostensibly descriptive notes in the catalog, Hendeles hinted at particular poetic figures that articulated this relationship.

One such figure is contrast. This figure was at work, for example, between the quietness of the gallery in which On Kawara's date work from the Today series (1966–present) and elements from his I Am Still Alive series (1969–present) were installed (fig. 2) and the loud, pounding sounds of the adjacent gallery, where James Coleman's *Box (Ahhareturnabout)*, from 1977, was staged (Hendeles 223). The contrast was effective because a soundproof door between the two rooms made the loudness of *Box* a shock. The equally noisy ragtime music of Paul McCarthy's *Saloon* (1995–96) worked differently, because this noise reached visitors earlier on, creeping up on them, changing from soft and unclear to loud and bizarrely out-of-date.

Hendeles also hinted at subtle counterpoints, such as between the themes of murder and suicide found in Hanne Darboven's *Ansichten >82<* and reiterated in the photojournalist narratives of Malcolm Browne and Eddie Adams on display at opposite ends of the long, narrow gallery (46–49, 69–77, 79–86; Hendeles juxtaposes these works on 220). But after Darboven's work, these two embedded themes were no longer clear opposites. Rather, they were complex entanglements with the real world, in which perpetrator and victim are not always in crystal-clear opposition, partly because the individual does not act alone. But, whereas the contrast between Kawara and Coleman proceeded in a forward movement of linear time, the resonance between Darboven's work and the two photojournalistic series emerged retrospectively. This difference—between prospective and retrospective resonance—is narratological. Hence the second frequently alleged conceptual metaphor derived from linguistic art, that of narrative.[7]

Exhibition Narratology

I explored the potential of this metaphor in an earlier study, devoted to the ways in which

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FIG. 2
Installation view of elements from On Kawara's series Today (left, center) and I Am Still Alive (right).

exhibitions produce a narrative for the visitor. In brief, the visitor follows an itinerary with a beginning and an end, one that develops over time, marked by specific rhythms and particular events that emerge in the interaction between the visitor and the objects. The encounters, sometimes slowed down, sometimes sped up by means of juxtapositions and captions, are always directed or, as narrative theory would have it, focalized by the expository agent.[8]

In general, this narrative dimension is inevitable, for every visitor moves about the space in time. The point is to make it work creatively and not in a confining or bossy manner. Here, as in the case of poetry, the conceptual metaphor itself produces possibilities for creative curating and critical understanding. For example, once the idea central to this metaphor has come up—that the encounters between works constitute events produced by presentation ploys—this insight can further the self-conscious and, one hopes, self-critical approach to hanging and caption writing, inspiring more sophisticated, surprising, ambiguous, and artistically dense invitations to encounters.

In my earlier study I mainly looked at accidental effects, using the metaphor as a critical tool. One example was the felicitous hanging of two paintings by Caravaggio and one by Giovanni Baglione in the former Gemäldegalerie in Berlin-Dahlem. I had been sensitized to these effects through an earlier investigation of the homosocial narrative underlying the presentation of European impressionist art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York, where a neoclassical refurbishing in the early 1990s had belatedly turned the walls into the same kind of prescriptive frames found in the Gemäldegalerie. But what in New York seemed predictable and exploitative of the traditional frames I have above compared to grammar became in Dahlem the occasion for an innovative, stimulating reflection on visual culture once the narrative of sequence was played off against the requirements of a

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corner that interrupted the sequence. But critical analysis is not the only practice in which such conceptual metaphors can be deployed. When I was invited, years later, to curate a small show in the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, in Rotterdam, I decided to construct a postmodern, exploded narrative.[9]

This narrative structure of the museum visit is inevitable even in the situations where it seems least likely. For example, narrative and the Wéry exhibition in Tournai may seem strange bedfellows. Because the exceptional structure of the building made sequentiality redundant, this model may not seem to account for the profound effect of the exhibition. This was due to an aspect Horta's building and Wéry's art have in common: their nonfigurativity. The museum is rich in potentially figurative decorative elements, but they are less figurative than the exuberant vegetal decorations in many other art nouveau buildings. The building resists the itinerary from entrance to exit that so often characterizes exhibitions. The structure of the building refuses this standard narrative.

Yet, although the decorations inside are closer to art deco than to art nouveau in style and hence are restrained in their figurativity, the building as a whole seems figurative. Its exposed full width at the front, round sculpture hall, and extensions with half second floors look almost like a huge orchid or other exotic flower but do not accommodate a prescribed itinerary. After entering, one can turn left or right, go upstairs, or dwell in the main hall before going on. This is the building's most liberal aspect. For Wéry's work this resistance to narrative seems even more obvious. The paintings are not narrative, no figures populate them, and the predominance of monochromes in the exhibition makes a narrative reading contrived, although by no means entirely futile.

For, in the phenomenology of the experience, viewing takes time, and so does moving from one work to the next. Even in a building like Horta's, a viewer must experience or, better, *make* events of greater and lesser intensity that, together and unfolding in time, constitute a kind of narrative. Unlike in more traditional exhibitions, here each visitor's narrative comes out differently, since after traversing the main hall one may arrange the visit to the wings and the second floor in any way. Moreover, Wéry's paintings are not at all abstract in the way they solicit a variedly intense, even bodily, engagement, which is conducive to an experiential narrative.

As has become clear by now, the two literary metaphors, poetry and narrative, help us realize how in an exhibition the art stubbornly addresses the building. In rhythm and rhyme, in grammar and tropes, the way the artworks are displayed creates tensions that activate visitors. This prepares the mind-set and bodily engagement necessary for the kind of narrativity that eludes large plots but accrues micro narratives in events where paintings and building collaborate and dialogue with each other. This analysis shows the exhibition in a more dynamic light than is customary. I will now bring to bear on exhibition two other conceptual metaphors for the analysis of exhibitions, both derived from the performing arts.[10]

Good Theatricality

Theater involves staging, fictionality, actors acting, and, in these things combined, artifice. This definition applies to exhibitions. Art objects are staged like characters; figures are dressed up and act, performing roles for the visitor. Performance art, in this sense, is only a logical further step in an awareness of the dynamic nature of art. Not coincidentally does *moving* refer both to physical and to emotional mobility. Fictionality and artificiality, in theory counterparts, can both be naturalized and hence remain unnoticed. A tacit agreement between curator and visitor entails a willing suspension of disbelief. According to traditional models based on art-historical authority, this fictionality is only naturalized, not eliminated.

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This makes exhibitions modeled on scholarship, often intimidating in their display of a knowledge the viewer does not have, difficult to resist and therefore damaging to the viewers' autonomy of mind. Like realistic novels, such exhibitions perform a make-believe that undermines critical dialogue.

The display of art objects is just as artificial as a play watched in the dark. Exhibitions use lighting just as much as the theater. And, as in theater but less statically, visitors respond to what they see, emotionally as well as intellectually. If the curator, then, exploits the three key elements of theater that motivate the metaphor—actors, the artificiality of fiction, and an appeal to the audience—less traditional, more daring experimental exhibitions result.[11]

In Tournai the sense of theater emerges as soon as one enters the sculpture gallery, the round main hall of the building. The view of this hall from the entrance is similar to the view of a gigantic stage. In spite of being natural, the almost miraculous sufficiency of light, coming from above and from the side galleries, has a theatrical flavor to it. This is primarily due to the architectural magic of a huge building spread out in width that can be overseen from one position in its entirety. The viewer is almost alone, not in a room with hundreds of seats, but the overview is similar to that offered in the best-designed theaters. On the loggia that delimits the half second floor, one imagines other spectators watching the spectacle.

The danger of the model of theater, in spite of this great gain, is that Wéry's works might easily be perceived as backdrop (decor) and so become almost invisible. A lesser artist and a less visionary curator might not have avoided this danger, which is all the greater since the paintings have no figuration to draw attention to them and away from the stage. Their colors and their placement on the clearly structured walls might facilitate abusing them as decorative. To understand them as merely ornamental would not only be a terrible neglect of the paintings as they are—alive, strong, and challenging preconceived ideas—but would appear to be an invasion of the primary feature of art nouveau. This would go against the grain of Wéry's entire artistic conception and ignore the contrast between the works and the art nouveau decoration of the museum. But it is in relation to this danger that the most brilliant aspect of the collaboration between the artworks and the curatorial intervention comes to the fore.

Instead of backdrops to figurative sculpture, the artist made sculptures out of her paintings. In this large hall as well as in the gallery of large history paintings, Wéry's paintings were put on low supports and laid on the floor, vulnerable to visitors' tripping over them (figs. 3 and 4). Laid out like sculptures, they distinguished themselves from minimalism by their bodily texture. The paintings had no pedestal, an absence they shared with minimalist sculpture, but they did have height, floating above the ground as if on tiny legs. The square and rectangular pedestals next to them contributed the heaviness of classical sculpture, against which these thin layers of light, almost fluttering legs appeared ready to fly away. As the floor of a theatrical podium, this ploy foregrounded the illusion by breaking it. Most striking, the paintings—juxtaposed to the imagined figurative sculptures whose shadows remained in the architecture designed for them—became also vulnerable to a form of refiguration. That is, next to a heroic figure, they looked like fallen soldiers; next to an upright man, they looked like female bodies—presences that insisted on the creatural life of the surrounding classical works.

These reclining paintings say that Wéry's work cannot be abstract because it forces the viewer to be aware of the body—of the paintings as body, of the visitor's own body, which risks damaging them, and of the body idealized in the sculpture close to them. These bodies, the paintings say, have blood and flesh, a gender, and a skin, even if the body is

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Fig. 3
Marthe Wéry, *Tours et taxi*, 2001. Acrylic on aluminium. Photo © Philippe De Gobert.

not red. The one with stains near the stairs, for example, is gray; a red one has dots that could evoke pimples. But in an environment where gray and white are the predominant tones, bodily sensation need not be realistically colored to occur. Thus, the contamination between building and artworks on the stage where, artificially, the curator had arranged the population became a primary tool for curatorial creativity.[12]



Fig. 4
Marthe Wéry, *Pontormo I*, 2001. Acrylic on aluminium. Photo © B.P.S.22.

Exhibition as Film

As is well known, art nouveau is a style of the surface, of texture rather than structure,

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and so is nonfigurative painting. And so are cinema and its partner and predecessor photography. The glossy surface that, instead of suggesting an underlying depth, bounces the eye back has fascinated many, including Roland Barthes, whose beautiful but overcited book *Camera Lucida* opposes term by term the camera obscura of linear perspective, overview, and illusory depth. Cinema, the most popular of arts, may hide its artificiality and superficiality, thanks to the appealing mechanisms of identification that film viewing easily entails. But if in the least decomposed, a film betrays itself as having been made out of minute shots—varying from close-up to medium shot to long shot—dissolves and fades, and work with focus. Alexander Sokurov's brilliant *Russian Ark* (2002), extraordinarily composed of a single shot, reveals better than any other film that deconstructs the medium how artificial cinema normally is. Moreover, this film is overtly, explicitly theatrical in costume, diction, and acting style.

For the cinematic aspect of exhibitions I cannot but turn again to Hendeles's *Partners*. The aesthetic of this exhibition was intimately bound up with the predominant medium of the works displayed, which was photography, aligned with sculpture and video. In the light of my earlier proposition that exhibitions, by virtue of the spectator's movement through space and the temporal sequentiality involved in the visit, are always to some extent narrative, the medium of photography in Hendeles's exhibition tended to take on cinematic effects. These effects were enhanced in *Partners*, so much so that a tension between photography and film was the primary aesthetic at play. In this respect, *Partners* was exemplary—indeed, a metaexhibition.

For an understanding of the artistic work this exhibition did, therefore, I find it most productive to deploy the metaphor of film. Specifically, since many of the works exhibited here were, or were derived from, photographs, I submit that understanding *Partners* requires considering photography—the medium, the art—as a storyboard or visual scenario for a cinematic vision of art presentation. Photography's allegedly privileged connection to reality is part of that function. Hence, so is its connection to, or engagement with, the transworld conceptions of nation and display.

Cinema takes off where photography reaches its literal limits: the frame. Thus, photography serves as cinema's scenario or storyboard, and cinema is photography's commentary: a metaphotography. This was emphatically demonstrated in *Partners*. With photography as its storyboard, this exhibition animated that visual scenario by means of cinematic strategies. The cinematic, which, I contend, was the soul of this exhibition, came to operate most powerfully at a few key junctures.

One of these was the transition between an artwork that the curator-collector had herself made, called *Partners (The Teddy Bear Project)*, and the gallery next to it. An archive of thousands of snapshots, studio pictures, and other inconspicuous forms of photography, all uniformly matted and framed, *Partners (The Teddy Bear Project)* was the heart of the exhibition (fig. 5). It occupied two galleries, with winding staircases in them, next to the entrance gallery if one elected to move forward instead of turning left. Here the artist—as I must now call her—ordered the wall-covering photographs according to taxonomies that repeated and thus mocked nineteenth-century models of exhibiting, in the process slowing down the narrative to the extreme. All the photographs had one element in common, not intrinsically important but made momentous by her collecting: in each a toy teddy bear is visible.

The categories were established around these toys. One child, two children, twins with teddy bears; soldiers, sailors, hunters with teddy bears; women, dressed or naked, with teddy bears; children aiming sometimes adult-size rifles at small teddy bears. Bears in baby car-

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riages, group portraits with a teddy bear, and babies competing with teddy bears in size and cuteness. Two floors of walls covered from ceiling to floor confined and held the visitor in a time-consuming act of voyeurism, of intimacy with unknown people, most of whom must have been dead by then. After these two crowded galleries, a near-empty third one beckoned.

In this next gallery, a sculpture of an adolescent boy kneeling in prayer was all there was. Its back was turned to those who exited the photo galleries. Slowed down by the time-consuming—indeed, time-stopping—photo galleries, one was not rushed to see the boy's face. Eventually, though, this moment became inevitable. Total shock ensued when one walked through that third gallery to see the boy's face. The face was Hitler's. The sculpture, from 2001, was *Him*, by Maurizio Cattelan (fig. 6).

When *Him* entered the picture, for me the narrative model suddenly yielded to the altogether different cinematic one. The contrast between the intimate installation of the photo archive, which invited viewers to dwell in and explore this installation within an installation, and the lone figure seen from the back in an otherwise empty gallery produced the estranging sense of a sharp cut between one episode and the next, set in a completely different space. The visual contrast was comparable to the auditory contrast between the quiet Kawara and the loud Coleman installations mentioned above. The contrast here was between multitude and singularity, between overwhelming and meditative, between welcoming warmth and cold loneliness. The lone figure kneeling on the cold stone floor was cut out.[13]

The crucial usefulness of the model of film comes to the fore again even when we face the abstract paintings by Wéry—that is, when we consider the triangular relationship between Horta, Wéry, and the curator



Fig. 5
Ydessa Hendeles, *Partners (The Teddy Bear Project)*, 2002.

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rather than each artist separately. The overview that, extraordinarily, allowed viewers to see the entire exhibition at a glance was an embodiment in real as well as fictional space of the cinematic long shot: like a shot in film of the entire space in which the subsequent events will take place, the view from the entrance revealed all there was to see. Just as filmmakers pan the camera or assemble shot after shot to make the entire diegetic space visible, visitors were compelled to turn their heads from side to side to make the transition from long shot to medium shot necessary for a viewing beyond the overview. This turning made the paintings lying on the floor or leaning against the wall like sculptural figures that seemed to move, acceding to visibility in their individuality, much as the characters are introduced in a film. The leftover figure from the old sculpture standing and the new color fields made literal on the floor lost their stability once viewers moved their heads and looked around.

The exceptional width of the space made viewers aware of the illusory nature of the overview. Everything was there, but it could not be encompassed without activity by the spectator. This inspired epistemic modesty. The space seemed widened by the accents the colors in the distance put on the far walls, so that width seemed to emanate from Wéry's paintings, increasing the space by drawing the gaze to the outer edges of the field of visibility. This happened on both sides of the space, left and right, and then also on the second floor, equally visible. The farthest walls of the space kept nagging so that we moved our heads even if our bodies stayed where they were. The illusion of the panopticon's divine, all-encompassing gaze that Horta created—an asset for security—was undermined by the emphasis the placement of the paintings put on the need to move our heads. Thus, Wéry's paintings were put to work on Horta's architecture, both espousing its form and contesting its implications.

Conclusion

Movement in vision: this is cinema's primary contribution to visual culture. The installations of Wéry in Tournai and Hendeles in Munich, different as they were, made the question of what moves—whether it is the image itself, the figures in it, or the viewer—almost immaterial compared to this awareness. The metaphor of cinema helps us realize this. Wéry's strong colors on the outer walls, retroactively mobilized to comment on the building, caused the art nouveau lines—of the outer and inner surfaces of the architecture—to lose their naturalized stability and recapture their original movement, bringing this building closer to Antonio Gaudí's most dynamic version of the style. The exhibition enabled not only Wéry's paintings but also Horta's building to come into their own, by making them cinematic. Hendeles's montage, which cut from the crowded to the empty gallery, differently cinematic, also demonstrated that the cinematic model can be productive for the arrangement of exhibitions beyond the classical monographic, period, and movement models.

While it is not my purpose to declare these classical models obsolete, I find that their predictability tends to encourage a certain passivity, a consumerist attitude in visitors. In contrast, the surprises new formats are able to offer encourage active and self-reflexive looking. And such activity is, after all, what visual culture needs if it is to resist the constant danger of manipulation.

Notes

1. More and more graduate programs in "creative curating" are up and running. In addition to older ones such as the Whitney program in New York and De Appel in Amsterdam, new ones are being created (e.g., at the University of Wrocław, Poland).

2. In addition to examples cited later in this essay, the exhibition by Hubert Damisch in Michel's series, published as *Traité du trait*, is worth considering. Damisch

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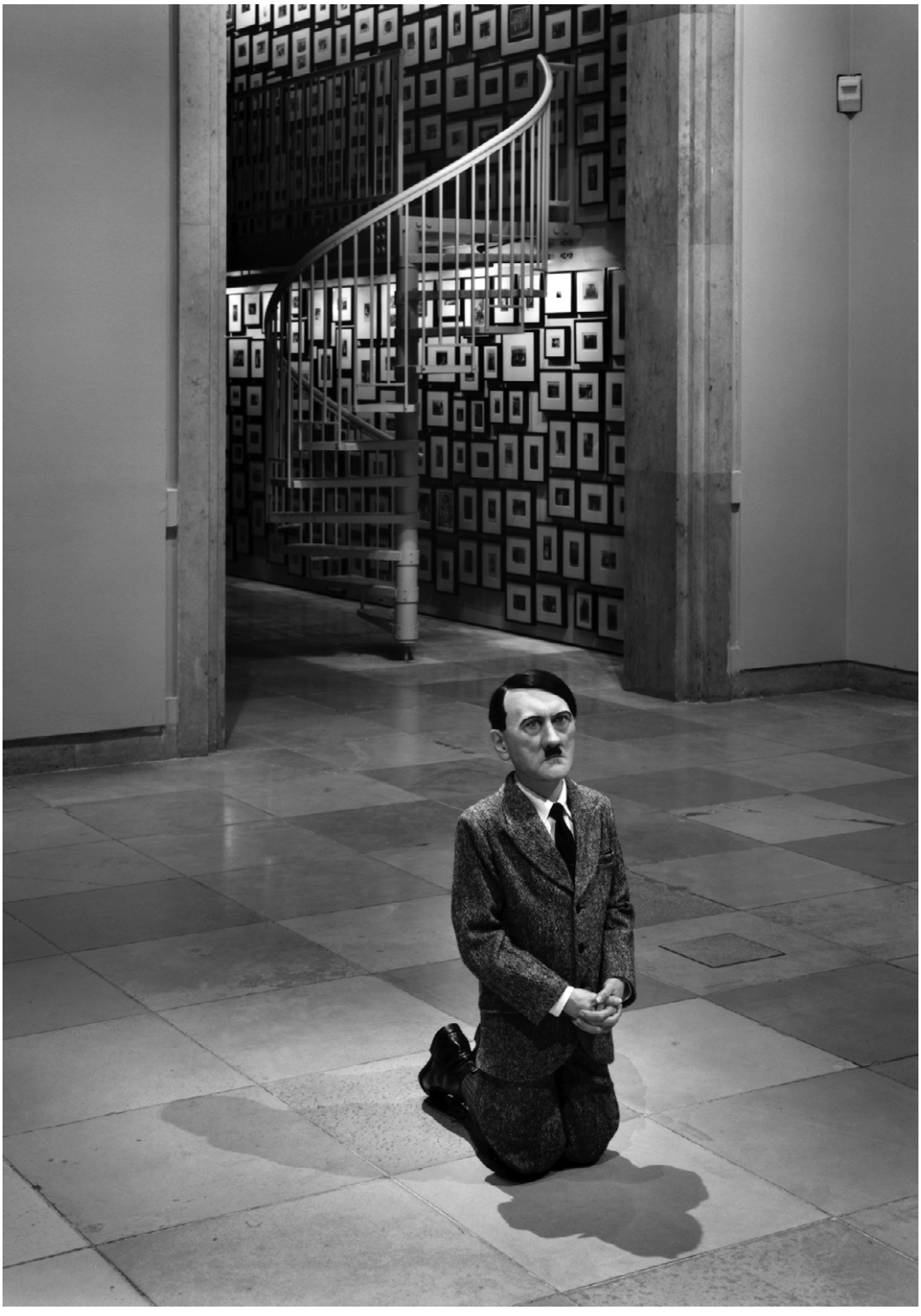


FIG. 6

Maurizio Cattelan, *Him*, 2001. Wax, human hair, suit, and polyester resin, 101 cm high.

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later curated a large exhibition in the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, in Rotterdam (see *Moves*). After the projected five installments of the series in the Louvre were completed, Michel continued with two exhibitions of his own design, published as *Posséder et détruire: Stratégies sexuelles dans l'art d'Occident*, on gender's impact on art, and *Painting as Crime: The Accursed Share of Modernity*.

3. The idea of art as thinking is the focus of Van Alphen, *Art*. For the white-cube tradition, see O'Doherty.

4. I have discussed this discursivity of visual art in *Reading "Rembrandt": Beyond the Word-Image Opposition*. Of course, the interpenetration also goes in the opposite direction, as I have discussed in *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually*.

5. On the usefulness of conceptual metaphors, see Reynolds. Hooper-Greenhill uses the term *postmodern exhibition* in an excellent study of museum and exhibition practices. On visual essentialism, see my "Visual Essentialism and the Object of Visual Culture."

6. For a historical approach to the literariness of museums, see Maleuvre. Porter touches on the relation between language and exhibitions, conceiving it more literally.

7. For these and other terms of narratology, see my *Mottled Screen*.

8. See my *Double Exposures*. A recent exhibition analysis according to this model can be found in Van Alphen, "Die Ausstellung."

9. Tinterow justifies the willful anachronism in the refurbishing of the galleries in the Met. For the Dahlem and New York displays, see my "Talking Museum." I discuss the exhibition in the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in *Travelling Concepts,* ch. 4. The analysis there is based on the concept of framing, but it is easy to realize that the model of narrative is strongly present. An astute analysis of this exhibition can be found in Denaci 77–101.

10. In a useful article Lehmann makes the move I am making here—using theater and then involving landscape, as I will do below, in relation to theatrical textuality ("From Logos"). In another article this author offers elements for the transition from narrative to body, which pertains to the metaphor of theater as well as to those of narrative and body ("Time Structures").

11. Pavis gives a concise and clear overview of concepts in theater analysis. On performance art, see Schneider.

12. As is fitting for a good curator, Pierre-Olivier Rollin closely worked with the artist. Wéry, in turn, is exceptionally keen on keeping the presentation of her work, especially its relationship with the exhibition space, in her own hands. The place of the works in the space is part of what they are and what they do. When I refer to the curator in this analysis, therefore, I mean the collaboration among Rollin and Wéry and all others involved. The term *curator* indicates a function, an agent, not an individual. For a justification of this use of the term, see my introduction in *Double Exposures*.

13. This contrast between multitude and singularity resonates with the reflections on the multitude as site of resistance given by Hardt and Negri throughout their book *Empire*.

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