

Exhibitions have become, at least since the 1990s, particularly attractive case studies to museologists, art historians and cultural researchers. As the centrality of the two main figures of contemporary art – the artist and the curator – started to be questioned in various fields related to art and museums, the focus has significantly shifted towards the exhibition, a notion widely understood as both a physical space of display and a conceptual ground for reflection.

The growing interest in the history and theory of exhibitions has not only increased our knowledge of specific past shows; it has also stimulated a relevant national and international discussion, fruitfully crossing academic, artistic and museological contexts. Within the frame of museum studies, the specific field of exhibition histories is still expanding, and also challenging and reshaping important art historical frontiers and methodologies. At the same time, museums are critically re-evaluating their exhibitionary legacies in an unprecedented way, launching, amongst others, projects such as multimedia archives, catalogues raisonnés of exhibitions (Pompidou, MoMA, Gulbenkian, etc.), or virtual and physical restagings of exhibitions (a well-known example being the remake of Harald Szeemann’s *Live in your Head. When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013*). Acknowledging the move from the past to the present, these different initiatives have been promoting refreshing forms of disseminating, documenting and recovering the histories and the memories of meaningful exhibition events. Moreover, they configure perfect opportunities to update and rewrite institutional narratives and, at the same time, rescue an unstable and often forgotten heritage from oblivion. This ample movement of “remembering exhibitions”, to use Reesa Greenberg’s words, attests thus to the growing importance of the exhibition, as a rich and dynamic object of study, where different forces and agents converge.

The publication of *The Exhibition: Histories, Practices, Policies*, issue n. 14 of *Revista de História da Arte*, aims to bring the “exhibition” to the fore in yet another way, addressing it not just as an object of study, but mainly as a prolific problem. The term exhibition usually involves the idea of communicating and holding something out to the world. However, while the public dimension of the exhibition is an essential one, it is equally important to get hold of its invisible lines, exploring the tension between what is openly shared and what is meant to remain quietly unseen, even if crucially present. The different contributions here gathered do deal with this duality, also demonstrating how the exhibition is a broad and flexible notion, and how its impact largely exceeds the circumstances of a specific, time-limited event. This publication focuses, thus, on “the” exhibition as much as it focuses on exhibitions. Furthermore, it resorts to the exhibition as a springboard to think about several other questions revolving around the exhibitionary phenomena. In this sense, the theme of the exhibition is here covered through various lenses, including exhibition theory, diplomacy, materiality of exhibitions and influence of its printed and photographic productions, national identities, memory, international transfers, exhibition as a form of resistance, historiographic impact of exhibitions, or conservation-restoration. These different perspectives underline how the exhibition is a vital topic to many interdisciplinary and interrelated research fields focusing on museums, art, and culture.

In their multiple forms – from biennials to art fairs, from creative interventions in public spaces to online revisiting of past exhibitions – , exhibitions also incorporate the complex experience of contemporaneity. This publication opens precisely with the interview with art historian Terry Smith, conducted by Carlos Garrido Castellano, in which the notion of contemporaneity or “the contemporary” is debated and stretched to include differentiated forms of “being in time”. Acknowledging that these forms may be variously shaped (by western modernism, colonialism, post-colonialism and today’s divisive issues like climate change, rise of authoritarianism, neo-liberal capitalism, etc.), Smith’s proposal of a “visual arts exhibitionary complex” articulates both the normative and the more dynamic, disruptive forces that constitute contemporaneity, and can be situated either in the concrete museum spaces or in more experimental venues like kunsthallen. The focus on curatorial activity that frames Smith’s books *Thinking Contemporary Curating* and *Talking Contemporary Curating* underlines how exhibitions have been instrumental in making visible dissenting discourses, configuring new visions of contemporaneity. The interview launches the discussion to an extended territory of artistic and curatorial practices that surpasses a European and North-American framework, underlining how interventive exhibition forms that respond to specific concerns may provide more tangible definitions of the global.

In the following essay, Reesa Greenberg also stresses the exhibitions’ potential to produce new knowledge in different temporalities, and to retrieve less visible narratives, often neglected by a (white-masculine) historiographical canon. Analysing two exhibitions organised by the Centre Georges Pompidou – a 1997 show about artworks recovered after the Second World War and *Elles*, an exhibition put forward in 2009 by recreating art history from the perspective of women artists and feminism –

Greenberg offers an insightful examination on the impact of the digital upon the field of exhibition histories. Microsites providing extensive information accompanied both exhibitions, and were later included in the online catalogue raisonné of Pompidou's exhibitions. By critically comparing the two formats – the microsite and the catalogue raisonné of exhibitions – , she highlights the limitations of thinking digital media with an analogue mind. Considering that exhibition histories importantly overlap with institutional history, Greenberg also shows how actions of classification and categorization can decisively influence and shape the politics of remembering.

In turn, Rémi Parcollet uses the same Pompidou's catalogue raisonné project to discuss another topic strongly connected with the remembering of exhibitions: exhibition view photographs or installation shots. Parcollet analyses the relevance of these sources in the formation of a canon in the history of exhibitions and curatorial practices. Emphasising how installation shots may define a specific photographic category, he further argues that the existence of “an exhibition as an image” plays an instrumental role in the process of asserting modern and contemporary art as heritage. Moreover, the author remarks that installation shots reproduce the exhibition from a particular point of view, that of the photographer. For this reason, he claims that instead of merely assuming them as objective documents, exhibition views should be examined according to their artistic, technical and cultural contexts, and this information, too, should be taken into consideration when developing a catalogue raisonné of exhibitions.

These three invited contributions not only introduce some of the topics that will be further developed in the themed dossier. They also make clear how, from a historiographic, methodological and theoretical point of view, the exhibition is still an unsettled object that opens to multiple directions of research. In his article, Felix Vogel argues that a theory of exhibitions is still to be made, and that it has been often undermined by “the curatorial”, a notion which, despite the significant amount of literature dedicated to it, remains rather vague. According to Vogel, “the curatorial” regulates discourse and validates current creative practices (presenting “the curatorial” as an artistic form in its own right). It also legitimises the academic proliferation of curatorial study programmes, instead of defining exhibitions as a specific object of research and advancing strong methodological approaches.

Catalina Imizcoz discusses the possibilities of conveying a history of exhibitions in the printed surface and of overcoming the linear reading that the publication format usually presupposes. She defies the apparent neutrality of publications when evoking past exhibitions by confronting two models: one that is contingent to that linearity, conveying an evolutive and more established perspective, and another, illustrated by the example of *Mousse* magazine, which presents a non-hierarchical, polyphonic and rhizomatic structure, resulting from the centrality awarded to photographic installation shots, from several origins. Through a fine analysis of exhibitions' printed matters, the author argues that publications, in their varied morphologies, are key elements in the shaping of exhibition histories.

The unfolding of the exhibition into the printed page is also the focus of Kathryn M. Floyd's article. Analysing the hundreds of images published in *Mousse* magazine issue

“Exhibition Views 1985-1995”, she offers a comprehensive assessment of different types of photographic exhibition views, in a period that preceded the online promotion and documentation of exhibitions. Defining exhibition photography as a specific genre, Floyd demonstrates how these images are deeply articulated with institutions, curators, artistic practice, processes of documentation and mediation and, finally, with the exhibition itself. Moreover, she suggests that photography and exhibitions somehow double and mirror each other, not only in the way that exhibitions become images but also, conversely, in the way images become exhibitions in the pages of the publications devoted to them. The reflection on the theorisation, historiography, documentation and mediation of exhibitions has inevitably to consider the traditional and globally expanding format of the biennial, as a system where decentralised and hegemonic discourses tend to converge. The contribution of Maria de Fátima Morethy Couto follows the history of the Biennial of São Paulo in the 1960s and 1970s through the eyes of two influential art critics, historians and curators – the Brazilian Mário Pedrosa and the French Pierre Restany – , confronting their views on Latin America and on the connection to European artistic models. In her discussion, biennials, their structure and expected impact, are seen from a perspective conditioned by the places of origin of Pedrosa and Restany, who joined a critical, revisionist movement that ultimately pointed to the collapse of the “Venetian formula”.

In the following article, Ana Bilbao analyses different case studies that eloquently express the exhaustion of the exhibitionary form by assuming a specific format: that of a literally closed exhibition. Emphasising function and necessity as key-factors that explain the pertinence of exhibitions in today’s context, Bilbao resorts to “closed exhibitions” to signal other relevant issues such as: the overproduction of exhibitions, the marginalisation of creative work and its association with leisure, the non-conformity with neoliberal notions of productivity, the growing relevance of fundraising and bureaucratic tasks over creativity and research work, and the debilitating working conditions in art institutions that increasingly invest in the mass production of exhibitions to “increase revenue”.

The growing parallelism between the art world and the financial and industrial universes suggests the capitalist logic of productivity that art institutions have been following, apparent also in the transference of vocabulary, labour conditions and work organisation. Katherine Jackson’s work examines an experimental exhibitionary operation that borrowed elements directly from the industrial corporative apparatus. Organised in the early 1970s, a particular period in recent British history, the *Inn70: Art and Economic Exhibition*, promoted by the Artist Placement Group, exposed the incapacity of language to integrate different sectors of society. It also created a general agreement between the political, corporative and cultural areas, while proposing new terminology and making visible the negative social impacts that corporative discourse often covered up.

While exhibitions may, politically, extend institutional critique to different sectors of society, they may also be the instrument of commercial endeavours, diplomatic interactions, national promotion and cultural colonisation. Laurens Dhaenens brings forward a different understanding of the role exhibitions can play in international relations by analysing strategic displays organised by the Belgian state in the United States and

Argentina. In his contribution, Dhaenens investigates these previously unaddressed government projects, uncovering unexplored narratives related to exhibitions, and revealing important cultural and diplomatic routes outside mainstream locations.

Turning to art history and its permanent reformulation, Sandro Debono examines a landmark exhibition organised in Florence in 1922 that revised the Italian Baroque and established Caravaggio as its most prominent figure. Assessing its impact on artistic historiography in the first half of the 20th century, Debono sets his perspective against the political background of the time, already marked by nationalism and the emergence of dictatorships in Europe, namely in Italy. Underlying the debate about Italian Baroque prompted by this exhibition was, therefore, an international conflict to establish cultural and creative hegemonic narratives in European artistic tradition. Finally, the article by Joana Silva, Joana Lia Ferreira, Maria de Jesus Ávila and Ana Maria Ramos shows how exhibition histories can engage in interdisciplinarity. In order to restage a slide-based artwork from the late 1970s in future exhibitions, the authors highlight the importance of knowing how the work has been displayed in previous exhibitions, including those in which the artist intervened directly. The focus on a single work accentuates the role and influence played by curators and conservators in the public presentation of artworks, especially when the artist is no longer alive. Emphasising the display specificities of time-based media, this article also claims that archival research to understand the (sometimes variable) way in which the artist has decided to present his/her artwork is of utmost importance.

By critically exploring the subject of “the exhibition” according to a wide range of methodologies, chronologies, geographies and approaches, we believe the articles collected in this issue provide a thorough and multifaceted investigation and will contribute to expanding and enriching the ever-growing debate on museums and exhibitions. We are most grateful for the enthusiasm and the new insights so generously offered by all the contributing authors in this volume. We are also thankful to the referees who kindly devoted their time and expertise in the peer-reviewing of the manuscripts, and to the authors who importantly contributed for the book reviews and news sections. Opening a promising new chapter in the life and future of *Revista de História da Arte*, and contributing to reinforcing its levels of internationalisation and access, we are also proud to announce that *The Exhibition: Histories, Practices, Policies* is the first issue of *Revista de História da Arte* to be published entirely in English. We want to thank the Institute of Art History, for the continuing help in all stages of this process. A special word of thanks also goes to the IHA research group MuSt-Museum Studies, for providing the fertile intellectual ground where both ideas and friendship have flourished. We are indebted to all the colleagues, junior and senior, who have been crucial pillars of support for us along the years. Thank you.

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