

## Introduction

One of the most prominent issues in the museum world today is that of diversity and inclusivity. Museums, as potential agents of change, want to contribute to the subject of inequality and cultural barriers that exist within society and speak of the need for inclusion. The discourse of contemporary museum ethics is founded on the concept that the institutions have moral agency, which is defined through the theory and practice of social inclusion, radical transparency and shared guardianship of heritage.<sup>1</sup> This is closely linked to the fact that museums are considered as public institutions, and they are currently under intense debate as contemporary museums often struggle to negotiate between the remnants of the historical rhetoric of ‘public’ and the new practices and types of spaces of the museum. Recently museums have been re-examining what it means to be a public institution. Museums at large have focused on broadening audiences, public programs, collections and exhibitions, in order to become more inclusive and accessible. But the threshold-fear still exists, and there are both programmatic *and* physical barriers that make it difficult for the uninitiated to experience the museum.<sup>2</sup>

Museums architecture and topological arrangements of museum spaces has dramatically changed in the past five decades and it situates the museums role within a broader socio-economic, political, urban context. In order to become more open and publicly accessible, some art museums have vocalized that they want their entrance hall to be ‘public space’. Within current museum architecture these are the most used spaces and centrally positioned. But simultaneously museums have lost their own special physiognomy since the introduction of architectural features such as escalators, shops and reception desks. These were previously only seen at shopping malls, airports and railway stations, and turned museums entrance halls into the non-places of global mass society.<sup>3</sup> Because of the overlap with those other public areas, it can make the visitors' experience replaceable, impersonal and especially non-artistic.

The point of departure of this research is the observation that a large part of museums consists of ‘in-between spaces’, meaning the non-programmed spaces - which are the efficient and functional public areas within the museum, such as the entrance space, corridors and staircases. While inclusiveness towards visitors is being overly mentioned within museum theory and discourse there seems to be a big disjuncture between museums’ programmatic interest in inclusion versus the architectural program of space development.<sup>4</sup> This research analyses the ideology of today’s art museum according to its architecture and the in-between spaces. It tries to understand the role, function and purpose of in-between spaces, with an emphasis on the entrance space, of contemporary art museum’s architecture, in relation to the way the museum tries to meet

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<sup>1</sup> Marstine, Janet. “The Contingent Nature of the New Museum Ethics.” *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First-Century Museum* Routledge, 2011. 5

<sup>2</sup> Heumann Gurian, Elaine. “Threshold Fear.” *Civilizing the Museum* Routledge, 2006. 115

<sup>3</sup> Magnago Lampugnani, Vittorio. “Insight versus Entertainment: Untimely Mediations of the Architecture of Twentieth-Century Art Museums” *A Companion to Museum Studies* edited by Sharon Macdonald, Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 251

<sup>4</sup> Heumann Gurian, Elaine. “Threshold Fear” *Civilizing the Museum* Routledge, 2006. 115



contemporary expectations. As museologists we need to understand the role and dynamics of these in-between spaces in relation to the art museums mission and vision, to understand in what way they are contributing or problematizing the museums aim for inclusivity. How can in-between spaces potentially contribute to a more meaningful museum experience and to a more inclusive museum culture?



## Research question

Central to the debate around inclusivity and the role of museums within society, I set out to explore different aspects of one main research question:

**What is the role of in-between spaces in modern and contemporary art museums and how can they contribute to the aim for inclusivity?**

This question will be explored from different angles, taking into consideration multiple primary sources and theoretical paradigms, each one carrying its own set of secondary research questions. Sub-topics are divided into four different chapters, as following:

### 1. Museum ideology

Where does the notion of the *public* museum historically come from and how has this developed over time. How has new museology changed and shaped art museums identity and role within society? Why are art museums still considered to be exclusive? How has the growing awareness of the social responsibility of museums within society increased the complex role of museums? What conclusions can we draw from the proposed International Council Of Museums museum definitions? What kind of different interpretations do museums have upon the subject of inclusivity? What does inclusivity mean? How do different art museums reflect upon the subject of inclusivity, and what are the differences? What types of discourses has it pushes forward, and how can inclusivity still be problematized? What does it mean to be a museum in the north-western hemisphere and what type of practice does this produce? Making use of different case studies, what conclusions can we draw from the hierarchical complications that space carries in relation to inclusivity?

### 2. Museum architecture

How did museum architecture change since the becoming of public institutions and how did purposely-built museums change its architecture and ideology? How did the relationship between museum architecture and museum practices change over time, and is this translated into different museum-modes? What are the director visions that lay at the core of these museum-modes? How can we analyse todays museum architecture, and what is the urban, political, social, economic context that transformed them? What can we learn from contemporary expansion projects, and how is their aim for openness and inclusivity represented?

### 3. Museum in-between spaces

What can we define as in-between space in today's art museum? What are the characteristics of museum entrance spaces and what are the similarities with other public spaces? What are the key aspects and key players for the transformation into public space? What does public space imply, how



does public space in museums change their identity and in what ways does it relate to inclusivity? How did museum policy and public practice change the entrance space? Did the transformation into public space bring complications? Can we define the difference of public space and public sphere? What does the theoretical concept of non-place contribute to our understanding of today's entrance space? What is the difference between a non-place and liminal space? How can the entrance space of museums benefit from the concept of liminality? Can we implement the theoretical concept of ritual setting practically upon today's art museums and what would this look like? Making use of Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam as main case study for this theoretical framework, how has their task force group in-between spaces defined their spaces? What are the different perspectives from the departments and what conclusions can we draw from their policy documents? What policy changes has Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam set in motion in order to deal with their in-between spaces?

#### **4. Art practices in in-between spaces**

How can the theory of 'museology without a prefix', that advocates for connectedness between the old and the new museology, contribute to today's art museum? What types of artworks are currently present in in-between spaces? How can artworks be a part of series of interactions between the public and the institution? In what ways can art function as a powerful, non-didactic way to enable the visitor to make sense of the museum? Making use of the case study of Michele Rizzo's performance at Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, what was the impact of different spaces upon the performance? What are potential methods of art interventions in liminal spaces? Can art in the in-between spaces contribute to inclusivity? Can the liminal spaces lead to new forms of inclusivity, and if so, in what ways?

In this thesis I aim to shed a light on these questions. The questions are normative and descriptive in nature as we are not only researching how things currently are, but also how we would like them to be. The Master of Museology study at the Reinwardt Academy has taught me to think progressively, out of the box, to question normative ideologies and to make use of approaches that are out of the box. With in-depth theoretical knowledge, complemented with practical insights and interpretations, this research thesis aims to contribute to the field of museology, not as didactic body of work but as an alternative critical approach that could inspire the museum field.



## Structure and chapter outlines

As explanatory methodology and structure throughout the thesis, I have decided to divide the thesis into four chapters: Museum ideology; Museum architecture; Museum in-between spaces; Art practices. Together the chapters reinforce and complement each other, as the complex issue of inclusivity is linked to all four aspects.

**Chapter one** is devoted to the ideology of art museums. Where does the notion of the *public* museum historically come from and how has this developed over time? To understand today's museum difficult position as a social and moral responsible institute and its current function within society, it will start with setting a historical framework of the museum and its developments as public institution. I will make use of the well-known body of work *A companion of museum studies* and the chapter 'The Origin of the public museum' by Jeffrey Abt, as well as Michaela Giebelhausen's 'Museum Architecture: A brief history'. For framing the civilizing nature of museums, I will turn to Tony Bennett's 'The exhibitionary complex'. The chapter aims to demonstrate why museums have a social agency and political role in society, I will draw insights from authors Vikki McCall and Clive Gray who illustrate the different ways that new museology has been defined throughout the decades in their research paper *Museums and the 'new museology': theory, practice and organisational change*. How has new museology changed and shaped art museums identity? As new museology promoted the need to develop strategies to redress the exclusivity and centralized authority of the museum, the term 'public' – as we are speaking of 'public museums' - has been called to reflect upon. Jennifer Barrett's published work *Museums and the Public Sphere* pushed the boundaries of our knowledge, reflecting upon society's diversity in contrast to the historical singularity of 'the public'.

The theory of new museology brought a shift within museums existence; turning away from their authoritative nature and being reframed and redefined as humanistic and educational institutions. New museology created a new role for museums but despite the efforts they are still upholding a (metaphorical) threshold and are still perceived as exclusionary. In result, museums are seeking to become more inclusive, but this trendy terminology needs clarification what it actually means, how it is being interpreted and what different approaches exist within today's museum discourse. What different definitions can be understood when we talk about 'inclusive'? I will draw definitions from Cambridge Dictionary to analyse them in relation to the core of museums ideology: mission, vision and aim. I will demonstrate that despite the increasing awareness of the social responsibility of museums within society, the role and identity of museums has become increasingly complex.

In the present climate many cultural institutions are disoriented as they seek to fulfil an increasingly pluralistic mission, for which I will exemplify with ICOM's attempt to decide upon a new museum definition. To understand the different interpretations that museums take into the subject of inclusivity, the analysis will be based upon website pages dedicated to the subject of



inclusion from three comparable art museums. This will be followed by the question how the aim for inclusiveness is reflected in the museums practice, through examples of the different exhibitions and public programs, where many similarities between the different art museums are to be found.

What can we learn from an artist perspective upon inclusivity? Drawing from an informal interview with artist Tino Sehgal, it sheds a whole new perspective upon the discourse on inclusivity as he regards it as very problematic dialogue on its own ground. Museums have to be aware that there is a fine line between inclusivity and patronizing gestures, as for Sehgal the very nature of our 'Western' museological practice can be considered as 'cold' practice, which is a very distant and judgmental. He proposes to be more critical about the museological practices, that should understand that art and museology is not a universal game but regional. Finally, what other ways of inclusion has been implemented in museum discourse? Many museums today create special programs for individuals with physical and mental disabilities. Museums cooperate, build platforms for inclusion and create formats that can be implemented in all art museums nation-wide. These are big steps in the sense of accessibility. Two different case studies of public programs around minority groups then will be examined, not only upon their discursive program but more so upon its location within the museum. It will bring up the ethical considerations that museums see themselves confronted with when dealing with such difficult topics. What I aim to demonstrate is that inclusion needs deeper research in context of space within the museum as space has hierarchical implications. **Chapter two** is dedicated to the symbolic meaning of museum architecture and its development since the coming of age of purposely-built public museums. How did the museum architectures typology emerged? The research will look at the different types of museum-modes that are brought up accordingly. Because the traditional architectural characteristics dramatically changed throughout the decades, I will explore the complex relation between the museums content and container. As modern and contemporary art does not have a singular narrative or meaning, the chapter observes how architecture, in which different ways, can relate to the museums content. What function can architecture have for art museums? I will mostly make use of writings by Kali Tzortzi in her work *Museum Space: Where Architecture Meets Museology*, and Michaela Giebelhausen's *Museum Architecture: A Brief History*.

I will demonstrate in-depth the entrepreneurial vision of former Stedelijk director Willem Sandberg on his expansion wing, as it will show how its architecture reflected his idea what role museum should have for society. The chapter will add contributions by contemporary critical thinker Wouter Davidts, who has researched the ambivalent relation between museum architecture and artistic discourse extensively in his work *Nostalgia and Pragmatism* and *Why bother (about) Architecture?* I will take some of the most iconic architectural contributors as case studies, in order to follow the process of how we have come to today's art museums complex and often unrecognizable architecture. As the research hopes to gain insight in contributions for inclusivity, the chapter will end with recent statements from museum directors, to understand how they envision their rebuilding and expansion projects in relation to the museum's identity, to understand how the role



of the museum building is reflected within the director's vision of today. What I hope to demonstrate is that the architecture of museums has moved away so far from its ideology as a social responsible institute, that it is hard to understand through its architectural features what the identity of the museum actually is.

**Chapter Three** will focus on the in-between spaces of today's art museums, with Stedelijk as main case study. I turn to the museum's entrance space and investigate how this space is functioning today. Analysing the similarities with other public spaces, it will clarify the unrecognizability it brings along. I will lay out some of the key aspects and key players who have contributed to this change. Whereas on one hand Tzortzi argues that the architects are mainly contributors, I argue that it is more likely to see this development in the context of a broader museological vision, demonstrated by Boomgaard, Davidts, Skellon and Tunstall who argue that the transformation is part of museum policies to implement public practices. The research will present data from an interview with Dorine van Kampen, Head of Visitor experience of Stedelijk. But what does it mean to be 'public space', as public space and public sphere are two different things.

In order to fully understand this transformation I will turn to Jennifer Barret who considers the relationship between concepts of the public sphere and public space, to understand how public spaces are used, produced, reproduced, and understood. How has this changed the dynamics of the museums entrance space and does this contribute to the goal for a more inclusive museum? I will argue that this makes the museum entrance spaces unrecognizable and replaceable with other public spaces. Instead of having created public space within the museum, I will propose that Marc Augé's concept of 'non-places' seem more applicable as non-places are places that can't be defined as relational, historical and are not concerned with identity. The concept of non-places have strong ties to the concept of liminal space. As a non-place often is a place of transit, the liminal space is defined as an intermediate space that offers transition going from one stage to the next. Liminality offers not only separation from hardened structures, but the potential to form alternative structures. If museums are able to acknowledge and position a liminal space within the museum, this could fundamentally change the museums impact it has on its visitors.

When realizing the entrance space can be understood as liminal space, I will turn to Carol Duncan's theory of 'The art museum as ritual', that analyses how museum-spaces are constructing certain behaviour that resembles rituals. The research will theoretically apply the theory upon Stedelijk museums spaces to see how it would work in practice, where these different spaces would be situated in order to deconstruct the 'script'. I will make use of internal policy documents from Stedelijk's Taskforce group, that will show that the organisation is highly reflective, as they have been aware for some years that their in-between spaces need extra attention and can offer potential value to the museum as a whole. It will clarify the perspectives from different departments within the museum on one of their most complex, undefined space; the Audizaal. In conclusion, Stedelijk has changed their policy regarding art programming in their in-between spaces, which therefor brings me to the final chapter.



[Chapter Four](#) will present the concept of ‘museology without a prefix’ as a proposition to an integrated approach of museology. A disciplinary framework that seeks for connectedness rather than rapture. I will search for different methods in which art practices could be used as a binding element within in-between spaces for a more inclusive experience. I will look at examples of art that is permanent and semi-permanent integrated in museums architecture, and present the case study of Michele Rizzo’s piece at Stedelijk as public program in an in-between space. The potential of in-between space will be argued, through the insights conducted from the interview, and how visitors interact differently with the same performance piece according to its location. This will be followed by different art interventions that promote participation and interaction. The intervention of art in the in-between spaces only makes sense when it makes something clear about this in-between space, relates to the qualities of liminality and if it can contribute to the museums aim for inclusion at the same time, which I will exemplify with carefully selected artworks that created platforms of interaction, human social interaction and stranger sociability. These works, that can be defined as Relational Aesthetic works of art, are not products of the social relations but instead artworks that ‘engineer intersubjectivity’ and *become* social relations. I will discuss the work of Tino Sehgal, who makes art that deconstructs institutional barriers through the closeness between visitors and its actors. I will argue that Relational Aesthetics can be used as a binding element within in-between spaces for a more inclusive museum culture.

