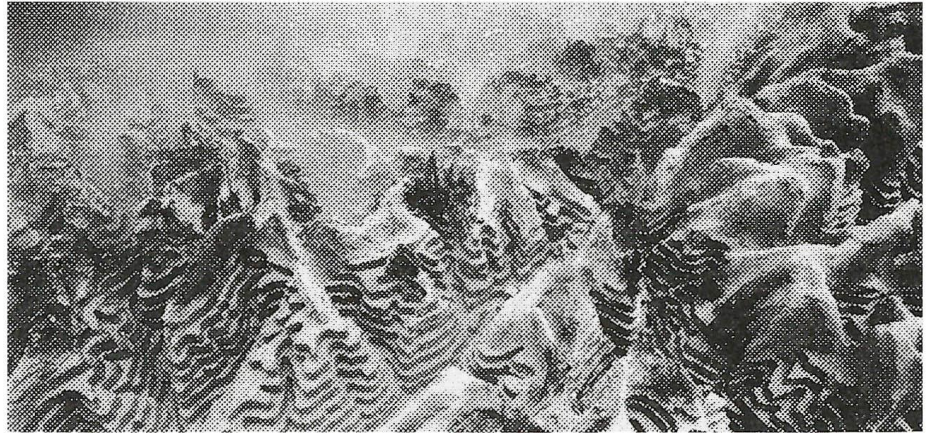


Phenotypes/Limited Forms

D



E

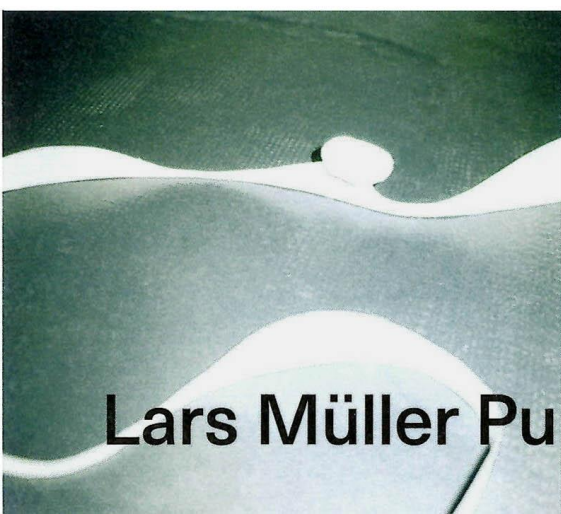


Armin Linke
Peter Hanappe

A



C



Lars Müller Publishers





Installation view, *Phenotypes/Limited Forms*, 2007,
in the exhibition *YOU_ser. The Century of the
Consumer*, 21.10.2007–30.04.2009, ZKM | Karlsruhe

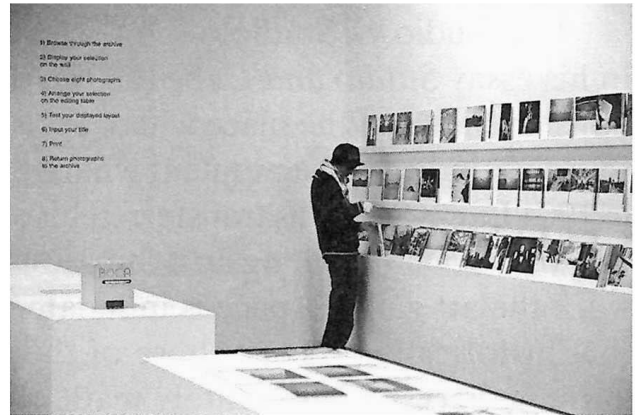
Studio vs. Studiolo

In his essay *Studio and Cube* (2007), Brian O'Doherty analyzes the relationship between the place where art is produced and the place where art is shown, indicating a moment where the two coincide. He describes how in 1964 Lucas Samaras transferred his studio to the Green Gallery in New York as a way of making an exhibition there, observing that in Samaras's work the art gallery space is inundated by the mythologies of the atelier that historically precede those of the white cube. By placing his studio in the gallery, he deliberately made the two places coincide, subverting their dialogue. Moreover, the studio included the artist's bed, books, and private belongings, all of which Samaras installed in the uptown gallery.

But it is not the transfer of the atelier space as such that is the point; rather, the extension of the production process or the identification of the art gallery as a non-finite space is of interest. We are confronted with the gallery as a space of production in the form of presentation. To grasp the implications of the link between production and presentation, the contrast of the exhibition gallery with the *Wunderkammer*, or cabinet of curiosities, is indicative. Here, instead of production, we encounter collection. In spite of being at the origin of the modern museum, the cabinet of curiosities in many ways contrasts with the exhibition as production: it is studio vs. studiolo.

Just like in Samaras's 1960s installation, the idea of a used space challenges the concept of treasured works; it also challenges the notion of the visitor as someone external to the production of a work of art. Since the early twentieth century, along with the exhibited objects, the exhibition itself acquires meaning; if the placing of an ordinary object within an exhibition space is able to generate an experience, the spatial context can be decisive in producing the artwork by way of an exhibition. In contrast to a collection consisting of selected valuable objects, an exhibition is the place where any object may acquire relevance once it is put into a specific and novel context. Transferring the production process into the exhibition space means that publicly displaying the object in space produces the work of art and, in so doing, it necessarily involves the beholder. The distinction between artist and visitor conventionally follows the rule that the latter doesn't touch the work of art, which may be ordinary as long as it does not serve its ordinary use. The exhibited object will not be

physically used by the visitor but will be used in a different way. While the collectible in the studiolo may be physically manipulated by its collector, the produced work of art is being displayed only for the distant visitor's eye: once the artist hands it over, the ensuing production process involving an audience is an immaterial one.



Installation views, *Phenotypes/Limited Forms*, 2007, in the exhibition *YOU_ser: The Century of the Consumer*, 21.10.2007–30.04.2009, ZKM | Karlsruhe © Johanna Hoth

Usability

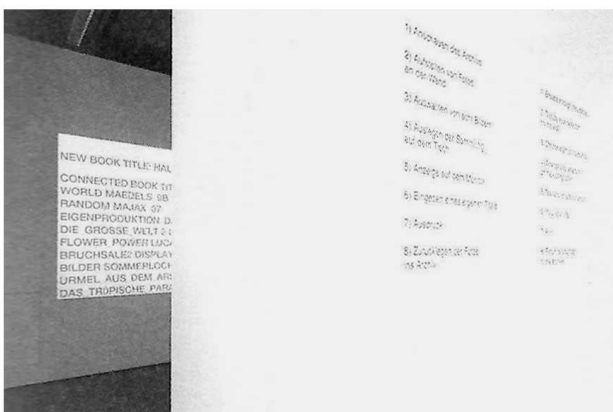
There is an analogy to the exhibition in the way that information technology and the design of interfaces have been developing in the twentieth century. If, from Peter Behrens's product designs for AEG in the early twentieth century up to the 1980s, it was the hardware that was being designed, notably industrially produced objects like Braun radios, Sony monitors, or Olivetti typewriters, beginning with the Apple *Lisa* computer in 1983 the hardware was complemented by a software that was turned inside-out and has been designed to become a display rather than just a technical protocol. The Graphical User Interface (GUI) came to be topical, moving from buttons to mouse clicks on an ever-more interactive display: the user became at once more involved with the process and more distant to the physical action. No doubt it is only a matter of time until interaction will be exercised purely through immaterial forms of interaction such as voice and eye contact—literally losing touch. The user ends up being a co-producer who is at once interactive and distant, just like the visitor of an exhibition in relation to a work of art. Usability is removed from our bodies but it engages our mind: without our interaction, the smart display is a flat and ordinary object, in this respect not dissimilar from an artwork that acquires its meaning through our engaging with it.

Taking into account the emergence of the internet, Peter Weibel advanced the thesis that the visitor of an exhibition actually turns into a user as co-producer of the artwork. With respect to the exhibition *YOU_ser: The Century of the Consumer* he states: "Following on the heels of participative and interactive media art, visitors as users now generate

or compile the content in the museum. From consumers they become producers and program designers and thereby competitors for the historical media monopolists: television, radio, and newspapers. Exhibition visitors can act as artists, curators, and producers. The visitor is at the center of the exhibition as user, as emancipated consumer.”¹

Collection as Production

Armin Linke with his *Book on Demand* introduced an internet-based artwork which, from its outset at the 2003 Venice Biennale section *Utopia Station*, continued to be active for years on the internet. Choosing from a digital archive of roughly 6,000 photographs, the *Book on Demand* could be composed online by any user. Owing to the numerous combinatorial options, each of the customized books that were co-produced online were always likely to turn out to be different. When Armin Linke proposed to update the *Book on Demand* for the exhibition *YOU_ser* in 2007, the question he posed to the department of Exhibition Design and Curatorial Practice at the Hochschule für Gestaltung Karlsruhe was a different one: could the online display turn physical? The implications are broader and more challenging than they appear at first sight. Display has a central but different meaning within the distinct contexts of the internet and the exhibition; if in the context of the internet the display as monitor plus GUI grants interactive usability as a two-dimensional interface that involves the abstract physicality of mouse-clicks, in the context of the exhibition the display is a device to present an exhibit and as such it produces a three-dimensional framework for the perception of an artwork, preventing it from coming in direct physical contact with the visitor. What conflates both definitions of display is the awareness that, first and foremost, it produces detachment rather than physical interaction. Armin Linke requested a physical display: a paradox. The exhibition design he called for was a plan that would allow reproducing his photographic archive as a visitor’s experience within the ZKM exhibition. In actuality, we were asked to design an exhibit, not a display.



Installation view, *Phenotypes/Limited Forms*, 2007, in the exhibition *YOU_ser: The Century of the Consumer*, 21.10.2007–30.04.2009, ZKM | Karlsruhe

Design derives from drawing, or *disegno*. Drawing up a plan separates the designer from the material production and the craft, while it also sets the professional apart from an artist whose drawing is not a design but a work of art in and of itself. Can an exhibit be designed? Accepting the challenge, we dropped any display and co-designed the exhibit together with the artist. We put the visitors into a novel position: using white art-handling gloves, they were encouraged to take the photographic prints into their own hands in order to look through, compare, select, and arrange the available images. Inclined shelves provided a tool for the photographs to be arranged and rearranged by everyone so as to test possible sequences, juxtapositions, and relational logics: the visitors were to act as collectors. Acknowledging that a collection contrary to an archive derives its reason from limitation, not extension, the *Phenotypes/Limited Forms* installation called on the visitors to transform a huge archive into a small collection. Doing it physically in the exhibition space not only involved the visitors' hands and bodies, reconnecting the experience to the practices within the artist's studio, but it also made the selection and arrangement process even more of a subjective experience in public, setting the act of collecting apart from the private *studiolo* and claiming it to be part of the exhibiting process. In stark contrast with a display in the context of both the exhibition and the internet, the physical image collection in the exhibition space prompted the visitors to expose themselves rather than to view and act from a distance. Preventing the exhibit from becoming a fetish, the exhibition made it not only usable for the visitor but the designed exhibit was transformed into a catalyst for the visitor to become a new type of collector-producer. In Armin Linke's installation, collection and production overcome their opposition and renew our understanding of a museum space: ridded of display, they generate a novel form of exhibiting.

Wilfried Kuehn is partner in the architectural firm Kuehn Malvezzi in Berlin. From 2006 to 2012 he was Professor for Exhibition Design and Curatorial Practice at the Karlsruhe University for Arts and Design/ZKM where he founded *Displayer*, a periodical focusing on curatorial design. In 2011 he curated the exhibition *Carlo Mollino. Maniera Moderna* together with Armin Linke at Haus der Kunst, Munich. In 2014 he curated *Hollein* at MAK Vienna and in 2015 the exhibition *Wohnungsfrage* at HKW in Berlin. With Kuehn Malvezzi he has earned a reputation in museum architecture and exhibition design; projects in this field include documenta 11 in 2002, the extension of the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum der Gegenwart in Berlin in 2004, the Julia Stoschek Collection in Düsseldorf 2006, and the extension of the Moderne Galerie at the Saarländermuseum in Saarbrücken in 2017.

1. *YOU_ser: The Century of the Consumer*, ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, October 21, 2007, to April 30, 2009 (accessed April 2018).

Installation view, *Phenotypes/Limited Forms*, 2010,
in the exhibition *Play Admont*, 03.06.–07.11.2010,
Stift Admont



Installation view, *Phenotypes/Limited Forms*, 2008,
28th Bienal de São Paulo, 26.10.–06.12.2008,
São Paulo