

Introduction

In her photographic work, the American artist Louise Lawler (* 1947) takes a wry and quizzical look at situations of display for art objects, be it in the home of a collector, in a museum or a commercial situation as in *Life After 1945 (Faces)*, which we chose as the cover image for this issue of the *Journal for Art Market Studies*.¹ The artist's multi-layered engagement with situational context, protocols of presentation and modes of perception offers a unique perspective in the most literal sense of the word. In Lawler's images, the fact that there is no such thing as an impartial setting is inescapable. There could be no more fitting departure point to introduce our subject, "Exhibiting Art for Sale", than Lawler's work. The Journal's third issue revisits the eponymous third workshop held at Technische Universität Berlin in 2014 that explored the various spaces in which art is presented for sale.²

The sale context may be more or less overt, while the boundaries between selling and non-selling exhibitions have always been somewhat fluid. A particularly striking example of this approach can be found in the exhibition history of the Berlin Secession.³ The chairman of the artist association was the painter Max Liebermann, and its aim was to become a forum for art outside the academy framework, which was implicitly denounced as dated and restrictive. Created in an alliance between artists and the trade, the organization was managed by the dealers Paul and Bruno Cassirer. Yet the Secession's inaugural show in spring 1899 was created very much in the spirit of the time and

1 We are grateful to Metro Gallery for assistance in sourcing the image and granting permission.

2 See www.fokum.org/workshop-2014/.

3 For the history of the Berlin Secession cf. Nicolaas Teeuwisse, *Vom Salon zur Secession: Berliner Kunstle-ben zwischen Tradition und Aufbruch zur Moderne 1871 – 1900* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwis-senschaft, 1986); Peter Paret, *Die Berliner Secession: moderne Kunst und ihre Feinde im Kaiserlichen Deutschland* (Berlin: Severin und Siedler, 1981); Robert Jensen, *Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-siècle Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); cf. also Malcolm Gee's article in this issue.

was not, as one might have expected, a beacon of innovative design and display, sweeping out the dusty remnants of traditional settings. Contemporary photographs show a fairly traditional presentation, not overloaded with art, using muted background colours, and mixing pictures and sculptures. Press articles describe the rooms accordingly as a “tasteful and uniform presentation.”⁴ Pictures were still displayed in a moderated form of the Country House hanging, although this had been gradually falling out of fashion since 1880, and there was not much wall space left in between the pictures.⁵ While these rooms were emptier than, for example, the display at a Victorian World Fair or at the annual salons in Paris and other major European cities, they were by no means empty in the sense of the twentieth-century gallery space as we know it. Pictures were still hung above door-ways, as illustrations in art journals like *Deutsche Kunst* show. In subsequent exhibitions, partition walls were added to win even more surfaces for hanging the exhibits.

But was the tasteful, modest staging of the art works actually a sign of artistic self-distancing from market mechanisms? Hardly - the Secession’s exhibitions implied museum canonisation while doubling up as a sale display. Indeed, the presentations showed clear similarities to the interiors of leading Berlin art galleries of the time such as Cassirer’s, including elegant Art Nouveau furniture, muted wall colours and ceiling decoration. In particular, pictures and sculptures were displayed in the same rooms, as opposed to museums, where these art forms were usually separated. At the same time, museum canonisation was just around the corner, as suggested by a museum-style simple white uniform style of plinth, and a mix with older, more established art works, partly on loan from museum collections.

The example of the Berlin Secession demonstrates how each display of art that had an implicit sale context was shaped by the market at the time. Even though the organizers ostensibly were not pursuing commercial goals, the rooms looked like those of the main dealers specializing in the same artists, while playing with museum elements to enhance their proposition. Visitors and potential buyers would have appreciated the reassuring atmosphere of these surroundings: these art works clearly would not be out of place in an affluent and educated ambience, and one day would surely become enshrined in a museum.

Malcolm Gee’s article in the current issue looks more closely at the sales exhibitions in the context of the art market in Berlin, including the Cassirer gallery, and compares the contemporary art trade in Berlin with its equivalent in Paris as one of the main art dealing centres during the decades before the Second World War. In both capitals, galleries worked towards a successful balance between a museum-like presentation that

4 Richard Mortimer, *Die Ausstellung der Berliner Secession*, in: *Die Kunst für alle*, Spring 1899, 315, author’s translation.

5 Edgar Degas had demanded a gap of 20 to 30 cm, cf. Edgar Degas, *A Propos du Salon*, in *Paris-Journal*, 12 April 1870, quoted in Alexis Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums 1880-1940* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 2001), 114.

enhanced the status of the art on display, and the private surroundings of their wealthier clientele – sometimes constructing a type of show home, as in the case of Wolfgang Gurlitt's gallery on Potsdamer Strasse in Berlin in 1918. Their display varied depending on their financial means and that of their clients. Location was of course a key element in these major art centres of the period, and mapping projects will surely become ever more widespread in art market research.⁶

Meike Hopp's analysis of the sumptuous premises of art dealers in Munich around 1900 focuses on the architectural challenge of custom-built art dealer premises that turned newly-built examples of this building type into veritable palaces. This is a relatively little-explored field of research, but from her initial analysis, it seems highly likely that such buildings and their display strategies were the forerunners of twentieth century museum exhibitions, and not vice versa. In this case, modernity is defined as much by technical advancement in architectural design as by the hanging and the selection of the works on view. Lighting, flexibility of floorplans and ease of moving objects were of equal, if not greater importance than an impressive façade and a luxurious interior decoration.

Whereas Malcolm Gee's and Meike Hopp's articles focus on classic venues for selling art, **Allison Stagg's** contribution looks at a rather unexpected exhibition site: American barbershops. With her article, which opens this issue, we go back to around 1800. While in eighteenth-century Britain caricatures enjoyed a wide-ranging audience and enormous popularity, relatively little is known about the development of this art form in its former colony. Not only was the barbershop a semi-public area for display and, potentially a sales platform with a captive audience, but it was also very much a male-segregated exhibition space, and in that aspect it differs from other exhibition venues.

Last, not least, **Anne Luther's** article is dedicated to the New York market, exploring the exhibition practices established by contemporary artists in New York in the very recent past. As artists react to market pressures and to a standardized aesthetic of display, as exemplified by the White Cube, they select or create alternative settings and innovative spaces to display their art. Backed up by their representing galleries, they explore different cooperation and marketing strategies based on personal connections and social media. This article also points towards an issue we plan to publish later this year on the subject of "Artists on the Market".

In today's art world, the boundaries between artists, independent curators, collectors, gallerists and museum curators are anything but fixed. In an interview with the curator and former gallerist **Sebastian Baden** we investigate developments in the commercial display of contemporary art and its effect on visitors, correlations with non-selling museum exhibitions, their perception and the market. It seems that the financial increase in

6 A recently published online resource now allows tracking historic gallery locations across Paris over time, cf. <https://paris-art-market.huma-num.fr/>, accessed on 11 October 2017.

the market for contemporary art has driven a quest for the monumental in its commercial exhibition spaces, where mega-prices may encourage megalomaniac displays and vice versa. At the same time, art market critique is subsumed, and in turn institutionalized by market strategies, as any avant-garde ultimately tends to become the new establishment.

At present, the main stage for contemporary art is of course the art fair. **Helene Bosecker** and **Susanne Meyer-Abich** jointly report on a conference held in London this summer on this subject, which embedded it within a wider historical as well as the current global contemporary context.⁷

Andrea Meyer

Susanne Meyer-Abich

⁷ A shorter review in German was recently published by Helene Bosecker on ArtHist.net, <https://arthist.net/reviews/16777/mode=conferences>.