

Changing the Game

Museum Research and the Politics of Inclusivity

Margriet Schavemaker

First published in The Curatorial in Parallax, edited by Kim Seong-Eun, Choi Jina, and Song Sujong (Seoul: National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMCA), 2018), 89–105.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, the notion of a “discursive turn” has been shaping museum research all over the world. Instead of focusing on exhibitions as key “output,” museums now seem bent upon transforming themselves into networked organizations, which entails (co-)conducting research of all possible shapes and forms. In the theoretical discourse surrounding the aforementioned discursive turn, one finds a strong focus on institutional critique and antagonism, bringing counter-voices inside the museum. The museum criticizing itself from within has been a familiar description of the changes that were taking place. However, one might also argue that despite their potential for criticality and depth, these practices ultimately remained somewhat unchallenging and homogenous when it comes to both audience and outreach.

Currently, a more radical turn towards diversity and inclusivity seems to be shaping our field. Not only in museums but across all of our institutions and social interactions, new and suppressed voices are demanding access, fundamental research, a rewriting of conventional narratives, and the deconstruction of the hegemonic powers that be. Is now the time when museums will actually begin to open up and museum research will finally liberate itself from the constraints of “preaching to the choir”?

In this essay, I will discuss some core programs and programmatic trajectories that have been developed by the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, firstly in order to bridge the gap between the museum and the academic world (including peers and professionals), and secondly to implement a more radical and self-critical opening up of the museum in order to counter social inequity and broaden accessibility. It will become clear that fundamental changes on many levels in the organization are still necessary, and we must prepare ourselves for some fundamental shifts as well. Or, to put it more strongly, the move from a discursive to an inclusive turn may appear to be a foundational game changer.

I

The Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam was founded in 1895. It is the largest modern and contemporary art and design museum in the Netherlands, and is located in the cultural heart of Amsterdam, adjacent to the Van Gogh Museum and the Rijksmuseum. *Stedelijk* means “municipal,” but, like many public institutions in the Netherlands, the museum has been privatized in order to foster a more entrepreneurial attitude. This occurred in 2008, but the collection and the building are still owned by the City of Amsterdam. Moreover, the City remains the museum’s greatest benefactor.¹ Aside from this public funding, the museum generates revenue via ticketing, the bookshop and restaurant, and additional fundraising. The governance of these public/private hybrids is a challenge for similar institutions globally. It became a major issue at the Stedelijk in the second half of 2017, when director Beatrix Ruf stepped down. She was hired by the supervisory board in 2014 because of her remarkable international network and track record in bringing in private funding. However, it came to light that she had been gaining income from private collectors during the two years preceding 2017, while also directing the Stedelijk Museum. Ruf was accused of not being sufficiently transparent about this fact.²

When I joined the Stedelijk in 2009, the museum had already been closed for over five years due to an extensive renovation and the construction of an additional wing. There was frustration in the community about this prolonged closure, and when it was decided that the museum would temporarily open the now renovated original part of the building, preceding its grand reopening in 2012, research and the implementation of the discursive turn was a key component. A small organization was set up to program lectures, book presentations, screenings, symposia, conferences, and performances on Thursday evenings and weekends. This so-called public program collaborated with various partners in the city, such as festivals, academics, artists, and art schools, and aimed to offer a platform for the more performative and ephemeral forms of art and design, as well as enhance critical thinking and research in the field.



Fig. 1. Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. Photo: John L. Marshall.

In order to make the research outcomes of this public program (and the many other forms of research conducted by the museum) more sustainable and build upon the new connectivity with academic partners in the Netherlands, the idea arose to launch a peer-reviewed magazine. Yet this idea needed more time; it was not until 2014 that the first issue of *Stedelijk Studies* (<https://stedelijkstudies.com>) appeared. The online journal offers high-quality, peer-reviewed academic research related to the Stedelijk Museum's collection, its institutional history (such as education and conservation practices), and topical themes such as globalization and the borders of Europe. It is open access and presented in a comprehensible and attractive format geared towards international audiences of (up-and-coming) art professionals and those with an interest in art theory and history. The journal aims to publish two thematic issues a year, and an international call for papers is issued for each edition. Between six and twelve papers are then selected and reviewed by two academics in a double-blind process.

As mentioned in the editorial of the first issue of *Stedelijk Studies*, the journal also signaled that the role of research in museums was changing. Such research currently occupies a greater and more autonomous role than it once did, and is no longer restricted to supporting exhibitions and the collection.³ It has become an independent, often interdisciplinary program with its own curators and budget. The trend is, among many things, part of the so-called New Institutionalism in which museums adopt a self-reflective approach to their strategies as institutions and incorporate research into their everyday practices. Although this often involves a form of critical self-reflection, we see that the academic world is frequently a partner in such programs.

A collaboration with the art history departments— together with the critical theory departments, whose orientation is more interdisciplinary—of six Dutch universities has enhanced the academic programs in the museum (resulting in more collaborations on the level of exhibitions, conferences, lectures, etc.), while international attention for the online journal is growing. The last three issues were visited by over 12,000 readers, and a recent improvement allowing individual essays to be downloaded as PDFs has increased this usage tremendously.

Although I am very proud of these research-driven programs at the Stedelijk Museum, I have also become progressively self-critical of their impact. The prevailing feeling is that we have foremost managed to create an infrastructure that allows the museum to collaborate with its academic partners and reconnect to its audiences comprising peers and professionals. However, should the goal not also be geared towards a more radical opening up to a broader public? To engage with voices that are not normally heard in the museum, and thereby cocreate new knowledge?



Fig. 2. Screenshot of the online platform *Stedelijk Studies*, no. 6, <https://stedelijkstudies.com/>.

When the discursive turn was theorized in the beginning of the new millennium, the British philosopher Chantal Mouffe was often quoted. She spoke about the museum as a space for “agonistic pluralism,” arguing that society has reached a state in which people will always disagree and that sharing differences is the most constructive way forward. The museum is the ultimate place in which to do this: Both public and private, within and outside society, various voices can be uttered in a safe space.⁴ A “safe place for unsafe discussions,” as director of the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam, Emile Schrijver, calls it.⁵

But do we really have unsafe discussions? Are we not in agreement and talking with our peers, most of the time?

In my essay “Curating Interactivity: Models, Motivations, and New Institutionalism” (2014), I set out to address this issue.⁶ I brought critic Jan Verwoert to the table, who argues that the art world is lying about many things, but most of all about its impact. In this harsh and polarized world, in which too many people doubt the merit and relevance of art and want to cut its funding, we, the art professionals, feel inclined to mislead others: We say that art is good for people (actually, an unproven claim). Currently, my feeling is that we are lying about the fact that we are open to all possible audiences.

How can we stop this? First off, we should stop lying about the fact that we are lying. Honesty about dishonesty seems an indispensable step in this process. However, we cannot leave it at that. It would be cynical to cling to this fake “publicness” and truthfulness; further steps must be taken. We should instead begin to acknowledge the fact that museums are in crisis due to a lack of relevance and impact. Moreover, efforts must be made in terms of the repressed “ghosts of the past” in their collections, funding structures, buildings, etc.

Yet, at the same time, these are opportunities as well. In this day and age of polarization, the museum could be the ultimate place dedicated to helping these ghosts from the past to speak. Moreover, the museum can begin dedicating itself to social and sexual equity, and be open and accessible for all. Or, for example, as Tate director Maria Balshaw formulates it, a place where art and visual culture at large can help people to live their lives in a better way and society can renew or rejuvenate itself.⁷

In other words, more radical steps need to be taken in order to make the public turn a success and help museums to become relevant.

II

In *The Art of Relevance*, American thought leader and Santa

Cruz Museum of Art & History director Nina Simon sees cultural institutions as rooms with doors that can be opened by various publics with a key.⁸ Every visitor needs a key in the right shape and size, which can be handed to them proactively by the institution. Of course new doors can be produced as well, in order to create new pathways to existing programs (e.g., innovative tours, apps, public programs), and in many cases entirely new rooms need to be shaped in order to bring in new groups (e.g., radically different exhibitions and collection presentations).

A radical opening up of the museum can take many different shapes and requires a large amount of research. Put differently, this opening up takes the shape of research projects, which are often conducted with many different partners in any given city. Consider, for example, *Tate Exchange* by Tate Modern. Since the opening of the new wing in 2016, this large-scale program has offered an entire floor to over fifty cultural and educational partners in London, each permitted to meet and actively program in the museum for a period of one week. Another good example is the “Special Guests” project at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, a frontrunner in the field of accessibility, social equity, and inclusion. Years of intensive research with partners in the field resulted in radical new approaches regarding how to welcome people with hearing and visual disabilities.⁹

In 2017, the Stedelijk Museum and the Van Abbemuseum joined forces in *Studio i: Platform for Inclusive Culture*.¹⁰ The initiative sets out to investigate best practices in the field of inclusivity and accessibility on a global level, supported by doctoral research devoted to an international comparative study on the impact of such projects. Moreover, the Stedelijk and the Van Abbemuseum use the platform to offer their successful inclusive programs as easy-to-implement “modules” (e.g., the *Unforgettable* project in which people with Alzheimer’s and their caretakers can visit the museum and experience a tailor-made interactive tour and workshop).¹¹

To diversify audiences also means diversifying content, adding new readings and layers of information. Regarding the collection, this shift in the Stedelijk Museum has taken shape in presenting the collection in two distinctive ways. Since December 2017, the museum has staged *STEDELIJK BASE* in the new wing, a large-scale exhibition that will remain for five years and presents highlights from the museum’s 125-year-old collection. This presentation of the canon (displayed in an experimental exhibition design by AMO/ Rem Koolhaas and Federico Martelli) is complemented with small-scale, research-driven collection presentations under the heading *STEDELIJK TURNS*, through which the museum sheds light on hidden or suppressed stories and unseen or rarely exhibited artworks. The two models are in dialogue with one another; fueled by the new research, the alternative perspectives offered in *STEDELIJK TURNS* will inspire changes in *STEDELIJK*



Fig. 3. The workshop *Unforgettable Stedelijk* makes art accessible to people with dementia. Photo: Tomek Dersu Aaron.

BASE. Consequently, *STEDELIJK BASE* will be in flux over the next five years, inviting visitors to experience the transformation of the canon.

In 2017 and 2018, *STEDELIJK TURNS* consisted, among other things, of a series of exhibitions devoted to the theme of migration. Departing from the topicality of this theme in terms of international political agendas, it aimed at bringing out multiple perspectives from the collection, reexamining and restaging works that had, in many cases, not been on show for a long time. For the first exhibition, Nalini Malani contextualized her video/shadow play *Transgressions* (2001; acquired by the museum in 2002 but never displayed) in which she departs from the forced migration of her family caused by the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947.¹² *Solution or Utopia? Design for Refugees* presented a generation of designers who strive to offer solutions for the continuing stream of refugees attempting to make their way to Europe, fleeing violence and poverty in the Middle East and Africa.¹³ The series concluded with a large-scale collection presentation titled *I am a Native Foreigner*, in which the effects of migration on artists both past and present were considered, revealing how they dealt with and depict the impact of displacement.¹⁴

In this series of exhibitions, migration was brought into play in various ways, offering a range of different visualizations and investigations by many different artists. Showing there is not one way to define or frame migration, by revealing the many questions raised by artworks from the collection, the museum aimed to provide a more nuanced consideration of the often harsh opposition between those in support of and those resistant to welcoming refugees.

Since 2016–17, the public program also opened up more radically for a multitude of voices from outside of the museum. In the series *Stage It!*, the key of the museum is offered to local cultural and educational institutions like the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, the National Opera, Mama Cash, and Sonic Acts for the presentation of new productions. Additionally, the *Stedelijk Statements* series offers the museum's key to a mix of artists, designers, writers, and academics who present (artistic) research in any possible admixture of performances, discussions, and Friday-evening events. It explicitly offers space to alternative readings of the collection, as was provided, for instance, by artist Joseph Semah. Semah has dedicated over thirty years of his research to the excavation of the Jewish context in works by modernist artists like Kazimir Malevich, Mark Rothko, and Barnett Newman. Various debates and performances, curated and performed by the artist and his network, adhered to these alternative readings and also critiqued the museum for neglecting these perspectives.¹⁵

The opening up of the museum to Semah stems from a longer relationship between this particular artist and the museum. The Stedelijk, which owns several of his

sculptures, functions as an important site and text. Semah positions himself in relation to the museum via what he calls “footnotes.” In recent years, these critical commentaries have transformed into sometimes rather aggressive appeals. Semah demands that the museum change its core narratives, going as far as hiring a lawyer and making appeals to the media to move the dialogue forward.¹⁶ Giving Semah the key of the museum for a *Stedelijk Statement* can be seen as an acknowledgment of the fact that the world has changed. These conversations are not always safe, equal, or pleasant. As I wrote in Semah’s publication on the relationship between the artist and the museum, “The new encounters can distort and become uneasy, often questioning, attacking and reformulating the conventional relationships between all players.”¹⁷ However, in this day and age, this is exactly what the museum needs: By radically opening up to these critical and “other” voices, the museum can shake off its identity as a neutral white cube speaking with a single, authoritative voice. Instead, the museum becomes a production house in which a myriad of voices can interact.

This goal became even clearer in another *Stedelijk Statement* that was developed with writer Arnon Grunberg and seventeen newcomer artists and designers who recently moved to the Netherlands (the majority from Syria). Under the moniker *Give us the Museum*, they extended the *Stedelijk Statement* through the entire month of May 2018, during which they worked in the museum, culminating in a final statement on the evening of Friday, June 1st. In the mornings, the participants acted in several capacities, ranging from security guards to art restorers, and covering anything from the marketing department to the current directorship. In the afternoons, they worked on their own projects at the museum. In addition, debates, performances, and other interventions took place while they worked in the galleries. Visitors had the opportunity to engage in conversation with the artists, and vice versa.

The inspiration for the project came from the fact that Europe has been entangled in a migration crisis since 2015, meaning refugees have become a central subject in European debate. Yet these people are mostly talked about in terms of numbers, figures, quotas, and costs. In the rare cases when refugees are permitted to take part in the discussion, rather than be discussed, they are primarily viewed as “token refugees.” What if this could be radically reversed? What can we learn from newcomers in Europe—and not just about them but also about ourselves, our identities, and our cultures? The title of the project arose from several conversations between Grunberg and the newcomer artists. When asked about the meaning of the *Stedelijk* to the artists who had recently arrived in Amsterdam, the answer was clear: “Give us the museum and we will show you.”

Grunberg asserted that *Give us the Museum* was “a research project, improvisation, performance and



Fig. 4. Peter Baren participating in the work of Joseph Sassoon Semah, during *Stedelijk Statement*, October 20, 2017. Photo: Ernst van Deursen.



Fig. 5. *MaKOM, The Doubling of the House* performed by Joseph Sassoon Semah, Jom Semah, and Peter Baren, October 21, 2017. Photo: Ilya Rabinovich.

dialogue.”¹⁸ With his daily column about the project in the Dutch national newspaper *NRC*, Grunberg shared his encounters with the Dutch elite (*NRC* is the most highbrow newspaper in the Netherlands). In many of his writings, he reflects upon the rules that govern a museum institution like the Stedelijk, depicting a sanitized place where people are scared of dirt, trying to create some sort of hospital or mausoleum for precious art from the past. Yet, at the same time, the entire project was about people. We met frequently with all the people involved (artists, Grunberg, the Stedelijk team, assistants, representatives from various organizations, etc.), and the morning “shadowing program” was also about connecting museum staff to the participating artists. This focus on the human aspects also took shape in the daily reports penned by Grunberg, which included many personal stories about museum colleagues and the artists. The art objects in the museum were humanized as well, described as “sick patients.”¹⁹ In other words, not only did *Give us the Museum* reflect upon the museum as a sanitized institution but also transformed it into a lively and warm home. The latter aspect became increasingly visible in the course of the month as well, as the gallery space where the artists and Grunberg were working was domesticated by bringing in curtains, carpets, plants (normally not allowed in the museum), games, and so forth.

The aspect of the personal and the human also became the nucleus of frustrations: Within the group, some artists began to feel annoyed by the fact that not all of the artists were spending enough time in the museum, whereas for others the feeling arose that the museum expressed too little individual appreciation for their work. As artist Mazen Al Ashkar formulated it during the final debate, on the night of June 1st, “I refuse to be a token despite all good efforts and willingness to change by the museum.”²⁰

III

Besides this self-criticism, the museum had anticipated criticism about the *Give us the Museum* project from the right side of the political spectrum. Surprisingly, this was not the case. However, right-wing responses had been triggered one year prior by the inauguration of the first exhibition in the aforementioned series on migration. The museum issued a press release in March 2017, wherein the series was framed and explained as critical nuancing of the unified populist perspective on migration, quoting director Ruf:

*It is important to always tell new stories, both with our collection and with separate exhibitions. Especially now, as populism is taking hold in Europe. I believe it's important that, at the Stedelijk Museum, you can see how art addresses this issue, and how art can confront us with how we think and allow us to reframe our thinking.*²¹

It evoked strong responses from populist right-wing politicians via Twitter (i.e., Theo Hiddema), arguing that the museum was siding with left-wing politicians and was



Fig. 6. Writer Arnon Grunberg introduces the participating artists of the project *Give us the Museum*, May 1, 2018. Photo: Maarten Nauw.

therefore too exclusive (despite its public funding). To contextualize these issues, a radio news program invited the museum for a discussion with Thierry Baudet, leader of the new populist party Forum voor Democratie (Forum for Democracy).²² In the discussion, Baudet, like Hiddema, strongly objected to the fact that the museum, in his perception, was taking sides with left-wing voters, offering no room for more conservative and populist perspectives. I represented the museum in the debate and did my best to convince Baudet that we tried to counteract a one-dimensional and unified voice with offering multiple perspectives, forms of art, and questions to enhance critical thinking. Baudet, however, was not convinced, making the assertion that the museum was “only showing left-wing abstract art” and offered no opportunities to more conservative, realist art, which he personally appreciated.

The issue of being overly left-wing oriented and exclusive also popped up in another critical response by Kate Sinha that same year. In an op-ed for the right-wing opinion website TPO.nl about who should be the new director of the Stedelijk Museum after Ruf stepped down, Sinha made an argument that it was not Ruf who was the problem but the corrupt left-wing ideology building upon a genuine disinterest in art. As an example, she critically refers to the exhibitions Ruf organized with artists from her circle, such as Seth Price, Jana Euler, Jon Rafman, Jordan Wolfson, Ed Atkins, and Avery Singer, who, in her eyes, share “left-engaged indifference.” The epitome of this trend was embodied by the museum’s exhibition of work by Zanele Muholi,²³ which demanded that visitors be interested in the “lazy figments of a spoiled brat, only because she is from South Africa, lesbian, and black.”²⁴

Although published in October 2017, the essay became world news in February 2018 when Amsterdam’s Gerrit Rietveld Academie decided that Sinha and her partner, Stefan Ruitenbeek, with whom she forms the duo Kirac (Keeping it Real Art Critics), were disinvited to present their latest video blog on art collector Bert Kreuk. The reason for the cancellation was that students at the art school believed that Sinha was a racist, based on her remarks about Muholi. Ultimately, the school held a debate with Sinha and her partner about the whole affair, which in turn became fuel for a new video blog by Kirac.²⁵ Moreover, Sinha wrote an additional op-ed for the left-wing national newspaper *de Volkskrant* in which she explains that she believes that artists with talent, who also fall under the categories black, woman, or LGBTQ, have a high risk of falling prey to being presented as “tokens” in the art world. In other words, they will be selected for what they represent without respect for their talent, and Sinha calls on these artists to use their talents to take responsibility for this.²⁶

Although I do not agree with the right-wing typecasting of the art world as exclusively left-wing, such as formulated by Baudet and Sinha, I feel uncomfortable with the silencing of such voices. I grew up in a predominantly white suburb of

The Hague (Zoetermeer), raised by white, intellectual parents—left-wing voters who strongly believed in the freedom of speech—but at the same time did not feel kinship or alignment with the middle- to lower-class environment in which they were living. These circumstances inspired me to bridge this gap by searching for common ground, including talking to those that did not like me, or even pestered me. I try to mediate, again and again.

This is also the reason why I think the Stedelijk Museum should engage in discussions with both Sinha and Baudet about their ideas. In the case of Baudet, I invited him to the museum at the end of the radio interview. I must admit I felt discomfort the day after, when I saw the headline on the website of the populist newspaper *De Telegraaf*: “Baudet makes mincemeat of museum babe.” What followed was an edited version of the radio discussion from the previous day, in which only Baudet was speaking and my comments were largely deleted.²⁷ This sexist typecasting and willful silencing—on top of the unfounded accusations used by Baudet in the interview—are as unpleasant as they are common in these current times of “fake news.” Should one therefore stop engaging?

Grunberg wondered about this as well, when he worked with the Stedelijk advisory board for inclusivity and accessibility in the context of the *Give us the Museum* project. This advisory board consists of a group of fifteen museum employees, a cross section of people taken from every possible team at the Stedelijk. Since the beginning of 2018, they have advised the Stedelijk director and management team on how to become more diverse and inclusive at the levels of programming, partners, staff, and audience.²⁸ In his column about the meeting, Grunberg raises the issue of how the museum should also become a relevant place for angry right-wing white men.²⁹ In order to kick-start the museum in this quest, he set out to organize two therapy sessions for these EU-, immigrant-, and art-hating populist voters for the final event of the *Give us the Museum* project.

In his humorous open application to become the new director of the Stedelijk Museum, artist Jan Hoek expresses a similar idea. His focus will be on making the museum relevant again, via engaging young artists, inspiring sexual exchanges in a “sex/art cave,” and an extensive program of African art (as the latter is absolutely amazing in his eyes, and should be on show in order to counter its invisibility in the West). However, he will also offer programming for populist voters:

I don't want to get the complaint that I only program politically correct leftist art (what I most certainly will be doing), and I therefore want to consciously engage with getting art-hating Geert Wilders voters [the most prominent populist in the Netherlands, M.S.] to the museum. In order to do so, I will open a special gallery in which, every three months, a Dutch artist will be commissioned to make a work that is both layered and high level, but also pleases Geert Wilders voters. The



Fig. 7. Arnon Grunberg in conversation with visual artist Noor Issa (Syria) during *Give us the Museum*, May 9, 2018. Photo: Maarten Nauw.

*artists are forced to talk to a special comity of angry white voters on a regular basis, who, in the end, will judge the work.*³⁰

Not everybody agrees with this kind of engagement with the right-wing spectrum. In earlier presentations on this topic for, among others, students of the Sandberg Institute and in meetings with the Stedelijk editorial board for public-program events, I was confronted with the fact that my plea for an open attitude towards those criticizing the left-wing *Gutmensch* and its dedication to incomprehensible art and minorities (e.g., the aforementioned Baudet and Sinha) led to heated discussions. For some, the idea prevailed that when a fundamental line is crossed regarding mutual respect, this functions as a disqualification and excommunication from the public forum that the museum offers. One should not open the door for those who do not respect the ground rules was the core message. Especially not in this day and age, when museums are finally challenging their own hegemonic positions.

For others, my tolerance was framed as a hidden intolerance, something so omnipresent in Dutch society. This perspective is probably best described by Gloria Wekker in her book *White Innocence* (2016), in which she explains how the Dutch have long cultivated an image of themselves as an exemplary model of tolerance, despite evidence to the contrary:

I am intrigued by the way that race pops up in unexpected places and moments, literally as the return of the repressed, while a dominant discourse stubbornly maintains that the Netherlands is and has always been colorblind and antiracist, a place of extraordinary hospitality and tolerance toward the racialized/ethicized other, whether this quintessential other is perceived as black in some eras or Muslim in others. One of the key sites where this paradox is operative, I submit, is the white Dutch sense of self
...³¹

In other words, the dominant groups see themselves as tolerant and will not consider themselves or their freedoms under threat from intolerance, because they are not. Although I do consider myself an avid (self-)critic of this Dutch mentality, the discussions with my peers did open my eyes to the fact that my desire for a radical freedom of speech is, in fact, grounded in a hegemonic position that I did not perceive as hegemonic.

However, I strongly believe that radically stepping aside and opening up to other voices, as described above, is a solution. If the museum and its staff is willing to relinquish (some of) its ownership/power, this shows it to be an institution that can be transformed, that can be and become an inclusive platform, an agent of change, and thus prove itself not to be an immutable tool simply working to maintain and reproduce hegemony. However, one of the most probing challenges that remains unsolved for these (semi-)public institutions is how to radically open up for all and yet also be a safe space where the repressed and counter-

voices can speak up, challenge, and change the institutions from within.

Perhaps it is an impossible combination. Can these two fundamentally different paradigms be united?

Issue 8 (Spring 2019) of *Stedelijk Studies* will deal with these topics. The call for papers is titled *Towards a Museum of Mutuality* and begins with the assertion that “engendering integration while acknowledging differences is one of the biggest challenges facing museums globally today.”³² We ask researchers and practitioners to reflect upon a reconceptualization of museums’ relationships between their collections and the engagement with (new) audiences at all levels, thereby aiming to shed light on shifts in the museum model, both theoretically and on the level of institutional arrangements, from the museum as a site of authority to the post-museum as a site of mutuality.

It is wonderful to deploy the academic infrastructure of the peer-reviewed journal to critically discuss fundamental issues as described in this essay and assess both best practices and those in need of improvement. However, I hope it is clear that a different kind of research is necessary, as well, in order to open up our museums more radically and move forward. Finding new narratives in the collection and staging new public-program events like *Give us the Museum* are just the beginning. In this polarized world, practice-based research projects provide us the mirrors and the game changers needed to transform our cultural institutions from hegemonic spaces into inclusive spaces.

Margriet Schavemaker is currently working as Artistic Director of the Amsterdam Museum and as Professor of Media and Art in Museum Practice at the University of Amsterdam (a chair in collaboration with the Amsterdam Museum). Schavemaker writes about contemporary art and theory and organizes discursive events. From 2009 to 2019 she worked at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam in various roles (Head of Collection and Research, Manager of Education, Interpretation and Publications and curator). Her exhibitions include *The Stedelijk Museum & The Second World War* (2015), *ZERO: Let Us Explore the Stars* (2015), *Jean Tinguely: Machine Spectacle* (2016), *Pinball Wizard – The Work and Life of Jacqueline de Jong* (2019), and the permanent collection presentation *STEDELIJK BASE* (in collaboration with Beatrix Ruf and AMO/Rem Koolhaas and Federico Martelli) (2017–2022).

1. Around 50 percent of the total budget is granted to the museum. The funding system is structured in four-year grant proposals. The current cycle runs from 2016 to 2020, and the next from 2021 to 2024.
2. Independent research into the matter has since been conducted, which led to the conclusion that Ruf had been mostly transparent about everything and that it was the

- supervisory board that was to blame for lack of clarity and inadequate governance. See J. A. J. Peeters and S. E. Eisma, "Governance en de WNT bij het Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam," City of Amsterdam, June 4, 2018, and <https://www.stedelijk.nl/nl/nieuws/bericht-van-de-raad-van-toezicht-2/>.
3. For a more in-depth explanation of the mission and vision of the journal, see Margriet Schavemaker, "Editorial: Topical, Urgent, High-Quality," *Stedelijk Studies*, no. 1 (Fall 2014), <https://stedelijkstudies.com/journal/stedelijk-studies-editorial/>.
 4. Chantal Mouffe, *Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism*, Political Science Series, vol. 72 (Vienna: Institute for Advanced Studies, 2000).
 5. Emile Schrijver, in debate with this author at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, February 11, 2008, <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/events/sunday/>.
 6. Margriet Schavemaker, "Curating Interactivity: Models, Motivations, and New Institutionalism," in *Interactive Contemporary Art: Participation in Practice*, ed. Kathryn Brown (London and New York: I.B. Taurus, 2014), 239–55.
 7. Maria Balshaw, "Museums of the Future," in MMCA Research Project 1, Symposium, *What Do Museums Research?*, April 8, 2018.
 8. Nina Simon, *The Art of Relevance* (Santa Cruz, CA: Museum 2.0, 2016).
 9. See <https://www.vanabbemuseum.nl/en/mediation/inclusion/>.
 10. More information is available at <https://www.studio-inclusie.nl/>.
 11. For more information, see the online publication and academic research on this project: <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/museum/inclusive-programming/unforgettable-stedelijk/>.
 12. This show led to the first infusion from a *TURNS* to the *BASE* collection presentation via the work *Utopia* (1969/1976) by Nalini Malani, which had been donated to the museum in honor of the *TURNS* exhibition *Nalini Malani: Transgressions* (March 17–June 18, 2017), <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/exhibitions/nalini-malan/>.
 13. *Solution or Utopia? Design for Refugees*, May 20–August 26, 2017, <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/exhibitions/solution-or-utopia-design-for-refugees/>.
 14. See <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/news/i-am-a-native-foreigner-aspects-of-migration-in-the-collection-of-the-stedelijk/>.
 15. See <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/events/stedelijk-statements-joseph-semah-2/>.
 16. For an analysis of the relationship between Semah and the Stedelijk Museum, see Margriet Schavemaker, "Dwingende voetnoten: Joseph Semah en het Stedelijk Museum," in *On Friendship/ Collateral Damage II* (in Dutch), ed. Linda Bouws (Amsterdam: Metropool, 2017), 141–53
 17. *Ibid.*, 141.
 18. See <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/events/stedelijk-x-makers-unite-x-forum-european-culture/>.
 19. Arnon Grunberg, "The artwork is a terminally ill patient," *NRC*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2018/05/08/het-kunstwerk-is-een-doodzieke-patient-a1602270/>.
 20. Because the museum questioned its usual hegemonic criteria, the artists were not selected by the museum on the basis of their individual work but, rather, as a group by the MakersUnite organization (<https://www.makersunite.eu/>).
 21. See <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/news/press-release-in-2017-the-stedelijk-museum-amsterdam-dedicates-five-exhibitions-to-the-theme-of-migration/>.
 22. "Dit is de Dag," radio 1, April 8, 2017, <https://www.nporadio1.nl/dit-is-de-dag/onderwerpen/402735-ophef-over-politieke-exposities-stedelijk-museum>.
 23. *Zanele Muholi*, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, July 8– October 22, 2017, <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/exhibitions/zanele-muholi-2/>.
 24. "De toekomstige directeur van het Stedelijk Museum," *The Post Online*, October 22, 2017,

-
25. <https://cult.tpo.nl/2017/10/22/toekomstige-directeur-stedelijk-museum/>. Kirac 13, "Stigma," https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=QS5Ws5ShnNw/.
 26. Kate Sinha, "Token én talent," *de Volkskrant*, February 13, 2018, <https://www.volkskrant.nl/columns-opinie/opinie-kate-sinha-token-en-talent~b0d3416b/>.
 27. *De Telegraaf* online, April 9, 2017.
 28. The board was installed in order to implement the Dutch code for cultural diversity in the museum. See <https://www.codeculturelediversiteit.com/the-code-english-version/>.
 29. Arnon Grunberg, "Ah, de boze witte mannen," *NRC*, May 26, 2018, <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2018/05/26/ah-de-boze-witte-mannen-a1604327/>.
 30. See <https://www.vice.com/nl/article/pa3q3m/mijn-open-sollicitatie-voor-directeur-van-het-stedelijk-museum/>.
 31. Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2016), 1.
 32. See <https://stedelijkstudies.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/CFP-Stedelijk-Studies-Issue-8.pdf>.