



RESEARCH PLAN

MUSEUM OF CONNECTION

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2024

COMPLEX PROJECTS

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Berlin Studio
Health Group

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INTRODUCTION

01

01.1 Thesis topic

This thesis explores the design and conceptualization of a contemporary installation art museum in Berlin, aiming to redefine the traditional white cube experience and contribute to a healthier society.

The 'white cube' model as we know it today has been around since the late 19th century. With its neutral, flexible and decontextualized spaces it takes away all distractions from the art. However this 'white cube' model and passive experience has become outdated and fails to engage visitors in a more meaningful way. It is exactly this engagement and interaction with the art and other visitors what makes the museum potentially such an important building in our future society. Especially in this digital age where people are becoming more alone and isolated it is important to have places where they can come together and connect with each other.

That is why the primary objective of this project is to create spaces that foster meaningful interaction and connections, ultimately contributing to a healthier and more cohesive society. This building, focusing on social health, together with eight other buildings will form a broader strategy to improve Berlins health by integrating a health beneficiary space in to the buildings design.

01.2 Problem Statement

Are the art museums of today still contemporary, or are they outdated and have they been surpassed by our rapidly changing society? Has their function as building that mainly collects and exhibits art not become obsolete in a world where technology has made it possible for everyone to view and access that same art on their phone or laptop through digitization, or even be able to wander through the museum in virtual reality. What should the function of a contemporary art museum be in this digital age, and how can they contribute to our health?

The experience for museum visitors today comprises of an on average 2 hour long repetitive action of looking at an art piece, reading the description, then looking at the art again, optionally reading some background information about the artist in the folder, while listening to the audio tour, all for about three whole minutes to then walk behind the other visitors on to the next. Resulting in an experience that has become nothing more than just a series of individualized, passive, static and superficial isolated actions. There is no real interaction between the art and visitor or even among the visitors themselves. So why bother going to a museum when nowadays if you want to have a good look at for example the Mona Lisa you are better

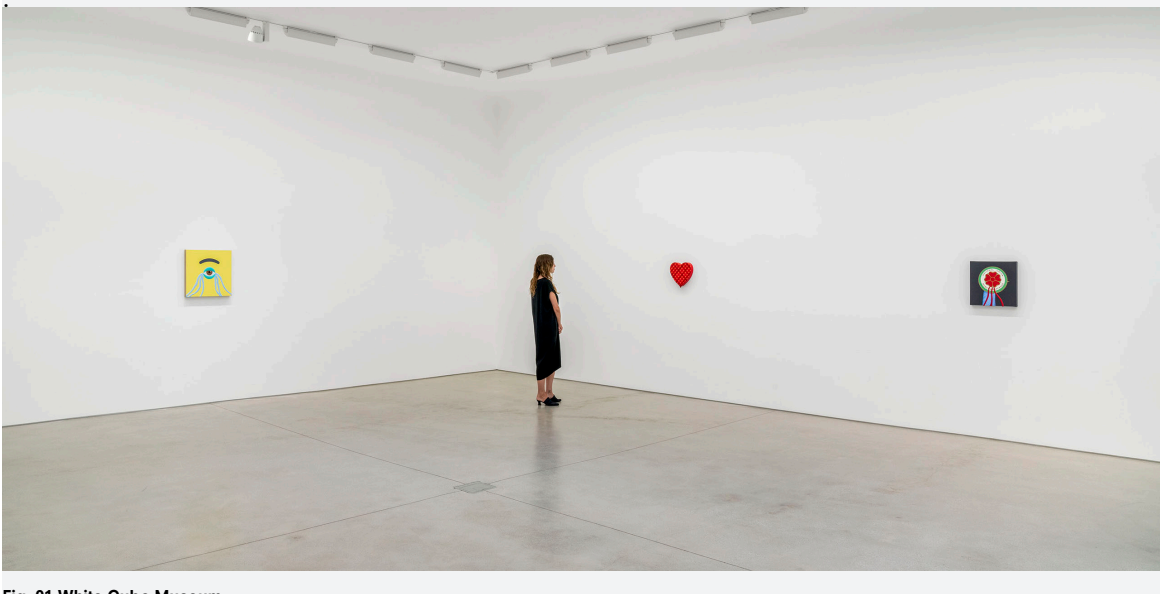


Fig. 01 White Cube Museum

of looking at it on your phone or computer through the Louvres online digital library than in real life with the hundreds of fellow visitors before you, with their phones out, listening to the audio tour while in an over a hour long que before they are allowed to view it for a couple of minutes before the next visitor.

So if the sole function of exhibiting and collecting art has become obsolete in this digital age and thereby no longer the most important function of a contemporary art museum, than what is? To be contemporary, art museums should rather focus on the visitor side or demand side of the equation, and not the art or supply side. The emphasis should be on the visitor and not the art, it should focus on creating an unique experience only to be made during a visit. It should be a place where people can come to disconnect from the world around them and connect with the art, themselves and each other in a more profound way. Something that is not possible or does not happen right now because of the way the museum is designed around the art and not the visitor. So creating a museum that fosters these type of connections means to be contemporary.

01.3 Research Question

So the main question in this research is about how we can design a contemporary art museum that fosters these types of connections and interactions. The main reserach question in this thesis is therefore:

How to desing an art space that fosters interaction and connection?

This research question will be answered through the design of a new contemporary installation art museum in the centre of Berlinin. In order to answer the research question research will be done about current white cube museums and how they are designed.



Fig. 02 Collage of Museum of Connection

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

02

02.1 Theoretical framework

A healthy society is not only about minimizing death and disease and have access to good healthcare but also about the less commonly considered, but even more influential, factors such as genetics, the state of our environment, our income and education level or our relationships with friends and family. The health of peoples lives is actually more determined by the context in which a combination of different factors like genetics, behavior and their physical, economic and social environment occur. However individuals often have very little power to change or influence this context, unlike the government with their legislative and executive power, they are able to create, design and shape this environment so that it is healthier for all individuals, communities and society (Determinants of Health, n.d.).

Research has shown that the social determinants in particular can be of higher importance to our health than health care or lifestyle choices. Research even suggests that social determinants account for between 30 to 55% of our health (WHO, 2019). And this is not something new, cities have recognized the importance of improving the social environment for very long, but also now more recently there have been major global policy initiatives like the New Urban Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals that now explicitly acknowledge social inclusion and cohesion as fundamental to a more sustainable and healthy future. (Sones et al., 2021).

Social connections are vital to our individual and group health, mortality studies have shown that that being more socially connected (e.g. stronger network ties, social participation and sense of belonging) is associated with a 50% increased likelihood of survival. And on the other hand that social isolation and loneliness are associated with increased risk of depression, anxiety, physical inactivity and poor cardiovascular and immune function. Moreover the effects of collective social ties and values on health at group level may go beyond those of the individual level. For example, community level trust and reciprocity have been linked to lower risk of depression and higher self rated health among individuals.

This powerful influence of individual and collective social relationships on health is often associated with the term social connectedness. The term as Holt-Lunstad describes it is a multifactorial construct encompassing the structure, function and quality of social relationships. These structural aspects include the existence of social relationships and their roles, the functional aspects captures the sense of connection, purpose or values derived from an individual's social relationships, and the quality aspects include perceptions of the positive and negative qualities of social connections separate from the functions they serve. These aspects have independent and possible synergistic effect on morbidity and mortality (Sones et al., 2021).

02.2 Relevance

This research is significant for Berlin, and other cities around the world, due to the increasing loneliness epidemic and its health and wellbeing implications. In this Digital Age where everyone seems to be connected with each other all over the world through social media one in four adults experiences social isolation and loneliness. And this has a significant negative impact on our overall health and well-being as a society. People that don't have enough strong social connections are more at risk of stroke, anxiety, dementia, depression, suicide and more. The lack of social connection carries an equivalent, or even greater, risk of early death as other better-known risk factors – such as smoking, excessive drinking, physical inactivity, obesity and air pollution (World Health Organization: WHO, 2023). Loneliness can cause increased blood pressure and cholesterol, activate physical and psychological stress, contribute to cardiovascular disease and deteriorate our immune system. Not only that but it can also lead to social isolation as people withdraw

from social interaction and connections. Conversely, loneliness can occur as a result of social isolation when people become disconnected from relationships with family, friends or other sources of social interaction. This can result in a diminished sense of community and loosen the bonds that would otherwise help people find a shared sense of direction on many socio economic issues like poverty, violence, health or conflict that plague society (Sones et al., 2021). So it should be evident that social connectedness is vital for a healthy society and thus a relevant topic to research on how to contribute to that through design.

RESEARCH METHODS

03

03.1 Program

Studying the building program is vital in understanding the buildings requirements and the spatial configuration. To understand the basics of the building program and there relationships three contemporary art museums are chosen based on their more alternative and social character. The analysis consist of calculating the square meters of different areas as percentages of the whole floor area of the building. Doing this will result in a program bar that visually represents the buildings program per category and its size. After which the relationship between the spaces will be analyzed and compared to create a benchmark relationship diagram. This will show how the museum is set up and how the flows are arranged. This will allow for an accurate comparison of the different

museum programs and relationships and create a benchmark for the museums new program and relationship scheme.

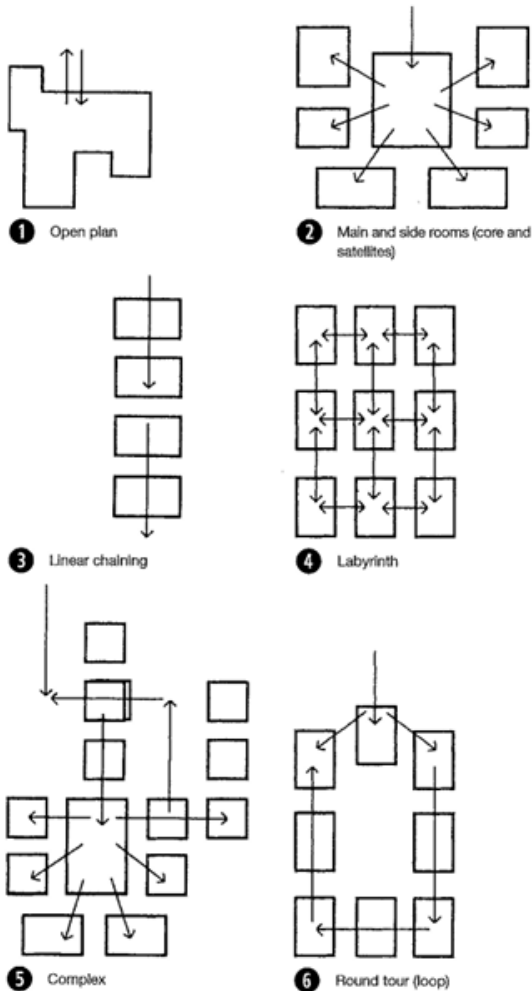


Fig. 03 Neuferts museum circulation diagrams

03.2 Site

The location of the museum can contribute significantly to its success, the question is where should it be and why? To find a suitable site certain requirements will be made to narrow down the options. The first requirement will be a group requirement to locate these buildings within the most 'unhealthy' areas in Berlin. This is done by researching which areas are the most thermal, air and noise polluted and combining these to find where these areas overlap making it the most 'unhealthy' area. The second requirement comes from the intended ambitions of the museum which relate to accessibility, neutrality and centrality. Accessibility is defined as the 15 min walk area around the main multimodal transportation hubs in Berlin, and a 45 min travel time to those hubs. This way all of Berlin is have easy public access to the museum within an hour. The neutrality is about the area between the touristic center and the main residential areas, this way it is less for the tourists and more for the residents of Berlin without favoring any residents or residential area. These are again combined and overlaid together with the group requirements to result in an area for potential site locations. Within this area potential free sites will be searched and compiled. Once at least two free sites are chosen they can be compared to find out which is better according to plot size, road and waterfront access.

03.3 Client

The role of the client is very important in the overall success of the project, they do not only supply the investment they want the project to align with their vision. To find the right client for the building and to make sure the project is aligned with their vision a intricate and comprehensive understanding of that client is needed. To find the right client research is done by compiling a list of similar projects in Berlin and analyzing whom are involved and which is most suitable for this project. Then further analysis of the client is done by researching their previous projects, relations to other stakeholders and their vision.

DESIGN BRIEF

04

04.1 Program

The three cases studies that have been analyzed are Moma PS1 in New York, Palais de Tokyo in Paris and the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin. These were chosen because of how they give the artists carte blanche to do whatever they want and at the same time embrace the visitors to really interact with the museum and art as much as possible, anything is possible in these museums. What immediately stands out is how much of the museum consists of exhibition space, around 35% to 40%, and how little social spaces there are from 3% to 12%. A theory of why that is could be attributed to the fact that art museums are often designed to accommodate the art as good as possible, creating optimal spaces for the art, but don't spend the same effort on the 'social' spaces.

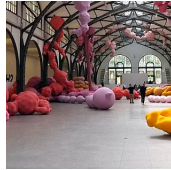
These spaces are for example the entrance, café or restaurant, moreover these are often the only social spaces in a museum and are separated from the exhibition spaces they do not form an integral part of the design.

In the proposed program bar the focus is predominantly on the exhibition and social spaces, both as an integral part of the design. In the relationship scheme draft those spaces are clustered to form a loop of various interactions. The main spaces are separated from the rest but this is something that is still being researched because ideally all the art spaces and social spaces should form one integral space without it being one big hall. The program for this new museum of Experience Beyond Art will be different than

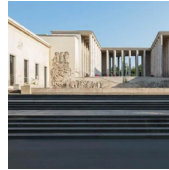
Moma PS1



Hamburger Bahnhof



Palais de Tokyo



Average

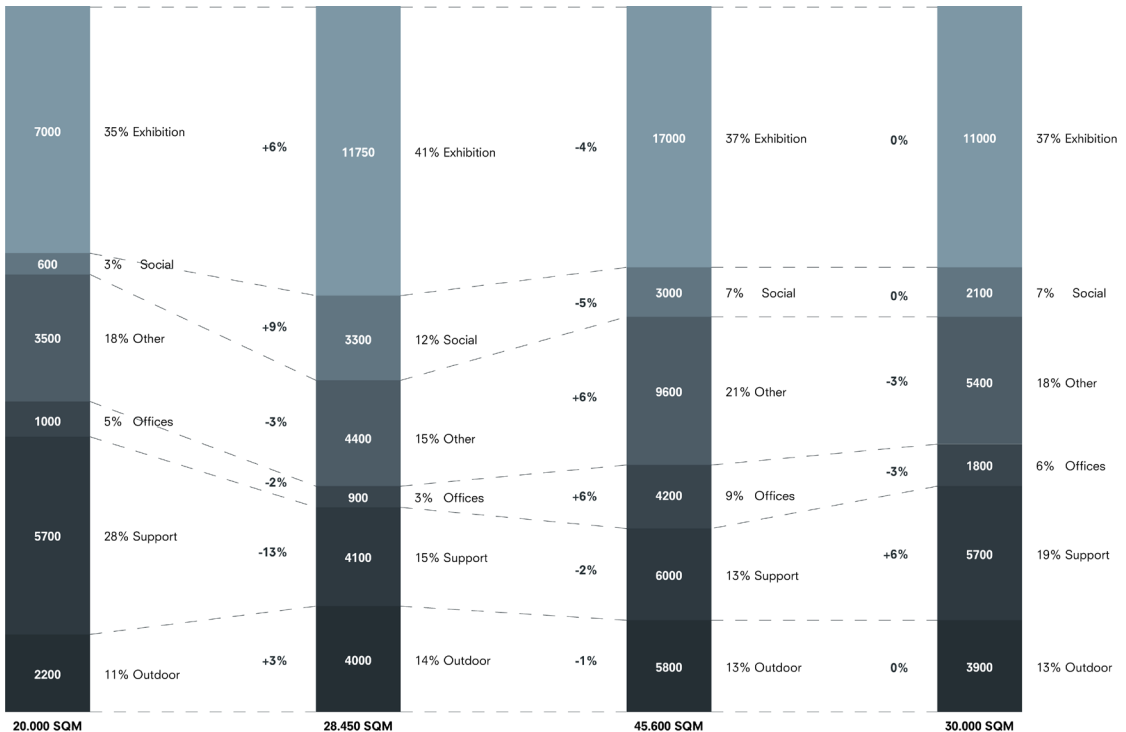


Fig. 04 Benchmarking museum programs

the 'standard' contemporary art museum in order to create the most contemporary art museum. To do this the social spaces of the museum are integrated with the exhibition spaces, creating a social art space, in order to foster a more meaningful and in depth experience where people are able to truly connect with the art and fellow visitors. An example of the result of this could be the introduction of a coffee cart or corner within the art space to foster informal contact between visitors and open up the possibility of social connections, it will also set the tone in which the art space can be experienced; enjoying yourself with a cup of coffee, looking art the art while conversing.

The interesting thing that happens when integrating these art and social spaces is the way they relate to each other. Questions like; do they blend together, can they be joined or separated, and when does the one start or the other end, is it just one big space? It is therefore important that the key spaces of the museum, the art and social spaces, are

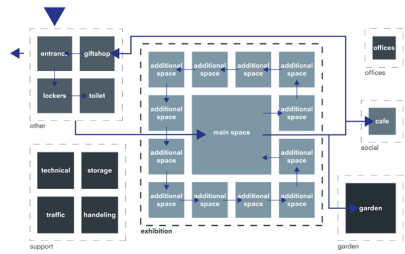


Fig. 01 Neuferts museum circulation diagrams

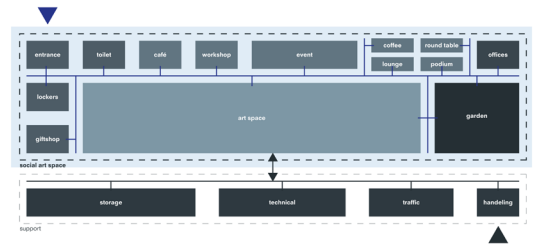


Fig. 01 Neuferts museum circulation diagrams

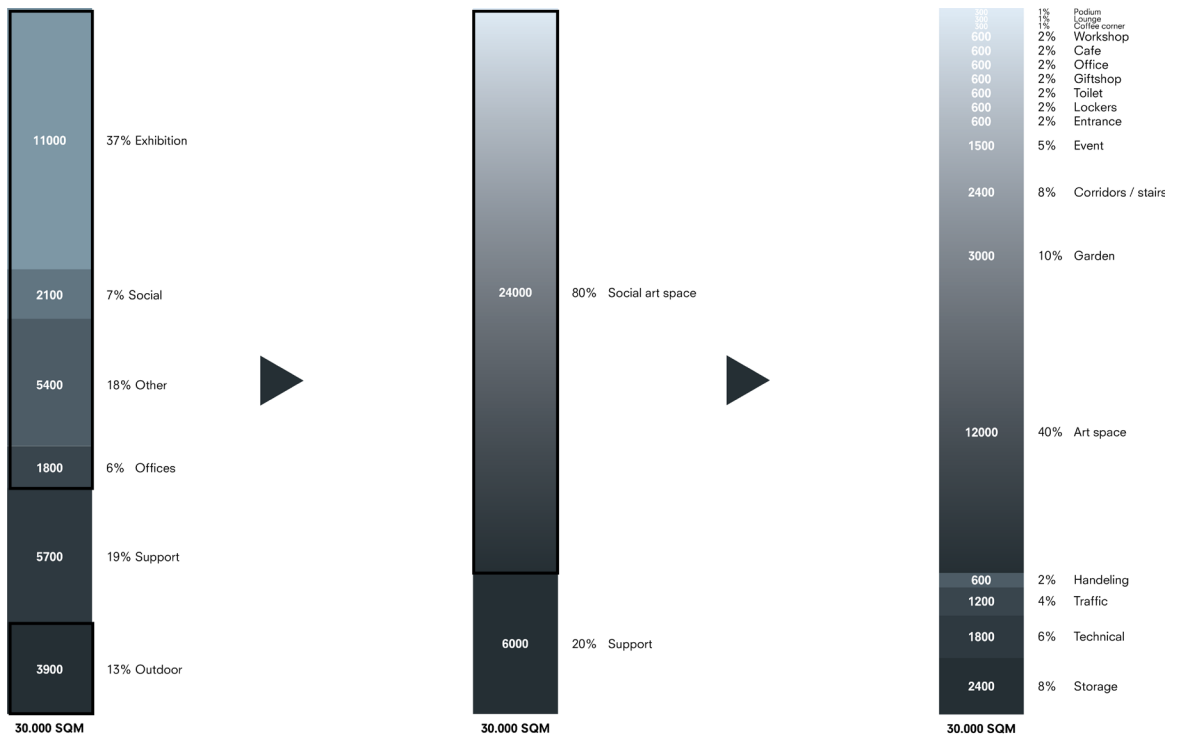


Fig. 05 New program diagram, combining social and art

04.2 Site

The location of the museum can contribute significantly to its success, the question is where should it be and why? To find a suitable site certain requirements will be made to narrow down the options. The first requirement will be a group requirement to locate these buildings within the most 'unhealthy' areas in Berlin. This is done by researching which areas are the most thermal, air and noise polluted and combining these to find where these areas overlap making it the most 'unhealthy' area. The group ambition is to create a healthier Berlin by providing healthy public buildings within unhealthy areas. The buildings differentiate between their health focus of physical, mental or social and try to be within an area that is in need of that type of health the most.

The second requirement comes from the intended ambitions of the museum which relate to centrality, accessibility and neutrality. The centrality of the location reasserts its place within society and Berlin itself, it is defined as

the area within the S-Bahn ring. Accessibility is defined as the 15 minute walk area around the main multimodal transportation hubs in Berlin, and a 30 minute travel time to those hubs. This way almost all of the inhabitants of Berlin have an easy public access to the museum within 45 minutes. The neutrality is about the area between the touristic center and the main residential areas, this way it is less for the tourists and more for the residents of Berlin without favoring any residents or residential area. These are again combined and overlaid together with the group requirements to result in an area for potential site locations. Within this area only two potential sites are found, these will be further compared and analyzed. Once at least two free sites are chosen they can be compared to find out which is better according to plot size, road and waterfront access.



Fig. 06 Group site requirements



Fig. 07 Personal site requirements, Centrality, accesability, neutrality

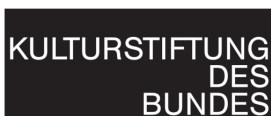
04.2 Client

Berlin is considered by many to be not only the cultural capital of Germany but also of the world, home to more than 170 museums and 400 galleries. What once was a divided city, separated in two by a concrete wall, is now a thriving city with a rich cultural tapestry. It was exactly this part of Berlin history that created the experimental cultural climate, creativity and free-wheeling spirit born from oppression and fueled with the abundance of free, spacious, cheap ateliers, places and apartments to do practically anything. A lot of informal, pop-up like galleries and studios opened everywhere after the fall of the Wall, that later attracted the grand and prestigious art galleries and museums. Berlin is a combination of grit and glamour with a certain appeal that cant be described in words, it's bound to remain a city that is always becoming, never being.

So in order for the project to appeal to this raw and creative Berlin society it has to follow that same spirit of always evolving and becoming and not just being. It is in the ambition of the museum to become a museum for the Berliners



Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung
für Kultur und Medien



**THERME
ART**

Fig. 08 Clients; Berlin, state and private

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05

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