

BARCELONA PRODUCCIÓ

# HOW ABOUT A LITTLE KISS, DON'T BE UNKIND

curated by ferranElOtro

16.07.24–29.09.24

The exhibition HOW ABOUT A LITTLE KISS, DON'T BE UNKIND posits a hypothesis regarding the history of museography.

It turns the spotlight on museographical devices because by rendering them visible, they are no longer seen as subsidiary. This inversion highlights their role in the exhibitionary complex: as conventions, we have internalised them as transparent but in reality they signify. Using an audio guide, we look back at five iconic moments in the history of exhibitions and their displays, represented in the exhibition space by means of five museographical devices.

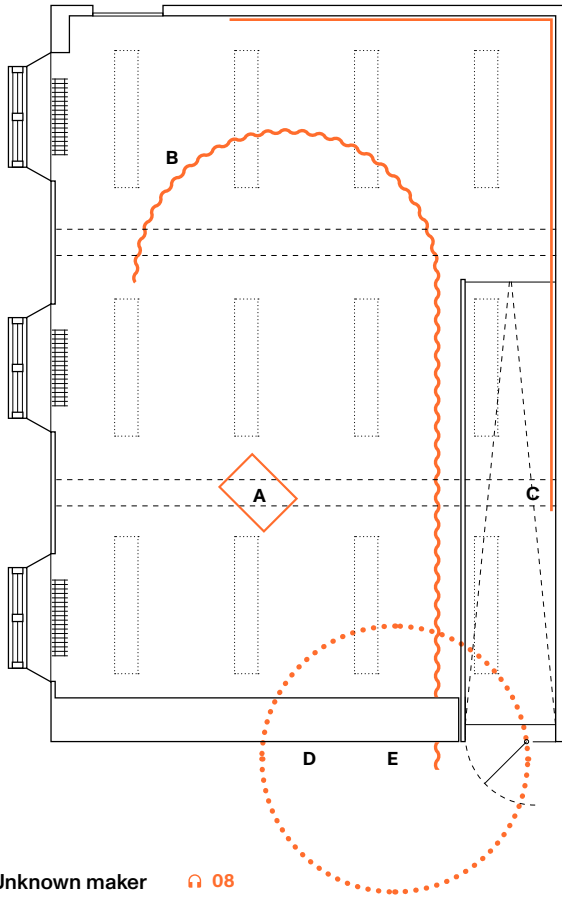
A display case from the Museu de Ciències Naturals de Barcelona evokes the Wunderkammers and museums of natural sciences of the nineteenth century. The reconstruction of a bit of one of the curtains in the *Café Samt und Seide*, designed by Lilly Reich and Mies van der Rohe, evokes the experimental explorations of the exhibition in the early Avant-garde movements. An augmented wall label evokes the democratisation of the experience of visiting exhibitions through the use of informative texts and graphic design. The piece *SHOW TITLES, #641*, by Stefan Brüggemann, evokes the concept and its staging as a consequence of the dematerialisation of art into the conceptual. Lastly, the audio guide evokes the disappearance of the line between performativity and pedagogy with which curators have in recent decades renegotiated the relation between art and its transmission devices.

The audio considers the devices present in the space together with *ekphrasis* of other absent devices. The narration, by way of a curatorial action, allows the exhibition to exist by means of the word and the voice. It is a metanarrative closely akin to Marguerite Duras's

film *Le Camion*, in which what we see is not a film but the screenwriter and actor reading a script. The author gradually disappears and the text makes possible the kindling of the collective imagination, the result of the crisis in the self, that argues for the dissolution of roles and the affective construction of an us.

As occurs in Roland Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, the narrative is constructed by means of figures. Quotations of many other voices that enable an exhibition of exhibitions to exist. A research methodology which, like the various branches of feminism and queer theories, questions mechanisms of representation and challenges them. An appropriationist methodology that also runs through the four pieces of music that interrupt the narrative on the audio guide.

The exhibition tries out new forms of distribution that performatise the exhibitionary complex and its limits, espousing the notion of the embodied spectator who enters into the work and, losing their fear of contagion, establishes new relational spaces.



**A Unknown maker** 🔔 08

**Display case from the Museu de Ciències Naturals de Barcelona,** c. 1988

Wood, iron and glass, 91 × 154 × 67 cm

Courtesy of the Museu de Ciències Naturals de Barcelona

This display case for a diorama is one of the oldest held in the collections of the Museu de Ciències Naturals de Barcelona, the first public museum in the city.

Display cases arose from the need to safeguard works when private collections began to draw visitors from the general public. From the late eighteenth century and over the course of the nineteenth, objects started to be shown in cupboards with large glass spaces that can be viewed as the predecessors of the display cases of today. These cupboards had an upper area, for display purposes, and a closed one below, used to store less important objects.

The display case, like taxidermy, shares with the museum the idea of reducing, controlling and classifying knowledge based on the representation of the world frozen at a particular point in time. This is heightened by its false transparency.

**B Lilly Reich and Mies van der Rohe** 🔔 13

**Café Samt und Seide** [reconstruction], 1927 [2024]

Silk and steel, 300 × 1500 cm

In 1927 Lilly Reich and Mies van der Rohe designed the café space for the *Women's Fashion Exhibition* in Berlin.

They constructed an ephemeral intervention consisting of small spaces defined by curtains: huge walls of black, red and yellow silk, rayon and velvet hanging from curved steel rods. By choosing material as the essence of the museography, they broke with the prevailing custom of presenting raw materials as mere complements of the finished product. The structure supporting the drapes was

dematerialised and the object to be displayed merged with the way it was displayed.

The exhibition space experimented with the spectator's fluid movement, with the display regarded as an architectural piece that the visitor travels through in a dynamic manner. The exhibition was no longer a solely visual experience and became a spatial experience.

**C Augmented wall label, 2024** 🔔 21

Vinyl lettering, 150 × 1200 cm

Wall labels initially offered precise information (artist, title, date and media) about works so they could be identified. Following the critical revision of the modernist notion of the art object as a self-sufficient and autonomous entity, the wall label has grown in size to make it possible to include more information and to contextualise the work. Such labels have been superseded by exhibition texts thanks to spectators' attainment of new cognitive competencies.

Exhibition texts have by and large been studied from the point of view of their reception as an element of mediation and education. However, critical curating strategies have opened up new paths of research, with these anonymous texts being interpreted as a reflection of institutions' authoritarian relations with knowledge.

The audio guide script presented as a diagram functions not so much as a disciplinary device but more as a speculative space for visitors.

**D Stefan Brüggemann** 🔔 25

**SHOW TITLES, #641, 2000— ...**

Title, variable dimensions

Courtesy of the artist

The exhibition takes its title from number 641 on a list of possible titles in Stefan Brüggemann's project *SHOW TITLES*, an ongoing work that consists of over 1,200 possible titles for exhibitions. They are all available for any artist, curator or institution to use, the sole condition being that they must be identified and accredited as a piece by the artist. The project arose from Brüggemann's interest in making explicit and questioning the subjective and at times random nature of the way curatorial discourse is constituted, presented and legitimised. The numbering functions like a set of footnotes, a *modus operandi* used in academic discourse that breaks with the authority of the modernist tradition of originality.

It is a linguistic abstraction that forces the reader to imagine the possible contents by analysing artworks as products and throwing the concept of authorship into crisis.

**E ferranEI Otro et al.** 🔔 37

**HOW ABOUT A LITTLE KISS, DON'T BE UNKIND, 2024**

Audio guide, 99 min. and 10 s.

The audio guide is a metanarrative that functions as a script, but without quite being one. It also contains indications regarding silences, pauses in which time becomes an essential element of every narrative, in this case indicating silence thanks to the music that fills these spaces.

Words allow the exhibition to be seen based on hearing and, to a large extent, by resorting to the imagination with the help of which it will be possible to perceive history that has not been put into images. The spectator, who is listening, becomes a reader. It is a small experiment that turns the exhibition space into a camera obscura: using a voice-over inside this former projection device so that this new listening space makes it possible to see images.