



# MUSEUMS, COLLECTIONS AND SOCIETY

YEARBOOK 2020

Holly O'Farrell and Pieter ter Keurs (eds)



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands



# **MUSEUMS, COLLECTIONS AND SOCIETY**

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Holly O'Farrell and Pieter ter Keurs (eds)

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Photograph cover: Kataka, one of the woodcarvers of Mandok Island (Siassi, Papua New Guinea), is working on a ceremonial dance shield for the museum in Leiden (November 1983). The objects of series RV 5307 of the National Museum of World Cultures, including this shield, were collected in 1983/84 on the Siassi-Islands (Photograph: Pieter ter Keurs).



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# Contents

<b>7</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>London goes Persian. The International Exhibition of Persian Art, 1931 and the British response</b> Holly O'Farrell
<b>31</b>	<b>Private Museums in Twenty-First Century Europe</b> Laurie Kalb Cosmo
<b>59</b>	<b>Contested cultural objects: property or heritage?</b> Evelien Campfens
<b>77</b>	<b>From the Leiden Collections: Part 1</b>
<b>81</b>	<b>Between policy and practice. The impact of global decolonization on the National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, 1960-1970</b> Martin E. Berger
<b>97</b>	<b>From the Leiden Collections: Part 2</b>
<b>101</b>	<b>Portland Plasters and Interiors for Display</b> Alexander Dencher
<b>107</b>	<b>Openly Linking Qing Things: the hair-hat-head-case</b> Fresco Sam-Sin
<b>113</b>	<b>Collecting: A multi-layered phenomenon</b> Pieter ter Keurs
<b>131</b>	<b>Museums, Collections and Society 2020: An exceptional year</b>



# Private Museums in Twenty-First Century Europe

Laurie Kalb Cosmo

## Introduction

Asked to leave our cell phones and cameras behind as we descended a dark staircase into a pitch-black entryway, where the only sound was avant-garde music by John Cage, my students and I were intrigued. On excursion from Rome, we travelled to Berlin to see how 1930s-era sites were either remembered historically or reconfigured. The Feuerle Collection of ancient Chinese and Southeast Asian and contemporary art, opened to the public in 2016, was housed in a former Nazi-era telecommunications bunker for the German National Railway system, located in the Kreuzberg section of Berlin. The most recent of nearly 2000 bunkers the German government began to sell privately in 2007, this was the second in Berlin that had been repurposed as an art museum.<sup>1</sup> Today, the Feuerle Collection offers a highly refined, eerily seductive, and spectacularly lit presentation of Khmer divinity statues and Han and Ming Dynasty stone and lacquered-wood furniture in the restored bunker, sometimes in juxtaposition with erotic photographs by Nobuyoshi Araki or other contemporary works by internationally recognized artists, among them Anish Kapoor, Adam Fuss, and Cristina Iglesias. The buildup to this new museum was intense. Pre-booked entry tickets were required and when we visited in 2019, they were still difficult to come by.

Class visits to private foundations and museums in Europe, such as The Feuerle Collection, had become increasingly frequent over twelve years that I taught Museum History and Theory at Temple University Rome. Numerous, powerful, and often

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1 The first was Sammlung Boros (2008), more about which will be discussed later in this essay.

idiosyncratic in their exhibiting practices, architecture, and even visitation rules, new private museums were exerting a growing influence on the cultural landscape. Of more than 300 private museums founded globally since 2000, seventy percent are in Europe,<sup>2</sup> with Germany and then Italy having the largest number.<sup>3</sup> Students of museum history needed to understand how these new institutions fit within the twenty-first-century museum context.

At first, as an American, I found private museums in Europe surprising. In the United States, nineteenth- and twentieth-century collectors and the extraordinary buildings they created provided a rich legacy for some of the country's most important public museums. But in Europe, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century national museums that emerged from the Enlightenment spawned a vast network of state-supported, often encyclopedic public institutions that from the beginning were government creations.<sup>4</sup> In Europe, private philanthropy of public institutions is more limited than in the United States, and private museums associated more with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century aristocratic palaces.

Against such a background, many questions arise regarding the proliferation of private museums in twenty-first century Europe. From what tradition do they emanate? How do they differ from state institutions? Why, like the Feuerle Collection, are they so popular? What are the goals of private museums? Who are their audiences? What role does architecture play? What is exhibited and how? How is the term museum employed in the context of a private setting? Do private museum founders collaborate with public institutions? Do their museums perform a civic role? What is the future of private museums? Such questions and others inform this article. At this point, my study is introductory, based on visits I made over the past five years, mostly with students, to private exhibition spaces in Rome, Milan, Venice, Berlin, and Stockholm. I offer brief case studies as examples to explore how private museums function and may fit into a larger continuum of European and North American museum history.

Although some private collectors refer to their exhibition spaces as “museums,” many prefer to use the terms “Collection” or “Foundation.” This is because their

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- 2 G. Walker, *The Private Collector's Museum, Public Good vs. Private Gain* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 10-11. The data from Walker comes from the Hong-Kong based *Larry's List* (2016), a leading art market knowledge company providing data, research and access to contemporary art collectors and a service provider for collectors and private museums.
  - 3 *Larry's List, 'Private Art Museums Report'* (Hong Kong, 2016), 11, 18. South Korea and the United States led as countries with the largest number of private museums overall, with Germany and Italy following. Seoul, Beijing and Berlin were the top three cities of private art museums globally.
  - 4 In Europe, it was at the juncture of princely and public that the art museum emerged, however in most parts of Europe the museum building era did not materialize until the beginning of the revolutionary period of the 19th century (Walker, *The Private Collector's Museum*, 14).

spaces do not necessarily provide the full range of museum services.<sup>5</sup> In the interests of clarity and efficiency, I call them private museums, with a caveat that private exhibition spaces have their own parameters and exist separate from but alongside public museums.

## Literature

Amidst the rising popularity of private museums, little targeted research has yet been done. However, the most respected visual arts and architecture journals and magazines, such as *The Art Newspaper*, *Apollo*, and *Architectural Review*, feature articles on the topic, especially as new private museums open.<sup>6</sup> One significant scholarly contribution is Australian art historian Georgina Walker's recent book *The Private Collector's Museum. Public Good vs. Private Gain* (2019). Recognizing a global emergence of private museums in the twenty-first century, Walker underscores a difference between Western and Asian collecting traditions, suggesting that those in the West are based largely on conventional models of philanthropy while those in the East are more entrepreneurial and worthy of separate study.<sup>7</sup> In her book, Walker focuses on private museums that follow Western collecting traditions -- in Germany, Switzerland, the United States, England and Australia. Based on a decade-long study, she attributes the boom in private museum building to numerous factors, including changes in wealth distribution around the globe, a competitive and dynamic nature of art collecting and philanthropy, and collectors' interests in asserting cultural prestige during their lifetimes.<sup>8</sup> As new private museums and galleries are conceived, Walker explains how they are often done so through the vehicle of a philanthropic trust or foundation, in which tax breaks are traded for ceding formal legal ownership, but not necessarily control.<sup>9</sup> Within this philanthropic context, Walker provides case studies and addresses the choices collectors make. They either donate their collections to public museums, which often means losing control though gaining prestige, or create private spaces of their own, where they can realize their individual cultural ambitions more quickly and keep their collections on permanent display. Walker also examines private museum building strategies, such as new commissions for architects and designers to foster

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5 Such services might include restaurants, bookshops, auditoriums, or conservation labs. See: Walker, *The Private Collector's Museum*, 1.

6 A. Ellis, "Privately Funded Museums," *The Art Newspaper*, February 2008, 24, [https://aeaconsulting.com/insights/the\\_problem\\_with\\_privately\\_funded\\_museums\\_](https://aeaconsulting.com/insights/the_problem_with_privately_funded_museums_), accessed 1 Nov. 2020; S. Moore, "Why Désiré Feuerle Displays His Art in a Berlin Bunker," *Apollo Magazine*, 22 February 2017, <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/feuerle-collection-berlin/>; T. Abrahams, "Fondazione Prada in Milan," *The Architectural Review*, 21 Sept 2015, <https://www.architectural-review.com/today/fondazione-prada-in-milan-by-oma>.

7 Walker, *The Private Collector's Museum*, 14-15.

8 *Ibid.*, 235-236.

9 *Ibid.*, 235.

unique and alternative engagements with art. She suggests that the twenty-first century private museum model allows influential wealthy collectors to present themselves in a manner seen as cutting edge, culturally accomplished, and public-spirited, though she ultimately questions the long-term viability and contribution that these private museums can make.<sup>10</sup>

European sociologists of art have also taken up the subject of private art museums. French critic and professor Alain Quemin has recently written about how in the past twenty years, the art market has strengthened its role in the creation of artistic value to the point that it can sometimes control and influence choices made by public institutions. He focuses on the leading French contemporary art collectors Bernard Arnault, CEO of the luxury group LVMH, and François Pinault, CEO of the Kering group and owner of the auction house Christie's, and the agency and power of their private museums in Paris and Venice.<sup>11</sup> Dutch sociologist Olav Velthuis has begun a research project with graduate students at the University of Amsterdam that he calls 'The Return of the Medici? The Global Rise of Private Museums for Contemporary Art', whereby he examines how private museums position themselves in local and global cultural fields and questions whether they contribute to a rise in cultural inequality or democratize and support art, especially when government support is absent or declining.<sup>12</sup> Sociological questions surrounding diversity and inclusion in private museums are especially pressing as state museums concurrently undergo their own dramatic paradigm shifts from collections-based, object-displaying, elite institutions to a wide range of visitor-centered museums, intended to be 'more socially responsive...[and] in service to the public'.<sup>13</sup> When private museums profess that they are created with the public in mind, what does this actually mean? To which public are they referring? British art and architectural historian Nicky Ryan, in her recently-published book *The Price of Patronage: Commerce, Culture and Exchange*,<sup>14</sup> about relationships between museums, patronage and the market, also contributes significantly to this topic.

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10 Ibid., 229-230.

11 A. Quemin, 'The Market and Museums: The Increasing Power of Collectors and Private Galleries in the Contemporary Art World', *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, 19/3 (2020), 211-224.

12 O. Velthuis, "Return of the Medici: The Global Rise of Private Museums for Contemporary Art.", presented at conference More than Money, An Interdisciplinary Perspective on Art in Organizations, *University of Amsterdam Online*, <https://corporatecollecting2020.wordpress.com/>, accessed 14 Nov. 2020.

13 G. Anderson, *Reinventing the Museum, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift* (California: Altamira, 2004), 1.

14 N. Ryan, *The Price of Patronage: Commerce, Culture and Exchange*. (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis Ltd., 2021).

## Precursors: The United States Gilded Age and Its Legacy

The relationship between private collecting and museum formation is not new. It is part of a system of cultural benefaction that has a long trajectory in the United States, going back to the nineteenth century when industrial and banking titans gifted their private collections and thereby contributed to the founding of leading city, state and national cultural institutions. Like their nineteenth- and twentieth-century precursors, including the collections of Isabella Stewart Gardner, Henry Clay Frick, Alfred C. Barnes, and Peggy Guggenheim, twenty-first century collections reflect the acquisitive interests of a single wealthy individual or couple and the small coterie of advisers they surround themselves with. In the past and present, these collections represent a passionate and single-minded interest – the antithesis of the universalist impulses of the encyclopaedic museum.<sup>15</sup>

Still, although the private impulse to collect and the desire to establish public museums with private collections links the American past with the European present, this millennium has seen a paradigm shift in cultural benefaction. In the United States, most of the private collections of last century were not opened as museums until after the collectors' deaths. The collectors lived with their artwork and entertained privately in their homes; they created trusts to open their personal spaces as museums only after their passing, when their personal collections would move into the public sphere to benefit future generations.<sup>16</sup> The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, The Frick Collection, the Barnes Foundation, and The Peggy Guggenheim Collection were not established as museums until after their founders died.

In twenty-first-century Europe, individual collectors create their museums and manage their holdings and public personae in their lifetimes. Unlike the intimate domestic settings of the early twentieth-century American collectors that have since become extraordinary house museums, twenty-first century European private collections are housed in a variety of unique and purpose-built alternative spaces spectacularly designed for engagement with art.<sup>17</sup> In Europe, different taxation laws and limited benefits to making museum donations have meant that private collectors have never had the power to shape the collecting, exhibiting and building programs of state-run museums the way North American collectors did. Instead, European collectors have found it more beneficial to establish private museums in their lifetimes but this does not necessarily mean they have clear plans for their museums' longevity.

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15 Ellis, "The Problem with Privately Funded Museums," 24.

16 Walker, *The Private Collector's Museum*, 1.

17 Ibid., 7.



## Germany/Berlin

### *The Feuerle Collection*

Over the past two decades, forty-two private museums have opened throughout Germany, including nine in Berlin.<sup>18</sup> Like most private museums internationally, the German collections comprise contemporary art. However, their preponderance in Germany has particular ties to the country's twentieth-century past. During Reunification, the repositioning of many museums highlighted significant gaps in public holdings of modern and contemporary art, particularly twentieth-century European and German avant-garde and American postwar art. In the case of Modernist art, this was due in large part to its removal or ban by the Nazi Socialist party, who labelled it “degenerate,” and the ensuing Cold War. It also had to do with financial constraints caused by a struggling economy. Since Reunification, a number of significant private bequests have encouraged some museums to develop their collections of contemporary art. However, in Germany as elsewhere in Europe the tax incentives for donating artworks to public museums are few and less enticing to collectors than creating private foundations. Collectors' motivations for managing

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18 Walker, *The Private Collector's Museum*, 11; Larry's List, *Private Art Museums Report*, 25.



Figure 2.1: The Feuerle Collection in the former telecommunications Bunker with “Bahnselbstanschlussanlage” (telephone network) for the National Railway System, Berlin. Photo: def image. Courtesy The Feuerle Collection.

their own collections are far more personal and complex than can be accommodated by state-run institutions.<sup>19</sup>

Two cases in Berlin, the Feuerle Collection and Sammlung Boros, demonstrate both the geographic particularity of private museums in Germany and the diversity of approaches to private museum display. Both the Feuerle Collection and Sammlung Boros are housed in World War II bunkers the collectors purchased from the German government for purposes of adaptive reuse. For Desire’ Feuerle, whose display of ancient and contemporary art I spoke about above, the bunker as a building fascinated him. A former gallerist in Cologne and connoisseur and collector of antique Asian art, Feuerle closed his commercial gallery and began a search throughout Europe for a private museum space. For Feuerle, whose display choices are based on a personal spirituality and refined aesthetic, the lack of beauty in Berlin and the concrete materiality of the telecommunications bunkers, which were never used, appealed to him. He likened the bunkers to a minimalist sculpture by the late American

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19 Walker, *The Private Collector’s Museum*, 143-144.



Figure 2.2: Permanent Installation, The Feuerle Collection. Photo: def image. Courtesy The Feuerle Collection.

artist Donald Judd (1928-1994) and felt they would form a suitable backdrop for the alternative exhibition space he sought. Feuerle acknowledged the charged tension inherent in using a Nazi bunker and insisted that his purpose was to aesthetically transform it.<sup>20</sup>

Desire Feuerle had a specific vision in mind for his museum, and he intended to realize it uncompromised. He wished to create what he called “a third piece”,<sup>21</sup> consisting of rich historical layerings and aesthetic juxtapositions of art and their aesthetic connection to the space in which they are housed, along the lines of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.<sup>22</sup> Although the bunker and Asian art in Feuerle’s collection have intrinsic historic significance, Feuerle wanted to build neither a museum of Asian art nor one of architecture. Rather, he worked with British architect John Pawson to renovate the bunker, respecting its form and age, to transform it into what he calls “a different world,” a space that visitors can now enter for a specified amount of time – forty-five minutes, by reservation.

20 D. Feuerle, Founder, The Feuerle Collection, telephone conversation with author, 20 Nov. 2020.

21 Ibid.

22 Moore, “Why Désiré Feuerle Displays His Art in a Berlin Bunker.”

With carefully lit installations in a building without natural light and the sensitive placement of an idiosyncratic art collection in an evocative atmosphere, Feuerle claims to give new life to art, even if, he explains, the pieces themselves have little commercial value to public audiences.<sup>23</sup> Feuerle's particular approach to art appreciation has to do with feeling and experience rather than didactics. In fact, no labels appear next to works at the Feuerle Collection; instead "art mediators" accompany visitors through the spaces and discreetly answer questions, though they are instructed not to talk if not asked.<sup>24</sup> In Feuerle's words, "I want... the visitor to be seduced by an experience, something very different to what you'll get in a conventional [museum] gallery space."<sup>25</sup>

The Feuerle Collection is administered by the Sara Puig Institute for the Arts, whose goal as stated on the website, is to display a permanent exhibition of The Feuerle Collection and promote discussion around The Feuerle Concept. Sara Puig, whose family founded the successful Spanish fashion and perfume company Puig, is the current president of Fundació Joan Miró and married to Desire Feuerle. She and her husband self-finance The Feuerle Collection.

Asked what he felt was his greatest achievement with the Feuerle Collection, Desire Feuerle said it was having young visitors (who must be sixteen years of age to enter) come into the museum and say, "Look how cool this is..." Perhaps, he mused, "it is a 'sexy' attraction to these works that [make this display appealing and] may be missing from other displays." According to Feuerle, "They (the youngsters) make the pieces young" and therefore relevant. The Feuerle Collection is on permanent display. Feuerle would like to advance his exhibition concept with state museums and universities to, in his words, "update museums into the twenty-first century."<sup>26</sup>

### *Sammlung Boros*

Other art collectors M. Christian Boros, a Berlin-based advertising agency founder, and his wife Karen bought the former Reichsbahnbunker in Berlin-Mitte in 2003. Originally built in 1943 as an air raid shelter for German National Railway passengers, the bunker subsequently served as a prisoner-of-war camp under Soviet rule, a storage depot for bananas and tropical fruit, a hardcore techno club in the

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23 Feuerle criticized the "flashy value" of contemporary art and sought a different experience for his visitors (D. Feuerle, telephone conversation with the author, 20 November 2020). However, it should be noted that his collection of antique Asian and contemporary art also have high market value.

24 D. Feuerle, telephone conversation with the author, 20 Nov. 2020.

25 M. Byng, "The Feuerle Collection: A Berlin Bunker Becomes a Beguiling Museum," *The Spaces*, <https://thespaces.com/the-feuerle-collection-a-berlin-bunker-becomes-a-beguiling-museum/>, accessed 12 Dec. 2020.

26 D. Feuerle, telephone conversation with author, 20 Nov. 2020.



Figure 2.3: Sammlung Boros in the former Reichsbahnbunker, Berlin.  
Photo: Boros Collection, Berlin © NOSHE.

mid-1990s, and after purchase and use by a number of investors, the residence of the Boros family and exhibition space of their foundation.

Originally designed under the direction of Hitler's architect Albert Speer (1905-1981) as an above-ground bunker and intended to last, the building has Renaissance-style flourishes, including symmetrical facades, a cornice, arched doorways and a pair of double opposing staircases in the style of those at the Chateau de Chambord attributed to Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519). Deemed a historic monument, the bunker's exterior cannot be altered, although the inside can. The Boroses hired the Berlin firm Realarchitektur to core out the building's interior to create dynamic vertical spaces, windows, balconies, and roomy galleries for a display space that

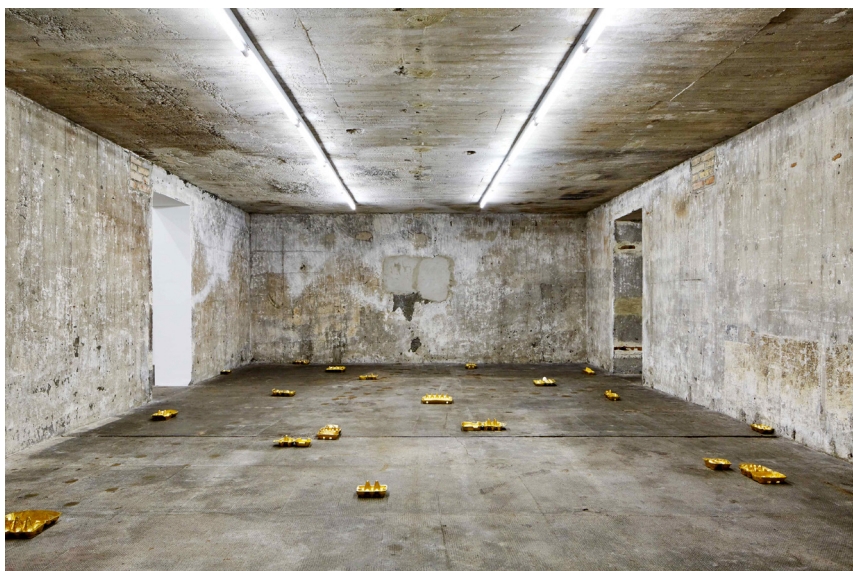


Figure 2.4: He Xiangyu, *Untitled* (2017), Bronze, 18K Gold, 24 pieces, overall dimensions variable. Photo: Boros Collection, Berlin © NOSHE.

opened to the public in 2008. The architects also designed an elaborate 500 square meter penthouse for the family residence.<sup>27</sup>

All of the bunker's former uses – military stronghold, prison, storage facility, nightclub – remain visible in traces, such as leftover neon graffiti on the walls and original air ventilation boxes. Unlike Desire Feuerle, who chose to neutralize the charged history of his bunker, the Boroses display site-specific and political works that tend to accentuate the past of theirs. For example, the artist duo Awst & Walther discovered a hole in a bunker wall that leads directly outside. It had been chiseled out by geologists wanting a sample of the building material. For *Line of Fire* (2012), the artists created a golden arrow that appears to have been shot through the hole, into the gallery wall opposite.<sup>28</sup> A recent installation of Chinese conceptual artist He Xiangyu's egg-cartons made out of 18K gold (2017), randomly strewn across a gallery floor with gritty, unpainted walls in the background, alludes to the increasing materialism and obsolescence of our society.<sup>29</sup> An art mediator once told me that the

27 S. Truax, "Carving a Space: The Boros Collection Bunker in Berlin," *Apollo Magazine*, 29 May 2014, <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/carving-space-boros-collection-bunker-berlin>.

28 Ibid.

29 E. David, 'Boros Collection: Bunker Berlin #3: A Private Tour Inside a Dystopian Treasure Trove of Art', *Yatzer Newsletter* (2018), <https://www.yatzer.com/boros-collection-bunker-berlin-3>, accessed 1 Dec. 2020.

presence of the Boros Collection in the former Reichsbahnbunker was the ultimate “f-you” to Hitler. According to Juliet Kothe, Director of the Boros Foundation, “You can’t separate the art from the space in which it is shown. We always give an introduction into the history of the house before we start mediating and explaining the exhibited works since we see this as an educational responsibility.”<sup>30</sup>

Christian and Karen Boros’ art collection dates from 1990 to the present. It includes work by international and up-and-coming Berlin-based artists. Due to safety regulations, the Bunker can only be visited in small groups accompanied by guides, called art mediators. Different from those at the Feuerle Collection, Sammlung Boros art mediators are talkative and trained to offer engaging, conversational visits. Tours last ninety minutes; routinely, they book up weeks in advance. Says M. Christian Boros, “We run a collection, which is neither a [state] museum nor a private museum. I see us as a private space that can be visited by appointment, showing fragments of our collection, which is solely contemporary.”<sup>31</sup> Exhibitions change every four years, often reflecting new acquisitions and site-specific commissions. The works always represent the Boros private collection. The space offers neither a cafe nor a bookshop. The only product for sale is an expensive catalogue of the Boros collection. Art storage is offsite and there are no conservation facilities. The foundation does loan artworks to other institutions.

## Italy/Milan and Rome

### *Fondazione Prada, Milan*

On 9 May 2015, Fondazione Prada, headed by fashion designer Miuccia Prada, granddaughter of the luxury fashion brand founder, and her husband Patrizio Bertelli, the company’s chief executive, opened a dazzling private museum on the site of a former gin distillery in the Largo Isarco industrial complex of Milan. Even larger than the sprawling Louis Vuitton Foundation in Paris, which opened six months earlier in a Frank Gehry-designed building, the Fondazione Prada museum comprises a vast campus of new and regenerated buildings conceived by Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas and his firm OMA. It opened at a time when private money from luxury goods brands like LVMH, Fendi, Prada and others began to fill a void left by European government cutbacks in the arts.<sup>32</sup>

Fondazione Prada’s new home is the product of a long gestation period. Established in 1995, the foundation had already invested heavily in support of the

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30 G. Bria, “Sammlung Boros: The Berlin Bunker Converted into an Art Gallery Gets Updated,” *Domus*, (2019), <https://www.domusweb.it/en/art/2019/05/21/sammlung-boros-a-bunker-collection.html>

31 Ibid.

32 Carol Vogel, ‘The Prada Foundation’s New Arts Complex in Milan’, *The New York Times*, 22 Apr. 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/26/arts/design/the-prada-foundations-new-arts-complex-in-milan.html>.



Figure 2.5: Fondazione Prada, Milan Architectural project by OMA. Photo: Bas Princen 2018. Courtesy Fondazione Prada.



Figure 2.6: "Edward Kienholz: Five Car Stud, 1969 – 1972." View of the exhibition curated by Germano Celant, 2016, Fondazione Prada, Milan. Photo: Delfino Sisto Legnani Studio. Courtesy Fondazione Prada.

arts before building its new venue. It mounted solo exhibitions of works by Italian and international artists in cities around the world, sponsored film festivals, and organized exhibitions in honor of two Venice Biennale fairs (2005, 2009). Since 2011, Fondazione Prada has also managed an art space at its Venice headquarters in Palazzo Ca' Corner della Regina, and from 2016, the photography gallery Osservatorio in Milan's Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II.<sup>33</sup>

The new Milan headquarters were financed privately, however the couple did not personally provide the funds. Rather, the corporation Prada S.p.A., a sponsor of Fondazione Prada, underwrote the entire complex.<sup>34</sup> Since its opening, Fondazione Prada Museum has been hailed as a welcome addition to the art and cultural scene in Milan, filling a void in the representation of contemporary art at a time when the city could not afford to build its own contemporary art museum, and considered de facto an equivalent institution to Milan's civic museums.<sup>35</sup>

## Programming

In its programming, Fondazione Prada has an international, creative and intellectually energetic reach. Among the many opening exhibitions in 2015 was one that offered a particularly striking departure from inaugural shows of founders' art collections. The exhibition "Serial Classic," curated by esteemed Italian archaeologist and art historian Salvatore Settis, focused on classical sculpture and the relationship between originality and imitation in Roman culture and the circulation of multiples as an homage to Greek art.<sup>36</sup> It included major international loans, including works from the Louvre, British Museum and Vatican Museums.<sup>37</sup> Settis praised Fondazione Prada for its conceptual and financial support of this program, calling it 'courageous'. For him, it affirmed that the classic must have a place in the contemporary world, that classical art, like contemporary art, responded to events happening in the world, and that classical and contemporary art can and should be presented as mirrors of each other. While contemporary art is welcomed in archaeology museums, Settis argued, it is much rarer for classical art to appear in contemporary museums.<sup>38</sup> For this Settis called the project "unprecedented....There is nothing comparable in Italy... This is something really avant-garde."<sup>39</sup>

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33 Fondazione Prada, <http://www.fondazioneprada.org/>, accessed 10 Nov. 2020

34 Vogel, "Prada Foundation's New Art Complex."

35 Abrahams, "Fondazione Prada in Milan."

36 Fondazione Prada, <http://www.fondazioneprada.org/>.

37 A companion exhibition, titled 'Portable Classic', which explored the origins and functions of miniature reproductions of classical sculpture in the ancient and Renaissance periods, opened contemporaneously at the Venice headquarters of Fondazione Prada, on the eve of the opening of the 2015 Venice Biennale.

38 Fondazione Prada, <http://www.fondazioneprada.org/>.

39 Vogel, "Prada Foundation's New Art Complex."

## Architecture

Architecture critics also praised the new Fondazione Prada museum as a triumph. According to London-based writer Tim Abrahams, “Here [with Fondazione Prada] architecture has been used to articulate a new relationship between private collection, patronage and the public as well as the relationship between the past and the present.”<sup>40</sup> The original distillery, built in 1910, consisted of a group of industrial buildings arranged around a courtyard, similar to an Italian palazzo. Koolhaas and OMA transformed the space by stabilizing pre-existing buildings and adding three new structures. Named “Podium”, “Cinema” and “Torre,” these additions were designed to offer a large, flexible display area, auditorium, and tall, nine-story space for showing the Prada permanent collection and furnishing a restaurant and rooftop bar. The OMA website describes Fondazione Prada museum as “a genuine collection of architectural spaces in addition to its holdings in art.”<sup>41</sup>

As with most private museums, the architecture of Fondazione Prada asserts its presence and demands attention. One of the extant buildings from the original complex – a three-story high block dubbed the “Haunted House” – was clad entirely in twenty-four carat gold leaf.<sup>42</sup> This was done to turn what many considered a drab and slightly off-putting building into what has since become a visual hallmark of the campus.

“Haunted House” along with other buildings on Fondazione Prada’s campus are self-referential. In describing the golden “Haunted House,” Abrahams recalls the first Metaphysical town square painting of Giorgio de Chirico, made in 1910, the same year the distillery was built. Titled “The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon,” this painting includes a golden house in its civic compound. Abrahams likens the new Podium, designed for temporary exhibitions, to the ground floor of the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin – the archetype of a public and state-run art institution.<sup>43</sup>

Bar Luce, a caffè designed in a quasi 1950s Milanese-style by American filmmaker Wes Anderson, is located at the entrance to Fondazione Prada. Its visual references include Italian Neorealist films of the 1950s, Milan’s iconic shopping arcade Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, and Anderson’s own short film *Castello Cavalcanti* (2013), about an American race car driver that crashes in an Italian village of the 1950s, that was financed by Fondazione Prada. The caffè’s filmic references, the Haunted House’s resemblance to De Chirico’s work, and the Podium’s likeness to an iconic museum are fascinating. But they are insider jokes, intelligible only to a few, and lend a quality of hyperreality to the place. Why, for example, if the Fondazione is located in the elegant city of Milan, is a filmmaker needed to recreate a Milanese café?

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40 Abrahams, “Fondazione Prada in Milan.”

41 OMA. ‘Fondazione Prada’, <https://oma.eu/projects/fondazione-prada>, accessed 5 December 2020.

42 Four kilograms of gold foil, costing approximately £75,000, were hammered painstakingly onto all parts of the building, including drainpipes and windowsills, over three months (Abrahams, “Fondazione Prada in Milan”).

43 Abrahams, “Fondazione Prada in Milan.”

## Commerce and Art

Despite Miuccia Prada's determination to keep her art and business separate, the Fondazione Prada seems to float amidst many overlapping worlds. Rem Koolhaas, the architect for the museum, has worked with Prada for twenty years, designing a number of Prada stores, including flagships in New York and Los Angeles. His exhibition style for the inaugural exhibition "Serial Classic" as well as conception for the Largo Isarco complex would be familiar to upscale Prada consumers who may have confronted Koolhaas' complex codings in his commercial designs for Prada shops. These consumers would have what art and architectural historian Nicky Ryan considers the "cultural capital" necessary to understand the Prada "aura," where shopping is redefined as cultural entertainment.<sup>44</sup> They may also be the audience most attuned to the stream of fascinating simulations and facsimiles that make up the Fondazione Prada complex.<sup>45</sup>

What then does this Prada "aura" do for the meaningful display of art? Since its opening, Fondazione Prada has exhibited important and sometimes edgy, political and disturbing artworks, such as installations by American artist Ed Kienholz (1927-1994), whose *Five Car Stud* is a gruesome depiction of racial violence in the United States, and the exhibition 'Post Zang Tumb Tuuum. Art Life Politics: Italia 1918-1943' (2018), that recreated rhetorical exhibitions held during the rise and fall of Fascist Italy. Somehow, in the coolness of the Prada complex and the wink and the nod of the architectural references, a sense of safety and serenity prevails, lessening the dangerous messages of such powerful artworks.

### *Palazzo Merulana, Rome*

#### The Project

Opened in May 2018 on Rome's Esquiline Hill, Palazzo Merulana is among the city's newest cultural institutions. A private, non-profit museum that does not benefit from government subsidies,<sup>46</sup> Palazzo Merulana offers an unusual combination of a distinctive private collection of early twentieth-century Roman art and a metropolitan cultural hub for its local community, a neighborhood rich in cultural and ethnic diversity but in physical decline. Palazzo Merulana's edifice, a prestigious 19th-century Renaissance-Revival style palace originally built by the Vatican and then used as offices for Rome's department of health and hygiene, had suffered a long period of neglect and decay. It was meticulously restored by S.A.C. S.p.A., the

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44 Ryan, "Prada," 8-17.

45 Ibid., 18.

46 Letizia Casuccio, et al. "Giving Value to Community Mission and Artistic Brand: A New Museum Tale from the Hill of Esquilino," Conference Proceedings from 10th Annual ENCATEC Education and Research Session. *Diversity and Sustainability at Work. Policies and Practices from Culture and Education*, Creative Europe Programme of the European Union, Dijon, France (4 October 2019), 104.

construction company owned by the late Claudio Cerasi (1933-2020), who with his wife Elena established the Claudio and Elena Cerasi Foundation for their well-honed Roman art collection and founded Palazzo Merulana Museum.<sup>47</sup>

In planning Palazzo Merulana, the couple expressed a desire for “un museo vivo,” a living museum, in contrast to what they called a “salotto,” or a staid, collection-driven living room environment.<sup>48</sup> In their role as directors of The Cerasi Foundation, Claudia and Elena Cerasi not only envisioned a restored landmark building to display their important art collection, but a dynamic institution that would engage local communities in cultural practices and achieve a sustainable financial equilibrium. To develop this model, the couple entered a partnership with CoopCulture, the largest company specialized in supporting culture and heritage activities in Italy.<sup>49</sup> Studies were undertaken of similar arts and community centers throughout Europe and the United States, and a particular institutional model for Palazzo Merulana was created,



Figure 2.7: Claudio Cerasi and *I Piccoli Saltimbanchi* (The Young Acrobats), 1938, by Antonio Donghi. Photo: CoopCulture for Palazzo Merulana.

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47 G. Tucci, “Faro and Practices. How Can Palazzo Merulana Involve Esquilino Local Community Into Cultural Initiatives. A Case Study,” *Tesi di Laurea Magistrale in Economics and Management in Arts, Culture, Media and Entertainment*. Università “Luigi Bocconi” Scuola Superiore Universitaria, 2018, 30; Casuccio, “Giving Value,” 107.

48 G. Tucci and P. Centanni, telephone conversation with the author, 30 Oct. 2020.

49 Casuccio, “Giving Value,” 119.



Figure 2.8: Summer Camp for Children at Palazzo Merulana. Autoritratto con violino (Self-Portrait with Violin), 1928, by Antoinetta Raphael. Photo: CoopCulture for Palazzo Merulana.



Figure 2.9: Opening "SlideDoor," 2019. Palazzo Merulana – Fondazione Cerasi. Photo: CoopCulture for Palazzo Merulana.

based on its singular edifice and local demographics.<sup>50</sup> The Cerasis' community participation objective was very much in keeping with the 2005 Council of Europe Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, which emphasizes the important aspects of heritage as they relate to human rights and democracy and which Italy has ratified. Principals of CoopCulture viewed Palazzo Merulana as an institution that could realize some of the convention's goals.<sup>51</sup>

Management as well as vision played an important role in the development of Palazzo Merulana. Recent official statistics count 124 museums and cultural sites in Rome, with twenty-seven million visitors in 2017.<sup>52</sup> With so many cultural attractions, competition for visitors is quite high. CoopCulture grouped Palazzo Merulana in the category of modern and contemporary museums, of which there are only three or four in Rome, and where visitors are fewest. Palazzo Merulana's distinction in promoting artistic productions and activities with roots in the city of Rome as well as exhibiting modern and contemporary art were considered fiscally as well as programmatically advantageous.<sup>53</sup>

The Cerasi Foundation invested five million euros in the renovation of Palazzo Merulana, but the foundation does not own it.<sup>54</sup> Rather, they engaged in what is termed a *progetto di finanza*, an economic opportunity in Italy for investors to restore a public building with an option to use it for their own purposes for a period of ninety years. Although the Cerasi investment may not have been motivated by issues of financial return, the program offers a way to recoup on expenditures. One can offer part of the building as rental property, which the Cerasi did with Palazzo Merulana. Other corporate art foundations have also followed this model in Italy, including the Punta della Dogana project in Venice by the Pinault Foundation (although they have property rights for only thirty years). Still, the social experiment of the Palazzo Merulana shows a difference in the behavioral and organizational models of the larger global brands.<sup>55</sup>

Claudio Cerasi's company S.A.C. S.p.A. had already been involved eight years earlier in another cultural revitalization project in the Flaminio neighborhood of Rome, in this case a state-run museum. S.A.C. S.p.A. was principal contractor for the construction of MAXXI, a national museum for arts of the twenty-first century,

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50 Among those researched were La Gaite Lyrique and Le Centquatre, both in Paris, the Matadero Complex in Madrid, Theaster Gates' Rebuild Project in Chicago, Marle Culturale Urbano in Milan, and Cittadellarte – Fondazione Pistoletto in Biella, Piedmont. Tucci, "Faro and Practices", 31-37.

51 Casuccio, 'Giving Value', 109, Tucci, "Faro and Practices", 2.

52 L. Casuccio, et al. "Giving Value to Community Mission and Artistic Brand: A New Museum Tale from the Hill of Esquilino", Conference Proceedings from 10th Annual ENCATC Education and Research Session, *Diversity and Sustainability at Work. Policies and Practices from Culture and Education*, Creative Europe Programme of the European Union, Dijon, France (4 Oct. 2019), 104-120 (106).

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid., 116.

55 Ibid.

designed by the late Zaha Hadid (1950-2016) and opened in 2010. Located on the grounds of a former military barracks, the MAXXI was conceived in a similar way to Fondazione Prada, as a museum campus consisting of the stabilization of old buildings and creation of a new one. Its purpose however was to be more socially and locally engaged. The MAXXI would introduce a star architect-designed building for the display of contemporary art to a section of the city designated for cultural revitalization. A piazza created between the new exhibition space and renovated barracks was made accessible to city residents and the general public, free of charge.<sup>56</sup> In Hadid's words, the museum was intended as a "field of buildings...[that would offer]...an immersive urban environment for the exchange of ideas, feeding the cultural vitality of the city."<sup>57</sup>

The construction of Palazzo Merulana had similar civic goals, to jumpstart a Roman neighborhood rich in historic and cultural capital but in need of economic and municipal attention. Instead of an archistar building, however, the Palazzo Merulana involved the much-publicized renovation of an historic municipal building. The architect was lesser known, but the building restoration was a significant component of the project.

## The Collection

The private collection of Claudio and Elena Cerasi is permanently displayed on Palazzo Merulana's second floor. It numbers ninety artworks by some of the most important Italian artists working between the nineteen-twenties and forties of the past century, including Giorgio De Chirico, Giacomo Balla, Gino Severini, Mario Sironi, Antonio Donghi, Antoinetta Raphaël and Mario Mafai, to name a few. Many, though not all, of these artists were part of the Scuola Romana Movement, a group of painters and sculptors that worked loosely within the Expressionist style. They often coalesced around the artist couple Antoinetta Raphael and Mario Mafai, gathering at the couple's home and studio on Via Cavour, a road near the ancient Roman Forum that was partially demolished under Fascism. Although Scuola Romana artists produced work under the Fascist regime, they were politically opposed to it; the tonalist hues or colorful Expressionist palettes, figurative style, and non-rhetorical content of their work reflected an anti-governmental stance.

When asked whether politics may have informed the collecting choices of the couple, Museum Site Manager Poala Centanni explained that the Cerasis' acquisitions were dictated solely by taste and a preference for figurative art. She suggested

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56 Over the past two years, the museum cafe, originally accessible only once inside the building, has been combined with the book shop and moved to a location with an on-street entrance, further inviting public participation without the need to buy museum entry tickets.

57 "Contemporary Arts Centre 'MAXXI' Rome by Zaha Hadid Architects | Museums", Accessed 20 November 2020. <https://www.maxxi.art/en/progetto-architetonico/>.

instead a geographic connection between the permanent collection and Palazzo Merulana, namely that the museum's location, on the Esquiline Hill, is precisely the neighborhood where the studio and home of the Scuola Romana founders stood. She explained that in this way the Museum's location served an added purpose of bringing the collection back to its roots.<sup>58</sup> Statistics show that in its first year, ninety-four percent of visitors to Palazzo Merulana were Italian, and of these only eighteen percent came to see the permanent collection.<sup>59</sup>

Curiously, another museum devoted solely to Scuola Romana artists already exists in Rome. Housed within the complex of the Villa Torlonia Museum and managed by the Rome municipality, The Scuola Romana Museum displays art from its own collection and long-term private loans. No association exists between it and Palazzo Merulana or the Cerasi Foundation. One can find the Scuola Romana Museum in the former servants' quarters of the villa's otherwise grand *casino nobile* (noble house), where it receives few visitors.

### Northern Europe/Stockholm, Sweden

Unlike the private museums described thus far, Artipelag, a purpose-built exhibition hall nestled among pine trees on Värmdö Island in the Stockholm archipelago, has no private collection. Rather, it organizes cultural events and hosts world-class temporary exhibitions with artworks borrowed from elsewhere. The inspiration of Björn and Lillemor Jacobsson, whose parent company Lillebor Design AB built the successful infant-care products company Baby Björn, Artipelag opened in June 2012 as a private art space reflecting the couple's passions—a love for the archipelago and its nature, a desire to give back, and a chance for Lillemor, who trained as an artist but spent her career working in the family business, to devote herself to art.<sup>60</sup> The name Artipelag comes from a play on words combining art, activities and archipelago.

Although privately conceived and financed by the Jacobssons, at an estimated sixty-nine million dollars as quoted by *The New York Times*,<sup>61</sup> the founders, who began planning for their museum in 2000, enlisted museum professionals early in its development. Before becoming Artistic Director of Artipelag, Bo Nilsson, an art historian whose background includes senior curatorships at Moderna Museet and Louisiana Museum of Modern Art and an academic post at Stockholm University, consulted on the museological requirements of Artipelag's new building. Making sketches of the museum for eighteen months before its opening, Nilsson helped the founders realize their vision.

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58 G. Tucci and P. Centanni, telephone conversation with the author, 30 Oct. 2020.

59 Casuccio, "Giving Value," 111.

60 B. Nilsson, telephone interview with author, 18 Nov. 2020.

61 F. Rose, The Swedish Museum That BabyBjörn Built, *The New York Times* (3 Sept. 2015), <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/06/arts/design/art-with-stunning-water-views-in-sweden.html>.

According to Nilsson, the goal for Artipelag was “to combine art and nature, not art and gardens.” Hoping to find a “more rough” or untamed environment than Värmdö, where they ultimately settled, the Jacobssons first tried a more northern location in the Swedish archipelago but were rejected. Nilsson explained how municipal seats are hesitant to accept private museum projects, because in the long run, the cities assume that they will have to support them. The current location of Artipelag was initially earmarked for a municipal recreation center, but in the end was not viable. This was how Jacobsson could finally purchase the land to build Artipelag.<sup>62</sup>

With a particular vision in mind, Bjorn Jacobsson interviewed seven architects for his building. He chose the seventh, Johan Nyrén, even though he was sick at the time, and did not live to see the building realized. Jacobsson liked that Nyrén was nationally known, coming from Nyréns Arkitektkontor, one of Sweden’s leading architecture firms, and he favored the architect’s idea. According to Nilsson, “[the design] was simple, modern, but not too perpendicular, “not a ‘spaceship,’ [like Gehry’s Guggenheim Bilbao or LVMH Foundation in Paris] but relating to boats.”<sup>63</sup> The design had a relationship to water and you wouldn’t see the building until you got close to it. Bjorn Jakobson was very present in the building process, on site every day. He changed the building company if something went wrong. The architect had already died by the building phase, and so the founder felt even more compelled to stay involved.

In an interview with me, Bo Nilsson emphasized the professional backgrounds of the Artipelag staff, many who, like him, had worked in Swedish and Danish state museums. He offered examples of how the staff has the capacity to make choices according to the specific needs of the founding family and professional museum requirements. For example, Bjorn Jacobsson is almost deaf. He wears a hearing aid. For Nilsson, this condition accentuated how important it is to make a museum building with good sound. This was addressed when planning for the big black box that is a multipurpose space for performances and concerts. According to Nilsson, “you never get good buildings if you don’t consider how they will function.”<sup>64</sup>

Other family preferences were also considered in planning the design. The Jacobssons wanted lots of light and to avoid a white cube environment in favor of a museum that had a strong connection to the landscape. These priorities were professionally addressed in terms of lighting with protective screens and climate control throughout the building’s public spaces. Though private, Artipelag was built on the same professional standards as state museums. In fact, Artipelag receives insurance support from the Swedish state through an indemnity just as state museums do. This is especially important, as most of the exhibitions mounted

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62 Bo Nilsson, Artistic Director, Artipelag, telephone conversation with author, 18 Nov. 2020.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.



Figure 2.10: Artipelag, Värmdö, Sweden, designed by Johan Nyrén. Photo: Björn Lofterud. Courtesy Artipelag.



Figure 2.11: Ainsa IV, 2012, by Jaume Plensa. Photo: Samuel Lind. Courtesy Artipelag.

at Artipelag are created from loaned artworks, which can be fragile to handle and expensive to borrow.

The actual decision over whether or not to build a private art collection was addressed during the planning of Artipelag. Bjorn Jacobsson discussed the possibilities with Nilsson, who urged against it, arguing that a new private collection would have to be international in scope in order to stand out from other private collections in Sweden. Such an undertaking would require an enormous additional financial investment. Besides, Nilsson explained that the Jacobssons were not interested in making Artipelag a monument to themselves or their art.<sup>65</sup>

From the very first exhibition at Artipelag, titled “What Does it Mean to Do a Show in an Archipelago,” an abiding ethos has prevailed in the programming and ambience, informed by an emphasis on art that has a relationship to nature and climate. At Artipelag, the earth matters. While it has no private collection per se, Artipelag does invest in sculpture, often by young artists; the works are installed directly in nature, along the twenty-two acres of grounds and boardwalks that surround the museum. Referring to the outside sculpture, Nilsson distinguishes between Artipelag and state museums, arguing that with these works, it is “about finding the right spot [for the sculpture], the right location. [Here] you are more relaxed than being in a museum.”<sup>66</sup>

Nature is built right into the fabric of the Artipelag building, where a 2000-year-old rock juts out of the floor of one of the two restaurants and a cliff forms the wall of an underground level. A harmony exists at Artipelag between land, building and art. The same fluidity endures for art, where crossovers of genres are celebrated. In the exhibition “Giorgio Morandi and Edmund de Waal” (2017), ceramic artist de Waal’s vessels and Morandi’s paintings, many depicting jars and pottery, were exhibited together, not necessarily for their similar subject matter but for the artists’ shared interest in how these objects are presented. In “Fornasetti Inside Out Outside In” (2019-2020), the museum displayed the technical versatility of Piero Fornasetti, among the twentieth century’s most renowned designers, whose skills spanned the genres of painting, drawing, graphic design, furniture, design objects and installations. This approach reflects both the sensibilities of the curator Nilsson and founder Bjorn Jacobsson, who has an interest in function and objects. It is also a practical as well as philosophical reality of Artipelag, where the museum must strive to create programs and exhibitions that differ from those of Stockholm’s other twenty-odd museums.<sup>67</sup> Although the art-nature-architecture continuum is not unique to Artipelag and is reflected in other recent European private museums, such as the Voorlinden Museum and Gardens in Wassenaar,

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65 Ibid.

66 Nilsson, phone conversation, 18 Nov. 2020.

67 Ibid.

the Netherlands, Artipelag's particular manifestation as a non-collecting private cultural center with an overriding curatorial theme distinguishes it from others of its type.

## Conclusions

In her book *The Private Collector's Museum. Public Good vs. Private Gain*, Georgina Walker suggests that many influential wealthy collectors – past and present – recognize that it is through their cultural, not business initiatives, that they establish lasting legacies to honor their individual achievements. The private museum model provides them an opportunity to achieve cultural and social prestige and present themselves in a manner seen as public-spirited, with public acknowledgment and validation bestowed upon them in their lifetimes.<sup>68</sup>

In the five examples of private museums surveyed in this article, we have seen how collectors claim their cultural and social prestige in varied ways. Some collaborate with public museums as more or less equal partners, as in the case of Fondazione Prada and Artipelag. Others, such as the Feuerle Collection and Sammlung Boros, exist separately though alongside public institutions, with a focused concentration on their own collections and alternative art spaces, and in the case of Palazzo Merulana, an additional dedication to creating community venues for them. For Fondazione Prada, the prestige of its new museum may actually add cultural capital to the Prada Company's elite brand.

As for the public-spirited manner in which collectors present themselves through their private museums, many questions must be asked. The first concerns the public. What type of visitor do private museums target? As twenty-first century public museums challenge themselves to diversify their audiences, do private museum founders take interest in such issues? Most private museums show contemporary art, often including conceptual works that address politically charged topics. Does the embrace of such work in private museums bring a demographically more diverse audience, or, as in the case of Fondazione Prada, possibly lessen the work's impact because of the hyperreality on display? The location of Artipelag, a vacation destination twenty-two kilometers from central Stockholm, self-determines its visitor population. It costs time and money to arrive there. Palazzo Merulana, on the other hand, sits amidst the diverse local community it aims to reach. But most Palazzo Merulana visitors do not come to see the permanent art collection; they arrive instead for cultural events and locally curated programs.

The alternative art spaces of most private museums, along with the high quality of displays, draw large crowds, some admittedly less diverse than others. The collections on view reflect the individual collectors' taste and that of their advisors. Directors of private museums necessarily promote the inspiration of their founders.

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68 Walker, *The Private Collector's Museum*, 160, 230.

In this context, one might ask, as does Walker, whether the discerning approach used for institutional collecting is perhaps compromised by private collections not necessarily formed with the same connoisseurship in mind<sup>69</sup> or, as Alain Quemin suggests for private art galleries,<sup>70</sup> do the new dazzling displays in private museums compete with public institutions, forcing them to make choices based on individual collectors' taste?

Ancient art found a home in two of the private museums surveyed in this article. Desire Feuerle created a contemporary installation, or as he calls it a "third piece," by juxtaposing Khmer sculpture, Han and Ming Dynasty furniture and contemporary art inside a restored Nazi-era bunker that he used as a canvas for his creation. Muccia Prada launched the new headquarters of Fondazione Prada with a world-class exhibition devoted to Roman copies of Greek art, curated by a renowned Classical art scholar who argued for the sculpture's relevance in today's world. These two examples demonstrate provocative and creative ways that conceptual and artistic thresholds may be crossed in private museums. But again, these departures from traditional exhibiting practices leave many questions unanswered. For example, as my students and I exited the spectacularly lit galleries of the Feuerle Collection bunker, we asked ourselves what we had just visited. A museum? A theater? A kind of three-dimensional painting? A sacred space? If this was indeed a museum, was knowledge conveyed? Or was knowledge even the point of our visit? What about the bunker? Did its own difficult history require separate attention? Did The Feuerle Collection reflect innovative museum practice? If so, how and for whom?

Private museums allow founders to take charge of their artworks and exhibition goals in ways that satisfy them and expand museumgoers' experiences. Walker argues that the alternative quality of these spaces is what keeps them viable.<sup>71</sup> But where does this leave public museums? One could argue that the proliferation of private museums could negatively impact the already challenged public museum sector, by denying them access to significant donations.<sup>72</sup> But that stance offers only one dismissive side to this phenomenon. What about the successful display methods employed by private museums that attract large crowds? Do private museums offer a constructive new model for the European public museum? Are they more than idiosyncratic presentations that cater to well-heeled visitors? To further explore questions such as these, future research must include comparisons of new exhibiting practices at private and public museums, and more dialogue about private museum practices between public museum professionals and collectors.

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69 Walker, *The Private Collector's Museum*, 232.

70 Quemin, *The Market and Museums*, 220-222.

71 Walker, *The Private Collector's Museum*, 230-231, 235.

72 *Ibid.*, 230-231.

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- Daniele Maruca, Director, The Feuerle Collection, telephone conversation with author, 11 November 2020.

Bo Nilsson, Artistic Director, Artipelag, telephone conversation with author, 18 November 2020.

Desire' Feuerle, Founder, The Feuerle Collection, telephone conversation with author, 20 November 2020.

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