

LOCALIZING THE CONTEMPORARY



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HOW EXHIBITIONARY PRACTICES TAKE PLACE

The centenary of the Kunsthalle Bern in 2018 calls for a reflection upon how its specificity has decisively shaped the notion of contemporaneity. Unlike collecting museums, Kunsthallen are associated with negotiations around the formal and social positioning of contemporary art. The sequence of more than 750 exhibitions held so far at the Kunsthalle Bern constitutes a paradigmatic model of display, which is significant within the institutional history of art. It serves as a case study for ways in which local and international artists examine the conditions of art making and push the formats of exhibition making. Interactions with the architectural structure of the Kunsthalle Bern, such as Christo and Jeanne-Claude's wrapping in 1968, have led to a constant and critical exploration of both the building and its rules. Such an artistic strategy has turned the frame for and site of art presentation into a medium itself.

This scholarly publication discusses the historical development of the Kunsthalle Bern and its implications for the "localization" of art. It contributes to current research on institutional histories by looking at the many ways in which the Kunsthalle Bern addresses the question of how exhibitionary practices take place.

A broad range of international authors draw on the archives of the Kunsthalle Bern itself and put it in the context of other paradigms of display, thus offering an insight into how the Kunsthalle Bern acts as a stage for artistic practice, and functions as a model for the performance of contemporaneity. They examine its role as a curatorial field of experimentation, as artistic material, and as a platform for transatlantic exchange.

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