Painting Into a Corner:

The Pedagogic Agenda, the Immersive Mediation (and the Overdetermined Experience) of Play Van Abbe 4

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The impact of a frame of reference on perception was the foremost subject of *Play Van Abbe 4: The Tourist, the Pilgrim, the Flâneur (and the Worker)*, an exhibition that took place at the Van Abbemuseum in 2011. To gain insight into the ways in which the interpretation of art is shifted by perspective, *Play Van Abbe 4* offered the visitor the opportunity to play four distinct "roles": the pilgrim, the tourist, the flâneur, or the worker. Visitors were encouraged to change roles along the way, thus facilitating a comparison between them. By using prevailing forms of art mediation, such as wall texts, audio guides, and maps, to immerse the visitors in these particular roles, attention was drawn to the fact that mediation does its part to effectively shape reception. Mediation was utilized in *Play Van Abbe 4* to stimulate two kinds of self-reflection—to enable the visitor to see herself looking at art—but also to draw attention to the praxis of the museum and the consequences of mediating art. With this explicit focus, *Play Van Abbe 4,* both in content and form, begs the question: is there such a thing as too much mediation? At which point do curators stop aiding and start impeding artworks and visitors with their own pedagogic agendas—painting both into a proverbial corner by overdetermining the encounter?

The Play Van Abbe series

Play Van Abbe 4 was the final part of an eighteen-month long series (November 2009 to August 2011) of "experimental" exhibitions that sought to explore how a museum and its collection might generate thinking about art and the forces that shape its appearance and reception.[1] The four-part project explored the history of the Van Abbemuseum and a small cast of characters who took part in shaping that history; various (historical) models for

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exhibiting a collection; the problematics of collecting; and the impact of mediation in shaping the perception of art. As has become commonplace in museums associated with new institutionalism, alternative forms of production, including performances, lectures, publications, and a symposium, complimented the exhibition calendar. In short, *Play Van Abbe* was a project by a museum about museums. At its most insular, it focused on its own institutional history and identity; at its most global, it raised questions about the power and influence of presentation methods.

The series engaged in approaches to exhibition-making that were highly discursive, especially in the case of *Play Van Abbe 3*: *The Politics of Collecting/The Collecting of Politics* (2010–2011), which (next to collections curated by artists) exhibited charts and graphs generated by research into its own collection history and policies. But it also engaged with elements intended to immerse, as was the case of *Play Van Abbe 4*, which aimed to "investigate the pleasure of being a visitor to the museum and how to intensify that experience."[2] By providing four roles for the visitor to play, each of which offered unique information and provoked a particular pace to be taken through the galleries, the exhibition makers (Charles Esche, Annie Fletcher, Christiane Berndes, Steven ten Thije, and Hadas Zemer) drew attention to the conventions of viewing. Playing the selected roles was optional, though encouraged in the printed materials and by "Game Masters" who were ever present in the space. It was important to the exhibition planners that the visitor not be passive, but actively engaged; that visitors, through role-play, would "step outside of [their] own preconceptions" by taking on the preconceptions of another, thereby learning more about how we perceive the world.[3]

Fig. 1 *One of several stations in the exhibition at which visitors could select or change roles. Play Van Abbe 4, 2011. Archives Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. Photo: Peter Cox, Eindhoven.*

The role models

Reaching into the annals of modernity, in the essay that provides the theoretical background for the project, research curator Steven ten Thije discusses a shift that began "somewhere in the end of the eighteenth century and heading into the nineteenth," which led man to seek separation between himself and the world around him.[4] Following Walter Benjamin and his essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936), Ten Thije posits that this division is profoundly experienced in the work of art, "w[h]ere this distance is utilized in the most coherent way."[5] The place in which art is contemplated—the ritualized museum—and the method by which it is viewed—the apparatus of eye (and the inherent externality of vision)—serves to distance the subject (man) from the object (art), allowing him to come to a better comprehension of both. "Culture or art," Ten Thije writes, "were the primary engines of self-differentiation," and the imperative to separate oneself, even if only temporarily, from the prosaic experience of daily life finds its logical outcome in the pursuit of travel.[6] It is in considering the historic conditions in which a traveler would embark upon such a journey of separation that the pilgrim, the tourist, and the flâneur were thus selected as the role models of *Play Van Abbe 4*.[7]

Ten Thije notes that implicit within these three roles are the various expectations placed upon the art encounter.[8] Art is a source of spiritual enlightenment—it provides a form of entertainment or escape—and, through art, one may transcend to an alternate state of perception, in which everything that surrounds us, from frame to fire extinguisher, can be seen as an object of beauty. In each of these cases, art is seen to have a particular agency that allows it to *impart* something *to* the viewer. This greatly discounts the effort that is required by the viewer to be open to the potential of its influence, and the fact that the production of meaning is the result of an interaction between subject and object. Acknowledging the significance of this co-production, Ten Thije adds a final role model—the worker—to the trifecta of travelers. This role is envisaged as a meta-role that incorporates the others.[9] The worker of the museum is actively engaged in deriving meaning from the experience: asking questions, making observations, and coming to new, independent conclusions.

Fig. 2 *A visitor with the audio guide used to play the pilgrim role. Play Van Abbe 4, 2011. Archives Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. Photo: Peter Cox, Eindhoven.*

The pilgrim

Upon choosing a role, the visitor to *Play Van Abbe 4* could distinguish herself by affixing a “P” for Pilgrim, “T” for Tourist, or “F” for Flâneur sticker to her person. Taking up the role-specific “tools” of mediation that accompanied the respective labels, she could commence with her journey through the exhibition.[10] The pilgrim was provided an audio guide that featured quotes and educational excerpts to frame designated artworks in an art historical narrative.[11] Matter of fact in nature, this information was partly reiterated on long, bookmark-reminiscent text cards. Both the audio and written material focused on the materiality of the work, the process of its creation, its historical context, or the symbolic references included in the works. For example, on *Rota, Rosa, Rotae, Rotae, Rotam, Rota/Rosa (III)* (1984) by Jan Vercruysse, an artist notorious for being abstruse, the text begins:

> *The Belgian artist Jan Vercruysse’s work is concerned with silence, emptiness and distance. According to Vercruysse, “What art is about, the essence, cannot be put into words. You cannot communicate about it, sell it, or make programmes about it.” This is why his works provide a space for contemplation without his prescribing its substance.*

The text goes on to succinctly describe the various elements within the work and their respective associations and inferences. “The rose is a well-known symbol of beauty and love but its thorns mean that [it] is also symbolic of pain and sorrow,” the empty frame and the mirror “literally and figuratively introduc[e] the concepts of emptiness and reflection.” The enigmatic nature of Vercruysse’s work, and the inclusion of a quote in which the artist specifically makes mention of the inadequacy of words to describe art, are particularly illuminating in demonstrating the counterintuitive role played by mediation. While positioning itself as a branch between art and visitor, mediation constitutes the production of a new layer of meaning that obscures its own objectivity.

Of all the roles, it is the pilgrim who receives, by far, the largest amount of information about the works. The one-way audio transmission of highly edited sound-bytes and informative texts sets the entry point and poses the questions, thereby "produc[ing] the playing field" and a more pacified viewer.[12] This role, of course, is reminiscent of conventional means by which art is mediated in the museum. In fact, the first wireless audio tour was developed by the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, in collaboration with Philips (a company based in Eindhoven) in 1952, and wall texts, naturally, were already commonplace much earlier.[13] If what underlies the pilgrim role is a critical appraisal of the established means by which museums shape perception, it is not entirely effective. To serve these ends, the role does not go far enough. The information provided is abundant but not overwhelming; the texts are authoritative, but diplomatic. As a result, the pilgrim would be disposed to fulfill her role as an indoctrinated subject rather than as an agent actively seeking enlightenment. Content to passively absorb the information offered, the pilgrim is thus relieved of the necessity to analyze the works autonomously, and not so overwhelmed by the level or quantity as to question the artifice of the exhibition.

The tourist

Like the pilgrim, the tourist of *Play Van Abbe 4* seeks to be in the presence of an authentic, one-of-a-kind object. Yet his motivations differ. Unlike the pilgrim, the tourist seeks diversion and amusement rather than sustained focus. He is looking for an experience with something new and unusual—a discovery to write home about. Fittingly, postcards were made available, alongside a postcard mailing station so the tourist could share discoveries made "away from home" with those outside the gallery realm.[14] But the tourist's primary means of mediation was a large, foldout map of the exhibition galleries. With the floor plan of the old building on one side, and the ground floor of the new building on the other, the map alludes to a landscape. Icons of trees, mountains, and valleys, but also towers and other rudimentary structures, vaguely correspond with the shape and content of various works and their orientation within the galleries. James Lee Byars's *Hear TH FI TO IN PH Around this Chair* (1978), for example, takes the form of a partially destroyed castle perimeter. Given that the work features a seventeenth-century Spanish writing chair on an ornate golden rug inside a black silk tent, the icon relates, albeit abstractly, to the opulence of the work and the fact that is within an enclosure. Icons for other works are more arbitrary. Andy Warhol's screen prints, *Mao Tse Tung* (1972) and *Campbell's Soup* (1968), are implied with two patches of land emblematic of urban landscape design with symmetrical trees, benches, and chairs.

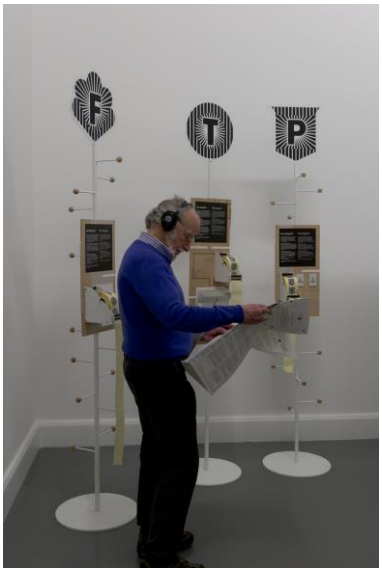

Fig. 3 *An exhibition visitor with the map used to play the tourist role (and the headphones of the flâneur). Play Van Abbe 4, 2011. Archives Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. Photo: Peter Cox, Eindhoven.*

The majority of the works are indicated solely by the artist's name and the title of the work stretched across the floor plan of the appurtenant gallery. For example, Surasi Kusolwong's *Naked Machine (Volkswagen Modern)* (2000–2011), a light-blue Volkswagen hung upside down and converted into an accessible lounge area for watching videos, is provided no

additional indicator—notwithstanding a monolithic, semi-brutalist tower of the sort that can be found on the floor plan in each gallery. These towers (semi-brutalist for the galleries of the new building, and somewhat medieval in nature for the old) are crowned with numerical labels that correspond with “tips” and “inside information”: easily recalled anecdotes and statistics about artists, artworks, the collection, and the museum. In reference to a room with several works by Ulay and Marina Abramović, it rhetorically asks the tourist to “imagine what it feels like to sit back to back for more than eleven hours, your hair knotted with your partner’s.” It divulges the inside information that Anselm Kiefer’s *Wege de Weltweisheit* (1977), at “222 kilograms, is the heaviest painting in the exhibition.” And with hyperbole, it refers to the Van Abbemuseum as “one of the most radical and hospitable museums in Europe.”

The tone suggests the predilections of the *Play Van Abbe 4* tourist: with easily repeatable, digestible tidbits, artworks are wrapped up in terms of what they can immediately offer the visitor experience. The speed of consumption is key. Following the map on a tour of the collection “highlights,” the tourist is directed, by and large, to a single work in each gallery. Going even further to facilitate the most streamlined of visits, the map even suggests the top five works “you must not miss during your visit,” including those by blue-chip artists like Warhol, Picasso, and Beuys. In contrast to the pilgrim, less information is provided and fewer works are addressed. The focus is on stories and surprising facts for consumption; it takes the tourist promptly through the galleries so he may be on to his next destination.

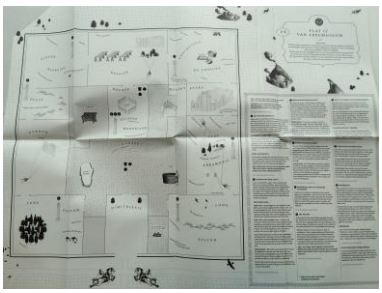

Fig. 4 *The tourist’s map, featuring the floor plan of the exhibition on the ground floor of the Van Abbemuseum’s new building. Photo by the author.*

Subdued dialogue

Unlike the other roles, in its suggestion of the path one might take in order to see it *all*—or at least the “must-sees”—most efficiently, the tourist map offers an impression of the exhibition as a whole. With its broad visual overview, playing the tourist gives the visitor some sense of the formal and conceptual decisions that underlie the exhibition. The works that feature in the galleries were selected for their resonance with the exhibition theme—the interaction of the individual with the “natural, built, or social environment” (presumably, this interaction occurs while the individual is engaged in a journey to come closer to himself).[15]

Curated by Charles Esche, the exhibition featured works from the collection, complimented by a few loans and commissioned works.[16] Esche looked to the collection and the “meaning of the work[s]” to make formal decisions about the compositions of the galleries.[17] He openly followed in the curatorial steps of former Van Abbe director Rudi Fuchs in “disobedience of chronological art history and its expectations.”[18] In the exhibition that resulted, some rooms are more coherent than others. Jan Vercruysse and Thierry De Cordier are an obvious pairing. As Belgian contemporaries who explore the poetic and melancholic nature of memory through sculpture, photography, and painting, works by Vercruysse and De Cordier are often shown together. The logic behind other galleries is less

clear. To give a rough sense of the diversity of the works included: installed in opposing corner galleries were two works from the same year, *Wege de Weltweisheit* (1977), a (literally and figuratively) heavy painting by Anselm Kiefer, and Richard Long's *Wood Circle* (1977), a sculpture made up of 840 branches placed in a circle on the gallery floor. Meanwhile, Robert Delaunay's colorful geometric composition, *L'Equipe de Cardiff* (1913), another "must-see" for the tourist, was shown in a gallery adjacent to Cristina Lucas's *Touch and Go* (2010), a video installation showing a mob of elderly men and women hurling stones through the windows of an old industrial warehouse in Liverpool to the tune of "Revolution" by The Beatles.

Installed in the center of the old building, with works surrounding it on all sides, Oliver Ressler's *What is Democracy?* (2009), a full-room installation (made specifically for the exhibition) featured various speakers raising questions about democracy while in locations with particular relevance to the issues in question. Esche described Ressler's work as the centerpiece "that brings the parliament of things surrounding it into discussion with each other" about rights and ideals.[19] Yet, in an exhibition in which mediation by opposing frameworks of reference is the main event, this "dialogue" between the works (to use a term associated with the curatorial strategy beloved by Fuchs) is notably subdued.[20] The experience of viewing in an assortment of roles shifts the emphasis away from the artworks and their interaction with one another. The works of art, from the perspective of those engaged in role-play, are essentially interchangeable. They serve as the backdrop for a performance of mediation. This is only exacerbated by the fact that the formal exhibition, though titled for its association with role-play, is related only in a recondite sense to the concept of role-play, or the roles themselves.[21]

The flâneur

In addition to the experience of viewing in an assortment of roles, the mode of the role-specific tools also plays a factor in drawing attention away from the artworks. The pilgrim's audio guide, for example, detracts from works in the exhibition that include their own audio. Nevertheless, the pilgrim's guide contains natural pauses between entries. This cannot be said of the soundtrack integral to the role of the flâneur. Played through large, sound-canceling headphones, a musical "soundscape" isolates the flâneur as a detached observer.[22] He is thus removed from a prescribed path, from any temporal guidelines, and from the experience of works that include sound. The flâneur is a figure of leisure. Unlike the pilgrim and the tourist, the flâneur is open to experience his surroundings with no ultimate goal or destination.[23] He wanders through the exhibition without a map or a narrator, and without boundaries his experience may encompass the full surroundings of the museum space, from its architectural features to the demeanor of fellow visitors.

While the lack of supplemental information may suggest that the flâneur is the "most likely to offer an original

interpretation," releasing the visitor from the narrative of the exhibition and the works is in itself a mediating act.[24] While the path may be less defined, he still performs a predetermined role. The curious experience of being excluded from the content of the exhibition by sound-canceling headphones serves to make the flâneur the most effective role to trigger the player to reflect upon the impact of mediation.[25] Without information to guide him while looking at art, or even to direct his attention to the art, the flâneur is more likely to look upon himself and the structures that shape his perception.

The worker

While all visitors to the exhibition served as cultural workers, those deemed "actively engaged" by Game Masters were to be provided a "W" sticker. Eschewing Marxist associations, the worker can be seen as a personification of the seemingly universal drive of twenty-first-century institutions towards increased interactivity. As with the other roles, the *Play Van Abbe 4* worker was invited to partake in the use of tools of mediation. These included a digital touch-screen map where the visitor could trace the route traversed through the museum and print it for takeaway, and interactive object labels, which, next to the customary information, included a list of "keywords" to which the visitor (via the assistance of the Game Master) could contribute, adding to "a unique database for the museum collection."[26]

Fig. 5 *A workstation available for use by a worker. Play Van Abbe 4, 2011. Archives Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. Photo: Peter Cox, Eindhoven.*

The worker could pause to reflect and collect her thoughts in an act of immaterial labor at the "workstation," though in actuality this work could be conducted anywhere and at any time, given that immaterial labor need never stop. Regarding the working conditions of the creative industries in Post-Fordism, Pascal Gielen expounds, "the employer of an immaterial worker," in this case the Van Abbemuseum, "invests not so much in effective labour as in potential: in creative powers and promise."[27] By shaping the ideal working conditions for the production of innovative, individual thought, the hope is that authentic—or even idiosyncratic—insights will be generated by the worker, which can, in turn, serve as a form of creative capital for the museum. This assessment fits well with Hito Steyerl's characterization of the museum as a factory in which "even spectators are transformed into workers" and "senses are drafted into production."[28]

Mediation as mediator

Ostensibly, art is always mediated in order to make it more accessible and to assist in the activation of an otherwise passive visitor. As Boris Groys and many others have pointed out, the word "curator" has its etymological roots in the verb "to cure"; "to curate is to cure."[29] By this logic, "the work of art is sick, helpless; in order to see it, viewers must be brought to it as visitors are brought to a bed-ridden patient by hospital staff."[30] Mediation, often associated with the so-called educational turn, can be seen in relation to this

drive to care for works of art, to assist them in speaking to their audience.[31] Yet in practice, rather than serve as pure "intermediaries" (which Bruno Latour defines as elements that "transport meaning or force without transformation"), mediation is, in fact, a "mediator": it "transform[s], translate[s], distort[s], and modif[ies] the meaning or the elements [it is] supposed to carry."[32] Mediation transforms, translates, distorts, and modifies works of art. It amends the work of art to increase the likelihood that the intended message (of the agent responsible for mediating) is conveyed. In the case of *Play Van Abbe 4*, that message is the circular (and arguably tautological) assertion that mediation is a mediator.

Mediation is a "secondary mode of production"; like exhibition-making, mediation is a practice that builds upon an original (or primary) mode of production—in this case, on the work of art.[33] However, this is not a simple one-way transmission from primary (work of art) to secondary (mediation). The implementation of mediation reflects and stimulates artistic production. Art serves as source material for mediation; artists, aware of the subsuming nature of mediation, in turn may respond to the new conditions of the system, generating new forms that perpetuate a cyclical production of art and institutional mediation. Therefore, it is important to note that the curatorial impulse to mediate art is not without connection to developments in artistic practice. What occurs to an artwork after production and into the stages of its distribution and reception is today a primary, if not *the* primary concern of artists. Since the 1980s, there has been a significant increase in the number of curatorial projects endeavored by artists; well before that, the treatment and recontextualization of "found" objects and images became fundamental to artistic practice.[34]

Brian O'Doherty traces this shift in emphasis away from the object and to the conditions of its exhibition to the installation of Marcel Duchamp's *1,200 Bags of Coal*.[35] Covering the entire ceiling of the *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme* (1938), the bags drew attention to the ceiling as a potential surface for art's presentation. "From this moment on," he argues, "there is a seepage of energy from art to its surroundings."[36] Art no longer could be seen outside of the context in which it appeared, without noting what he calls "the effect of the container on the contained."[37] Thus, it is a logical development that artists would seek to control the conditions of the container. According to Boris Groys, this is what lies at the heart of the practice of installation art. The installation is a battleground over sovereignty.[38] Art mediation is one of the elements within the installation that controls these conditions; it sets the entry point, thereby controlling the context or perspective. Thus, gaining control over the mediation of art is, at least in part, to gain control of its context.

Fig. 6 *A workstation available for use by a worker. Play Van Abbe 4, 2011. Archives Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. Photo: Peter Cox, Eindhoven.*

The compulsion to mediate

While the shift in artistic and curatorial concerns towards modes of secondary production has historical roots, it does not change the fact that there is an inherent paradox in a

curatorial—or institutional—compulsion to mediate. The means by which art is framed and interpreted have multiplied, and didacticism has surged to the forefront of curatorial aims. This should be seen in relation to the fact that critique has become a short-circuited practice. The museum is the subject, commissioner, and site for the production of institutional critique. What comes with the museum's apparent self-reflexivity is the *pretense of criticality*.[39] The museum appears to be preemptively aware of critique, thereby nullifying potential voices of dissent. Thus, it stands to reason that what may at first appear counter-institutional is, in fact, very much in service of maintaining or strengthening the institution.

While Charles Esche prefers the term "experimental institutionalism," in program and discourse, the Van Abbemuseum ascribes to similar tenants as the so-called "new institutions" that first gained prominence in the 1990s and early 2000s.[40] Infiltrating all layers of the museum, from the artistic program to collection research, from administration to discursive debates, new institutionalism is focused on "the transformation of art institutions from within."[41] As such, new institutionalism incorporates critique into the structures of the museum while maintaining that the institution is a viable platform from which to self-reflect.[42] Placing emphasis on inclusivity and the participatory visitor experience, more resources are devoted to those functions of the museum that engender the production of discourse and make possible the interaction and participation of visitors. In 2001, Esche contended that art, as a category, was replacing religion, science, and philosophy as an active social space for "experimentation, questioning and discovery."[43] His assertion, that the "institutions to foster it have to be part-community center, part-laboratory and part-academy, with less need for the established showroom function," explains the privileging of concept, via mediation, over art.[44]

Conclusion

Having gained insight into the context and practical outcome of *Play Van Abbe 4*, and with some knowledge of the historical grounds and theoretical ramifications of mediation, we may now return to the questions with which we began: is there such a thing as too much mediation? Did *Play Van Abbe 4* detract from the works of art on view by using mediation to promote a pedagogical agenda? As a participant in its game of role-play, it would have been difficult not to come to the conclusion that mediation has an effect on art's reception. *Play Van Abbe 4* was therefore effective in drawing attention to the conventions of display in the institution and the mechanisms of mediation. However, the mediation used to do so took precedence over the artworks on view. It is not clear what the unique qualities of the featured artworks contributed to the exhibition; instead, it is the story around the art, as told through mediating devices, that stole the show. The works were subordinate to the project's epistemological statement. While *Play Van Abbe 4* was effective in taking aim at the authoritative, pedagogic role played by the traditional museum, it

established the questioning of hegemony as its *own* pedagogic aim. Of *Play Van Abbe 4,* a Game Master wrote, "Only to a small degree did [visitors] employ the power to actually question and challenge the museum itself."[45] The multiple formats in which mediation was provided, rather than open up visitors to their own interpretations and impressions of art, succeeded mainly in providing a multiplicity of absolute possibilities.

It can therefore be resolved that there is, indeed, a tipping point at which an exhibition can use too much mediation. It may be an outmoded position, but in evaluating *Play Van Abbe 4,* the conclusion can be drawn that art might prove more effectual if it were entrusted to breathe on its own, without the assistance of mediation. However, the shortcomings of *Play Van Abbe* 4 are not necessarily failures of the Van Abbemuseum. In keeping with the notion of the museum as a laboratory, the experiments it conducts with pushing the boundaries that exist "between art and everything else" may indeed spark awareness that some of those boundaries we really wish to keep.[46]

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1. According to the project website for Play Van Abbe, accessed December 12, 2015, Van Abbemuseum website, http://vanabbemuseum.nl/en/programme/detail/?cHash=06f8a684b62ec29a8535f5487a3e9ff1&tx_vabdisplay_pi1%5Bptype%5D=24&tx_vabdisplay_pi1%5Bproject%5D=548.
2. As stated in the press release for the exhibition, accessed April 22, 2016, E-flux announcements, April 5, 2010, http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/play-van-abbe-part-2-time-machines.
3. Charles Esche, Q&A Video, "What do you expect from the visitor in part 4?" June 8, 2011, accessed February 27, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcFHCx1iDyM&list=PL9B8CF2F01A8377EF&index=7.
4. Steven ten Thije, "Verdieping: Theoretische achtergrond van de tentoonstelling en de vier rollen," in Game Master's Manual for Play Van Abbe 4 (February 9, 2011), 38.
5. Ibid., 39.
6. Ibid.
7. This theoretical background is not included in the exhibition materials. Instead, the selection of roles was justified to the visitors in the much shorter visitor manual, which states that the roles "have a long history in our culture" and that "[t]ogether, they are a prismatic representation of the ways we relate to art." The Play Van Abbe 4 Visitor Manual (Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 2011), 9. Alternatively, Charles Esche explains that these three roles embody the "three types of travel you make that are not guided by business." Charles Esche, Q &A Video, "Why do you choose these visitor roles in Play Van Abbe 4?" May 20, 2011, accessed April 19, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8vTNOQNc_HA&list=PL9B8CF2F01A8377EF&index=6

8. Ten Thije, “Verdieping: Theoretische achtergrond van de tentoonstelling en de vier rollen,” 40.
9. Ibid. Esche calls it a “second-level role.” See Esche, “What do you expect from the visitor in part 4?” (2011).
10. The “tools” that accompanied the roles are referred to as such in numerous places, including in The Play Van Abbe 4 Visitor Manual. Only one role was to be played by a visitor at a time, with the possibility to switch roles at any of the stations.
11. Ten Thije, “Verdieping: Theoretische achtergrond van de tentoonstelling en de vier rollen,” 41.
12. Irit Rogoff. “Turning,” E-flux journal (#O, November 2008), accessed November 4, 2015, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/turning.
13. Loic Tallon, “About That 1952 Sedelijk [sic] Museum Audio Guide, and a Certain Willem Sandburg,” Musematic, May 19, 2009, accessed November 11, 2013, http://musematic.net/2009/05/19/about-that-1952-sedelijk-museum-audio-guide-and-a-certain-willem-sandburg. It is worth noting that the pilgrim, a “believer,” is provided the audio tour given that the first (wireless) audio tour led visitors through an exhibition of painting forgeries, called Vermeer: Real or Fake? (1952) at the Stedelijk Museum.
14. The Play Van Abbe 4 Visitor Manual, 10.
15. Rebecca Uchill, “Play Van Abbe,” Art Papers 36, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2012): 49.
16. Artists featured in the exhibition included Gerrit van Bakel, Georg Baselitz, Joseph Beuys, Marcel Broodthaers, James Lee Byars, Sarah Charlesworth, Thierry De Cordier, Robert Delaunay, Braco Dimitrijević, Erwin van Doorn, Marlene Dumas, Barry Flanagan, Hamish Fulton, Douglas Gordon, Jenny Holzer, Anselm Kiefer, Surasi Kusolwong, Richard Long, Cristina Lucas, Klaus Mettig, Piet Mondrian, Deimantas Narkevicius, Marko Peljhan, Pablo Picasso, Oliver Ressler, David Robilliard, Martha Rosler, Allen Ruppersberg, Katharina Sieverding, Ulay/Abramović, Jan Vercruysse, Andy Warhol, and Yang Zhenzhong.
17. Annie Fletcher, “An inside conversation about role-playing in the museum: Annie Fletcher interviews Charles Esche, Steven ten Thije, and Hadas Zemer about Play Van Abbe 4,” The Exorcist #2, Play Van Abbe Journal (Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 2010), 18.
18. Ibid.
19. Charles Esche, “Openingstoespraken,” Van Abbemuseum, exhibition archives, 2011, collectiepresentaties; Play an Abbe: Deel 4: De Pelgrim, De Toerist, De Flaneur (en de Werker), 26-02-2011, 00-08-2011 (1432 Map I).
20. Curating in “dialogues” is a strategy Fuchs actively employed for the exhibition Summer Display of the Museum’s Collection (1983), a repetition of which was installed in the first part of the Play van Abbe project (2009–2010).
21. Esche claims that he “wanted to choose works that seemed to address these three roles, of the tourist, the pilgrim and the flâneur in a way that was not explicit.” Fletcher, “An inside conversation about role-playing in the museum.”
22. The Play Van Abbe 4 Visitor Manual, 10.
23. Ten Thije, “Verdieping: Theoretische achtergrond van de tentoonstelling en de vier rollen,” 42.
24. Ibid.
25. In addition to the headphones, the flâneur was provided a notebook for writing down his impressions of the exhibition. These notebooks were then passed on from flâneur to flâneur.
26. The Play Van Abbe 4 Visitor Manual, 28.
27. Pascal Gielen, The Murmuring of the Artistic Multitude: Global Art, Memory and Post-Fordism (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2009), 20.
28. Hito Steyerl, “Is a Museum a Factory?,” E-flux 7, (June 2009), accessed February 27, 2016, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/is-a-museum-a-factory.
29. Boris Groys, “Politics of Installation,” E-flux 2, (January 2009), accessed February 24, 2016, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/politics-of-installation.

30. Ibid.
31. Dorothee Richter, “Introduction,” in On Curating, Institution as Medium: Curating as Institutional Critique/ Part II, eds. Dorothee Richter and Rein Wolfs (Issue #13/12: 2012): 2. Richter argues that, among other things, the educational turn “stands for the attempt to use the most intensive and stimulating means possible to activate the immobilized viewer in the modern museum. The idea is to counter the effects of one pedagogic practice, namely, exhibition-making (which involves immobilization and passivity) with the contrary practice of mediating art (which involves participation and activity).”
32. Bruno Latour. Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 39.
33. Helmut Draxler, “Crisis as a Form: Curating and the Logic of Mediation,” in On Curating, Institution as Medium: Curating as Institutional Critique/ Part II, eds. Dorothee Richter and Rein Wolfs (Issue #13/12: 2012): 6.
34. Ibid., 5.
35. Brian O’Doherty, “Context as Content,” in Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space (San Francisco: The Lapis Press, 1986), 67.
36. Ibid., 69.
37. Ibid.
38. Steyerl, “Is a Museum a Factory?” Steyerl goes further than Groys to add “spectators” and “critics” to artists and curators on the list of competitors for sovereignty in the space of the exhibition.
39. Draxler, “Crisis as a Form,” 5–7.
40. Alex Farquharson, “Bureaux de Change,” Frieze (Sept. 2, 2006), accessed August 14, 2015, http://www.slashdocs.com/msrrqi/alex-farquharson-bureaux-de-change.html.
41. Claire Doherty, “New Institutionalism and the Exhibition as Situation,” in Protections Reader, ed. Adam Budak (Graz: Kunsthaus Graz, 2006), 1.
42. Ibid. Farquharson describes new institutionalism as “institutional critique practiced from the inside, exposing and opposing the ideological and disciplinary structures through which art in institutions comes to be mediated.” Nina Möntmann describes new institutions as those “that have internalized the institutional critique that was formulated by artists in the 1970s and ’90s and developed an auto-critique that is put forward by curators in the first place.” Nina Möntmann, “The rise and fall of new institutionalism: perspectives on a possible future,” in Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique (London: Mayfly, 2009), 155–160.
43. Charles Esche, as quoted in Doherty, “New Institutionalism and the Exhibition as Situation,” 2.
44. Doherty, “New Institutionalism and the Exhibition as Situation.”
45. Max Majorana, “Interpassive Scepticism: Visiting the Van Abbe Museum,” September 17, 2012, Notes on Metamodernism, accessed 22 February 2016, http://www.metamodernism.com/2012/09/17/interpassive-scepticism-visiting-the-van-abbe-museum/ - _ftn1.
46. Charles Esche, “Director Charles Esche talking about Museum of Arte Útil,” February 26, 2014, accessed April 27, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lr9j7MhPXuU.