

THE NARRATIVE OF HOME

2480 x 3508 PX

A4

IRIS MOLENAAR

1. CLOCK
2. "M"
3. CHAIR
4. SWITCH
5. MICKEY
6. RADIO

Lamp
Wilma de Bruijn

April 30th 2020

768 x 1024 PX
2,3 MB



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1

A new reality

Currently, a global pandemic controls the state of the world. The Covid-19 crisis affects almost every single aspect of life. Schools, universities and offices are closed down. Going to a restaurant or meeting up with friends are activities we can no longer take for granted. The new "normal" of staying at home is forced upon us. This results in frustration as well as creative endeavours. These endeavours are initiated by individuals, brands and other organisations. Especially museums appeared to possess a characteristic which made them able to adapt to the new situation. That is, the visual character of exhibitions. Paintings, photographs and other images can easily be digitised. The processes of

digitisation are accelerated in order to fill the hole of physical exhibitions. The Covid-19 crisis has resulted in virtual extensions now being promoted more than ever. Museums develop virtual tours, post their collections online and create 360° videos to keep their audience engaged with the exhibition contents. Google Art & Culture is an institution which supports such processes ("Google Arts & Culture," n.d.). They work together with over 2000 museums and archives from all over the world. Together they transfer offline materials to a digital platform. This way, a wider audience can be reached.

Google Art & Culture offers many attractive options for visitors to engage with the contents. The guests can look up high resolution scans of famous paintings, read articles and even save images. Online platforms

such as these give a whole new perspective on the museum experience. Another institution that cleverly played into this online opportunity is the Rijksmuseum. They promote their own digital extension called Rijksstudio ("Rijks studio," n.d.). As soon as you create a profile for Rijksstudio, you get access to an enormous digital collection containing more than 600000 objects.

2

Digital options

Google Art & Culture and Rijksstudio both give the visitor the opportunity to save artworks and further organise them. The users can organise saved images by creating folders. These folders could be seen as a tool to categorise visual findings. How people label objects is not

universally shared (Geismar: 2018). One might put an image of a cup in their "cups" folder, while another could store the same image in their "porcelain" folder. How obvious a label might seem, it is a product from the personal perspective of the user.

In conventional museum practises, labels were given to objects by official curators. Only they possessed the agency to make decisions on the way artworks would be categorised. Additionally, they were the ones who decided on the narrative of a collection. The narrative can be seen as a theme to which the objects shown in the exhibition all relate. They share a certain characteristic, such as all the objects coming from the same certain time period or all the artworks being painted by the same artist. The opportunity to frame artworks is

LABEL; TRANSPARENCY

1.



Window
Anna de Haas

April 21th 2020

1200 x 1600 PX
5,5 MB

2.



Vase
Emma van der Plas

April 30th 2020

3024 x 4032 PX
34,9 MB

1/30 sec. f/1,8 3,99 mm
ISO: 32

3.



Bell Jar
Nova Folkersma

May 1th 2020

1200 x 1600 PX
5,5 MB

4.

Pencil sharpener
Richard de Melker

April 30th 2020

1200 x 1600 PX
5,5 MB



1.

I labeled these objects as "chair", but what other characteristics do they have in common? Labels that could be used as well include "leather", "one person fit" , "back rest" etc.



Chair
Terenic Sallah

April 30th 2020

1600 x 1200 PX
5,5 MB

LABEL; CHAIR

2.



Chair
Leontine Kolman

April 30th 2020

1200 x 1600 PX
5,5 MB

FOCUS

WHERE

DO YOU

PUT

IT?

one which no longer exclusively belongs to curators (Geismar: 2018). Online platforms provide the possibility for everyone to practise curation. Curation from home challenges the authority of conventional curation practises. The activity of artistic contextualisation is now available for anyone with internet access. By saving artworks in folders, the user has participated in the act of categorisation which consequently leads to narrative creation.

The Covid-19 crisis has pushed developments around online museum experiences. Cultural institutions are required to take on digital practises, so as to still reach the "at home audience". These recently created online platforms subsequently question the conventional narrative. Online methods shed a new

light on the possibilities of the narrative. Telling a story through a series of physical objects is one way to approach narrative creation. Virtual practises offer supplementary possibilities for the visitor to engage with a collection (Geismar: 2018). Videos and virtual reality tours provide contemporary interpretations of traditional exhibitions. The digital suggests a new understanding; one which questions the act of categorisation and narrative creation itself.

Moreover, the digital is critical of the agency of the traditional curator. Virtual museum extensions propose a model in which the visitors have the opportunity to not only experience a collection in a passive manner, but to actively engage with artworks (Geismar: 2018). Active

involvement manifests in the practise of curation, namely creating folders. Curation from home challenges the authority of conventional curation practises. The activity of artistic contextualisation is now available for anyone with internet access.

3

The Narrative of home

Our new reality includes spending a great amount of time at home. Due to the measurements against the virus, our bodies are bound to a heavily decreased area. At this time, we exclusively interact with artworks through a screen. Physical museum visits seem to belong to an external reality. The bodily experience of being in the presence of an art object is one which cannot be fully

imitated by digital substitutes. A connection we can still touch upon is the physical interaction with the objects around us. This focus introduces a new perspective of what an exhibition could be and what narrative this would entail. Could we, perhaps, create an exhibition using the materials in our direct surroundings. Moreover, in what way would such an exhibition question conventional knowledge about artistic narrative creation. For this project I have collected images from the daily environment. People had the opportunity to send me pictures of what they thought was worth photographing in their homes. I have taken the position of the curator to organise and select the images. Actively interacting with the visual material was the first step in creating a virtual exhibition. Labeling objects brought

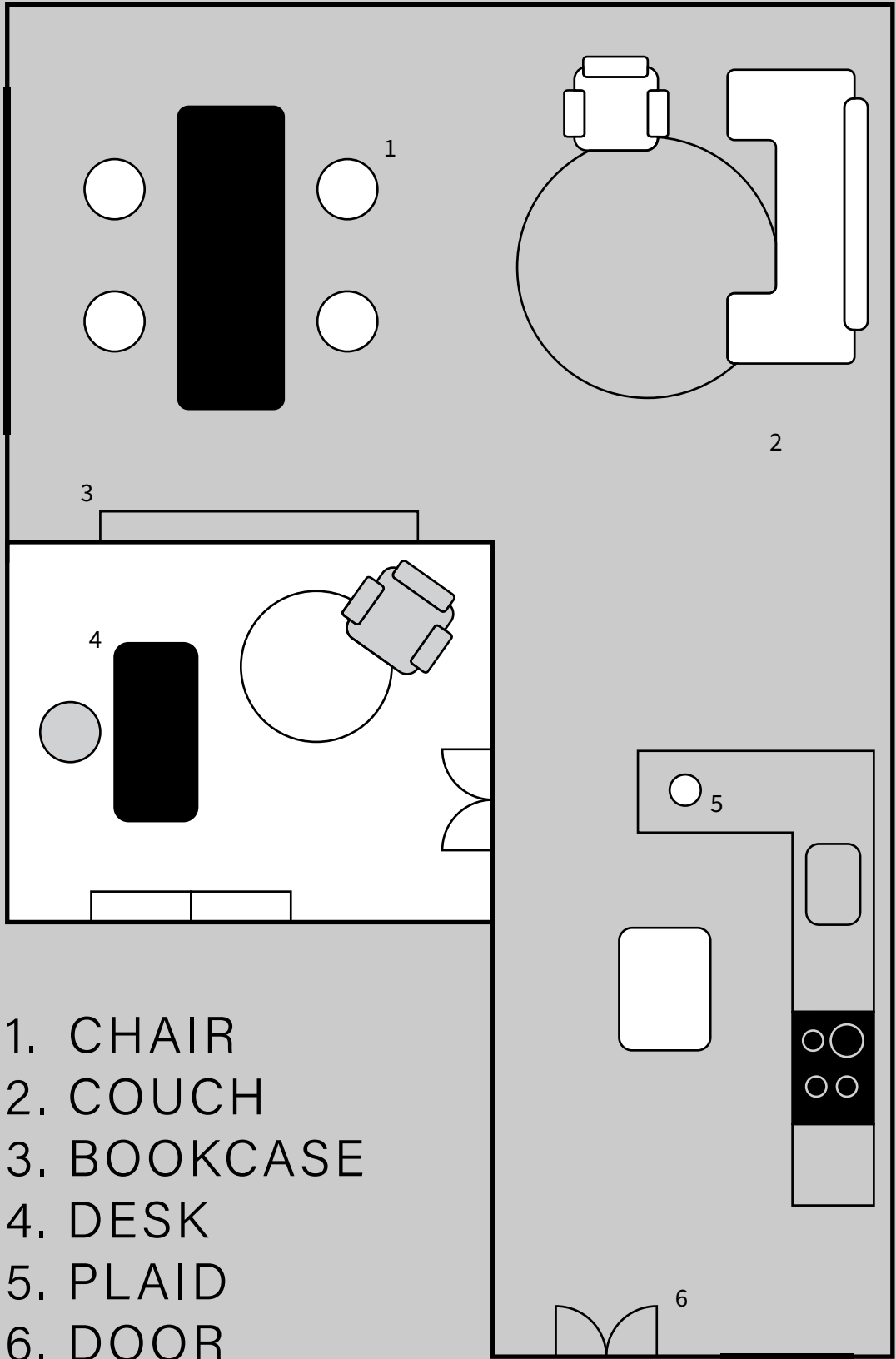
The exhibition space

What could it be?

A home?

A video?

A website?



1. CHAIR
2. COUCH
3. BOOKCASE
4. DESK
5. PLAID
6. DOOR

A table as an exhibition space



1. CDs
2. Tambourine
3. Headphones
4. Cord

Thirza van 't Rood

May 1th 2020

3456 x 4608 PX

45,6 MB

1/30 sec. f/1,9 3,6 mm

ISO: 160

de zee
wind €1
regen
onweer
water
insekten

1

amateur-filmers
geluidsjagers



awareness of the emerging narrative. It made me conscious of the fact that a narrative as well as categories and labels, do not hold an objective truth. Instead they are inseparably connected to the human perspective.

As I reflect on the process of composing this virtual exhibition, I ask myself what we can learn from the narrative of home. What knowledge do the pictures share, and how can we use this in further research on museum practises? After thoroughly analysing the material and the corresponding context, I realised that the narrative of home exists of three parts; the participants, the visual material and the curator. These elements together produce and explain the story that is being told by this digital exhibition. It starts with the participants. They produce the materials that later will be

analysed and labelled by the curator. However, we should not forget their personal reasons for choosing a certain object. These motivations, whether they are emotional or mainly aesthetic, tell us how the participants themselves view an object and why they think it is worth photographing. This act of choosing and framing an object by adjusting the angle in which the picture is taken, implies that the categorisation process does not start with the curator but with the participants.

Secondly, the visual material itself should be discussed. Even though the photographer chooses a certain subject and decides to capture it in a specific way, there is always a portion of unintentionally that expresses itself in the picture. Photographs hold an immense amount of information. Pictures consists of

technical aspects, pixels, colour codes and the habits of the photographer are, quite literally, exposed.

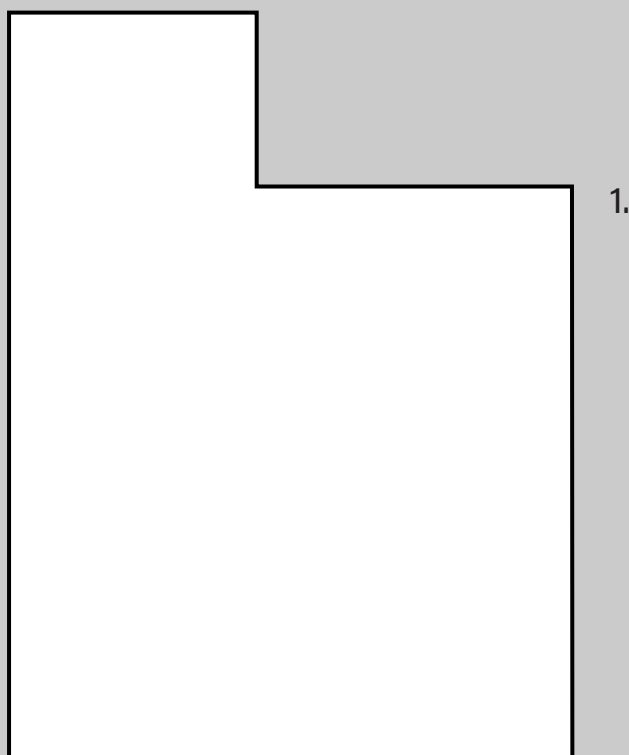
Lastly, the curator plays a crucial role in choosing which story will be told. They interpret the photographs made by the participants, and decide on how the material should be displayed. Using the position of curator, I have argued for more awareness on the concept of the narrative being bound to human perceptions. With my project, I tried to push the boundaries of conventional museum knowledge. The digital revolution in museum practises, partly caused by the Covid-19 crisis, challenges these traditional limits. I realise that the idea I try to convey, namely a narrative about the idea of "narrative", is quite meta. Nevertheless, I have found this exercise to be insightful.

The Narrative of Home has taught valuable lessons on unavoidable subjectivity. In my opinion, we must be critical of the perspective an exhibition imposes on the visitor. We should consider an attitude that is mindful of the labels that are placed on objects, and the way in which categories reduce room for interpretation. Furthermore, we ought to question what an exhibition could be and what digital extensions can be employed to exceed the boundaries of the traditional museum.

References

- Geismar, H. (2018). *Museum Object Lessons for the Digital Age*. London, United Kingdom: UCL Press.
- Google Arts & Culture. (n.d.). Retrieved 18 May 2020, from <https://artsandculture.google.com/>
- Rijksstudio. (n.d.). Retrieved 18 May 2020, from <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/rijksstudio>

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