Exhibiting Cult Value
On Sacred Spaces as Public Spaces and Vice Versa

Sven Lütticken

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Using as a point of reference the window that Gerhard Richter designed for Cologne Cathedral and works by Thomas Struth, Lidwien van de Ven and De Rijke / De Rooy, Sven Lütticken analyses concepts such as 'sacralization' and 'profanity'. Delving into the shifting and interlocking import of institutions like the cathedral, the museum and the mosque, Lütticken lends nuance to prevailing views on art and public space. [1]

Cathedral

In the summer of 2007, the German media were awash with articles on Gerhard Richter's new window for Cologne Cathedral, and even more so on controversial remarks aimed at said window by Cologne's Cardinal Meisner. After fruitless experiments with figurative motifs, Richter had decided to adapt the principle of earlier works consisting of grids of rectangular colour fields. Since the 1960s, Richter has devised a number of strategies to cope with what he sees as the absence of valid forms in modernity. After the demise of the 'time of kings' and its God-given hierarchy and social structures, art became literally informal, formless; the putative absolute nature of the squares and grids employed by modernists is as arbitrary as the chance that Dadaists and Fluxus artists put in the service of art.. In works such as *4096 Colours* (1974), Richter submitted the rigour of the grid to the laws of chance: the distribution of the 4096 unique tones across the structure is aleatory. To the cardinal's dismay, Richter adopted this strategy for the cathedral, placing squares of coloured glass in a grid that is held together by silicone (rather than the traditional lead).

For Meisner, the abstract window was misplaced in his cathedral, because Catholicism is a religion of the Incarnation, not of transcendence. Christ, Meisner explained in a newspaper article, had descended 'as a mediator into the centre of our world' (*als Mittler in die Mitte unserer Welt*), and therefore churches belong in the centre of the city. [2] However, although the great cathedrals are still in the geographical centres of their respective cities, are they still in the spiritual centres? In his article, Meisner claims that societies which 'banish God from their centre' become 'inhuman' – his proof being the 'two forms of dictatorship' that the last century produced. 'Man's dignity is jeopardized when God is abolished and man is put in his place as sole measure; human life then loses its worth. [3] Any institutionalized secularism, then, leads to the gulag. This is the voice of reactionary Catholic *Kulturkritik,* which happily reduces National Socialism to the desire to place 'man' (*den Menschen*) in the centre. The Holocaust, then, had little to do with an ideology that wanted to purify the collective *Volkskörper* from alien elements; it was simply the logical consequence of the modern rebellion against God, which must necessarily reduce man to the level of beasts. This cynical ideological instrumentalization of Nazism conveniently forgets the links between Nazism and the very discourse

espoused by Meisner.

Meisner's article, with its almost obsessive use of the term 'centre', was a response to the controversy that had arisen because of his sermon during the Mass at the inauguration of his archdiocese's new museum of Christian art, which in turn took place when Meisner's negative opinion concerning Richter's window had already attracted a great deal of publicity. During this Mass, Meisner intoned: 'Where culture is severed from worship, cult becomes rigid ritualism and culture degenerates. It loses its centre.' [4] Predictably, the German press had a field day; one paper called Meisner 'the Caliph of Cologne', a sobriquet formerly held by an Islamist hate-preacher who used to operate from the city. [5] While most polemic attacks focused on the German verb *entartet*, which is now linked forever to the Nazi's repression of 'degenerate art' (*entartete Kunst*), Meisner's reference to the phrase 'loss of the centre' is perhaps more interesting. Art historian Hans Sedlmayr, who coined the term, was a member of the Nazi party in the 1930s, and at the time of the *Anschluss* of Austria in 1938, he rhapsodized about southern Germany's baroque style, which he saw as completely distinct from Italian baroque – the former being a purely German *Reichsstil* that created 'a new, German centre' for Europe. [6] During and after the war, Sedlmayr would reformulate the question of the centre – and its loss – in Catholic rather than fascist terms; his best-selling book *Verlust der Mitte* (*The Loss of the Centre*) argued that the Enlightenment – culminating in that traumatic event, the French Revolution – saw man rebel against God and his place in creation; man put himself in the place of God, which meant that the great *Gesamtkunstwerke* of the past, the great churches and palaces with their decorations, were no longer possible. [7] The arts disintegrated, and in visual art the image of man, created in God's own image, was horribly distorted or effaced altogether. In presenting modernity as being intrinsically satanic, Sedlmayr silently suggested that Nazism was a trifle, no doubt soothing his readers' souls. What is Auschwitz compared to the horrors of a Mondrian?

The success of *Verlust der Mitte* and its sequel, *Die Revolution der modernen Kunst,* in post-war Germany suggests that Sedlmayr sounded a reassuringly familiar note. This was, as it were, sugar-free *Entartete Kunst.* In 1951 Sedlmayr was appointed as professor of art history in Munich, where Benjamin Buchloh would be among his – reluctant – students. Ironically, an artist who is crucial to Buchloh's critical-historical project has long professed his allegiance to Sedlmayr's analysis: from the 1960s to the present, Gerhard Richter has repeatedly stated that Sedlmayr had been correct in diagnosing a loss of centre. The time of kings and of a God-ordained hierarchy was indeed over. However, the artist should affirm and explore this situation, rather than be seduced by reactionary nostalgia. [8] Richter detourned Sedlmayr's discourse by pressing it into the service of a sceptical and questioning artistic practice, one that informs his various colour-chart paintings and their extension in the cathedral.

In his design for the cathedral's south transept, Richter mirrored some parts of his chance-based 'composition', allowing symmetries to emerge; these remain mostly in the viewer's optical unconsciousness, however, being only truly apparent in the designs and in reproductions. Apart from the scale of the window and the number of squares, the 'hidden' nature of the symmetries is also caused by the surprising intensity of the colours, especially when the sun is shining. Above all else, this is what sets Richter's window apart from the older abstract windows in its vicinity. In spite of the cardinal's protestations, an abstract window in itself is hardly an alien element in a Gothic church, and besides the usual saint-studded windows, both medieval and nineteenth-century, Cologne Cathedral contains numerous abstract examples with ornamental patterns and subtle and muted colours. Compared with these, Richter's window is almost aggressive, refusing to be mere background and looking – as many critics have noted – somewhat like a pixellated flatscreen. Abstraction is thus unmoored from the canvas and seemingly digitized; however, the quasi-industrial colour charts in Richter's painterly production already hint at such a development, and it is they and Richter's practice in general that provide the

primary context for the piece.

To mark the window's inauguration, some of these works were shown at the Museum Ludwig, immediately next to the cathedral. [9] This complex and contradictory connection between church and museum has to be taken into account when discussing the church window. After all, Richter's museum status tends to turn the window into a mere entry in the catalogue of Richter's *oeuvre*. Meisner, perhaps all too aware of this, seems to have little faith in the transformative function of the cathedral as a context for Richter's work. Whereas Meisner attempted to impose a rather impoverished and ahistorical Catholic aesthetic, critics writing for various newspapers and magazines subjected the sacred context to intense scrutiny, measuring it with the historical yardstick provided by the museum. The cathedral has indeed been decentred – by the essential institutions of the bourgeois public sphere that is the museum. Meisner's own museum of Christian art, Kolumba, can only attempt to ape this institution and give it a specific slant. But then, is the museum as such not a cathedral for the religion of art?

Museum

Since the nineteenth century, increasingly visitors to Europe's major cathedrals and churches have been drawn to these destinations more for art-historical than for religious reasons. This mode of behaviour was immortalized by E.M. Forster in 'Santa Croce with No Baedeker', a chapter from *A Room with a View*, and recently in certain photographs of Italian churches by Thomas Struth, in which the colourful clothes of tourists enter into a dialogue with the altarpieces. Tellingly, Struth's photos are part of his series of *Museum Photographs,* thus acknowledging the fact that major historical churches and cathedrals are now museums as well as places of worship, and often more so. One structure in Struth's series, the Pantheon, has known three incarnations: the original Roman temple became a Christian church and is now, above all, a monument – a 'museified' version of itself. (The Pantheon is still officially a church, in which services are occasionally held, but its religious function is rather marginal.) On the other hand, as some authors keep repeating, the museum itself has become a temple or church; the seemingly secular can be secretly sacred.

Heroic nineteenth- and twentieth-century narratives on the intransigent iconoclasm of modern art are now often seen as exercises in myth-making; Hans Belting is not alone in characterizing modern art as a 'myth', and as a 'fetish' that is 'idolized'.[10] Such a 'debunking' discourse, which claims to unveil the mythical or idolized status of art, seems to have become the new consensus. In the Netherlands, Dutch economist Hans Abbing likes to complain that the 'myths' surrounding the status of the artist lead large numbers of youngsters to enrol in art schools, even though practising a creative profession means they are likely to live in poverty. [11] There is nothing more offensive to bourgeois economics than a refusal of wealth and a regular career – the impending global ecological collapse is small fry compared with the shocking phenomenon of people who willingly risk poverty, making art a sphere of radical otherness. This otherness manifests itself physically in the museum, habitually referred to as a 'temple' of art. Increasingly, the otherness of the museum has come to be seen as problematic. German art historian Wolfgang Ullrich has considerable success with writings that argue for a less 'religious' and more down-to-earth approach to contemporary art, and that praise the rise of event culture in museums – think of the nocturnal openings or 'museum nights' that have become popular in Europe, or of the 'spectacular' Turbine Hall commissions of Tate Modern – as a phenomenon that breaks with art's striving for transcendence and that celebrates the 'ephemeral and profane'. [12] In support of Ullrich's thesis that museums have long had a sacred status they should now abandon, the cover of his book boasts an installation view of three of Mark Rothko's *Seagram Murals* from the Tate Gallery's collection. Rothko, of course, had a particularly charged, romantic, quasi-religious conception of art, and the installation view of the *Seagram Murals* almost automatically conjures up that other Rothko space: the

nondenominational Rothko Chapel in Houston, a shrine for an abstract spirituality.

From Caspar David Friedrich via Gauguin to Rothko, modern artists often dreamed of making work for – or designing – small churches or chapels, as a more intimate and folksy stand-in for the Gothic cathedrals that were idealized as the ultimate total works of art. With the exception of the Rothko Chapel, those plans came to nought; the museum imposed itself as the destiny of the modern work of art, indeed taking on characteristics of sacred spaces in the process. But is this as remarkable and objectionable as some would have us believe? The opposition of sacred and profane came to the fore in modern theory in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when religious scholars and anthropologists moved from a focus on beliefs and on myths to a focus on religious practice, on behaviour, on the enactment of myth, on the ritualistic and social dimensions of religion – a development associated with names such as Robertson Smith and Émile Durkheim and his school. Both time and space now came to be seen as being radically split: profane time finds its opposite in the sacred time of myth, actualized in rituals; and profane space finds its complement in the sacred space of cult sites.[13] Authors such as Durkheim realized that seemingly secular modern institutions can still have a sacred function, and Durkheim for one did not think this to be reprehensible; the sacred will always reappear in new guises. By contrast, those critics and art historians who complain about the museum's sacred status cling to a rather impoverished, one-dimensional secularism, according to which public space must be necessarily and completely profane; while attacking institutions for being insufficiently profane, they themselves turn 'the sacred' as such into a fetish. On the other hand, the photos of Thomas Struth are suggestive of a more nuanced and more dialectical approach. When Struth, a former student of Richter's, depicts artfully composed groups of visitors in front of the massive Hellenistic altar that is the centrepiece of the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, clichés about contemplation and the worship of art seem irrelevant; we are dealing with complex and varied modes of behaviour.

The self-proclaimed myth busters are correct in stating that, from Romanticism onwards, art often adopted the trappings of religion. It is also true that this sacralization of art proved to be a way of branding art as a mysterious, auratic and expensive commodity. In Walter Benjamin's terms, the limited 'exhibition value' of modern art, which was predicated on unique or at least exclusive artefacts, created plentiful 'cult value', returning art to its roots in religion.[14] But if the modern museum celebrates the cult of art, the art it worshipped was already a dead god: as Douglas Crimp has shown, Schinkel's design for the Altes Museum in Berlin was contested by Alois Hirt precisely because it did not present past masterpieces as normative and timeless works of art, to be studied and emulated by students. Its Pantheon-style rotunda presented a circle of 'timeless' ancient-classical sculptures as a cultural high that can never be regained, because, as the *parcours* surrounding this rotunda showed, art moved on from classical Greek sculpture's perfect equilibrium between the real and the ideal to the predominance of the ideal in post-antiquity, 'romantic' art. This programme was distinctly Hegelian. For Hegel, of course, Spirit in its progress eventually left behind the sensuous realm altogether, finding fulfilment in (his) philosophy. Thus from the Hegelian perspective that the Altes Museum seems to embrace, the museum represents 'not the possibility of art's rejuvenation but the irrevocability of art's end'.[15]

Cologne Cathedral is a museum to the same degree that the Ludwig is a museum. One may well argue that the former has been a museified version of itself since the first half of the nineteenth century, when the Romantic idealization of the Middle Ages instigated a movement to complete the building (which had remained a fragment for centuries).[16] Neo-Catholic Romantics such as Friedrich Schlegel may have attempted to resacralize art, but they ended up aestheticizing religion, as did Sedlmayr with his take on the 'total work of art'. While they may have tried to put the Middle Ages as a new ideal and norm in the place of antiquity, the process of museification – of transforming objects into art history –

neutralized the cult of the Middle Ages. As Sedlmayr remarked, even if the early nineteenth century sacralized art, in the museum Christ and Heracles share the same space, as defunct gods. [17] From the centre of a cult they have become questionable objects, constantly interrogated and redefined. One sacred being is different from the next; church and museum may take on each other's characteristics, but in doing so these are transformed.

In the words of Jacques Rancière, art in the early nineteenth century became *une chose de pensée*, the site of a perpetual tussle between thought and its other, between logos and pathos. [18] In this respect, art is indeed not purely secular, incompletely enlightened. However, often the real enemy of those who attack art's 'idolized' status seems to be the potential for thought and dissent that is implicit in this very status. Even if it is complicit with the market, the cult of art may actually be more enlightening than its abolition. At its best, the mythical logic of idolized art points beyond the instrumental reason of the market that enables it, as well as beyond the rhetoric of free art and free words that positions it in today's culture wars. The task is to activate art's implicit logos and to use it – not least against art itself.

Mosque

In his remarks on Richter's window – the comments that first attracted attention – Meisner opined that the window would be more suitable for 'a mosque or a house of prayer'. [19] The latter term, *Gebetshaus* in German, is often used to refer to synagogues and to Protestant spaces, but it was mainly the m-word that drew public interest. Islam has long been seen as the religion of abstraction *par excellence*. Hegel considered Muslims to be 'ruled by abstraction'; their religion is based on a fanatical devotion to an abstract thought, an abstract deity that is merely a negation of existence. [20] With their aniconic interiors, mosques seem to exemplify this abstract otherness of Islam. [21] For Sedlmayr, abstraction was one symptom of the loss of centre; the collapse of hierarchy and tradition led to meaningless forms, or non-forms. Everything in the cardinal's discourse suggests that he is not averse to this interpretation. But how can abstraction be a sign of man's rebellion against God and tradition and at the same time be considered Islamic? Perhaps in the cardinal's mind these opposites meet. Perhaps for Meisner, Islam with its non-incarnated God is but thinly veiled atheism, the purveyor of a spurious form of sacrality and, as such, not dissimilar to the cult of modern art. Both are bad copies, misleading simulacra of the true church, and neither has warm and humane saints, merely confronting the viewer / believer with meaningless patterns. If for Cardinal Meisner mosque and museum seem to be strangely continuous, both being sites of abstraction that are opposed to the Catholic cathedral as spiritual centre, for others mosque and museum could not be more different.

In today's media, Islam-bashing 'Enlightenment fundamentalists' such as Ayaan Hirsi Ali reiterate over and over again that Islam has proved immune to reform; their Islam, which thus strangely mirrors that of their Islamist opponents, is timeless and unchanging. As Talal Asad puts it: 'A magical quality is attributed to Islamic religious texts, for they are said to be both essentially univocal (their meaning *cannot* be subject to dispute, just as "fundamentalists" insist), and infectious. [22] For Enlightenment fundamentalists, this timeless Islam is the perfect Professor Moriarty – an unyielding, tenacious, omnipresent threat, which has sworn to bring down the West. The opposition of sacred and profane is plotted not onto one society but identified with those opposing social forms: the West is secular, whereas Islam is a totalizing form of the sacred that aims to colonize the whole of life. Its most undiluted manifestation can be found in mosques – spaces dedicated to the book, the *Qur'an*, which right-wing populists denounce as being incompatible with the 'free word', as represented by Western media. Regarded as sinister and non-transparent sites in which hate-preachers reveal what the Enlightenment fundamentalists consider to

be the true face of Islam, mosques are seen as spaces of pure otherness that are incompatible with the – allegedly – purely secular nature of Western cities.

For Enlightenment fundamentalists, mosque and museum are radically opposed to each other, whereas the cathedral is politely or opportunistically ignored.[23] If the *Qur'an* is seen as the enemy of the 'free word' of the West and its media, the mosque stands in similar opposition to the museum, the home of 'free art' that is under threat from sinister fundamentalists. As a result, the mosque comes to be opposed to the museum as representative of the secular public sphere. Recently, when the Gemeente Museum in The Hague refused to exhibit photographs that showed gay men wearing masks representing Muhammad and Ali, his son-in-law, the museum was attacked for betraying its mission as a space of secular freedom in the struggle against theocratic tyranny.[24] What we have are two opposing interpretations of the museum: in contrast to the authors who argue that the museum is too sacred, that it is insufficiently profane, others idealize the museum as a prototypal space for Western secularism, for free words and images. Both positions are militantly secularist. In both cases, the sacred as such is seen as ominous.

Émile Durkheim noted that 'there are two kinds of sacred, one auspicious, the other inauspicious'; for Enlightenment fundamentalists, there seems to be only bad sacrality.[25] But does not the concept of the secularitself come to play the part of the 'good' sacrality? After all, Enlightenment fundamentalists effectively sacralize 'the Enlightenment', 'the West', 'free speech', 'free art' – while using such slogans to avoid any discussion of Western complicity in the situations they denounce, in the Middle East and elsewhere. If secularization means the questioning of dogmas and the stifling of celestial and earthly hierarchies, a revolt against a culture of fear and taboo, then secularization is indeed crucial, but many secularists seem intent on sabotaging this process by nurturing manicheistic dichotomies. This goes for art-bashers as well as for Islam-bashers; while the latter use the bogeyman of Evil Islam to prevent a serious contestation of Western neoliberal policies and economic imperialism, the former seem intent on disabling whatever potential for dissent art may still have. Yes, the museum needs to be critiqued, but Ullrich's 'profane' museum, which is no longer distinct from the surrounding culture, would itself be as critical as Fox News.

Perhaps the museum's insufficient secularization, its elitist and mystifying form of publicness, also enables critical practices that would not be possible otherwise. And did not churches, at various moments in history, function as public places that enabled the articulation of dissenting practices and forms of resistance, from both a Christian and a post-Christian perspective? No doubt some mosques deserve to be eyed with suspicion, and there are many obstacles to be overcome, but one can give a positive twist to the mosque's difference from (and in) the current order, as in the case of the museum.[26] Some works of art stage a tentative dialogue between art context and mosque. Lidwien van de Ven's photo of a Viennese mosque, in which men are seen from behind, praying with their faces to the wall, is pasted directly on the wall of the white cube; thus one space of concentration, however myth-ridden, is presented as an extension of the next.

De Rijke / De Rooij's 1998 film, *Of Three Men*, is also a montage of different *espèces d'espaces. Of Three Men* shows the interior of an Amsterdam mosque that was formerly a Catholic church built in the 1920s. The space has been stripped of its Catholic paraphernalia; chandeliers and an empty floor complete the visual transformation. The film focuses mainly on the changing effects of light entering through the windows; the light is largely artificial, and changes quickly. The association with seventeenth-century church interiors by Saenredam and others is inevitable; these, of course, used to be Catholic as well. By treating the mosque in a formal way, as a receptacle for a light show, filmmakers De Rijke and De Rooij suggest that a mosque is a potential place of enlightenment – or Enlightenment – and reflection, just like those seventeenth-century

Dutch churches, many of which have been transformed into cultural centres or arenas of debate, arguably making them more vital spaces than the most central of cathedrals.

Yes, De Rijke / De Rooij's piece is itself mystifying – an example of rarefied art that is shown under conditions which make viewing it a quasi-sacred experience. The film cannot be seen on *YouTube*; its limited exhibition value increases its cult value and thereby its exchange value. De Rijke / De Rooij's extremely auratic use of the gallery space is indeed problematic, but in this case the filmmakers' complicity pays off. Doing away with various ossified oppositions between sacred and profane, or between good and bad sacrality, such a work begins to explore the functional value of various types of space, and of possible intersections linking such spaces. In introducing the church / mosque into the exhibition space, De Rijke and De Rooij create a montage space that delineates an as-yet hypothetical publicness, whose potential remains to be tapped.

Sven Lütticken is a member of the editorial board of *Open! Platform for Art, Culture & the Public Domain.* He teaches art history at VU University Amsterdam; is the author of several books, including *History in Motion: Time in the Age of the Moving Image (*2013); and writes regularly for journals and magazines including *New Left Review, Afterall*, *Grey Room*, *Mute* and *e-flux journal*. At the moment he is working on a collection of a essays under the working title 'Permanent Cultural Revolution,' and editing a reader on art and autonomy. See further: www.svenlutticken.org.

Footnotes

1. 'Interview mit Hans-Ulrich Obrist 1993', in: Gerhard Richter, *Text. Schriften und Interviews*, edited by Hans-Ulrich Obrist (Frankfurt am Main / Leipzig: Insel, 1993), 245.

2. Kardinal Meisner, 'Wenn Gott nicht mehr in der Mitte steht', *faz.net*, 18 September 2007, www.faz.net .

3. 'Sobald sie Gott abschaffen und den Menschen als Mass in ihre Mitte stellen, ist der Mensch in seiner Würde gefährdet und ein Menschenleben nicht mehr viel wert.' Meisner, 'Wenn Gott nicht mehr in der Mitte steht'.

4. 'Dort, wo die Kultur von der Gottesverehrung abgekoppelt wird, erstarrt der Kultus im Ritualismus und die Kultur entartet. Sie verliert ihre Mitte.' 'Meisner warnt vor Entartung der Kultur', *Focus online*, 14 September 2007, www.focus.de.

5. Dirk Knipphals, 'Der Kalif von Köln', *die tageszeitung*, 17 September 2007, www.taz.de.

6. See the third part of Albert Ottenbacher, 'Kunstgeschichte in ihrer Zeit. Hand Sedlmayr', www.albert-ottenbacher.de.

7. Hans Sedlmayr, *Verlust der Mitte. Die bildende Kunst des 19. Und 20. Jahrhunderts als Symptom und Symbol der Zeit* (Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1948). Selmayr doesn't speak of '*Gesamtkunstwerke*' but of '*Gesamtaufgaben*' (pages 17–19).

8. Richter first encountered Sedlmayr's *Verlust der Mitte* in the 1950s, when he was still studying at the academy in Dresden (letter to the author, 9 September 1999). See as references to Sedlmayr, including one in the course of a conversation with Buchloh, in: *Text,* 72, 120, 139.

9. *Gerhard Richter - Zufall: '4900 Farben' und Entwürfe zum Kölner Domfenster* was on view from 25 August 2007 to 6 January 2008, showcasing a new work, *4900 Colours*, in combination with *4096 Colours* from 1974.

10. Hans Belting, *Das unsichtbare Meisterwerk. Die modernen Mythen der Kunst*, (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2001), 9, 19, 25, etc.

11. See, for instance, Hans Abbing, 'De uitzonderlijke economie van de kunst' (2003), www.hansabbing.nl.

12. Wolfgang Ullrich, *Tiefer Hängen. Über den Umgang mit der Kunst* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 2003), 56. For Ullrichs response to the controversy surrounding Richter's cathedral window, see Wolfgang Ullrich, 'Religion gegen Kunstreligion. Zum Kölner Domfensterstreit', www.eurozine.com.

13. After the Second World War, Mircea Eliade would reduce this approach to a rather schematic but influential model.

14. Walter Benjamin, 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit', in: Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (eds.), *Gesammelte Schriften I.2: Abhandlungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 482–485.

15. Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, Massachusetts / London: MIT Press, 1993), 302.

16. In his *Lettres à Miranda* from 1796, Quatremère de Quincy already realized that museification does not always need an actual museum; he argued that the whole of Italy is one big museum and that Italian art treasures should be left in this museum rather than be transported to the Musée Napoleón in Paris.

17. Sedlmayr, *Verlust der Mitte*, op. cit. (note 7), 31–32 (the remark on Heracles and Christ is a quotation that Sedlmayr attributes to Nazi architecture historian Hubert Schrade).

18. Jacques Rancière, *Le Partage du sensible: Esthétique et politique* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2000).

19. For Richter's response to the mosque comparison, see Georg Imdahl, 'Meisner irrt sich ein bisschen', *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*, 31 augustus 2007, www.ksta.de.

20. 'Die Abstraktion beherrschte die Mohammedaner: ihr Ziel war, den abstrakten Dienst geltend zu machen, und danach haben sie mit dergrössten Begeisterung gestrebt. Diese Begeisterung war *Fanatismus,* d.i. eine Begeisterung für ein abstraktes, für einen abstrakten Gedanken, der negierend sich zum Bestehenden verhält.' G. W.F. Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte, in: *Werke 12* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 431.

21. In Europe, mosques are often highly contested, especially when very large mosques are planned, giving physical form to the expansion of Islam in Europe. In Cologne, there had been massive protests against such a mega-mosque (competition for the cathedral) during the preceding period.

22. Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2003), 11.

23. Many Enlightenment fundamentalists seem completely untroubled by Christian fundamentalism, suggesting that in the end what matters is not whether the West is secular or not, but whether it dominates – by whatever means.

24. The artist in question, Sooreh Hera, publicized her work in advance of her participation at the Gemeente Museum in the newspaper *De Pers* (29 November 2007), stressing its 'dangerous' nature. After museum director Wim van Krimpen decided not to exhibit it, the usual stream of articles about freedom kicked in.

25. Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), translated by Carol Cosman (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001), 306.

26. However well-intentioned it may have been, Günther Wallraff's recent proposal to stage a public reading from Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* in a Cologne mosque risked being linked with the culture of staged hysteria surrounding Islam in today's media. Note, however, that Wallraff planned to do this not in the 'sacred space' of the mosque but in its community centre. See www.qantara.de.

Tags

Aesthetics, Art Discourse, Public Space