

4

In Practice I: Working-With

After devoting ourselves to the literature about the Sainsbury Centre and gaining an overview of the various approaches to and narrations about the building (as a piece of late modern or high-tech architecture, as the first public commission of a starchitect, as the work of two great men and ‘the best object in the collection’) we will now shift focus. In the following, we turn to the building itself and approach it as an actor. This may sound confusing at first, as we have not only just studied the many contexts, but also the plans, the materials, and the functional organisation of the building. We were able to understand the three-dimensional body, its materiality and structure and in this way, developed initial ideas about the effects that the building and its elements could have. Yet, these ideas are based on simple causal explanations that we extract from the diagrammatic body. To escape a linear cause–and–effect relation that lies at the root of a deterministic architectural thinking these assumptions need to be tested and verified ‘in practice’. Thus, we will now move closer in order to understand the earthly reality and to trace the complexity of the Sainsbury Centre. Here we find the building as an actor on the move, which does not dominate but take part in mutual interactions while being exposed to constant negotiations.

The lack of structural spatial separation in a monospace seems to allow for infinite possibilities of experimentation. Monospaces suggest an architectonic openness to change. Designed and promoted as a building of extensive flexibility, how does the Sainsbury Centre relate to time, processes of change and transformation? Let us explore what modes, mechanisms, potentialities, and limits become visible when approaching the building in practice. The approach to look from inside out, to use an experiential perspective in a pragmatic way (see Chapter 2.3 and 5) is very different from the previous chapter and we will leave the focus on the building as a static object behind. With this chapter we turn to ‘the continuous flow that a building always is.’ (Latour and Yaneva 2008, 81) Space, in the flow of a building, is not contained but constantly re-thought, re-shaped, re-transformed according to many material arrangements, different sets of practices, and movements of people

and objects. Thus, we will focus on the relationship between building and people and distinguish different ways they share agency during spacing. ANT is particularly helpful here because it makes possible the investigation of doing in common and provides us with a vocabulary with which we can address the different ways of sharing agency.¹

We will enter this world of spacing together with Calvin Winner, Head of Collections and a Senior Curator at the Sainsbury Centre, and at the time of the interview additionally Deputy Director. The interview was conducted during a walk we took together in the building without any pre-defined route. Walking interviews create a very site-specific setting and provide a rich amount of data, as previous studies have shown (J. Evans and Jones 2011). Moving in the building in the course of the interview promotes leaving a linear narration behind and turning to the material world. Here we learn how the building is not a singular object but made up of many different ingredients that connect in many different ways. Winner gives an insight into how *they*, the employees of the Sainsbury Institute for Art, work *with* the building. The building shapes, facilitates, and permits daily life in a very particular way. Listening to Winner and his colleagues, we learn about their specific engagements and see the rich and different characteristics and possibilities of working with the building.

Isometric diagrams accompany this chapter. They show the route of the walking interview and present parts of the actor-networks we encounter at a specific spot during the interview. I understand these drawings as a navigational tool, since we face a great complexity once turning to reality. They do not reduce the building to static freeze frames but build a connection by offering a simplified or reduced point of anchor, permitting the travelling between in-depth encounters.

Besides the walking interview, for this chapter I draw on a broad range of in-depth interviews with people who are engaged with the Sainsbury Centre on a permanent bases. Furthermore, I draw on my own observations during the walking interview and during my research stays at the Sainsbury Centre in general. All of this allows to witness different processes of transforming the world of the building, some major reconstructions, others minor replacements or technical improvements, and again others that change courses of action (some of which leave the material world unchanged). Here, we enter into historic notes about the origin or biography of the elements that make up the building; however, I will only pick up these traces where they make a difference today. With this chapter, we will get an insight into the work of actors who are in permanent relations with the Sainsbury Centre and the possibilities of understanding spacing when following their working-with. With the help of ANT we can differentiate ways the building

1 Approaching the relationship between body and building, Yaneva introduces different ways of distributing agency and gives an overview to the relevant literature (Yaneva 2009c). See also Latour, *On Technical Mediation* (1994).

shares agency in the process of spacing and thus gain an understanding of which roles the building and its elements have during these processes. Before heading off with Winner let us take a look at the route and our guides.

4.1 Taking a Walk: Introduction to the Guides

Calvin Winner has been working at the Sainsbury Centre for 11 years (at the point of interview). He is knowledgeable about the historical developments and has been involved with most changes around the building during the last decade. Winner is responsible for all curatorial aspects concerning the museum art collection and temporary exhibition programme. He knows the Sainsbury Centre on a day-to-day basis; however, his role has changed throughout this long period of involvement. Winner was so kind as to explain himself, willing to give a tour through the whole building, and notwithstanding that this is not a short undertaking, remained patient and opened the last doors in the basement to show warehouses of discarded lamps or the freezer for objects potentially infested with vermin. The walk lasts until early evening, disrupted and cut into pieces by several other obligations.

The aim of the walk is to see all parts of the building, especially those I might not be able to enter on my own. As agreed upon, a certain amount of focus is always given to recalling changes, modifications, and the flexible usages of areas, elements and objects that might not tell their story on their own. While the tour leads through the whole building, I will only mention three significant stops at the beginning of the tour. The first stop is downstairs in Gallery 1, the next in the East End Gallery and the last stop in the middle of the Living Area.

Such a selection takes Winner's roles and activities into consideration. Above all, Winner is concerned with the curatorial aspects to the permanent collection and the temporary exhibitions. This is the background to his narration and argument. If we consider this, it becomes clear that the selection of stops on the tour in the galleries are important anchors to his engagement with the building and that this is where we can learn the most from him. Thus, while my tour with Winner runs through the whole building there are areas he is engaged with on a daily basis through his activities. In contrast, other areas, like the school between the two mezzanines for instance, do not belong to his roles and daily activities and he therefore only makes mention of these areas by pointing to the respective function or giving me a brief explanation or even does not mention them. Thus, the three stops that we will explore give us the opportunity of witnessing best how Winner is working with the building.

While Calvin Winner guides the tour, he is however not the only guide. There are things that stop us; anchor points that remind Winner to talk about specific issues, and points of attraction that catch his or my attention and redirect our conversation.² Thus, it is not only Winner choosing where to turn and what to tell it is also the building and the many things that navigate this interview. This is why a walking interview is a particularly suitable method to approach a building. In in-depth interviews, I often face large narrative overviews, official interpretations and accounts, while in a walking interview the things themselves have an impact, remind the interviewee about details he/she might have forgotten about otherwise.³ Nonhumans can also assert themselves, prompting their spokesperson to make mention of them. Thus, the mode of the interview does not only approach a spokesperson for the building in a more or less detached setting, but faces the complex world of the building and allows for a more *realist* account of it. Even if Winner is guiding the tour, it is the building that conducts our activity.

In the following each section is dedicated to one stop and explores a particular fragment of the Sainsbury Centre. Each section starts with a sequence of the walking interview. Here we learn about Winner's experiences and engagements. He introduces different actors and concerns. And while Winner always takes the initiative, we will follow particular paths in more depth and take up other voices to then bring everything together in the analysis in order to see how this can contribute to our understanding of spacing.

The first stop, downstairs in Gallery 1, starts with the resistance to change present in the upper part of the building, the monospace. We learn that it would not comply with the wish to stage major temporary exhibitions. The new demands led to a new way of *working with and not against* the building. Following Winner into this world of working-with we quickly lose sight of external or contextual categories, which seem incompatible with or not of concern in the practical reality of the building (as long as they are not visible, do not interfere and thus become actors themselves). A flexible space, it becomes apparent, is nothing a building can possibly contain—a flexible space is the work of many and thus, moving on with Winner, we slowly arrive at an understanding of the different ways the building as an actor shares agency and how both humans and nonhumans can shift, distort, and redirect certain courses of action, certain spacings.

With the second stop, we move into the East End Gallery. We learn that with the creation of the new underground Exhibition Suite, this gallery was also rethought. If action is a 'knot' of 'sets of agencies' (Latour 2005, 44), in the process of

2 Guggenheim elaborates on how objects stabilise memory by 'doing remembering' and thus by building links to the past. He furthermore sheds light on the often problematic nature of making history (2009).

3 As such, it is a specific elicitation technique distributing the role of the elicitor into the environment walking about.

re-thinking this knot becomes loosened or unravelled—some strings vanish and new ones join and new courses of action become part of the life of the East End Gallery. A new network assembles and defines the East End Gallery in its (new) relatedness: in its rhythm of changing exhibitions, in its materialisation of temporary exhibitions. We witness how actors gain meaning through their relation and understand that precisely in these relations they can shift from unnoticeable helpers to obstructive hinderers in the course of action.

The third and last stop then, takes us into the Living Area. Here, we approach the relation of the intention of architects and patrons when planning and realising the building and in particular the Living Area and today's spatial practices. We pay attention to how the material arrangements and practices come together to stabilise the material setting and how actions for communicating the artworks change the processes of spacing in this area of the building.

4.2

First Stop: Gallery 1

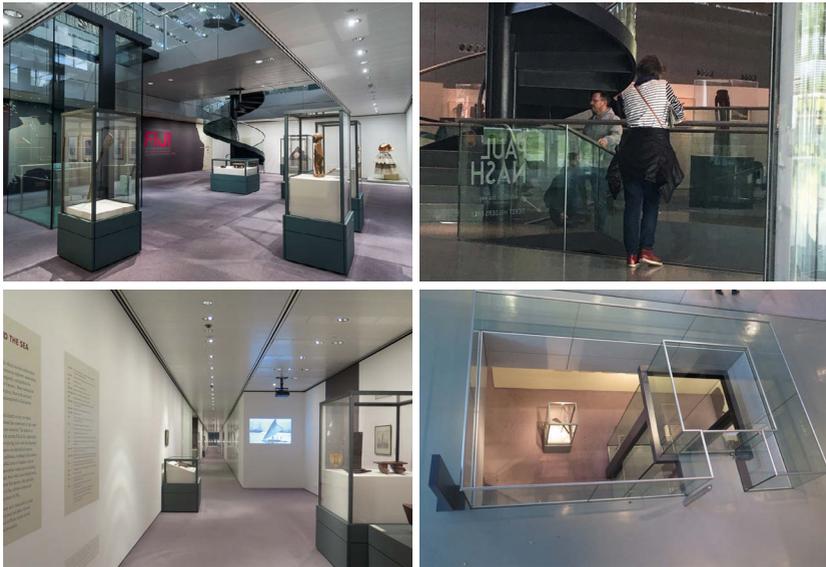


Fig. 4.1

We had only walked a few metres, still downstairs, and recalled the purpose of the interview. We are in Gallery 1, which is the link between the upper building and the underground built in 2006, when Winner notices 'I mean

there is a lot of flexibility in everything, but I guess increasingly with parts of the building now being listed there are complications.' The listing only includes the 1978' building and not the part we are in at that moment. He points out that the connection between the two parts is open plan and thus if they would wish to change something in this gallery 'there would still be a need for a certain permitted development'. When the extension was done in 1991, the Sainsburys did not want the Centre to be closed during construction. Winner says, as the extension was almost conceived like a separate building, it would be interesting that now the listing would treat it like that again even though the building today, is linked by an opening that is joining 'the two halves, the two parts of the building'.

We stop at the connecting point between downstairs and upstairs next to the spiral staircase that leads up into the monospace. Two rectangular holes in the ceiling connect the two building halves. A Gallery Assistant is coming down the stairs; we greet him. He will replace a colleague situated over here to control visitors entering the Exhibition Suite.

After the appointment of the recent director (in 2011), Paul Greenhalgh, new strategic directions were formulated Winner continues to explain. The outcome was the desire to create an exhibition suite downstairs to be able to obtain major art loans. '[O]ur institutional reputation was suffering, constantly having battles with insurance and lenders over the conditions upstairs', he elaborates. The shop that used to be located over here, as a consequence, but also out of commercial considerations, had to move upstairs. Winner describes this process of decision-making and the demand for changes coming from the Sainsbury Centre staff, as 'quite new', 'quite interesting', and 'quite tough'. They started to formulate opinions and views and got into debates with the architect and the funders—this time more out of a client's position.

To stage major exhibitions, Winner elucidates, you need climate-controlled space, which could not be achieved with the big open plan space upstairs—that is, not within reasonable efforts: 'We are trying to make the building do things that it doesn't want to do. You have to work with the building, not against it. [...] Once we kind of exposed that, there was clearly a logic to start changing spaces.' The underground extension thus 'helps to support the idea that it is a flexible building, which isn't always true of course.'⁴

4 Winner, Calvin (Acting Deputy Director, Head of Collections and Senior Curator, SCVA). Walking interview by Sabine Hansmann. Norwich, 4 November 2016.

4.2.1 Two Building Parts?

Let us take a little break here. ‘We are trying to make the building do things that it doesn’t want to do. You have to work with the building, not against it.’ What an outstanding testimony to the involvement and cooperation with a building. We will get right back to that, but let us start at the beginning. Winner stops and is stopped by the connecting point between downstairs and upstairs. So, what do we find in this sequence of the interview? There are different key themes: Firstly, the extension of the building, the listing of the old upper building part, and the connecting point between upstairs and downstairs, old and new (where we are stopping); secondly, the redevelopment of the underground into an exhibition suite, which is connected to the appointment of Greenhalgh and the re-location of the museum shop upstairs. Winner provides historical information about the spot we are stopping at. Pausing at the staircase that connects the underground and the upper building is not randomly chosen but it is the location of the most recent, most radical re-thinking and material transformation of the building that Winner and the building both were involved with. In the sense that this transformation was a constructional intervention, indeed, our tour takes off with a traditional architectural subject and is moreover concerned with historical development. Buildings are constructed, reconstructed, and extended. However, Winner is also hinting at connections that he seems to find strange or remarkable and introduces new, or so far unmentioned actors who took part in the process of redevelopment.

Right from the outset, Winner points out that Historic England when listing the building under Grade II* on 19 December 2012 treated the building as consisting of two buildings, only including the building parts that have been built 1978 under the listing.⁵ So why is it remarkable that Historic England includes only the old building parts? One of the official reasons for becoming listed is the following:

Flexibility of design: the in-built flexibility of its open spaces responds to the changing needs of its use as a museum gallery and education centre. The design has allowed regular, sympathetic changes to work satisfactorily, and the essential elements of the building survive intact. New additions and alterations, while too new to be of special interest, have been thoughtfully incorporated. (Historic England 2017)

The new underground building part is simply too new to fall under the listing. It does not seem surprising that an age classification is applied by Historic England. Winner’s point, however, seems to be of another sort: He says that the listing would treat the building as almost two separate buildings, just in the way they

⁵ The listing followed the decision by Heritage Minister Ed Vaizey, after advice of *English Heritage* (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and Vaizey 2012).

were originally built. Today they are indeed connected by the two holes with a grand steel staircase that we stand beside. Furthermore, he mentions that the listing added complications and that—because there is the connection—they would also need ‘a certain permitted development’ to change the parts that are not listed. And this hints at the practicalities that this listing includes. While from the outside, approaching the building by its age, a historical categorisation, is common, this does not correspond with the experience of daily life with the building. Here, it is less important how old one or another part is. Thus, it is *not* about rigid categories, but what differences these parts do or how they work together.

When approaching the people who experience and work with the building every day, the question of whether there is one or two buildings disappears. It becomes more important how they can relate to them. Here networks are formed and agencies are shared (see Chapter 2.3). Thus, following the principle of working-with opens us to different ways of how Winner and his colleagues share agency with the building.

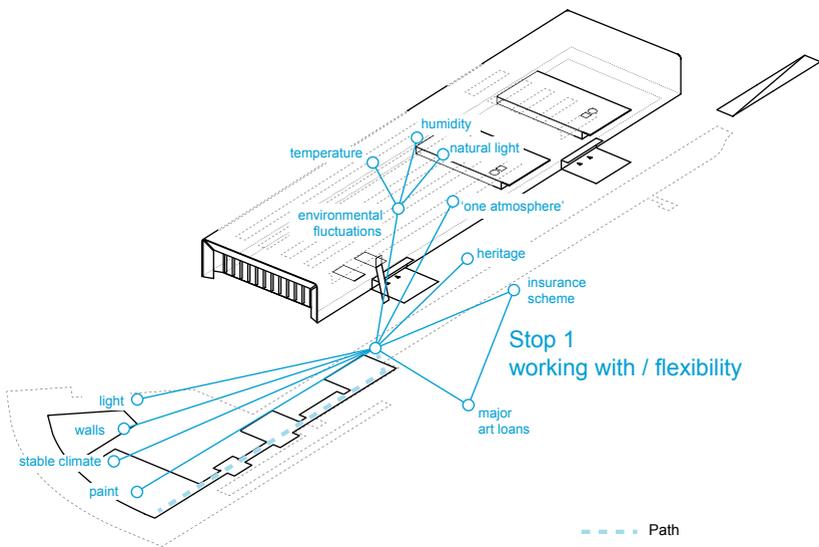


Fig. 4.2:
First stop and actors.

4.2.2 Working with the Building

Winner recalls the history of the corridor, which was only built in 2006 as an internal public link between the upper building and the underground Crescent Wing (opening 1991; see Fig. 3.7). This connection, as well as the former underground extension and other modifications, mainly took place under the guidance of the

funders and the architects. Here, Winner distinguishes the last strategic re-thinking (in 2012/13) that happened after the appointment of Greenhalgh. While the Sainsbury family and Foster + Partners were also involved in this change, the staff of the Sainsbury Centre Institute formed a new or so far at least little-noticed actor: the client who demands change as a spokesperson for and out of the daily work with the building: 'You have to work with the building, not against it.'⁶

Re-thinking the building, in this case, was less concerned with the material world than with the immaterial world of the building—it is not primarily the form that does not lend itself to the changing demands and new ideas of staging major temporary shows but rather the climate in the upper part of the building. As we have learned earlier, the monospace is not air-conditioned (see Chapter 3.1.3). And here Winner introduces two other actors, the insurance scheme and the lenders. Amongst others, a stable climate is required for an exhibition to fall under the Government Indemnity Scheme which provides cost-free indemnity to art loans apart from commercial insurances (Arts Council England 2016). The upper part of the building is not able to fulfil the requirements—it does not permit the borrowing and staging of expensive pieces of art as it does not meet the demanded conditions of the Indemnity Scheme, which is important for an institution like the Sainsbury Centre for staging temporary exhibitions. A stable temperature but far more important humidity and light are major concerns in museum environments to prevent damages to artworks (Thomson 1994).

'We are trying to make the building do things that it doesn't want to do. [...] Once we exposed that, there was clearly a logic to start changing spaces.'⁷ Making the building do things that it does not want to do, could have included major climatic and energetic redevelopments of the upper building part. Yet, dealing with a monospace this would have been a far-reaching decision as it concerns the whole building and its networks, as one cannot change only a section of the climate. Indeed, the new objective of staging major shows could have led to radical material modifications. In this, every new demand and objective involves a destabilisation of the spatial setting, concerning both material and immaterial spacing devices. In the process of re-thinking, of virtually testing the possibilities of new spatial arrangements, they decided working-with the building and following the opportunities that it provides: While 'upstairs the control of the conditions is rather more passive [...] the downstairs spaces gave us this big controllable space to host major shows'.⁸ A path of minor material modifications is chosen, which relocates major temporary exhibitions downstairs and leads to new distributions of objects and people throughout the building.

6 Winner, walking interview.

7 Winner, walking interview.

8 Winner, Calvin. In-depth interview 1 by Sabine Hansmann and Maria Lisenko. Norwich, 2 November 2016.

In the process of decision-making and re-modification, there are not only humans who contribute. Re-thinking the material arrangements, the building offers some possibilities and impedes others. The ‘programme of action’ is formed in negotiation with the building and here new possibilities arise (Latour 1994, 32). The building as an actor emerges. However, it is not the building as a single thing, but different materials and technologies: for example the low mass of humidity and temperature buffering materials, the high ceiling of the shell and numerous thermal bridges and areas with single glazing in the shell of the Sainsbury Centre. They influence the decision and thus contribute to the formation of new material arrangements, which become new ingredients of spacing.

4.2.3 Flexibility: The Work of Many

According to Winner, the existing air-conditioning downstairs was one of the key arguments to re-develop the underground part of the building. However, the new Exhibition Suite allows for a fundamentally different way of working with a whole series of things. Paul Greenhalgh, the director of the Sainsbury Centre since 2011 points out that ‘the one problem with the beautiful single space is that you can never escape from it, which means that if you want to set a different kind of atmosphere, it’s difficult to do that.’⁹ This is what the new Exhibition Suite downstairs allows for: working with the floor, the walls, the paint, the climate, the light, with adding architectural elements, Greenhalgh explains. ‘So now we think we have the perfect flexible space’ to do so, which in size is said to be the largest temporary exhibition space in Britain and which does not interfere with ‘the single space—the integrity of that is very important’.¹⁰

To put it briefly, the underground transformation created ‘the perfect flexible space’ for major temporary exhibitions,¹¹ which left the upper part of the building unchanged and ‘helps to support the idea that it is a flexible building.’¹² This is a striking development for a building which amongst other things became listed because of its ‘in-built flexibility’ (Historic England 2017) and which is said to realise ‘the dream of the infinitely flexible and perfectly conditioned art gallery’ (Banham 2000, 85).

Approaching the Sainsbury Centre from afar by reading about it and studying the plans, indeed at first glance, the monospace in its form seems to be the perfect flexible space. We will have to reconsider this. A building never acts alone but is involved in innumerable associations and this is what we do when we approach it and move inside it following the people engaged with the building on a daily

9 Greenhalgh, Paul (Director, SCVA). In-depth interview by Sabine Hansmann. Norwich, 10 August 2017.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Winner, walking interview.

basis. This is of course not surprising, and architects especially know very well that we cannot determine what a building is and what a building does by looking at its static abstract structure. A building is far more than that, and so likewise, it should come as no surprise that the monospace turns out to *not* be the perfect flexible space but rather the new underground areas. Space is not contained, a building *does* space with many other actors together, and so creating a flexible space is a task in which many are involved. Working with the building in re-thinking, reshaping and negotiating material arrangements and sets of practices to create a flexible space, comes about in and through shared agency. Thus, we have to unravel the different ways in which the building and its elements contribute to these agencies to understand how it contributes to spacing.

'Working *with* the building and not against it' left the upper building in its shell untouched.¹³ Changing spaces in changing the paint, the wall, the light and the climate, the pieces of art (that are able to travel into the building under the Indemnity Scheme) is something the Exhibition Suite allows for. The rather conventional spatial layout in the underground and the monospace on ground level now complement each other, Winner explains: 'The extension offers a further range of possibilities and opportunities. It complements what was there without destroying'.¹⁴ Winner refers to the open plan connection of the two building parts, and in the course of the tour it becomes clear that we cannot think of these two parts separately, they never act in isolation. The point of connection, the two holes create the open plan link. They allow and hinder together with mobile barriers, with stickers as entrance cards, with Gallery Assistances humans and nonhumans to travel. With the introduction of the Exhibition Suite they now travel in new trajectories. The new Exhibition Suite is an active participant in the world of the Sainsbury Centre staging major shows like the *Paul Nash* exhibition in 2017,¹⁵ drawing in new numbers of visitors. 'In a space of about five years, the audience certainly doubled, there's now around 100,000 a year, give or take. That element has been achieved, and we're still looking to see that audience grow'.¹⁶ However, this does not mean that the monospace is sunken into routine. In the same course of re-thinking upstairs functional changes also took place, which in fact were accompanied by material changes inside the building and also brought about new courses of action—new ways of spacing. Let us move on, upstairs into the monospace. What are the different ways the building and its elements share agency with Winner and his colleagues?

13 Ibid.

14 Winner, Calvin. In-depth interview 2 by Sabine Hansmann. Norwich, 12 August 2017.

15 This exhibition was organised by and previously staged at Tate Britain.

16 Winner, in-depth interview 1.

4.3 Second Stop: East End Gallery



Fig. 4.3

We walk up the spiral staircase, pass the shop, and our next stop is in the East End Gallery. Winner explains that this area used to be a temporary exhibition space and was changed into an extension of the permanent collection with the last modification phase. The reconfiguration was associated with the liquidation of the open storage area, an underground reserve collection that was accessible to the public. They had found that visitors were not really exploring it and today this material is shown on rotation in the East End Gallery. While the main display in the Living Area does not change (although art loans and minor rotations minimally change the setting), the main benefit of this extension is, Winner continues, that they could curate the space, add more text, have thematic groupings and have a different approach to what happens in the Living Area. This area would be in this sense complementary, it ‘allows freedom, flexibility to do other types of display’, which for example includes text-heavy displays. ‘So here we are a little bit more like a museum,’ he says and adds ‘the Sainsburys would hate that.’ However, Winner emphasises that he thinks they got the best of both worlds with these changes, as the Living Area still is ‘the heart of the identity’ of the Centre.

We move closer to one of the big display cases that have been newly designed for this area in connection with the rededication of this area. There are two different types: a big one and a small one. Winner says that David Rees has some issues with them and demonstrates: 'Now if you do this, you get very little movement [he gives the box a push]. In fact, I could give this a pretty good thump, and it would remain absolutely static. But for using the cases, they are really unstable.' The internal structure is not very rigid, he explains, and this poses challenges for setting up a display of ceramic for example.¹⁷

4.3.1 Defining in Relation

Standing with Winner in the monospace, it is not only that the objects serve as anchor points and affect our trajectory. The high visibility, the long uninterrupted view that the building allows for, also influences the mode of the interview as pointing to 'here' and 'over there' is enough to refer to different areas and devices. It does not seem to be necessary to move-on as Winner can address different issues from one spot: the East End Gallery itself and its relation to the Living Area or the display cases for example.

Once more there are historical notes about the development first. They show how re-thinking an area within the building is a re-thinking of specific ingredients of spacing and their relations. The East End Gallery used to be the temporary exhibition area. With the introduction of the Exhibition Suite as a new temporary exhibition area downstairs, the East End Gallery is able to take over new functions, which implies detaching old connections and building up new relations. In this process of setting up new relations, a new East End Gallery is formed which is characterised by its activity. Neither the new nor the old East End Gallery is a red encircled area on the plan of the building. Instead, listening to Winner, we can gain an understanding for the relatedness of this new actor in the world of the Sainsbury Centre.

In the first instance, the East End Gallery presents artworks of the permanent collection that used to be amongst others stored in the open storage area downstairs, Winner explains. Hence, this area allows showing art that would otherwise remain downstairs in the dark. Furthermore, it permits mixing in objects from other collections. Changing the type of display, changing the display cases and wall setting, and as Winner emphasises, including lengthy text explanations and grouping the artworks thematically. In contrast to the Living Area all of this is possible, he points out. It seems we can better understand what the East End Gallery is in relation to the Living Area. However, before we move on and explore why and how the Living Area is not flexible and does not allow for lengthy text

17 Winner, walking interview.

displays let us linger here for just one more moment. Winner explains that today this Gallery acts in a complementary way to the Living Area—complementary, in the sense of adding freedom and flexibility. Of course, once again it is not the area that holds the characteristics of flexibility and freedom, rather it is the joined practice of different actors that come together to circulate and present the artworks in changing constellations.

We can learn what distinguishes the East End Gallery by tracing its relatedness and its similarities and contrasts to other areas in the building. It allows a specific way of working-with for Winner and his colleagues. Here they are able to explore different thematic groupings, and draw connections to temporary exhibitions downstairs or on the second mezzanine. Thus, the rhythm of change relates to the coming and going of visiting artworks. Spacing in the East End Gallery happens in connection to the other exhibition areas.

Talking of *the* East End Gallery as a spot or an area in the building is a simplification that is indeed helpful to distinguish one area of the building from another. However, it is also black-boxing—we take it for granted.¹⁸ Once one begins to open the black box of the building we approach many new black boxes. Yet, Winner introduces the East End Gallery in contrast to the Living Area by what it does. And standing there, surrounded by the material arrangement, it is impossible not to open these boxes and point to the different actors that actually do the work. This is a specific feature of the walking interview. We just need to look carefully, to listen and to slow down if we want to explore the different ingredients that do the work of spacing in this area. Indeed, Winner points to different actors that foster and impede certain courses of action.

18 It is this process of black-boxing ‘that makes the joint production of actors and artifacts entirely opaque’ (Latour 1999, 183). Each black box is made of many other individual parts, of which each is again a black box. It is an important aim of the school of social constructivists to open these black boxes of historical and contemporary technologies. Vice versa black-boxing is a mode of structuring or simplifying after having looked ‘into’ the black box to make sense of its complex realities (Bijker, Hughes, and Pinch 1987).

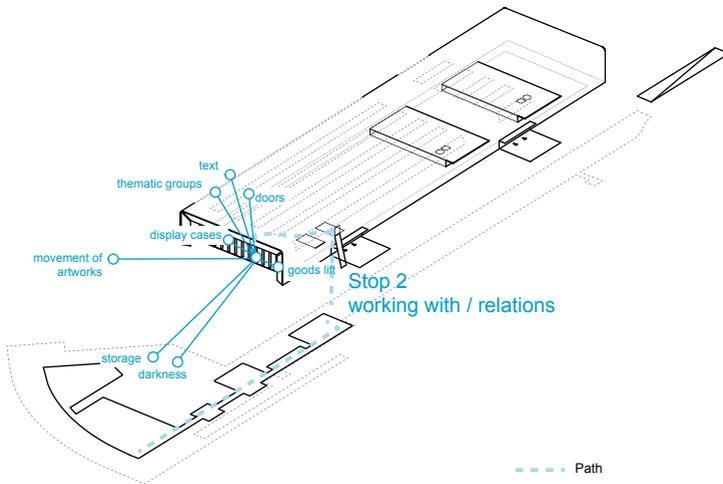


Fig. 4.4:

Second stop and actors.

4.3.2 Unpredictable »Mediator«

Winner hints at the issue of rotating and moving the art, which as we learn in the beginning is one of the beneficial aspects that the East End Gallery allows for. The circulation of the artworks is not only connected to insurance schemes, and museum environments, it is of course also about practicalities that allow or prevent artworks to take part in changes and material arrangements. And this brings actors of different material qualities together; Winner introduces two of them: David Rees and the new display cases. The former is said to have an issue with the latter.

David Rees is Head of Technical Services at the Sainsbury Centre who amongst many other things deals with the circulation of artworks in the building. ‘There are the challenges of getting things into the building’ he explains. ‘We have got this huge space in here, but you can’t actually get big things in because the biggest doors are just like a pair of ordinary double doors, [and] a non-functioning goods lift.’¹⁹ Working-with the building is working with these access points in bringing things in and out. Unlike the building’s symbolic reference point, the aircraft hangar, the shell has no large gullwing doors that open the entire front of the building. There are only several pairs of standard sized double doors, one

19 Rees, David (Head of Technical Services, SCVA). In-depth interview by Sabine Hansmann. Norwich, 3 November 2016.

of which is located in the east end façade. The goods lift is also located there and connects the monospace directly to the underground service areas. These access points filter object movements in size and frequency. The goods lift is not broken, as one might think, but rather temporarily immobilised by the huge glass case that is sitting on top of it. This case is an obstacle and resists being moved given its size and weight as well as its inner structure that easily starts shaking. All of this makes it difficult to move and only becomes apparent when actually working with the case. A simple punch will not make it shake, as Winner demonstrates. The know-how required to operate the elevator has thus shifted into having the ability of moving the case. The glass case became quite a prominent actor, and most notably for the person working with it.

Both Winner and Rees, refer to specific devices that allow, hinder, and foster certain movements and interactions in connection to the building. This is how spacing takes place, with elevators, with exhibition cases, with air-conditioning, insurance schemes, and the rhythms of rotating artworks.

Thus far we have come to understand that the building and its elements take part in spacing, that they transform and foster certain spatial decisions, that they distort or modify certain courses of action. In addition, we have seen that a building never acts alone but that many are involved, for example in flexibility. Accordingly, it is clear that agency is shared and we have to look at the different ways in which the building participates, how its agency is manifested, in order to understand the different modes in which it participates in spacing. The distribution of agency is a core interest of ANT and here we find some guidance to unravel the different relations the building, its elements and the team around Winner have.

Following practices, the working-with, we approach the *multiplicity* of objects.²⁰ This is particularly evident in the example of the display cases: There is a beautiful super transparent case, which works smoothly in presenting art without obstructing light reflexes, as Winner explains at a different point of the walking interview. It invites people to explore the art, and I can observe visitors squatting, kneeling on the floor or crawling around the box under the spell of art objects in the example on the lowest presentation tableau. The case takes part in courses of action, however, it is important to differentiate the various ways in which it does. If it just conveys meaning in the sense in which input is equated with output without any transformation, then it is considered a smooth and predictable

20 Mol (2002) discusses reality as multiple, as something that is *done* rather than observed from different perspectives. Objects then are not multiple because of different points of view that can be taken on them, '[i]nstead, objects come into being—and disappear—with the practices in which they are manipulated. And since the object of manipulation tends to differ from one practice to another, reality multiplies.' (Ibid. 5) Foregrounding the practices out of which space emerges, spacing thus follows the trail Mol has laid down and forces our attention to the multiplicity of reality.

‘intermediary’ (Latour 2005, particularly 37–42). Intermediaries participate in courses of action and are predictable; therefore they can be defined prior to them. The case, like any other actor, can behave like a smooth intermediary. In the next moment, however, it can break down or turn into a disobedient ‘mediator’ (Latour 2005, particularly 37–42). ‘Mediators transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry.’ (Ibid. 39) Thus, it depends on *how* the case is enacted and which network we turn to, to gain an understanding of an actor.

This is important for understanding the multiplicity and unpredictability of spacing.²¹ There is also a heavy and (depending on practice) unstable box. It does not mean that mediators are always uncooperative. However, it is at the heart of their definition that they can only be defined in the process of action. Latour calls this ‘uncertainty about goals *translation*.’ (Ibid. 32) It is the *actor-network* the connections that the different actors have—the connection of case–lift–Rees–light–glass–visitor—that allows us to understand the *specific* display case and its specific contribution to spacing. Spacing is unpredictable insofar as all actors are multiple and have the possibility to distort, re-guide, and transform courses of action. Once understood, the building appears with its multiple elements and relations as hopelessly complex and relative. Where to start and where to stop? However, we have our guides who we should trust in making the right selection and indicating their important aspects.

21 Murdoch points out that ‘modes of ordering are never complete, closed totalities: they always generate uncertainties, ambivalences, transgressions and resistances.’ (1998, 364) Architecture’s *uncertainty* goes also to the heart of Till’s *Architecture depends* (2013).

4.4 Third Stop: Living Area



Fig. 4.5

We leave the East End Gallery and enter the thick skin, walk through the kitchen of the East End Café, and leave it past the counter. Winner touches on the little patio outside that he would like to make accessible—but there is the issue of how to access it without changing the interior conditions. ‘There was some discussion if it could become a sort of airlock but we actually think the solution is through the skin.’ Entering the skin again, we walk along the southern façade next to the Living Area and access it somewhere in the middle. We move deeper into the field of screens and cases. Winner explains that Foster + Partners would be very concerned about the height—2 meter for the white screens. And although this would not be high enough for many paintings of the Sainsbury Collection they stick to this height. Furthermore, the wall only appears to be flexible and movable but this is not really the case; that said; they are also not quite as sturdy as Winner and colleagues would like them to be. ‘They have a few kind of issues. It’s not so good but we kind of work with them.’ However, the height would be an important factor and part of the way the building operates, Winner emphasises and explains, ‘it provides that sort of domestic quality that is bizarre in such a

massive building to have a sense of intimacy with the objects. You would not expect it until you come here. [...] Well, clearly the heights are doing something, and I would not underestimate that. So we are really keen to retain that.²²

4.4.1 Stopover: A Connection to the Patio

Walking into the Living Area and pausing there in the middle, we take a little stopover. There is the idea of creating a link to the little patio in front of the East End Café, and we encounter again the climate as an actor that hinders the opening of doors to the public here, and thus to establishing a direct connection between the café and the patio. There are doors; however, in contrast to the opposing entrance doors, there is no airlock over here. Again opening the doors, and as some people might not close them, could be a challenge for maintaining a constant museum climate. On this tour we encounter not only the past and present settings, but also future projects. Working-with the building is a constant re-thinking of possibilities for new ways of spacing. How could they add this link or connection to the building and create new movements, new trajectories, and experiences for people and objects? In the process of re-thinking, already established actors like Historic England are present: 'In terms of listing I think we could manage that and just take out a single panel which could always be replaced anyway.'²³ Winner imagines creating a link via the thick skin in the back of the café not only for the purpose of the café but also to give direct access for visitors to the growing Sculpture Park next to the building and on campus. Obviously not only Historic England upholds the material setting and complicates a re-arranging of elements and introduction of new networks. With our first two stops we approached areas that seem to be in a constant mode of change—rhythmically hosting different pieces of art, changing their material arrangements, and the flow of their visitors. And furthermore, areas which seems to be recently at the heart of a strategic re-thinking with the building, a course of testing new ways of working with the building and negotiations about what the building can do in terms of spacing. Entering the Living Area we confront a different situation.

22 Winner, walking interview.

23 Ibid.

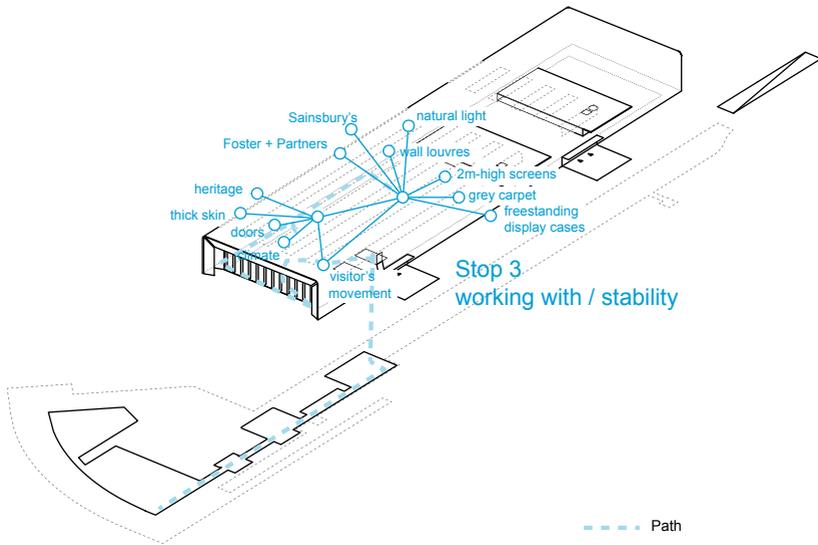


Fig. 4.6:
Third stop and actors.

4.4.2 In Its »Script« Anti-Museum

Winner mentions that they have some issues with the screens. Amongst others they are not high enough for some of their paintings. But because of what these screens do in relation to the building and the objects, they are 'keen to retain' them. 'You would not expect it until you come here.' In other words, you have to experience it. Winner explains in a later interview that the Sainsburys did not want to create a museum. He says, 'they were anti-museum',²⁴ less in an understanding of a political act than with the will to democratise art, to make it part of everyday experience. It was for this reason that they were 'breaking down barriers, breaking down walls', Winner says.²⁵ Creating a museum as a social space, having coffee next to the gallery was unusual back then, however, it is common today. But it is not only about the symbolic proximity of the areas. It is also about the process of experiencing the art itself.²⁶ Winner emphasises that the height of the walls is important to how 'the building operates', how we perceive the building, and how we interact with the objects (in an intimate setting). Thus, the walls are considered an important actor in experience.

24 Winner, in-depth interview 2.

25 Ibid.

26 Compare the museum as 'classifying machines' discussed by Hetherington (1997).

One of the great pleasures of art is being able if it is an object to handle it, to be able to alter the angle at which you look at it, in the case of a picture to look at it in all lights and in all moods. (Robert Sainsbury in Downing 1979, 04:11-04:27)

This is not just a historical quote from one of the founders in the documentary *Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts: The Gift*, but also a vision that was *inscribed* into the design of the building.²⁷ And more specifically into the Living Area which is supposed to accomplish this vision still today. People should be able to walk around the objects, approach them in an intimate, unobstructed way, and interact with them in changing lights and moods—all this was part of the design brief (even if it was just an unofficial brief).²⁸ Hence, there is a script for how spacing should take place embedded in the material setting of the Living Area not only back then, but also still today. '[T]his display has more or less stayed the same since 1978, [...] it's considered a historic display. There are objects that get loaned out or need rest, often the works on paper change, but the majority, the more robust sculptural works, stay pretty much in the same place.'²⁹ Thus, there is a wish to make certain courses of action durable through time. The heights of the wall are part of that script. Approaching the Living Area and the zigzag walls thus crosses different times. 'They [the Sainsburys] wanted things to be visible' says Steven Hooper,³⁰ director of the Sainsbury Research Unit and editor of the catalogue of the *Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection* (Hooper 1997). It is about the direct relationship with the artworks. The designers developed a setting, a proposal, which incorporates this brief.

The building really was a huge frame, and so what it had to create [was] lots of different types of frames at different scales, to relate the objects in the space, and people moving through the space. One of the biggest factors that shaped the design of the installation was creating a series of layers or frames to bring [...] someone's attention to a very small object, the size of your finger or smaller, which really was a manipulation of

27 The 'script' or 'scenario' as coined and elaborated by Madeleine Akrich (1992) is the result 'of the work of innovators' (in our case architects and designer) who *inscribe* a 'vision of (or prediction about) the world in the technical content of the new object' (ibid, 208).

28 For the museum part, Foster Associates did not become an official design brief but only two guidelines from the Sainsburys: 'We did *not* want a monument to ourselves nor to him, and we did want a positive statement.' (Robert Sainsbury after Rybczynski, 106; original emphasis)

29 Croose Myhill, Nell (Education Officer, SCVA). In-depth interview by Sabine Hansmann. Norwich, 3 November 2016.

30 Hooper, Steven (Director and Professor of Visual Arts, SRU) In-depth interview by Sabine Hansmann and Maria Lisenko. Norwich, 1 November, 2016.

layers and frames. And lighting, to get people to be able to relate and enjoy objects at that scale in that type of space.³¹

The lighting and museum designer George Sexton tells with a view to his time during the installation of the exhibition, and lists material and immaterial devices, which ‘scale the space down and invite you into the space.’³² Clearly, he refers in this quote to a ‘container space’ that *contains* people who move *through* the space, but this is not our present focus. All these material and immaterial devices, the mezzanines, the high and low partitions, the colours, the materials and textures, the types of cases, the grouping of the objects versus singular objects, and the lighting that are mentioned by Sexton—all do the work of scaling down. At the outset, with regard to the monospace, the building is described as the largest of frames, but in the next moment, this idea dissolves into other elements, materials, colours and textures by Sexton—all individual actors that do something together, allowing people ‘to relate and enjoy objects’. The building in the meantime has disappeared.

There is little text, and lots of natural light that penetrates the façades, free-standing screens and small display cabinets allow for meandering from object to object without curatorial guidance or art historical classifications. And this setting is still more or less the same. ‘The Living Area display, which has gone through about four or five changes, is not all that different; it’s a bit denser than it was almost 40 years ago,’ Hooper explains.³³

The ethos is that it should remain inspirational. People can come in, and they just see forms and shapes; just human creativity. And then, if you want to learn, you can go to the catalogue, you can go online or go into the library, and it’s like a separate thing. The Sainsbury Centre staff and,

31 George Sexton in: Sexton, III, George S., and Joe Geitner (Sexton Associates, lighting and museum design). In-depth interview by Sabine Hansmann. Washington/Norwich/Berlin, 18 September 2017.

32 Ibid. Sexton was initially approached to focus on the exhibition lights he later was commissioned as an acting keeper (acting director) for 18 months while the Sainsbury Centre was put into operation during 1977–78. He was entrusted with the task of organising and installing the exhibition. Opening his own lighting and museum design firm, George Sexton Associates in 1980, Sexton and his team stayed in close contact with the Sainsbury Centre. Having been under contract for the exhibition design for many years, today Sexton Associates still has a contract to maintain the lighting systems and they are still occasionally involved with exhibitions.

33 Hooper, in-depth interview.

certainly us, are happy that that remains a priority. The priority is about the inspiration of human creativity.³⁴

Thus the idea of 'being anti-museum' was inscribed purposefully into the setup by the Sainsburys together with Foster Associates and Sexton and all other actors involved in the design process. The anti-museum does not communicate contextual information about the objects of art. There are only small labels giving a minimum of information. Furthermore the building does not provide traditional walls to put anything on, there are louvres along the interior skin preventing the use of the inner façade as hanging area—they cannot be painted, and nothing can be attached to them. There is the floor, a grey striped carpet (not a very flexible, robust material and rather unusual today in a museum context) that stages the artworks on screens and small freestanding display cabinets. This setting indeed mobilises the visitors to move around and view the works of art from different angles (see Chapter 5). However, this setting is challenging for a museum, for staging different shows, as Greenhalgh emphasised. It is also difficult to possibly change climatic conditions. Thus, there is a contradiction between keeping and nourishing the existing Living Area and with it the legacy of the Sainsburys and of moving on and facing today's institutional obligations.

4.4.3 Stability: The Work of Many

Claudia Milburn, who is a curator at the Sainsbury Centre, explains that there indeed were ideas to change the Living Area as well:

When Paul [Greenhalgh] started he had some plans to change that space and then soon realised that actually that has to be a stable space; it has to remain in keeping with the original ethos of the building and how the Sainsburys wanted it as the extension of their living room. How those screens are devised can't really be moved much, so there's a kind of stability to that area.³⁵

If the Living Area is not connected to the practice of flexibility but rather that of stability—who or what keeps it stable? Greenhalgh emphasised that it is important to keep the 'integrity' of the monospace and hints at the people who are involved: 'It occurred to us that we should put the big exhibitions downstairs. When Norman heard the idea, he liked it. David Sainsbury liked the idea. Because

34 Ibid.

35 Milburn, Claudia (Curator, SCVA). In-depth interview by Sabine Hansmann and Maria Lisenko. Norwich, 2 November 2016.

it means the upper building is exactly how Robert Sainsbury and Norman and Lisa Sainsbury imagined it would be.³⁶ The testimony that the Living Area still is ‘the heart of the identity’ of the Centre,³⁷ seems to be of great consensus within the Sainsbury Centre itself. We touched on the understanding of the building as ‘the best object’ in the collection earlier, which elevates the building to a work of art (Chapter 3.2). This gained support when the building became listed in 2012. As it is common for artworks to be maintained in as constant a condition as possible (Guggenheim 2009), it is tempting to give a simple causal explanation: Because it is a piece of art, it is important, it stays! However, just like flexibility is the work of many, there must be a gathering of actors around the Living Area that keeps it stable. As far as the Sainsburys and Foster are concerned, the Sainsbury family is still particularly financially involved. The son of Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, David Sainsbury, funds the Sainsbury Centre with his Gatsby Charitable Foundation on a biannual basis. Foster in turn still holds responsibilities in questions of design and as an architect plays an unusual role in the life of the building, which is already 40 years old. Winner exemplifies what this commitment includes:

It was his [Foster’s] first public building, as he has credited it as one of his most important buildings, if not, the most important. So, he’s very protective of it, and we still have a direct relationship with him, and nothing happens in the building without his practice being involved, [...] Not so much the exhibitions. The exhibition design and build are very much in our hands. That changes regularly, obviously, but with the permanent display, yes. So that would be the screen system, that zigzag screen system, they were responsible for that, and if there was any adjustment made to that, that would be done in collaboration with them. The permanent collection areas look like that, and that’s the Foster aesthetic.³⁸

Winner continues to explain that this does not include the temporary exhibition areas: ‘that’s understood, that’s a temporary build, and that can change.’³⁹ Networks are apparently determined and formed here on the basis of the permanence of a material arrangement. Areas that are subject to regular change have a different network of actors than those that are permanent, and it seems that Foster + Partners and the Sainsburys isolate the Living Area in a sense to exclude it from

36 Greenhalgh, in-depth interview.

37 Winner, walking interview.

38 Winner, in-depth interview 1.

39 Ibid.

building new unwanted and potentially permanent networks.⁴⁰ However, what is the Living Area's network? Where can we see the work that is necessary to keep it in place and how is it physically stabilised? The material arrangement provides for certain stability, but constant care is nevertheless necessary. Thus, there are changes, which are compulsory to keep the stability. Material ages and is replaced. This is a work of maintenance that needs to be done with every building, and especially any interior under heavy public use. In the case of the Living Area, it was replaced with continuity in its brief as we have learned. In addition to this kind of exchange of for example technical equipment, carpet, panels and furniture at extended intervals of time, as done in the last major refurbishment in 2004–06 (see Chapter 3), there is also a continual daily process of maintenance that allows the Living Area to do its work of constantly presenting art. Here we enter yearly, monthly and daily rhythms and networks of actors of different material qualities that come together and do the work of caring for and making sure things stay in place. To keep the material arrangement stable the building is never on its own. This concerns cleaning work from the façade, to prevent, e.g. water accumulation and penetration into the building interior, to the vacuuming of carpet in the exhibition area, which 'represent potential niches for bacterial colonisation' (Camuffo 2001, 127). This also includes regular replacements such as of light bulbs or filters in the air handling plant and furthermore, repairs. This broad field of maintenance work on the building could be a study in its own right.⁴¹ However, as it leads into technical details and in particular into the structural substance of the building and thus away from the question of spacing at the intersection of building and social life, I will only exemplarily highlight two regular activities. These will illustrate how humans depend on the work and ability of the permanent presence of nonhumans in their efforts to ensure a more or less stable and safe environment for the artworks.

Maria Ledinskaya, conservator at the Sainsbury Centre, explains that she and an assistant check at least once every three months on an extensive tour the whole building to control any infestation of vermin. They do not actively search for insects themselves but control their helpers.

40 See Michael Guggenheim on the tool of physical and organisational isolation to control and hinder the creation of new networks. For artworks this may involve locating them in museums, while for buildings the declaration as monument restricts the number of possible new networks likewise, as Guggenheim points out (2009, particularly 44–45). The Sainsbury Centre being listed since 2012 can be seen as isolated in this sense, yet, regarding the Living Area the isolation seem to be particularly explicit.

41 An unpublished study by Ledinskaya comprehensively recorded and evaluates the structural substance of the building and rates the need for action for different types of maintenance works (2015).

I have these sticky traps for insects that are spread out strategically throughout all the downstairs areas and the upstairs areas. We do the walk and we check the sticky pest traps, looking for things like silverfish or carpet beetle, things that are of potential danger to collections. So, I record all this, and we monitor activity, seeing if any insect populations spike up and why that is.⁴²

These sticky traps allow Ledinskaya to be absent and only to control every few months the activities and populations of the smallest inhabitants of the Sainsbury Centre to make sure that there are no species endangering the art. The sticky traps replace her day and night. There are a lot of objects like the sticky pest traps that support the building in its ability to house art, to keep it free of insects, to provide the right level of humidity, or light (as it will be our focus with Chapter 6). Many of them are invisible, hidden in corners or for example under the tray in the cases like the silica gel that stabilises the environment by passive means. Ledinskaya explains that there are different ways to control the environment. However, she found that ‘with most of the cases upstairs it’s not actually necessary, just having the physical walls over the case is enough for the atmosphere to remain stable.’⁴³ The building does not provide humidity control but the cases take over this task (see also Chapter 3.1.3). Thus, there are ingredients added to foster and stabilise the building’s ability to present art. However, the cases do not only provide for stable humidity levels for the artworks they also mediate the interaction between artworks and visitors. There are rules to prevent accidental damages, which the guides commonly explain during tours: ‘For little ones, it’s no running, no shouting, no touching.’⁴⁴ For older children, it is ‘being careful that none of their actions threatens the artwork in any way, so not to touch or poke or prod, or take food and drink into the galleries that might get spilt on the canvases’.⁴⁵ Furthermore, there are photography rules, which include the prohibition of flashlight to keep the light exposure for art low. Outside the guided tours and workshops, only a small sign indicates that food is forbidden, hardly visible on the glass barrier (Fig. 4.5). Here it is the task of the gallery assistants to make visitors aware of misconduct. However, the task of looking after the works of art is largely taken over by the material setting. Covers, for the most part, prevent works of art from being touched or exposed to malign influences. Again, they are permanently present and allow the gallery assistants to be out of reach, following the action in the Living Area mainly

42 Ledinskaya, Maria (Conservator, SCVA). In-depth interview 1 by Maria Lisenko. 4 November 2016.

43 Ibid.

44 Sturgess, Rebecca (School and Outreach Coordinator, SCVA). In-depth interview by Sabine Hansmann. Norwich, 11 August 2017.

45 Ibid.

via camera monitoring. This is another way of sharing agency between actors in spacing. The cover is not simply a transparent hood but conveys the will of the designers and founders, who impressed their wish to create visibility but prevent touching into the design of the cases. We can call this following Latour ‘delegation’ (1992).⁴⁶ The intention of interdicting physical contact is shifted from humans to nonhumans who then carry out this task permanently. In this, they have a stabilising effect on the Living Area. Once again, we approach many layers of time and space in these objects. They ‘prescribe’ the courses of action of visitors today—even years after their inscription at a different place in the process of design.⁴⁷ This is how spacing in its complex entanglement in different times and space, different humans and nonhumans needs to be unravelled. A stable material setting is not simply stable—there is a constant work towards keeping the material settings stable—and in its stability, it is never passive. Furthermore, this stability is relative. The Living Area is still more or less the same but this does not mean there is no movement as David Rees points out:

Can you see that white painting over there, a Frank Auerbach painting? That was in the Giacometti exhibition, there was a Morandi there, the Morandi has now moved around the other side of the wall. Also, Giacometti’s *Standing Woman* was removed altogether and has been put back in a different place. For years she stayed in exactly the same place down the end there, but she’s now been moved to somewhere different; there are numerous examples of that because we took quite a lot of artworks out of here for the Giacometti show. They go back but then we tend to replace them with something else and you end up with this knock-on effect [...].⁴⁸

There is movement that takes place, the circulating of art objects. Some of which happens when staging for example a Giacometti show (which happens periodically and the last time 23 April–29 August 2016). Then artworks from Giacometti disappear from the Living Area and move for example downstairs into the new Exhibition Suite. Other objects like the Bacons are frequently requested and leave the building to visit other institutions. Furthermore, there are objects, which are particularly sensitive to light and therefore need to travel downstairs to take a rest in the dark (see Chapter 6)—a movement that is necessary to ensure object stability in

46 Delegation is the act of inscribing the competence and responsibility of people into nonhumans with the aim that these can prescribe permanently and potentially more reliable human behaviour (also see next footnote for prescription).

47 Prescription is (after Akrich 1992; Latour 1992) the delegation of behaviour by nonhumans to humans. The prescription implies how to use a machine, a tool, an object etc.

48 Rees, in-depth interview.

the long term. Supported by many tools and instruments, it is the collective work of registrar, conservator, curator, and technical team to decide on the appropriate care and necessary movements. 'It constantly changes, it appears never to move on but it's constantly changing. It's constantly morphing into new phases' Rees emphasises, not only regarding the Living Area, but also in terms of the whole building.⁴⁹ Many of these little or minor movements are only visible to the expert's eye. They stay hidden from the sightseer who tends to take the building in as a passive and stable object, while working-with the building, this object (automatically) dissolves into many small objects, relationships and situations with their own intensities and speeds.

While these kinds of material movements take place predominantly with continuity, the Living Area nevertheless exists within a contested space.

In the beginning, when this place was built, it was about housing the Sainsbury Collection, and in the years since then, it's become a lot more outward-facing with the realisation that you need to earn money, so you need to get the people in to see the works and get schools in and encourage education. So, that's developed, and we've had to change with it; we have changed the way we have worked, because it's important to get visitors in.⁵⁰

There is a script of being an anti-museum embedded in the material arrangements, which in the case of the Living Area has gone through several changes while staying more or less the same. Yet today there is a need to encourage education, to get visitors in and to earn money and this changed the way Winner, and his colleagues work with the building and the Living Area.⁵¹ Once in the world scripts are not simply extracted but negotiated. There is always the possibility of changing the script embedded in the process of 'de-description'.⁵² At the very end of our tour Winner touches one more time on this issue. I had asked about the education programme and, in response, Winner points out that there are all of these elements of setup that are trying to go against museum practice, if however only slightly. That they should be mindful of what their benefactors had in mind, but are also a public institution and thus have an obligation to communicate the art to their

49 Ibid.

50 Hoxley-Carr, Rachel (Executive Officer, SCVA). In-depth interview by Maria Lisenko. Norwich, 4 November 2016.

51 This is a general trend that has been observed for some time in the field of museum studies (DiMaggio 1996).

52 Referring to Akrich (1992) the process of *de-description* of the script lends itself to 'inventory and analysis [...] mechanisms of adjustment (or failure to adjust) between the user, as imagined by the designer, and the real user' (209).

visitors.⁵³ While Robert Sainsbury emphasised the immediate encounter with art today, a vivid practice of communicating and educating lies like an ephemeral veil over the Living Area. Therefore, new actors have grouped around the Living Area, providing different possibilities of experiencing the art and thus introduced new modes of spacing in this area, however, without changing its material setting.

4.4.4 Heterogeneity in Practice

Communicating art is a broad way of working with the building. It is about building up access, sharing knowledge, engaging with people about and with art. Let us focus for a moment on meeting people who are engaged in the activity of education and communication of art at the Sainsbury Centre and learn about their relation *to* and practice *with* the building, and thus about different modes of spacing. A group of about 60 volunteer guides offers tours: advanced-booked group tours and daily public tours. I interviewed two volunteer guides; both welcome groups twice a month, both would like to remain anonymous. I, therefore, call them Guide 1 and Guide 2.

When Guide 2 starts with a tour, she likes to begin at the top of the spiral staircase or come in on the glass walkway. Here, visitors ‘would get an impression of the building, they can see it from a high vantage point, get a real sense of the space. Then we go downstairs and I stand in front of the heads of the Sainsburys’.⁵⁴ Every guide has his or her own approach. However, the tours I joined and the guides I interviewed start off with the story of the Sainsburys. In the following, they tell the story of Norman Foster’s involvement introducing next what is considered the most important elements of the building before they dive into the Living Area most likely approaching first the *Baby Asleep* from Jacob Epstein, one of the first acquisitions from Robert Sainsbury. Here they begin by drawing attention to different pieces, provide information and try more generally to start a conversation about the works of art. This is only an abbreviated description of an ordinary 11am or 2pm public tour. It does not do justice to the many different tours that are tailored to needs of individual groups.⁵⁵ However, I would like to draw attention to two aspects: Firstly, the grand narrative and secondly the practice of communicating the art to the visitors. Both bear witness to the specific way of working with the building in the field of tension between respectfully remembering the benefactors (anti-museum) and being-a-museum.

The grand narrative or the story of the Sainsbury Centre is frequently retold: in publications, on the website, during the tours, in my interviews (see also

53 Winner, walking interview.

54 Guide 2. In-depth interview by Sabine Hansmann. Norwich, 15 August 2017.

55 For an insight into the education programme at the Sainsbury Centre see Sekules (2015).

Chapter 3). I witness a strong wish to respectfully remember the benefactors at all levels of staff. It is a powerful story, that of the anti-museum and the domestic Living Area, the friendships and sponsorships of the Sainsburys with the artists and later with the young unknown architect who today is one of the most famous in the world. Being-remindful, however, is not only an immaterial practice of retelling a founding history. That said, the retelling is one part, and there are material anchors to it, like the two bronze heads of Lisa and Robert Sainsbury or Epstein's *Baby Asleep* prominently positioned at the beginning of the Living Area. All these anchors allude, remind, and invite the guides to stop the groups here for a moment. Just as the view from the top of the spiral staircase, which gives the impression of a 'panorama', of a perfect intact world in the distance and an idea of a whole, this founding narration creates the feeling of belonging.⁵⁶ However, this founding narration is not to be misunderstood as a context in which the people work with the building. Instead, it is an actor that together with many humans and nonhumans works towards stabilising this place. The objects, in that sense, not only provide stability in terms of material durability, but they connect interactions, they remind and bridge different times and spaces and support to keep the tradition of being anti-museum alive.

Communicating the art, however, is a practice, which is complementary or even contradictory, as it adds a layer of knowledge between people and objects—a relation that the Sainsburys wished to be immediate. But is it that simple to say? Let us return to one of the guides and take a closer look.

It's quite hard to move people around space quickly. I don't know if you've ever tried, but you have to allow for people to follow their own interest or get absorbed in something, or maybe a particular object will take more time because there are more questions or just generally more interest. So, you can have an outline, but it might not always go to plan.⁵⁷

Guiding people around is not always easy. At least it does not always go according to plan. Once again, there are several guides or actors who influence the course of the tour. Guiding is an activity *with* the artworks. Some of them stop the visitors, arouse their interest, and absorb them. Thus, guiding is an activity with different intensities and speeds, with events; just like the walking, that we explored earlier (see Chapter 2.2.2). The tour is spaced by the different actors that take part in it—there are the artworks, the visitors, the guide, but also the carpet, the high ceiling, and the sound-absorbing walls that for example do not always make it 'easy to

56 See Latour (2005, particularly 183–90) on panoramas, and their ambiguous character between showing *everything* and *nothing*. See Guggenheim (2009) on how objects relate to time and are capable of stabilising memory.

57 Guide 2, in-depth interview.

project your voice to a large group constantly', as Guide 1 points out.⁵⁸ The building and the material arrangements take an active part in every tour. And this can even be better understood in the contrast between the ground floor and the basement. The setup of the Living Area supports a smooth way of guiding visitors while the layout of the Exhibition Suite, for example, seems to be more challenging. 'I don't think there's ever a time when we can't move around [...] the Living Area quite comfortably with a group; it's very easy. Maybe in the special exhibition area when it's busy, that's more difficult, partly because of the nature of that long corridor'.⁵⁹ Here they have to keep the group on one side to let other visitors pass. The high visibility in the Living Area, 'the fact that you have totally uninterrupted space and you can see where your colleagues are working very easily makes it much easier' and allows for a great deal of 'fluid[ity] with the groups'.⁶⁰ This is something supported by the scale and the shape of the building, 'you don't wander from room to room, you wander from space to space'.⁶¹ Wandering from space to space, following the material arrangements, in the Living Area, is not a linear process. Sometimes the works of art take over; sometimes the guide, a guest, or the presence of another group redirects the trajectory. However, they do not wander within space but *with* space. New connections appear, and with a turn around the corner, others fade. Communicating art thus is not necessarily associated with the insertion of a distance in the immediate experience. In some cases, this immediate experience, which contrasts with knowledge-driven communication, is taken as the starting point:

If I am doing a session, it will always start from just letting people explore, feeling at home within the space. So usually I would start somewhere around the Henry Moore *Mother and Child* in the middle, but always give people an opportunity to spend a few minutes doing whatever they want before I then hone in to do particular activities. But the particular activities are usually, take a thing, see where it leads you.⁶²

Alexandra Woodall is Head of Learning at the Sainsbury Centre at the time of interview. Her work is not knowledge driven as she emphasises, 'I'm not a curator; I'm not an expert on the context of any of these objects whatsoever. I don't approach objects from needing to know anything about their context. I only know

58 Guide 1, In-depth interview by Sabine Hansmann. Norwich, 6 November 2016.

59 Guide 2, in-depth interview.

60 Guide 1, in-depth interview.

61 Ibid.

62 Woodall, Alexandra (Head of Learning, SCVA). In-depth interview by Sabine Hansmann. Norwich, 15 August 2017.

things accidentally, in a way. So, I would always use things as a means of exploring ways of looking and ways of finding out things without needing to know.⁶³ She explains that the Living Area is ‘perfect for us because it enables us to just open it up to whatever our visitors want.’⁶⁴ The absence of text, of interpretation, is essential for this purpose as it allows her to bring the visitors and the ‘things’ directly together without any pre-informed layer of meaning in-between. ‘Take the thing and see where it leads you’, is also the idea of the *object dialogue boxes* by the two artists Karl and Kimberly Foster whom she has worked with a lot. ‘These are beautiful boxes filled with quite surreal objects, and the idea is that visitors, as a facilitated session, take these surreal objects and use them to make a connection between the weird thing in their hand and something in the gallery. But it’s totally led by the visitor who’s holding the thing, or you could argue it’s led by the thing.’⁶⁵ The education programme experiments with how people experience the art and the building; experiences which are not guided or under full control of humans but take place with the nonhumans (see also Chapter 5). ‘Lie down in the gallery’ is a little yellow brochure produced by the group of Young Associates at the Sainsbury Centre led by Nell Croose Myhill (Sainsbury Centre Young Associates 2017). It invites one to explore the Gallery differently and contains advice like, “Hide and seek”, “Draw an artwork with both hands (pencil in both hands)”, “Mime an artwork”, “Make a friend for a lonely object”, “Critique an object individually or in a group”, which plays with ways of knowing and looking and tests new modes of engagement with objects—some of them challenge what could be described as ordinary practice in a gallery.

All this is experimenting with spacing. It changes the practices of viewing, perceiving, understanding and moving with the objects. This could well be in the interests of the Sainsburys, but that is not to be judged here. It is more important to emphasise that it is a practice of adjustment in de-scription of the Living Area. The ‘users define quite different roles of their own.’ (Akrich 1992, 208) The action of communicating the art, like the adding of contextual information can be understood as a process of objectification of the art and a distancing of immediate experience;⁶⁶ however, it can also guide, leading to experience many different relations, in heterogeneity,⁶⁷ as we have seen. Both shift the relation of the different

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 See Hetherington (1999) on the changing relation of subject and object in the history of heterogeneity in museum spaces.

67 See Hooper-Greenhill on the museum concept of ‘post-museum’, which is shifting away from the modernist museum, as a place of ‘many voices and many perspectives’ (2000, 152).

actors by adding new actors (knowledge, strange objects, instructions) into the seemingly stable network for action with the Living Area.

Thus, the Living Area can be understood as a stable space in terms of its script and in relation to its materiality. Furthermore, it has a stable network, which functions every day towards the constant re-production of this space. A space largely defined by prescription. Space is nevertheless shifting and changing in relation to the practices that appear with the Living Area in the course of de-description. Since we witness different practices and new experiences, new spaces in turn are encountered. Spacing is about negotiation with the existing scripts and here differences occur.⁶⁸

As the Living Area in its layout invites individual encounters, we discover a specific situation in which prescription and negotiation co-exist in the sense of continuity in difference. Part of the script is not having a uniformity when it comes to activities, but a diversity of experiences in the loosely scattered field of art works—contrary a linear narration of the modern museum and gallery (Hetherington 1999).

4.5 Conclusion: Connectivity in Spacing

‘Taking a walk’ to explore the ordinary world of the Sainsbury Centre turned out to be very different from a static interview conducted at a table. The building, but even more so the many individual elements (the connecting point, the glass case, the connection to the patio, the walls), direct and divert the course of the interview. Thus, the interview was not linear, neither in space nor in time. We approached many different spaces and times guided by Winner and guided by the building, a building that is itself on the move and always changing. Winner stops and is stopped at points that are of concern and he starts to introduce the way that he and his colleagues *work with* the building in specific locations. However, this is not a working with a singular static object but in multiple and various courses of action and then also with multiples objects. Thus, in the interview the building disappears as a Late Modern and High Tech construction. Questions of style

68 Akrich (1992) particularly draws attention to negotiations which are then translated into technological objects prescribing certain roles for future users (which then still can define their own roles). Murdoch (1998) explores further the aspect of negotiation and prescription in connection to space for the field of geography (see also Chapter 4). Speaking of the ‘space of negotiation’ and the ‘space of prescription’, Murdoch highlights that both can ‘emerge from within the same networks’ (ibid. 364).

and age categorisations vanish and practicalities come to the fore. In the walking interview, the attention stays with the thingly world we move in. This world is introduced with biographical details. Winner points to the most recent changes, to specific current challenges, to future projects and options for transformation always in relation to how the Sainsbury team works with a particular area and/or what difference specific elements make. These biographical accounts are different from Rybzcynski's biography (Chapter 3.2.3). Like the interview itself, it is no linear narration: neither in space nor in time. It is not *the* biography of *the* building, but rather a biography in fragments. However, it is not as if the grand narrative of the Sainsbury Centre that is frequently retold in the publications about the building would disappear. The Sainsburys and the founding myth are there to stay. Yet, it turns out that this narrative is not *outside* or *above* the building, but an actor in itself. It guides today's decisions; it gives a starting point to the public tours as we have seen, for example, with the two bronze heads of Lisa and Robert Sainsbury, and thus it directs and changes trajectories. Foster is also here. Not as the big starchitect, however, whom we encounter in the literature, but with regard to his very specific influence on and contribution to specific decision processes today ('a temporary build can change').⁶⁹

Therein lies the very contribution of this type of interview and approach as we leave the big picture, focus on particular spots, and deepen our knowledge on very specific elements and entanglements. We gain a first impression of how people and things are interwoven in practice. With this pragmatic introduction to the material world of the building, we witness what the objects do and how they become. We gain a clear understanding that it is neither a simple functional nor a semiotic interpretative relation that the people and the building share (Kamleithner 2014; Chapter 1). Instead, we gain an idea of their complexity. Slowing down and listening to the team of the Sainsbury Institute, countless relational things emerge, things the team engages with every day, that redirect decision, movements, and trajectories. Thus, we learn how the building and its elements take part in daily life.

The isometric diagrams help to anchor or situate the new knowledge gained and to build a connection to the three-dimensional abstract body we are used to handling in architecture. That said, we encounter a great complexity of temporal and spatial connections that go beyond the visualisation of these drawings. We are no longer in a pre-existing Euclidean space. The space that we approach here is not one of scale but a space of connectivity, of a network in the processual reality of architecture.⁷⁰ Turning to spacing we encounter 'connections, short circuits,

69 Winner, in-depth interview 1.

70 Tracing connections is essential to Latour's project of *Reassembling the Social* (2005) and ANT more generally. Yaneva then conceptualises buildings as 'a tie amongst others', as 'a specific *connector*' that shapes experiences and practice (2010, 144; original emphasis).

translations, associations, and mediations' (Latour 1997, 183) in the act, thus making the witnessing of how architecture connects possible. This reality 'constantly changes, it appears never to move on but it's constantly changing' and this is most obvious when working with the building.⁷¹

Space is not what is contained in a building but what is practiced with a building. This becomes particularly evident when approaching the paradigm of flexibility that is traditionally connected to open plan buildings (see Chapter 2.1 and 3.2). Analysing the plan of the Sainsbury Centre and taking the intention and history of the founders and architects into account, we get the idea that the Sainsbury Centre indeed provides a flexible space, is open to (spatial) experiments and change (see Chapter 3). Turning to its lived reality, however, the monospace part of the Sainsbury Centre is not what can be described as a flexible space. As we have learned, the new underground area with the traditional room-based layout is in fact the flexible space. It becomes apparent that flexibility and likewise stability are practices. Space depends on and emerges with practices and these practices are hybrid human-nonhuman. Approaching Winner and his colleagues takes us into details in which we can witness the specific connectivity of humans and nonhumans in practice.

Unlike traditional sociology, which for a long time had banished things from its view of the social (Delitz 2009a), and which still seems to have some difficulties incorporating them into its spatial thinking outside human-centred considerations, ANT permits the acknowledgement that space is made up and composed of a lot of 'stuff'. Materiality here is not viewed as representation or materialisation of the social (see Chapter 1), but as an actor that can shift the course of decision-making (move the temporary exhibition downstairs), of daily practice (take the stairs not the goods lift) and thus shift, redirect or modify reality. This is familiar ground for architects and the basis of creative pragmatic thinking in producing new realities. That said, there is the tendency to treat buildings, if not as artworks (as we face with the Sainsbury Centre), but at least as discrete objects negating or trying to determine to a certain extent the processes that do take place with it (Guggenheim 2009; Till 2013). Acknowledging that buildings—that things—can never determine a certain course of action, as there is always a possibility of acting otherwise in spacing,⁷² thus implies shifting the notion of building.

Space is hybrid—the work of many—humans and nonhumans. The building and its elements take part in this work, but the real question is how. Here again ANT is of particular help. It allows us to analyse specific connectivity and provides

71 Rees, in-depth interview.

72 Compare the interview with Michel Foucault, *Space, Knowledge, and Power* (Rizzoli Communications 1984) where he describes liberty as practice and relativises the position and power of architects. See also Till (2013) who shows how architecture's determination vanishes in its dependencies.

us with a vocabulary to address the different ways humans and nonhumans share agency. Spacing emerges from within agencies and thus we have to shed light on the way humans and nonhumans co-exist in specific courses of action. The concept of script by Akrich (1992) allows us to acknowledge the presence of architects, patrons and craftsmen who inscribe a vision into the setting. We learn, for example, that the Living Area should permit people to have an intimate experience of the art objects. Hypotheses concerning the panels, the light, the carpet, the cases etc. were inscribed into the material setting and thus stabilized over space and time. Today this script and programme of the setting is enacted in the daily routines of the human and nonhumans involved; it prescribes certain movements or interactions (this we will also explore in more depth with the next chapter). The constant presence and action of nonhuman vigilance—such as the cover over the cases—hinders people from touching the art objects substituting human observation in some cases. Action here is delegated to nonhumans (Akrich and Latour 1992). Additionally, the concept of script allows us to shed light on the creativity or ability of interpretation by people in the process of de-description. Taking for example strange objects with them on a tour creates new spatial experiences as new interactions with the existing setting and works of art occur. Adding temporarily or permanently actors into a network distributes agency differently, creating new spacings and changing experiences.

Approaching the Living Area we confront a great deal of temporal (network) stability or a practice that is consistent and continuous. With Murdoch (1998) we can differentiate here the ‘space of prescription’ and the ‘space of negotiation’. The former tends to give architects the security of being in control. Yet, listening to Winner and colleagues we gained an understanding of the negotiations involved—of the different ways links are established, maintained, or dissolved in shared agencies. Thus, the latter, the space of negotiation or de-description, dissolves this supposed security once again. Both, stability and negotiation come together in the course of spacing.

By shifting our focus from outside, from a contextual approach to the messy real world with its mediating elements we become aware that objects as mediators can act in surprising ways and can only be defined in the process of action. We learn that it is work to stabilise and create a predictable environment. We witnessed how stable climate, a beautiful glass box, how sticky traps and glass covers participate in courses of action, how they shape, facilitate, foster or hinder certain spacings. Equipped with the understanding for the fundamental entanglement of human-nonhuman-interaction in spacing and in particular with this chapter in the process of working-with, let us turn towards the people who are only temporarily engaged with the building. Let us continue to explore how people experience the art and the building. How is the engagement of visitors in spacing different and how are we to approach the experiences of people who are only temporarily present?