

How Format Matters. Handling and Scaling in Art History (19th-21st centuries)

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The project examines the concept of "format" for the period of the 19th to 21st centuries. In art history, "format" is an essential methodological approach for analyzing art pieces. So far, scholarly perspectives on format are threefold: 1) Format as a dimension of space. 2) Format as a dimension of techniques and technology. 3) Format as a narratological dimension. What has hardly been discussed so far is the handling and scaling of objects as additional dimensions of format. This project probes the art historical position on these commonly neglected yet central dimensions of format. To examine the mutual interdependency of format, handling, and scaling as a meaning making principle, the analyses methodologically combine material, tactile, and receptive approaches with production-relevant aspects. The aim of the project is to both build upon and further enrich the research on format by proposing an innovative methodological approach to select groups of works. The mutual interdependency of format, handling and scaling will be examined on selected art formats from the 19th-21st centuries such as, 'Artists' Books', 'Multiples', 'Folded Objects', 'Historiscopes' and 'Miniatures'. These objects all achieve their meaning and significance by scaling and haptic handling. Their genre or normative expectations of spatial proportions have less impact. However, art historians have not yet explored when and how these meaning making practices of handling and scaling in different media appeared in general. In particular, we do not yet know when and how such practices deal with conventions of formats, how they confirm, question, vary or undermine such conventions and expectations and to what degree they constitute intrinsic meaning. This study seeks to provide answers to these questions.

Projektbeteiligte

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