

On Public Demand: Staging Temporary Exhibitions of Artworks from Storage

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Abstract

Museum storage facilities are currently very much in the spotlight. Usually, these places are inaccessible to visitors, which in itself naturally arouses curiosity. A recent survey conducted by a leading Dutch newspaper concluded that over 90% of the artworks owned by the country's museums is languishing in storage. Pressure is mounting for the public to be given an opportunity to view these "hidden treasures." More and more frequently we now see museums responding by organizing temporary exhibitions featuring objects from their own storage, not least because this is a relatively inexpensive way of attracting visitors.

There are several modalities for an exhibition of this kind. One option is to have the museum staff choose the artworks to be included. Another is to invite a succession of TV celebrities to roam the storage facility. A third route might be to hold an online survey in which members of the public can indicate what they would like to see on display. A key factor in all these decisions is the museum's own position on what it does and does not want to put on display. For instance, you need to decide whether artworks from storage should undergo restoration before being put on display, or whether they should be exhibited quite deliberately in their original state, even if they are in poor condition.

This statement will examine the dos and don'ts of the phenomenon of "Out of Storage Exhibitions," in which Edwin Buijsen will primarily draw on his own experience with the exhibition *In and Out of Storage*, which was on view at the Mauritshuis in the spring of 2016.

About Edwin Buijsen

Edwin Buijsen studied art history at Leiden University. He took up his position as Head of Collections at the Mauritshuis in 2008. Through the years he has worked on various exhibitions and publications on Dutch and Flemish artists, including Paulus Potter, Jan van Goyen, Rembrandt, Johannes Vermeer, and Cornelis Troost. Recently he curated the exhibition *In and Out of Storage* at the Mauritshuis. He is currently completing his dissertation on the production of paintings by the seventeenth-century Dutch artist Adriaen van de Venne. He is a member of the editorial board of *Oud Holland* and a former member of CODART's program committee.

Edwin Buijsen has been a member of CODART since 2005.