

Next Landmark 2014 rewards

Mariela Apollonio for The Art Circle

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*Mariela Apollonio puts museum curators on a pedestal in her collection of photographs entitled **The Art Circle**. Her series of 23 photographs of curators of prestigious museums all over the world were entered in the 2014 Next Landmark international architecture and photography contest, and won the prize in the Photography section.*



Jean-Louis Vidouz, Director of The Guggenheim Bilbao 1107

Mariela Apollonio won a prize for **The Art Circle** in the Photography category of Next Landmark 2014, an international architecture and photography contest organised by Floornature, held for the third time this year.

What are the mechanisms that make a work of art? Mariela Apollonio asked the curators of 23 prestigious museums all over the world. **In *The Art Circle*, the curators do not hesitate to become works of art themselves, portrayed standing on a pedestal in the centre of the frame.** The curator gets up on the pedestal and is displayed to the public like a sculpture or installation.



Mariela de Carral, Director of Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid 1991-1995

The curators smile at us and, even though Mariela Apollonio did not make their pedestal too high, they look down at us from their privileged position, aware of the duty and honour of beating a path for others. **While the trend in publishing is towards dispossession of the publishing houses, thanks to the web medium, which allows anyone to publish online without the usual filters on competence, museum institutions are reinforcing their central role in the world of art, declaring that there can be no art without an art museum.**

The great institutional revolution that began with the advent of the web, of digital catalogues and of planet-wide reproduction and transmission of publications, has now come to a very important chapter. Today's museums are no longer places for preserving knowledge but places of entertainment, no longer archives and custodians of permanent collections but temporary containers for collections "in transit". Museums (or at least the most contemporary and popular ones) are no longer identified with their collections, but with the temporary exhibitions that come through them and the series of related activities, from conferences to screenings, performances and theme days, from school projects to twinnings with other institutions. A museum web site becomes a portal providing news from the world of art, emphasising its cultural offerings for different ages and types of people, like windows on today's world of art. Exhibitions last less and less time, one replacing another; as if the museum were a magazine, the curator chooses an editorial policy, appointing specialists to conduct particular studies and set up spaces for entertainment and exhibition routes on multiple levels.

According to Mariela Apollonio: “The architecture is the framework in which the scene takes place and the scenario that dignifies the subject portrayed”. **This study of curators is also a study of architecture, as every shot frames not only the space for exhibiting the work of art, in this case the curator identified with it, but its whole world.** The museum’s architecture, meaning the museum building, is both its world and its means of expression. The curator is at the centre of his or her architectural world, interpreting it, determining its connotations, and announcing its presence in every window. The architectural volume is in effect not particularly recognisable, it can merely be guessed at from the detail framed in the shot, but its purpose is not to make this clear, because the architecture also takes on the public face the curator wishes to present: Frank O. Gehry’s Guggenheim would be an unexplored meteorite if it were not the focus of its curator’s communication project.

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Photos: © Mariela Apollonio