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How can routing support the story of a museum

**An essay exploring different ways of
routing for design museum house Dedel**

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We only needed a few small things, a pillow cover, a mirror and some organization folders, but our visit to Ikea still took an hour and a half. We knew the store and we were going with a clear goal but the routing in the store makes for everything but a quick store visit. The store starts with Småland, a kind of kindergarten where you can leave your children behind. After a brief hesitation about leaving my boyfriend here in view of the fact that we got into an argument last time because we couldn't find our way to the toilet quickly, I decided to take him anyway. Walking fast we moved between the slow strolling visitors looking for the products and the cutting off routes. It seemed as if people are losing speed and have to stick to a maximum of 2 kilometers per hour. When we finally found one of the hidden off-roads, we reorient ourselves and looked for a map that is placed on the paths. We came to the restaurant and quickly went to the toilet and bale that the restaurant is closed because of the corona measures. Otherwise, we probably would have been here to get some food because walking around makes you hungry. When we finally arrived at the checkout not only the pillow cover, mirror and folders were in our shopping cart but also placemats, a new plant with a flower-pot, and other things we didn't need at first.

That I end up with more stuff than I need is no coincidence. Alan Penn, director of the Virtual Reality Centre for the Built Environment, claims, "IKEA's store layout is a psychological weapon used to confuse and disorientate shoppers into spending more".¹

The route of the IKEA is a linear route that goes from the entrance to exit with multiple bends makes to sure you spend as much time in the store as possible. The tricks the store uses to keep us in the store as long as possible and to buy as much as possible starts just after the entrance. Ikea has created a children's play palace where parents can leave their children and thus shop undisturbed without bored and tired children. In this way, they are more likely to spend more time, and more money, in the store. When you may have left your children in Smaland, you take an escalator to the second floor where the store starts with showrooms. Here people can see and touch the real furniture to get a good idea of the product. They can pick up that product in a flat box in the second part of the store, the department store. The route has a lot of bends so you can't really see what you're going to find in the next room. This makes you curious and you tend to look and not take the cut-off routes that are also very hidden to make them unattractive. By

making the store and the route confusing, IKEA makes you more inclined to take a product you see along the way. This is because you don't know if you are going to see it later in the store and you don't want to walk all the way back.

For this year's studio, I am working on House Dedel, An old patrician house with a lot of monumental value that is being converted into a museum. I Wonder if the routing of the IKEA can be implemented, and be relevant in other buildings like the museum. Can the winding, linear path also be a psychological weapon to educate and inspire museum visitors? And are there more types of routing possible in the museum. How can the routing help tell a story in the museum?

First of all, it is important to know what a museum is and what the purpose of a museum is. According to the ICOM, the International Council of Museum, "A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development,

open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment."²

A museum organizes permanent or temporary exhibitions. Exhibition designer Herman Kossmann describes in the book *de narratieve ruimte* (the narrative space):

*"An exhibition is a narrative that unfolds in space and time."*³ It is a story through which people can walk and determine their own pace. What the narrative does for the mental experience of an exhibition, the walk does with the physical experience of the exhibition. By moving the visitor, objects acquire different relationships with each other that may or may not have been designed beforehand.

Because we move in time, through a succession of spaces, we experience a space in relation to where we have been and

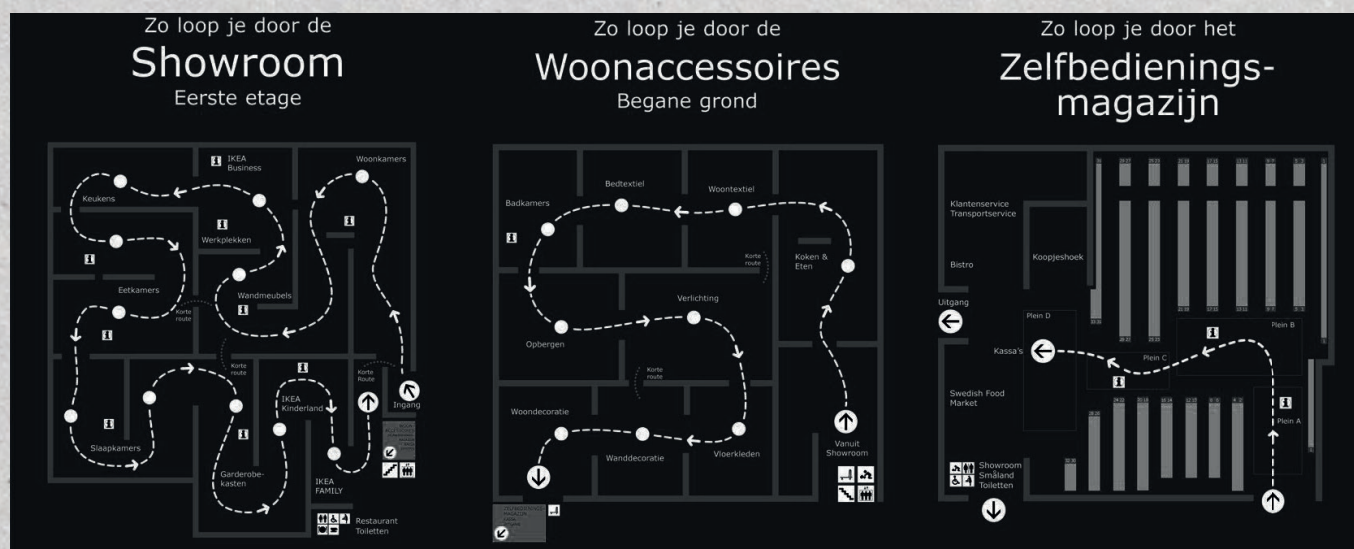


Photo: 1 routing IKEA Eindhoven

In some cases, it is not a problem in which order visitors see the works because there is no direct link between the works or it is not bound to a timeline.

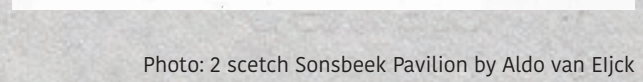


Photo: 2 scetch Sonsbeek Pavilion by Aldo van Elick

For some exhibitions, like Aldo van Eijk his pavilion, it doesn't matter in which order people see the spaces and artworks. For other exhibitions, it is more important that people follow the route the museum has come up with or reflect on a particular work, in order to better understand the story the exhibition is trying to convey. In "huis Dedel" there is no real clear connection between the works even though I think there is, and should be a connection. This could be a timeline so you can place the advertisement in the social, cultural, and economic conditions of a particular time. Although most exhibitions are a collection of separate story fragments, it can happen that an exhibition has a story with a clear beginning and an end. The routing of the exhibition can then be in a linear route with a chronological story. Like the routing of the IKEA. This way of guiding people around can help to draw a clear timeline for visitors and convey a story from beginning to end.

A variant that occurs more often is a story with successive phases in a sequence of spaces. They are often separate fragments that are staged spatially but can also be approached differently by walking the route in a different way. The visitor can therefore use the fragments to write his own story by choosing his own route through the exhibition. An Example of this method is The fairy tale factory, an exhibition at the Musée d'ethnographie de Genève designed by Holzer Kobler. The exhibition takes place in a large space that represents the real world. Within this space, Eight European fairy tales are placed in each their own space. The

order in which you see the fairy tales is not important, only within the space itself there is an order of the exhibited objects and stories.

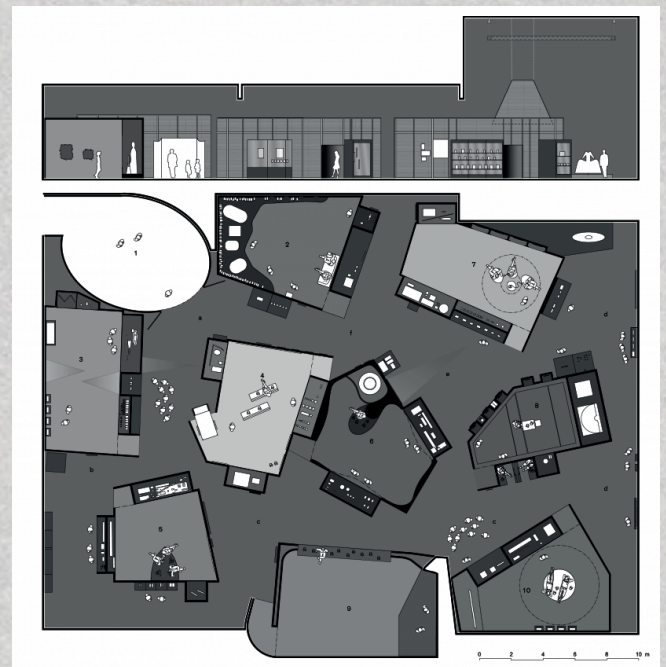


Photo: 3 Floorplan The fairy tale factory, an exhibition at the Musée d'ethnographie de Genève designed by Holzer Kobler

"We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us," 4

said Sir Winston Churchill in his speech to the meeting in the House of Lords, October 28.

I think this quote is relevant because it says something about the relationship we have with the built environment around us. It means that after we have designed our environments, such as a park, our houses, or a museum, these spaces constantly influence how we see things, how we act and how we feel. We can use this theory to design spaces that steer us towards a certain goal. What this goal is, depends on the function of the design and the ideas of the interested party. One of the factors architects can use to shape our environment is routing.

In this essay, I summed up three different types to order an exhibition, the labyrinth way, the linear way, and the successive phases in a sequence of spaces. Depending on the goal, the resources, and the space at your disposal you can find the best way to deal with the spatial organization. Where stores like IKEA use routing to make people consume more, museums could use it to tell a clear story from beginning to end and make sure that the visitors see everything. Design museum Dedel is at the moment an uncomfortable encounter between the advertisement art and the house with its history. Using the routing as a design tool to tell a story the advertisement art and history can become a whole in the museum.



Voetnoten

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