

MMA
COLLECTIONS

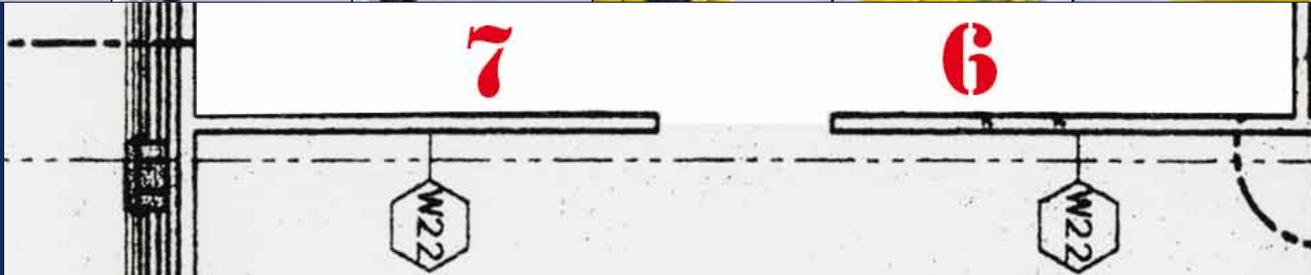
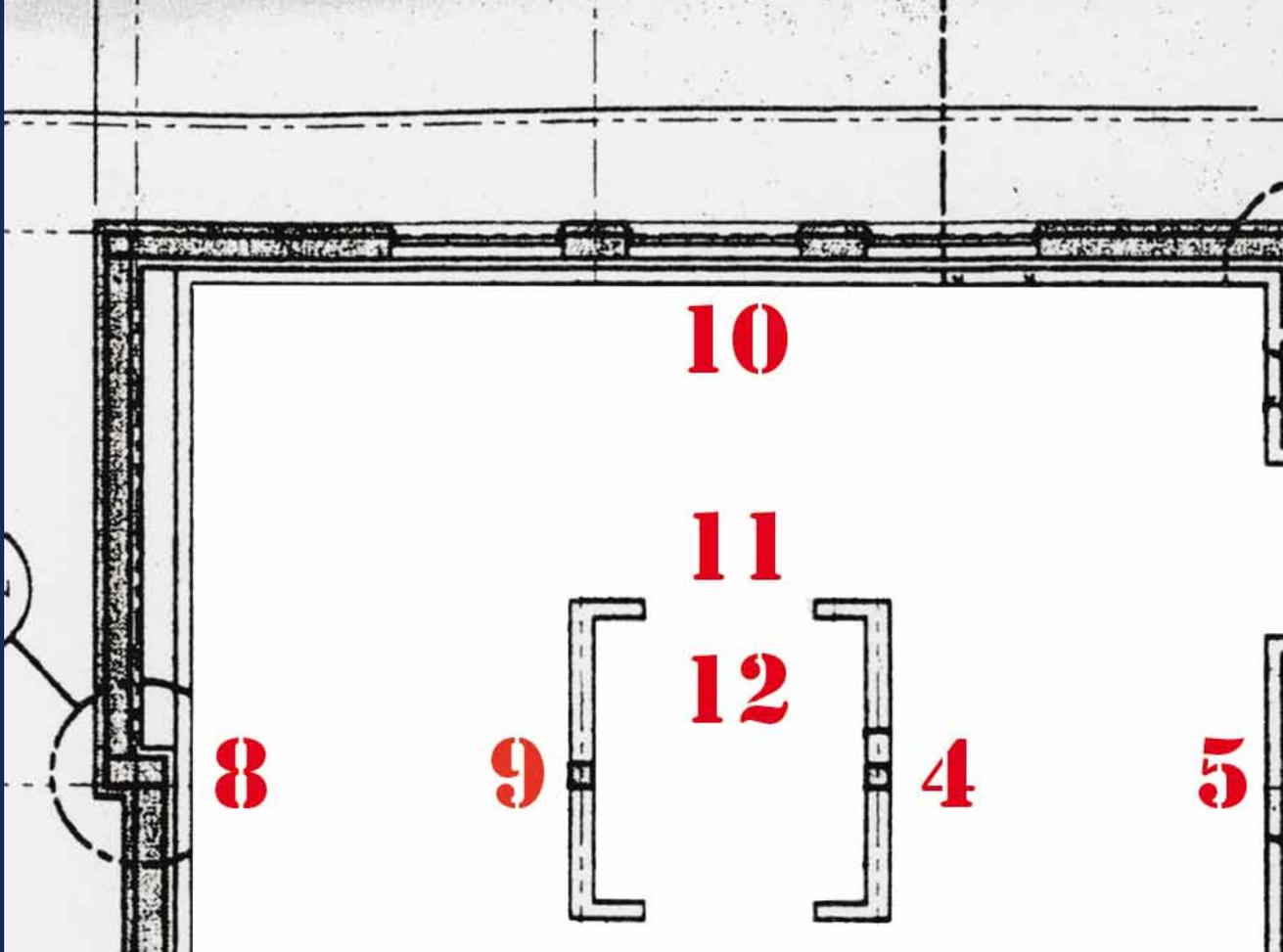
The Blind Architect Meets Rembrandt

August 28, 2010 - January 8, 2011



alexander pilis & ihor holubizky





Artist's Acknowledgements

Alexander Pilis extends his appreciation to the following for their contribution and assistance with the development of this project; Raphael Grazziano, Teresa Novaes, Miriam Chnaiderman, and the McMaster Museum of Art staff

The Museum acknowledges the support of the City of Hamilton, its members, McMaster University and the various trusts and endowments established in its name.

Publication Design: Alexander Pilis & Raphael Grazziano.

Over the past 25 years Alexander Pilis has explored a research praxis through exhibitions, workshops, publication and curatorial projects under the aegis and metaphor of Architecture Parallax; posing questions about visual literacy and cognition, and the modernization of vision that is woven through the built environment, architecture and the city.

<http://theblindarchitect.com/>

Front Cover Images;

Rembrandt van Rijn, *Faust*, c.1652-53

etching; Collection Art Gallery of Hamilton

Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Blindness of Tobit*, 1651

etching; Collection Art Gallery of Hamilton

Alexander Pilis, *The Blind Architect Meets Rembrandt*, 2004

film still

Back Cover Images;

Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Artist in His Studio*, c. 1629

oil on panel, 25.1 x 31.9 cm

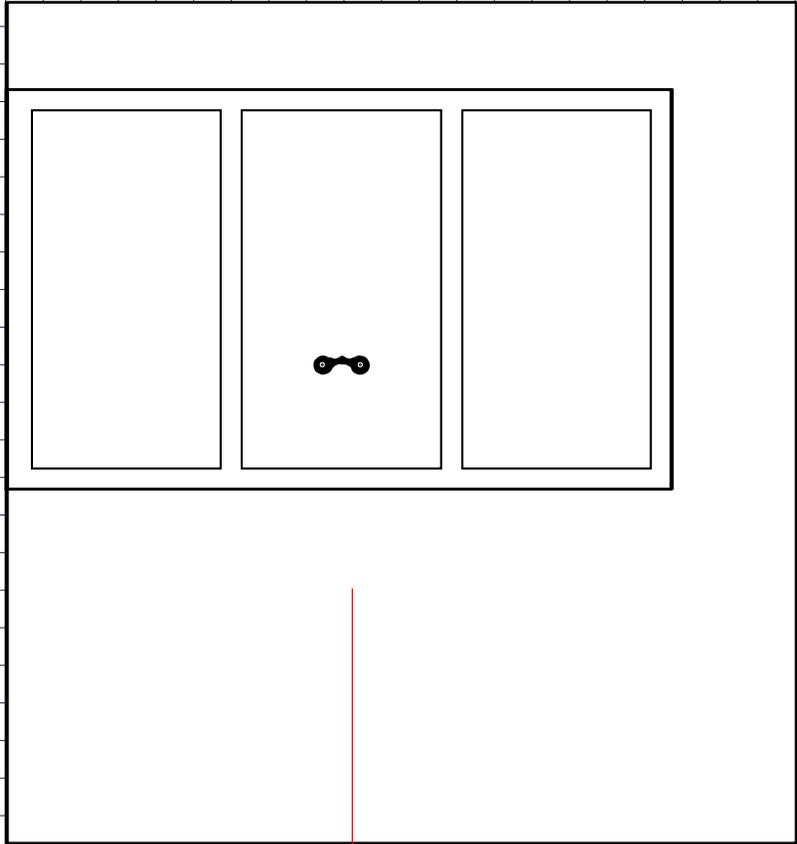
Museum of Fine Arts Boston

Alexander Pilis, *The Blind Architect Meets Rembrandt* 2004

film still

All works collection of the McMaster Museum of Art, except where noted

I



Alexander Pilis (Canadian, b. Brazil, 1954)

Blinding Light, 1995

2 refurbished binoculars on both sides of
glass facing each other, 1/1 scale

Courtesy of the artist

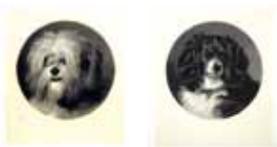




Edwin Landseer (British 1802-1873)
Dash (engraved by J.W. Josey 1875)
steel engraving; sheet size, 51 x 35 cm

Edwin Landseer
Cairnach (engraved by J.W. Josey 1875)
steel engraving; sheet size, 51 x 35 cm

2



3



Alexander Pilis (Canadian, b. Brazil, 1954)
The Blind Architect: Gary M. Dault, 2004
C-print, 43 x 199cm

Alexander Pilis
The Blind Architect: Dr. Jeanne Randolph, 2004
C-print, 43 x 199cm

Alexander Pilis
The Blind Architect: Ihor Holubizky, 2004
C-print, 43 x 199cm
All courtesy of the artist and Peak Gallery





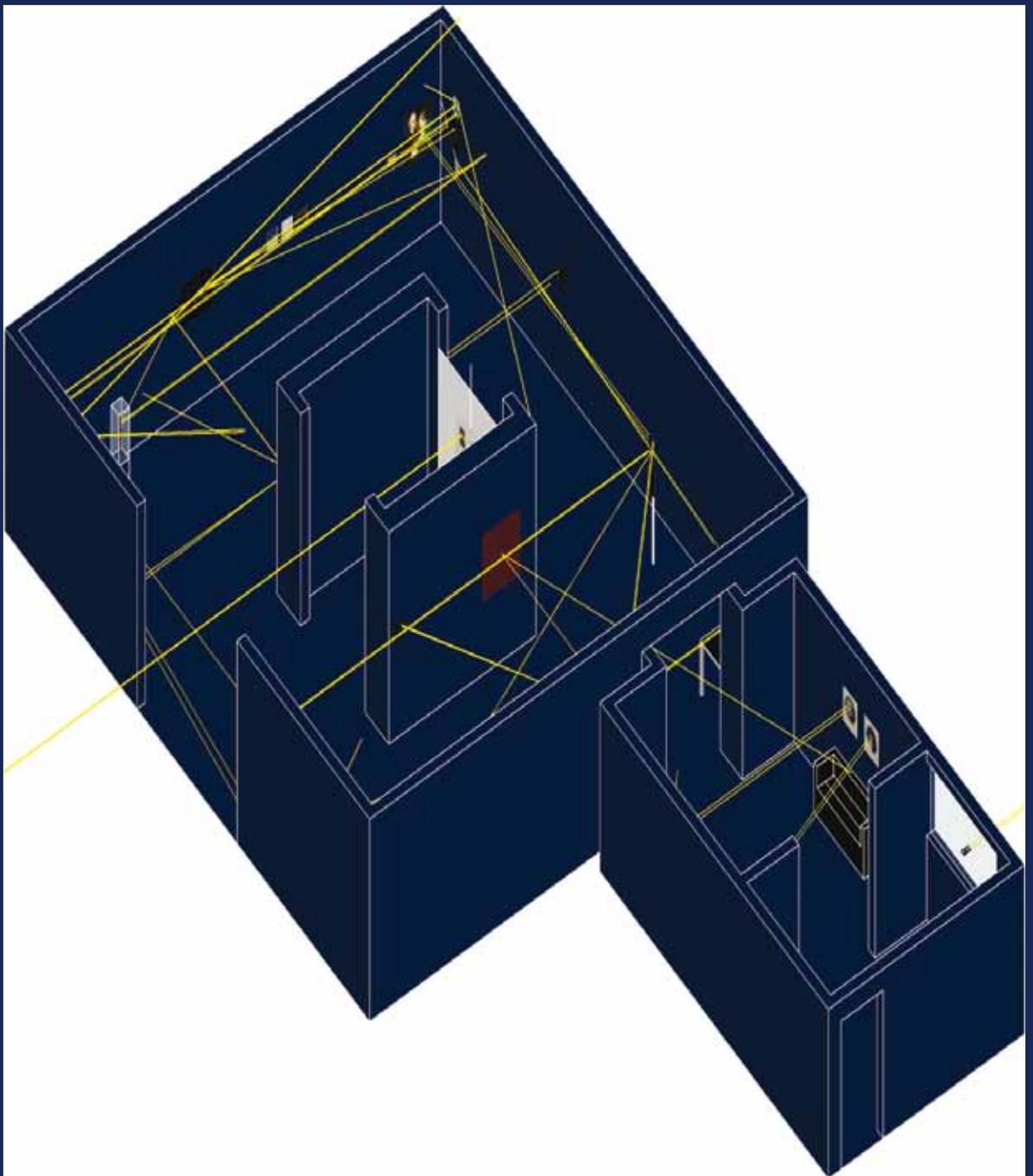
4



Tsugouharu Foujita (Japanese 1886-1968)
Jeune Femme, 1928
ink on paper, 31.2 x 26.8 cm
Gift of Irving Zucker, 2002



Gerhard Richter (German b.1932)
Mirror Painting (Blood Red 736-6), 1991
pigment on glass, 95 x 86 cm
Levy Bequest Purchase, 1997





Rembrandt van Rijn (Dutch 1606-1669)
Faust, c.1652-53
etching; image, 22 x 17.5 cm
Collection Art Gallery of Hamilton

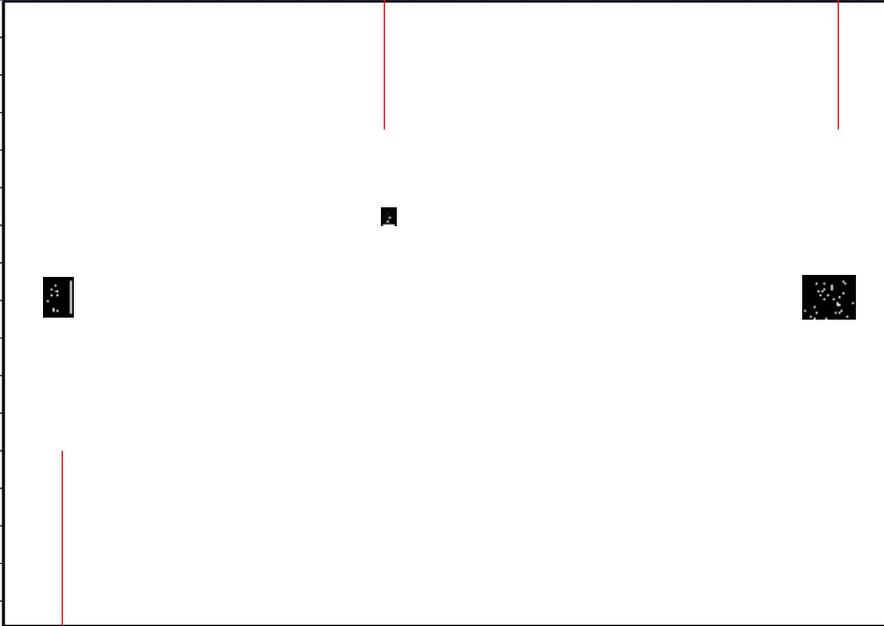


Gerrit Dou (Netherlandish 1613-1675)
Portrait of Rembrandt's Father, nd
oil on canvas, 19.2 x 15.3 cm
Gift of Herman Levy Esq., 1984

Ludwig Meidner (German 1884-1966)
Meine Mutter / My Mother, 1937
etching; image size, 8.3 x 6.2 cm
Museum Purchase, 1974

August Sander (German 1876-1964)
Otto Dix and His Wife, Koln, 1928
gelatin silver print, 20.4 x 24.2 cm
Levy Bequest Purchase, 1996

6

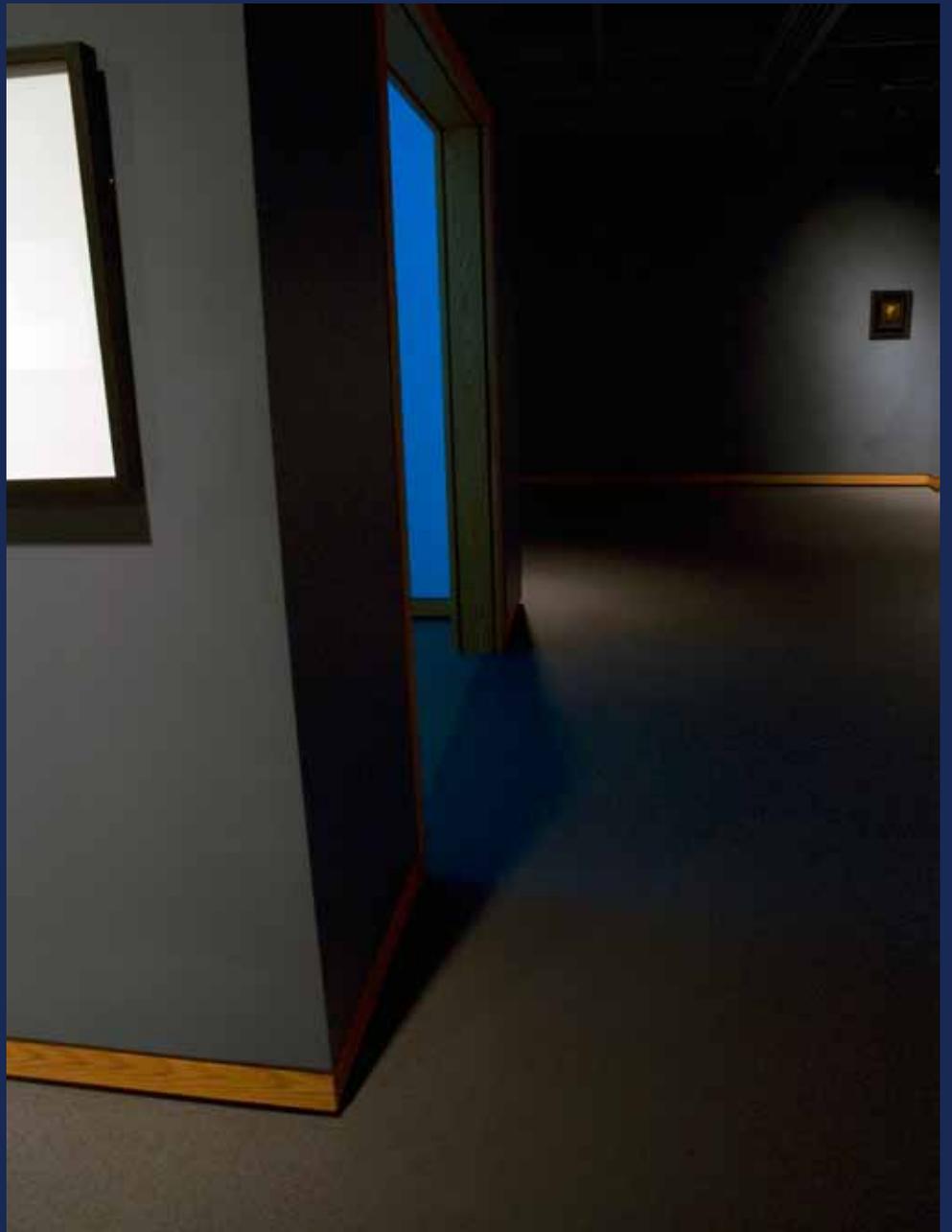


Otto Dix (German 1891-1969)
Fliehender Verwundeter (Sommeschlacht 1916)
/ Fleeing Casualty (Somme battle 1916)
Plate 10 from the Portfolio *Der Krieg/The War*, 1924
etching; image size, 18.3 x 13.4 cm
Museum Purchase, 1974





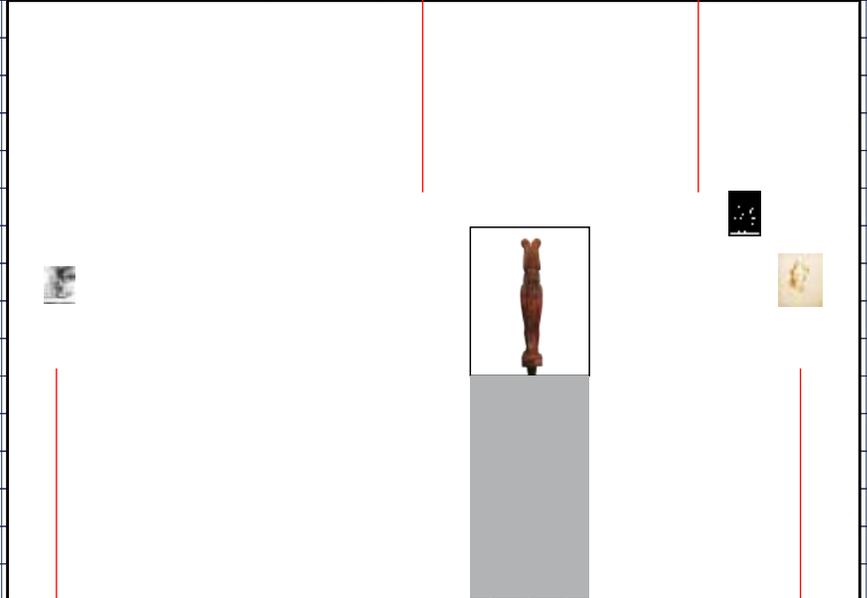




Ptah-Sokar-Osiris figure
Egyptian B.C. 1000-500 BC
carved wood with traces of pigment
overall size, 65.2 x 10.2 x 10 cm
Gift of Mr. W.H. Atkinson, 1975

Ludwig Meidner (German 1884-1966)
Portrait of an Actor, 1920
etching; image size, 20.8 x 54 cm
Gift of George Wallace, 1999

7



Rembrandt van Rijn (Dutch 1606-1669)
The Blindness of Tobit, 1651
etching; image, 17.3 x 14 cm
Collection Art Gallery of Hamilton

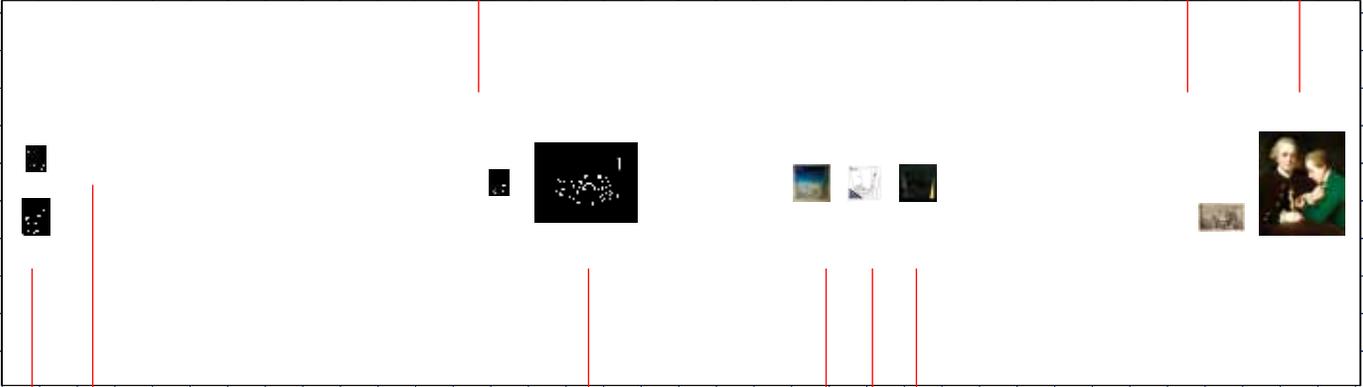
Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (Italian 1696-1770)
Head of an Oriental, Turned to the Left, c.1742 -1757
black chalk, pen and brown ink, brown wash; image size, 25 x 19.7 cm
Levy Bequest Purchase, 1993

Otto Dix (German 1891-1969)
Soldier and Nun, 1924
etching, drypoint and aquatint
image size, 19.2 x 13.6 cm
Gift of Undercliffe Limited, 1990

George Romney (British 1734-1802)
*Robert, 9th Baron Petre, Demonstrating the Use of an
Écorché Figure to His Son, Robert Edward*, c. 1775 – 1776
oil on canvas, 76 x 63.2 cm
Levy Bequest Purchase, 1994

Thomas Rowlandson (British 1756-1827)
Time and Death Their Thoughts Impart,
c. 1815 – 1816
aquatint, 13.1 x 21.1 cm
Gift of Barry Brown, 1970

8



Allen Jones (British b.1937)
Rattle for a Simple Man, 1970
coloured crayons on paper
59 x 76.4 cm
Gift of Gordon Eberts, 1992

Margaret Priest (British b.1944)
The Museum at Night, 1981
etching and aquatint, intaglio with à la poupée
colour and surface roll
ed. 1/40; image size, 27 x 27 cm
Gift of Gordon Eberts, 1991

Ken Currie (Scottish b.1960)
Head Study, 1993
oil, charcoal and wax, 27.5 x 22.5 cm
Gift of Neil and Blanche Carragher, 2004

Otto Dix
Transplantation; Plate 40 from the Portfolio
Der Krieg/The War, 1924
etching; image size, 19.3 x 14.3 cm
Museum Purchase, 1981

Margaret Priest
The Museum, 1981
etching and aquatint, intaglio with surface roll
ed. 18/40; image size, 23.5 x 23.5 cm
Collection Joyce and Fred Zemans

Margaret Priest
The Empty Museum, 1981
etching and aquatint, intaglio with surface roll
ed. 5/40; image size, 27 x 27 cm
Gift of Gordon Eberts, 1991









Giovanni Battista Piranesi (Italian 1720-1778)

The Sawhorse, 1760-1770

Plate 12 from *Carceri d'Invenzione*

etching; image size, 41 x 55.4 cm

Levy Bequest Purchase, 1995

Pablo Picasso (Spanish 1881-1973)

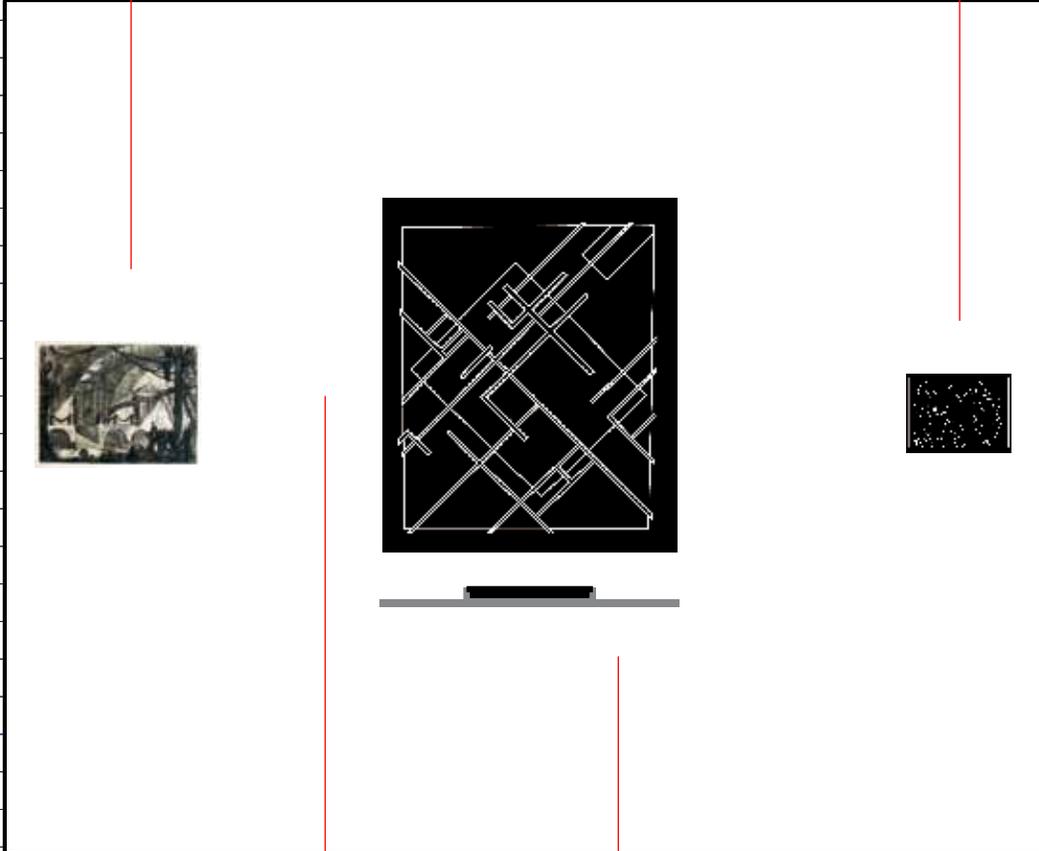
Minotaure Aveugle Guidé par une Filette Dans la Nuit / Blind

Minotaur Guided by a Little Girl in the Night, 1934

aquatint and etching; image size, 24.7 x 34.7 cm

Levy Bequest Purchase, 1995

9



Jean Gorin (French 1899-1981)

Architecture Spatiale No. 57, 1946

painted wood relief, 117 x 99 x 10 cm

Levy Bequest Purchase, 1995

Jacques Villon (French, b. Gaston Duchamp, 1875-1963)

La Ferme Normande, 1952

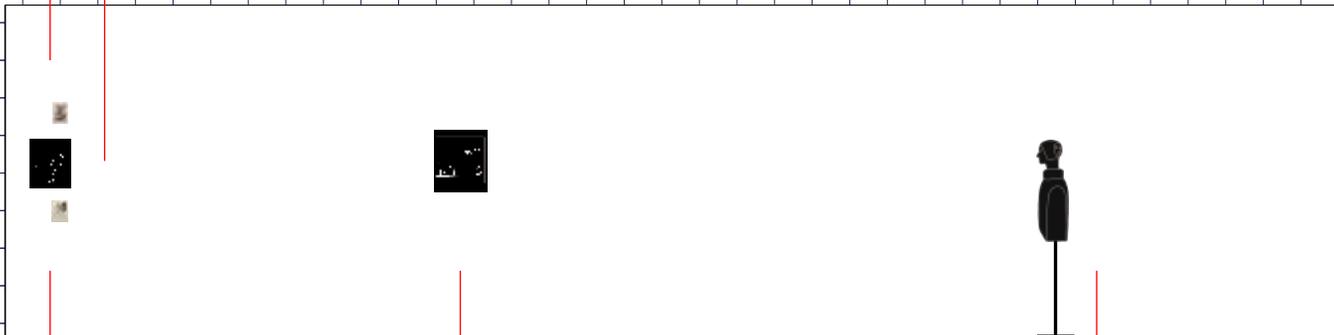
lithograph, ed. 20/200, 27 x 40 cm

Gift of Dr. Paul and Helen Walton, 2000

Lovis Corinth (German 1858-1925)
Der Künstler und Tod II / The Artist and Death II, 1916
drypoint; image size, 17.2 x 11.9 cm
Museum Purchase, 1971

David Hockney (British b.1937)
Henry in MMA Garden, 1976
ink on paper, 43.2 x 35.6 cm
Gift of George Loranger, 1988

10



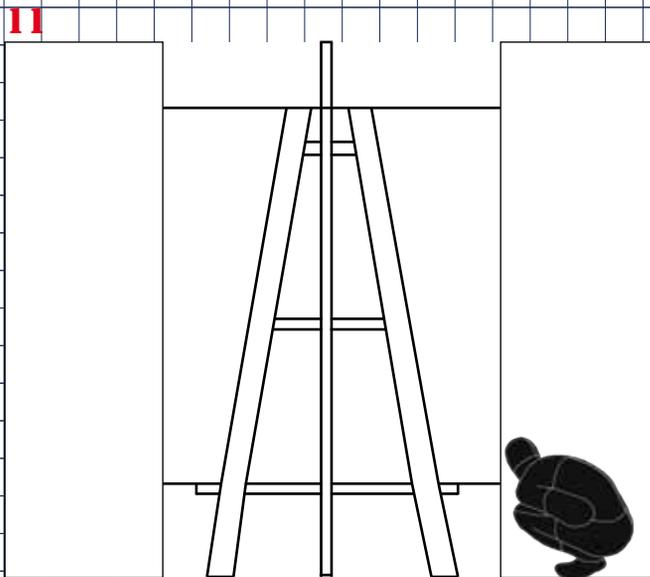
David Hockney
The Hypnotist, 1963
colour etching and aquatint on zinc, ed. 33/60
image size, 49.5 x 49.5 cm
Levy Bequest Purchase, 1997

Lovis Corinth
Der Künstler und Tod I / The Artist and Death I, 1916
drypoint; image size, 25.5 x 17.5 cm
Museum Purchase, 1977

Katsura Funakoski (Japanese b.1951)
Moon on the Northernmost, 1995
painted camphor wood and marble; overall, 87 x 57 x 28 cm
Levy Bequest Purchase, 1996







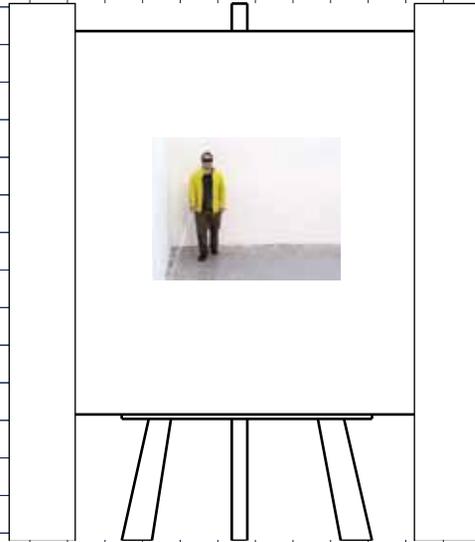
Antony Gormley (British b.1950)

Proof, 1983-1984

lead, fibreglass and plastic; overall, 77.5 x 86.3 x 55.8 cm

Levy Bequest Purchase, 1995

12



Alexander Pilis (Canadian, b. Brazil, 1954)
The Blind Architect Meets Rembrandt, 2004
film duration 4:04 min.

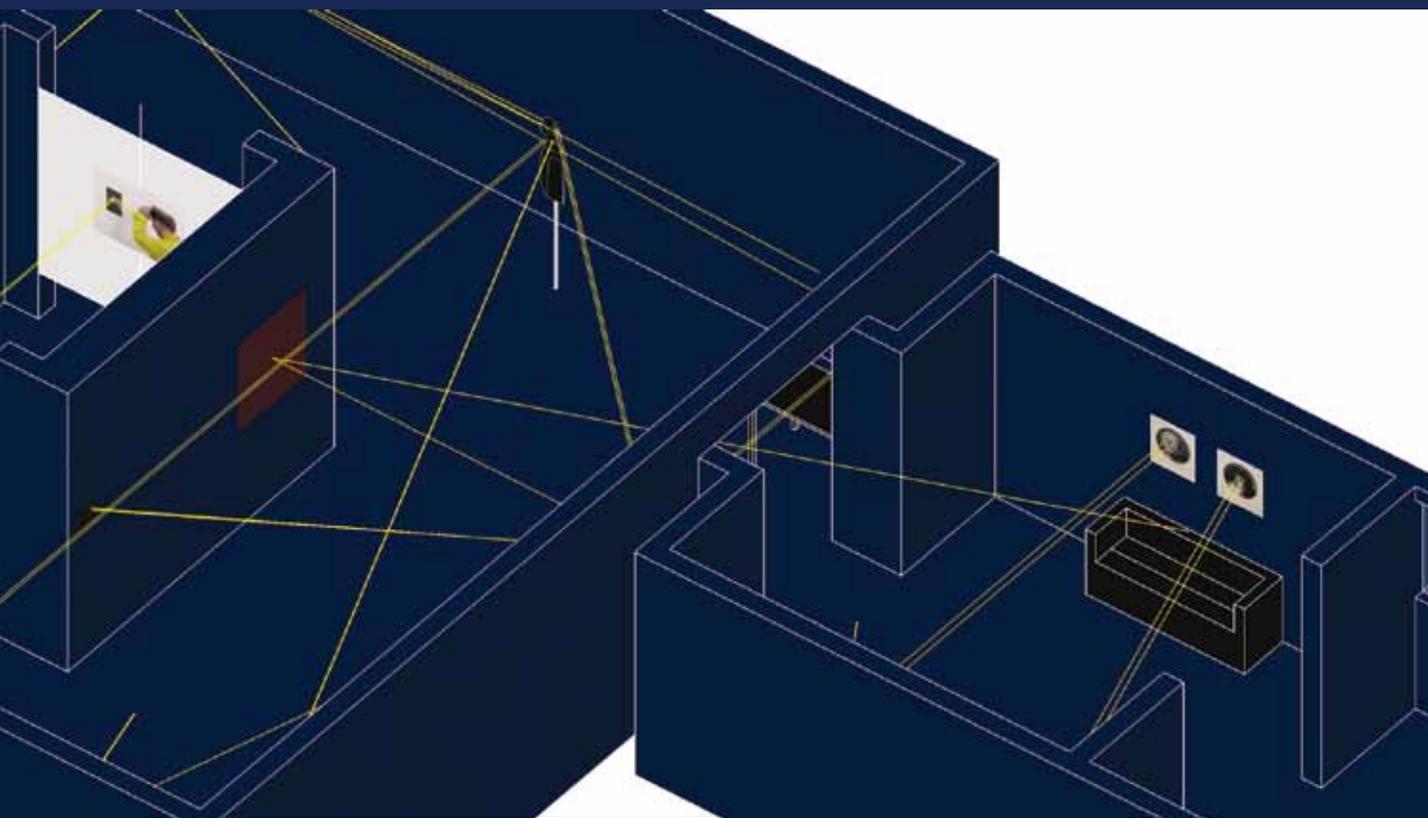
film projection size: 100 x 75cm

Courtesy of the artist and Peak Gallery

The Blind Architect performer: Lance D. Blomgren

Location: The Banff Art Centre, 2004

canvas, 225 x 225 cm; easel courtesy of Katherine MacDonald



Motion/Emotion Detectors

Ihor Holubizky

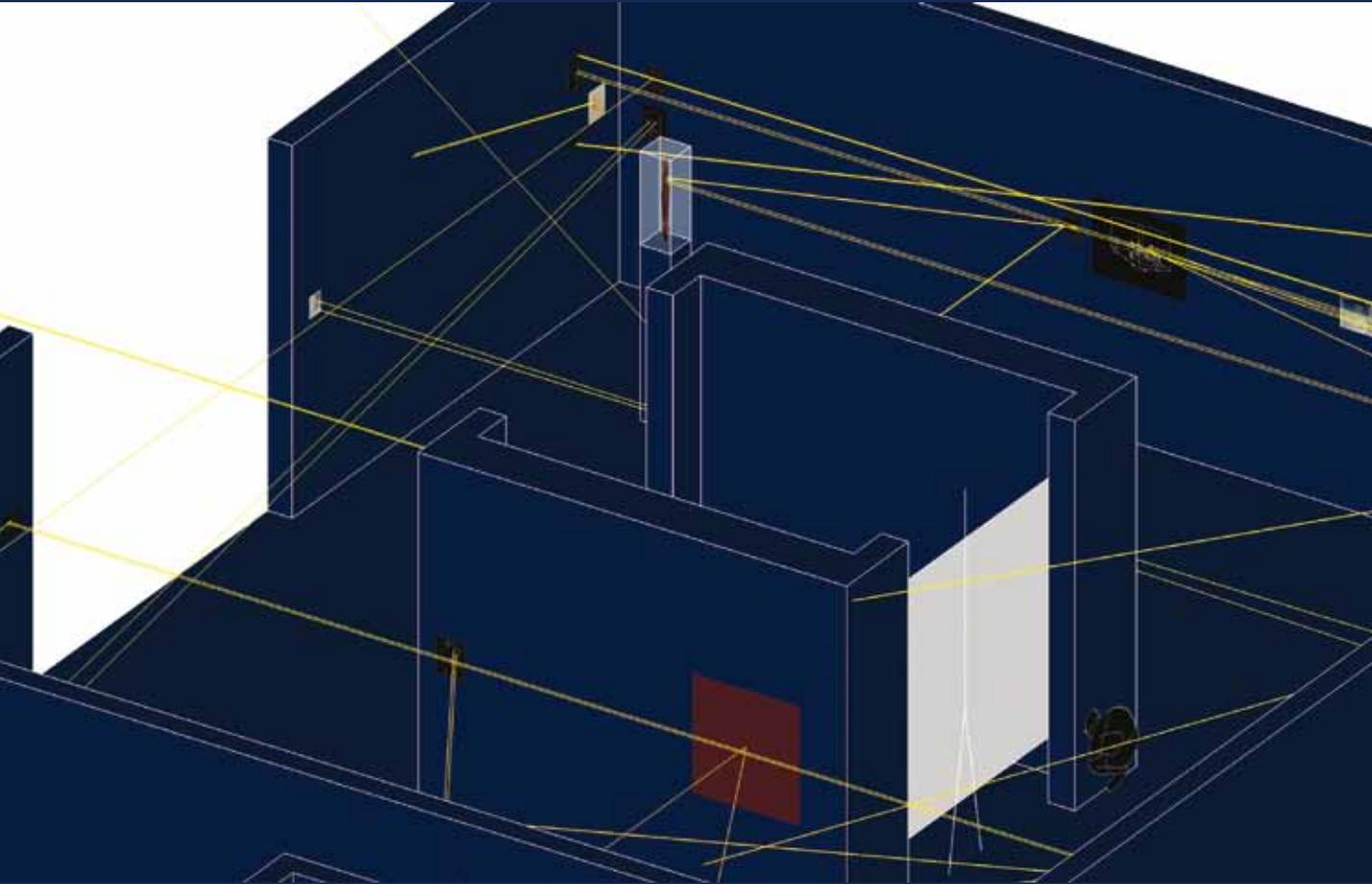
Museum collections represent the spirit and ethos of the modern age. Whether assembled by mandate or happenstance—art collections are often a combination of both—there is a rational ordering of things in order to make ideas and concepts visible. In this way, a sense of progress and reality—and a civilizing effect, which is at the heart of modernity—could be demonstrated. The public dimension and social space is another and often cited critical ingredient in the museum experience.

Resonant questions were already in play for Alexander Pilis...and *The Blind Architect*. Pilis was trained as an architect, yet his *Blind Architect* is not merely a guise or surrogate. It is an apparatus-cum-methodology for measuring and testing, and conducting research; working out of a discipline in order to re-discipline himself. His praxis engages the parallax, the apparent displacement or difference in the position of an object viewed along two different lines of sight, to view an object in movement without a fixed reference. This tool of measurement, to examine a visual contradiction, is also a metaphor for Pilis to probe the modernization of vision, rather than



its construction or an obedience to its rhetoric. In the ten days he spent digging through the MMA collection, the investigation and points of view shifted, adapting to the unexpected and revising as the examination continued, as if a motion detector.

In Pilis' scenario, *The Blind Architect* meets Rembrandt, an artist who probed vision and seeing, and left much for us to reflect upon for nearly 400 years. What happens when *The Blind Architect*—an unlikely interloper in the Museum setting with Rembrandt in mind and within “earshot”—is our guide through the collection? Does this destabilize rationalism (“seeing is believing”) or bring another set of questions forward?



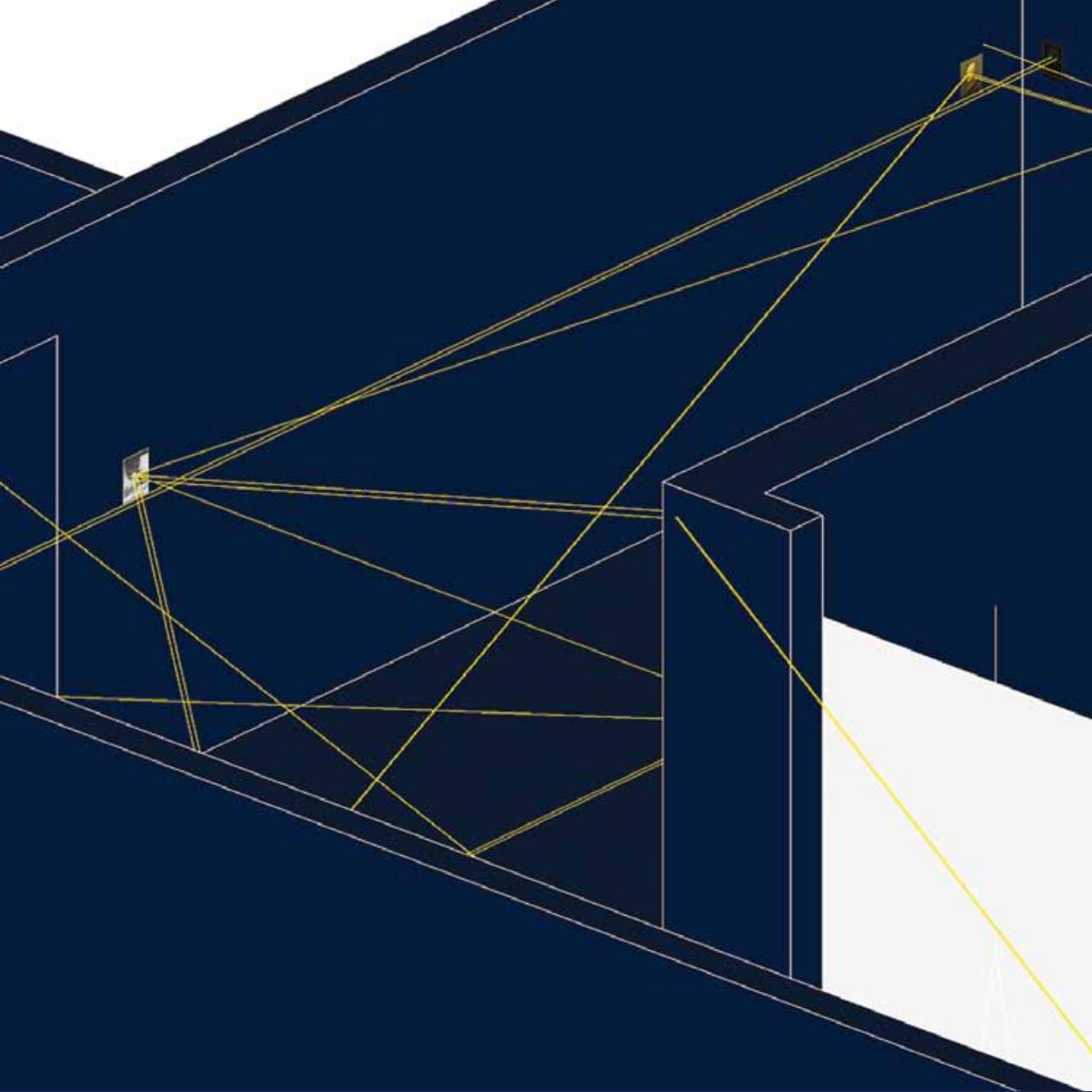
The modern museum has been described as a place for organized walking (Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, Routledge, 1995)—the visitor’s walk organized through directed precepts. Some of this is implicit in the museum use of a classical architecture—the processional direction of the galleria and arcade, and finding its modern utopic expression in Frank Lloyd Wright’s design for the New York Guggenheim Museum, a linear spiral, ascending and descending. A line is drawn, and a cynic might say that the architecture overwhelms the art. A critical part of Pilis’ investigation was to walk the gallery space repeatedly, to learn the route and consider the variety of views and approaches. An ordering system took shape for Pilis, but based on a conceptual and perceptual modelling—the architecture parallax.

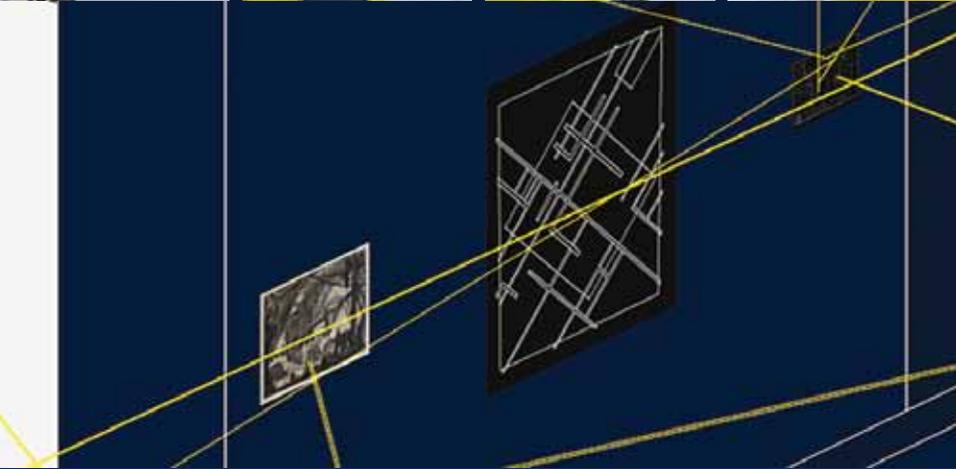
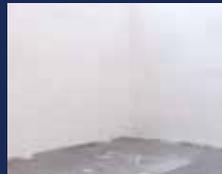
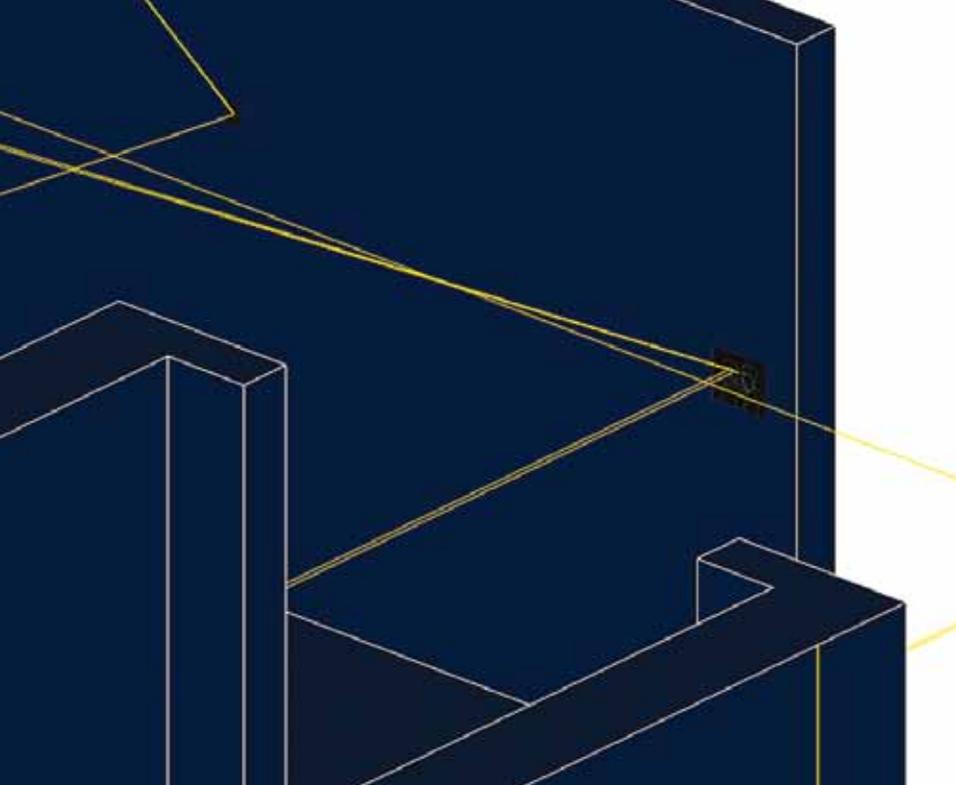
The museum world often talks about sight lines and the points of connectivity, but in Pilis’ graphic mapping, after he laid out his ideal design, the overview resembles motion capture imaging software; movement in space for an augmented reality is made visible when the “door to the process is opened.” That “door” and threshold is the essence of *The Blind Architect Meets Rembrandt*.

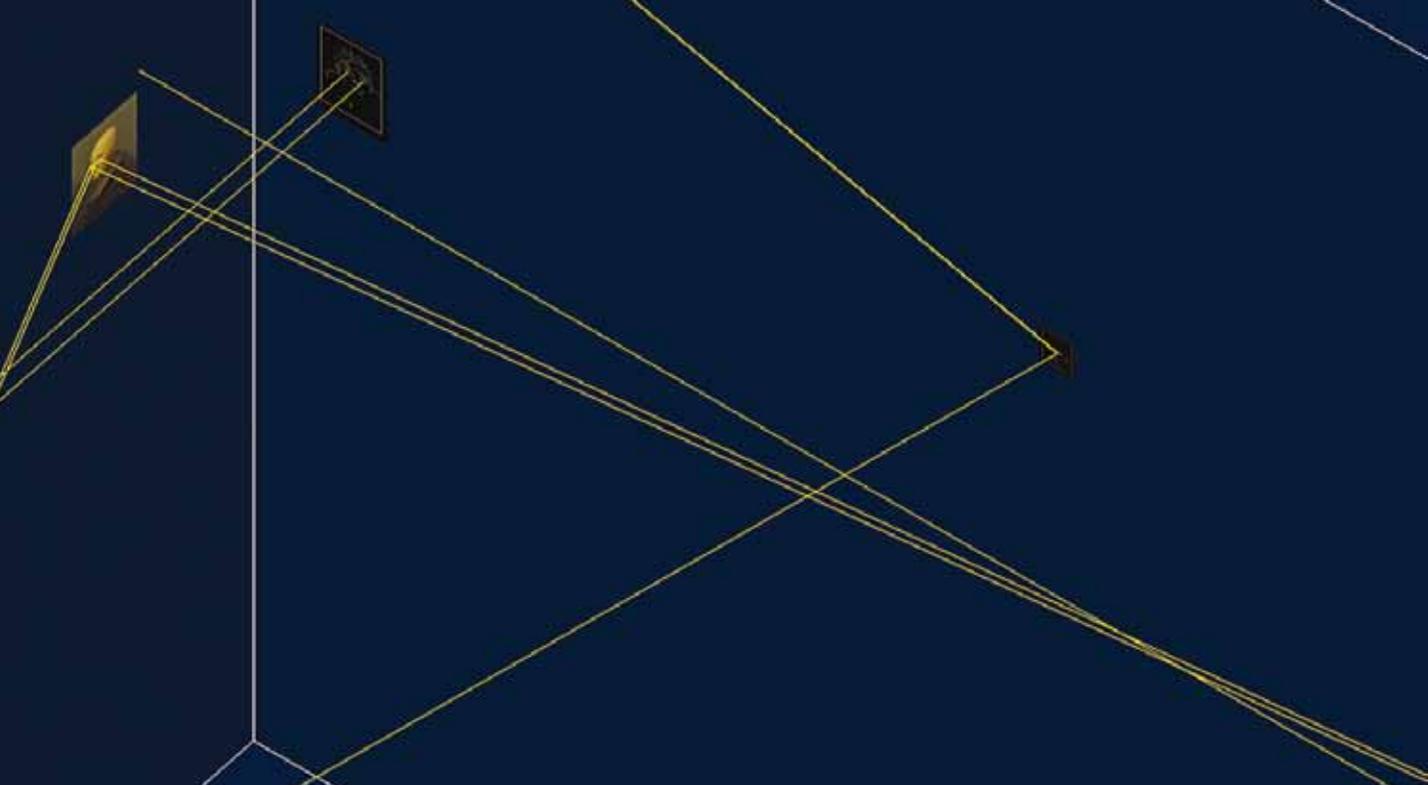
What then will the visitor experience through the aegis of The Blind Architect?



As Pilis was constantly moving to the unknown, the visitor will encounter likewise. Rather than a disruption of rationalism, there is a return to eternal ideas and visual inquiries: not the portrait, but the eyes; not the representation or enchantment of our eye, but the orchestration of empty spaces with connected episodes of content.

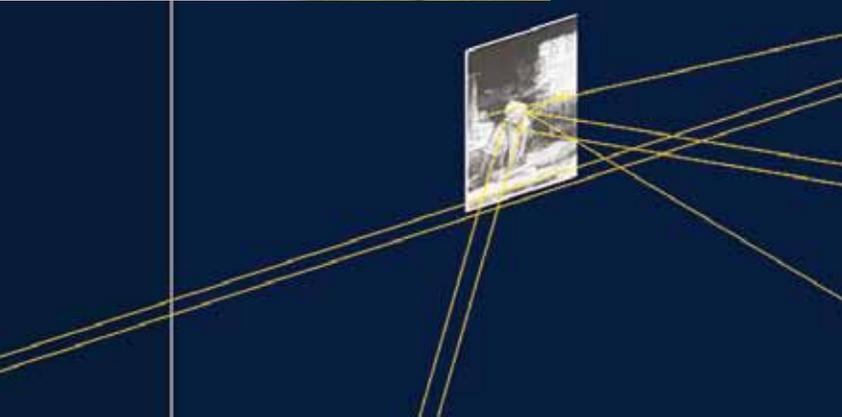












The Blind Architect Meets Rembrandt:

Alexander Pilis

To understand architecture you must collide with it as if you are blind. Depth of field—in the built environment—collapses in the moment when there is no complete observation point in the space of vision. You are in the frame of experience.

The theoretical space is the distance between what you expect to see and what you are actually seeing. This is the parallax condition; an apparent displacement in the position of an object when viewed from two different sight lines, and while in movement without a fixed reference point.

A critical practice

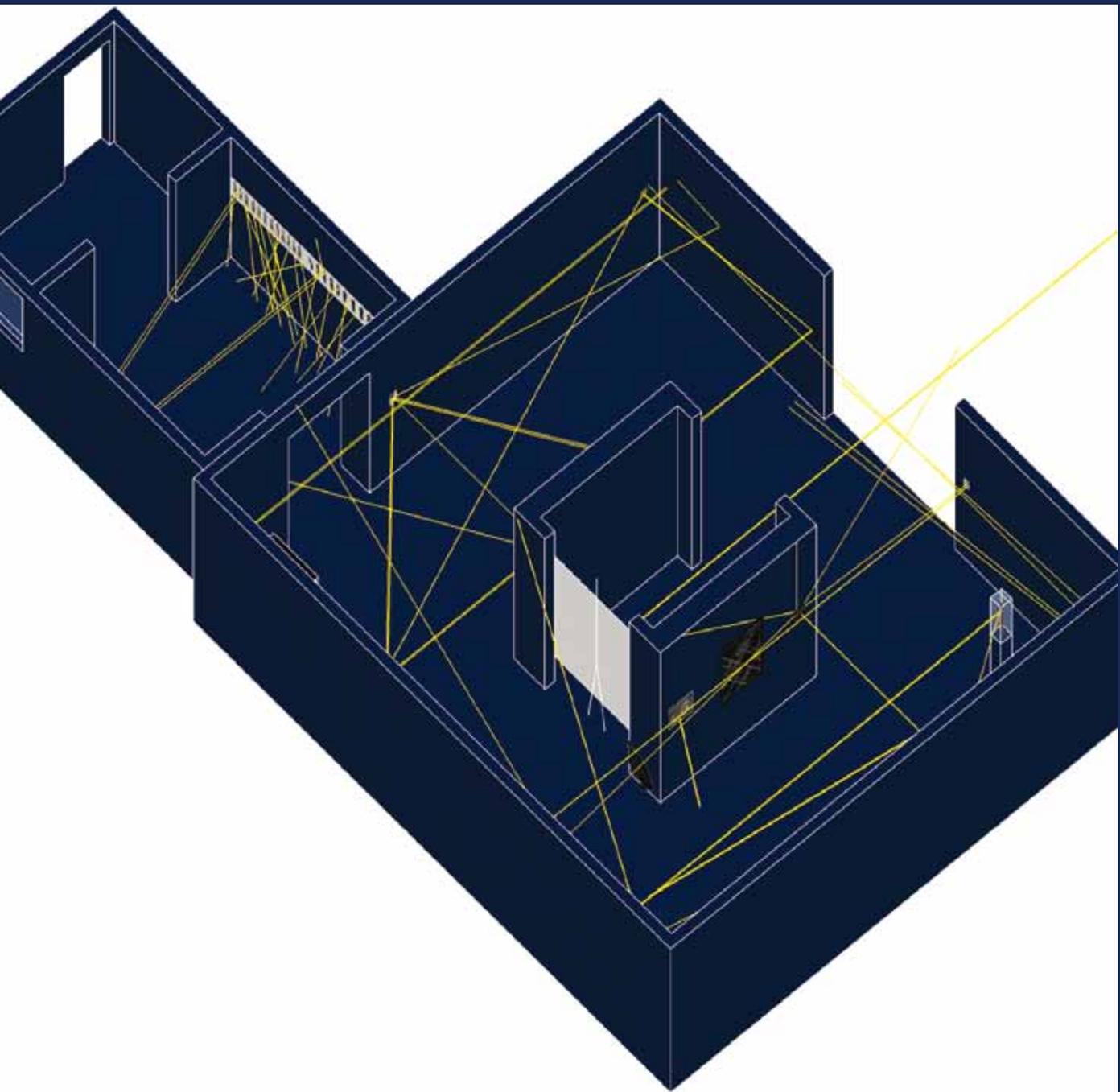
I am not a painter and I see the cultural world through various architectonic apparatus and positions. When invited to project my film *The Blind Architect Meets Rembrandt* in a museum and collection context, I felt like I was crossing the threshold – walking between the white box of The Blind Architect film and what would come forward from examining the McMaster collection. Studying the physical space through an architectonic discipline activated my parallax view, and through a “theoretical intuition” led to subject matter and content.



This “intuition” can get under your skin to reveal unspeakable things.

Three architectonic themes appeared from my research; The Model, The Walk, and The Portrait.

The Model is the ideal-conceptual white cube of the artist’s studio. The existing Model is the Levy Gallery inner room constructed within the main gallery space, to echo the domestic space of Herman Levy’s house and designed to install the Levy-donated works that originally hung in his dining room. At the same time it is The Model in reverse, now used to project a video in real time, but also a historical reference to the space in Rembrandt’s painting *The Artist in his Studio*, c. 1629.



The Walk is The Blind Architect with his cane, following and measuring the artist's studio along its periphery, as architectonic moments. The cane touching the walls is an extension of his body, but not the only way of measuring space. For The Blind Architect, the clicking of the cane produces a sound, an echo shadow. It is the studio in relation to the body, a form of "self portrait" and personal, learned knowledge.

The Walk is stretched-out by the empty walls, but which compresses in the corners as you make the turn. Novelist J.G. Ballard asked, "Does the angle between two white walls have a happy ending?" Is it a place of encounter, between the viewer's body, the content in the works of art, and the museum architecture?

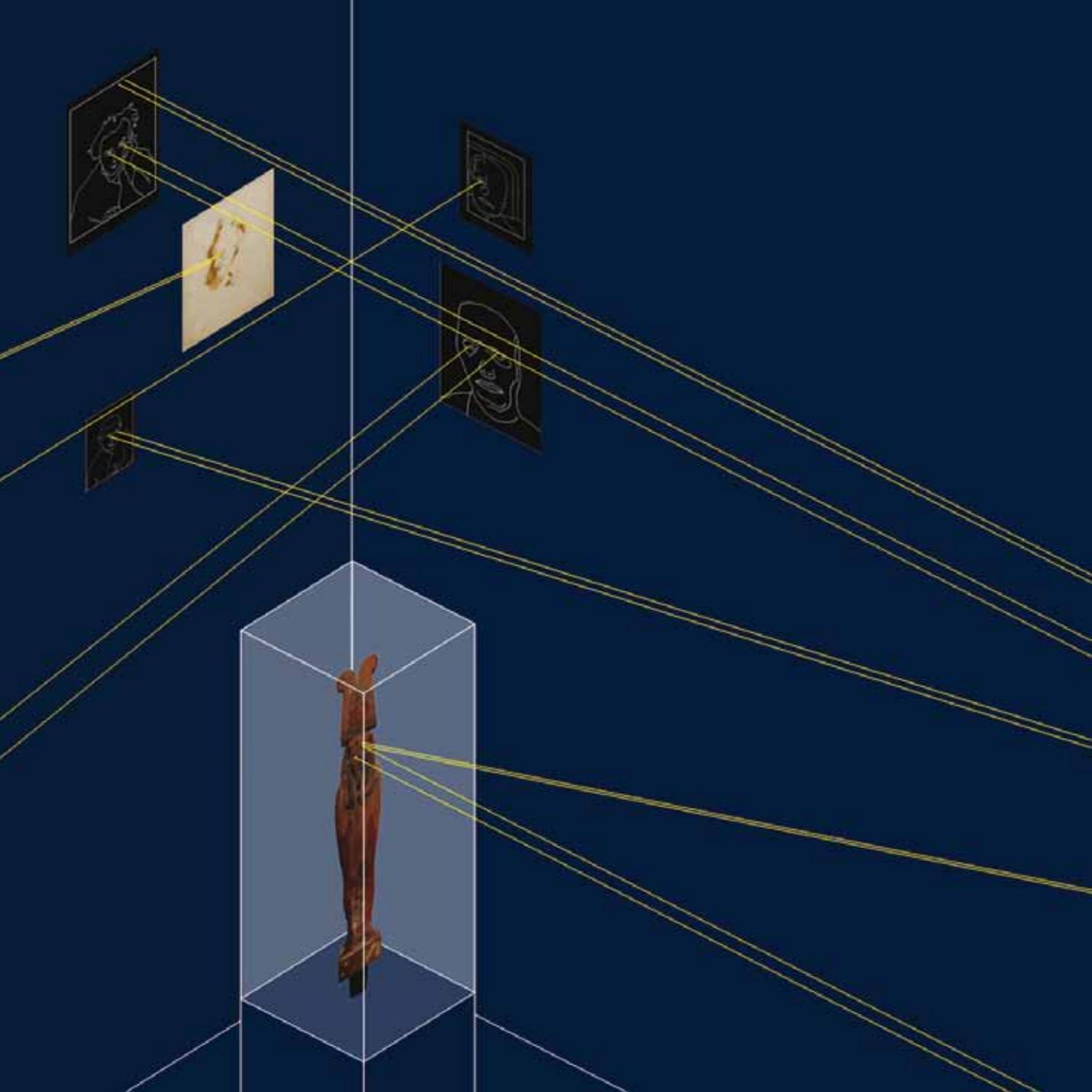
The Walk unfolds as you move your body and your eyes interact with those in the Portraits, which are a means for representation and an architectonic apparatus place for contextualizing the image and content. There is a theoretical measurement between the portrait eyes and yours. In that "reveal" an architectonic space appears, in which you are also positioned. It continues to be revealed as you continue The Walk.



"In the 1660s, Rembrandt would arrive at a manner of painting that was itself a kind of outward-inward vision, a manner that owed almost as much to touch as to sight, and which certainly ran directly against the coming vogue for sharp-focused, hard-edge, brilliantly colored, crisply modeled forms sparkling with reflected light."

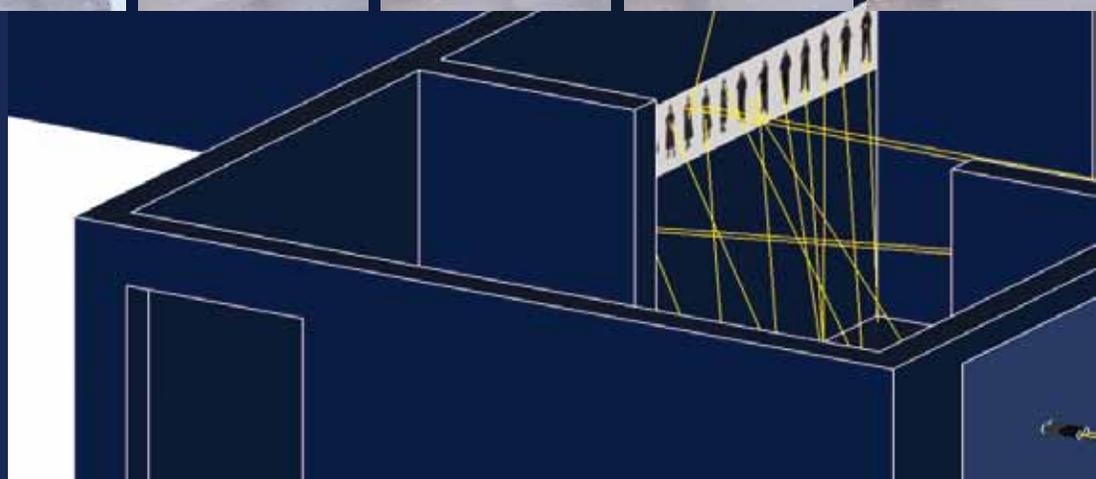
Simon Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes* (Knopf, 1999), p.425

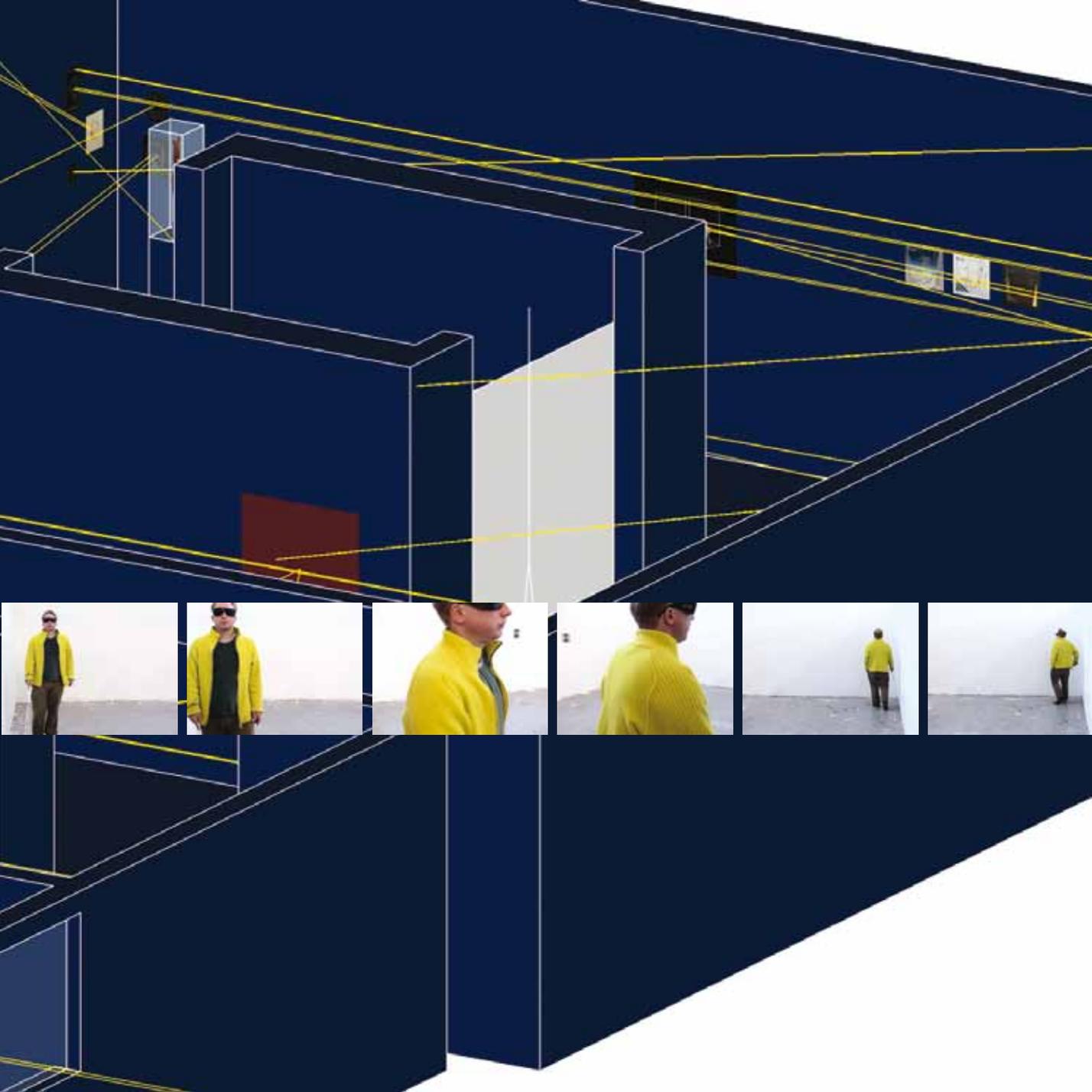
The architectonic space created by The Walk has a clockwise and counter clockwise possibility. Yet another space is constructed by the relationship of the eyes and its content from each work positioned within the existing architecture and their relationships.

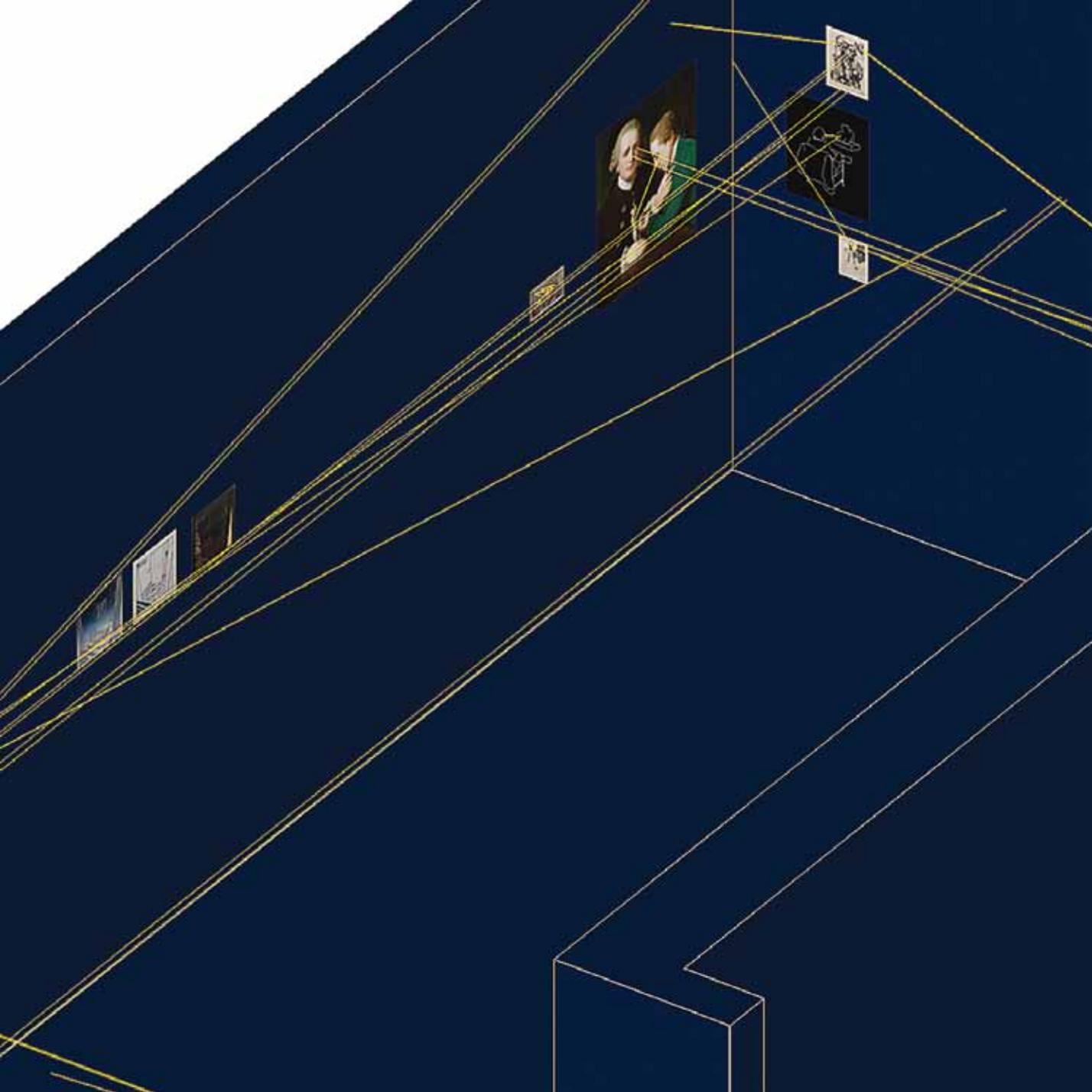


If The Blind Architect is situated between within the portrait and the empty space, the viewer too has a position.

I am overhearing a conversation between Rembrandt's eyes and The Blind Architect's echo shadow; their problems and thoughts on being blind; the loss of vision between the outward and the inward; depth of field and blinding light; explorations of the eye and the pleasures of the optically surveyed natural and material world; the book of Tobit – the spectacle, points of reference, reflections, the absence of light and blind love...



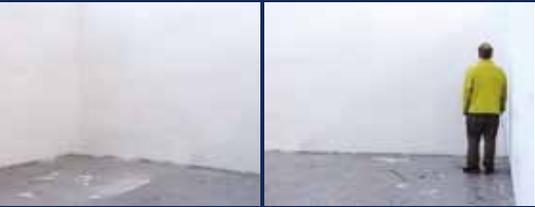






The Blind Architect Meets Rembrandt

alexander pilis



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