The ambiguous
typology of the gallery
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The art gallery is well known as a building type, but because its purpose is to display and call attention to a separate collection of objects it highlights the distinction between the building itself and how it is filled. Is it the spaces or the objects that define the architecture? Which of these constitute the building type? On one hand the gallery has seemed, particularly over the past century, to be a blank canvas in which art objects play the dominant role, against anonymous white, warehouse walls; surely our experience of visiting such a space, and our chosen path through it, is guided by the placement of these objects to which we are drawn. Yet evidence suggests, even here, our movement is actually determined by the building’s spatial organization; Turner and Penn’s (2002) Space Syntax analyses of the Tate Gallery predict real movement through the building with no reference to what is hung on the walls. Such contradictory views might question our notion of typology itself. Is it possible that the type of the building might change when objects are placed within it? Can the placement of objects make one type appear to be another?

By one notion of type this should be impossible. Typology is the identification of elements as belonging to classes, notionally quite distinct. Traditionally, we might follow Plato in assuming each has an essence, and define each class by example, assuming an ideal form or archetype to which all real examples compare. We might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to distinct natural kinds. Or we might follow Linnaeus’ taxonomy of species linking observable traits to...