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Notas

¹The colloquium was sponsored by the Getty Center for Education in the Arts, The Ohio State University, The Wexner Center for the Arts, and The Ohio Arts Council. It was the second of three national forums about teaching contemporary art organized by the Ohio Partnership for the Visual Arts.

Conferências

O nexo entre o museu e a loja de departamentos...

Museus e Magazines: The Arts of Display

L. W. Rosenfield and Janet Farrell Leontiou

Central to the idea of the museum is the display of objects thought to have aesthetic, historical, scientific or cultural significance in a manner which enhances and communicates to the viewer the worth of those objects. Over the past two centuries, this function has been driven by two countervailing traditions, tendencies embodied in the dual origins of the modern museum in the seventeenth century *Kunstkammer* and eighteenth century national museum such as the Louvre. Correspondingly, there have emerged two divergent aesthetics for addressing the viewer, one which envelops his eye, and another which directs it.

1. *Museum as Carnivale: The Eye Enveloped*

It is sometimes forgotten that the earliest museum, the *Kunstkammer*, the "curiosity cabinet" of the German princes of the seventeenth century, served often to disorient and overwhelm the casual visitor. Far from being temples of aesthetics, these treasure cabinets were storage areas for all manner of natural and human curios: stuffed birds, two-headed calves, finely crafted goblets, rare scientific instruments, wedding gifts too delicate for daily use, outdated suits of armor, in all a dizzying jumble of items rare, exotic, and even grotesque [Alpers, in Karp, 26; Duncan, in Karp, 92]. And the overwhelming disequilibrium provoked by the gaudy array of objects fine and peculiar, and/or bizarre, often created a mood resembling that of the carnival: at once festive and "awful." As in a souk or gambling casino, the eye is enveloped [cf. Merleau-Ponty], the mind is disoriented by the sheer sensory richness that threatens to drown the viewer.

The abundance of the princely curiosity collection served its own function—it was for the private enjoyment of the prince and his guests. But the kaleidoscopic chaos of the array of treasures also served to conquer the visiting dignitaries who, much like visiting tourists today, were expected to carry back to their own kingdoms exaggerated accounts of vast splendors and the fabled power of a lord who could appropriate to his private pleasure such magnificent hoards of natural and man-made treasures [Greenblatt, in Karp, 51].

It was to this earlier tradition of the museum as repository of the exotic or weird that early North American "dime museums" clung. In the early part of the nineteenth century, they were clustered in the Bowery neighborhood in New York amidst gambling dens, taverns, flophouses and brothels. In fact, many of them occupied the back rooms of taverns. Their "displays" were mostly fraudulent relics and carnival freaks promoted by hucksters such as P. T. Barnum to snare the loose change of country bumpkins, drunks, Lotharios and callow youths on the unfulfilled promise of cheap and sometimes erotic ("nude cannibal woman") thrills more typical of a carnival side show or fun house today [Sante, 96–101]. These displays (and we leave aside for the moment questions of fraud or authenticity of the objects) worked just the opposite of the museum *cum* temple. The fun house display sought not meditation but astonishment through disorientation, through overwhelming the viewer with the strangeness of the jumble of items. These dark confines, operating in shadows and on the margins of respectable daily life functioned, as do flea markets, gambling casinos, gypsy fortunetellers, and (to a lesser extent) academic congresses to evoke a surreal atmosphere, one whose theme seemed to be "things are not what they seem." [C. M. Hinsley, in Karp, 352] In such piecemeal mosaics, the novice's distraction and confusion may set him up for cheating—personal bargaining becomes the order of the day, be it wagering in a casino, buyer and seller negotiating a price for goods, or dancers establishing erotic connections under the influence of rhythms and alcohol. "It will be a jumble of foreignness—a bit of Fez and Nurenburg, of Sahara and Dahomey and Holland, Japan and Rome and Coney Island. It will be gorgeous with color, pulsating with excitement, riotous with the strivings of a battalion of bands, and peculiar to the last degree" [J. Ralph, quoted in Karp, 351]. What is sacrificed in this dream-like climate are senses of perspective, valuation and judgment. They all aim to envelop the viewer's eye, to overwhelm his expectations by making the familiar momentarily strange and confused, and to thus make the viewer drunk with *musike* of the apparent *mythos* startlingly revealed [Ricoeur, 348; Karp, 375; Merleau-Ponty, 172]. In a setting such as this, what matters most is to ascertain if "the price is right."

II. Museum as Temple: The Eye Directed

Superimposed on this early tradition of the museum as treasure trove of overwhelming splendor is the more "modern" and more familiar contrary tradition, reaching back to the eighteenth century, of the museum which awes the visitor by its austere focus on works which transcend time and place and aspire to universal value [Duncan, in Karp, 88].

The Louvre represents the museum as secular temple, a place in which are displayed treasures meant to invite meditation and to ennoble the spirit. When its doors were thrown open to the common people in the wake of the French Revolution, the vast wealth of the Ancien Regime there exhibited was met not with outrage, but with awe and astonishment. Much the same as when the Philippine government of Corey Aquino opened the doors of the Marcos palace after the dictator's ouster and people stood in wonder at the sheer magnitude of Imelda Marcos's 3,000 pairs of shoes, so did the French peasants who viewed the furniture, art work, and household objects of the Louvre respond with wonder at the richness, the abundance, the undreamt-of magnificence of the "lifestyles of the rich and famous" there revealed. Their reverence verged on devotion to the material splendor.

This power of the ensembles on display in both instances to stun the viewers, to evoke an awe verging on religious reverence, was not lost on officialdom [Karp, 16–17; Greenblatt, in Karp, 42]. The new institution of the "museum" (after the nine Greek muses, the goddesses of inspiration) appropriated to itself the functions of a temple in a secular culture. The creed incorporated the canons of art history; catalogs and guided tours served as authoritative texts and sermons; the priests included in their ranks the curators; and treasured objects shaped common piety in the national school of masters (or saints) [Duncan, in Karp, 957; Gadamer, 142–143]. Today national pride is often refracted through manufacture of a national auto, support for a national airline, or cheering for the national soccer team. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, such national pride displayed itself in popular reverence for cultural "styles" (from the Greek *lexis*: style, appearance, display, that which has been made visible) [Ricoeur, 346] said to reveal the "genius" (from the Latin *gens*, roots, as found in the words *genre* and *genealogy*) that distinguish a people. Thus a didactic function is served in referencing the viewer's eye.

"Museums . . . may be said to occur whenever viewers . . . are guided . . . among artifacts, samples, labels, captions, stereotypes, light, categories, drawings, feathers, skulls, visual murmurs, and (in the case of museums and zoos and theaters) other goers." [J.A. Boon, in Karp, 265]

In these circumstances, the task of artistic display is primarily to direct the viewer's gaze to the object in ways that will bring to mind its "symbolic" [Gadamer, 31–32] significance in a moment of surreal reverie. It is no coincidence that such nudging, such whispering to the mind of an appropriate path through an otherwise bewildering panoply of icons demands of the viewer a trance state, or dreamlike openness to suggestion often referred to as "aesthetic" [cf. Castiglione, 344–345; Baxandall, 46–48].

With the coming of industrial production of merchandise for a mass market in the middle of the nineteenth century, decisive changes took place in the way in which museums displayed objects so as to highlight their value and enhance their appreciation by the viewer. And this change paralleled the shift from the selling of goods in the open air market to the temple of commerce—the

department store. Not only did the newly wealthy impresarios sit on the directorial boards of the major museums in mid- and late nineteenth century E.U.A., but they also supported the arts and crafts through their stores and by lending their merchandising skills to the emerging arts of object display. For example, the first display of cubist art in North America took place in and under the sponsorship of Gimble's in Pittsburgh in 1913 [Kimmelman, 46]. We can also trace much of the nexus of the department store and the museum in the United States during the turn of the century to John Wanamaker's in Philadelphia. Rodman Wanamaker, John's son, founded the Academy of Art in Paris [Leach, 136]. The store's founder, John, rotated pieces of art from his own private collection to the walls of the store. He provided each art work with its own "place" in response to what he saw as the deplorable practice of museums to cluster pictures together "on the walls, destroying the effect of the finest things" [Leach, 137]. Researchers of the department store and the museum state conclusively that modern art and American art found their first true patrons in the department store.

Nor was the influence one-way. Museum curators borrowed eagerly from the display principles practiced in the leading department stores [Leach, 136-37]. Influential curators such as Culin (Brooklyn) and Dana (Newark) detested traditional museums, which they felt were remote, inaccessible, elitist institutions which intimidated the common folk with their gloomy display of antique artifacts. And they enthusiastically urged their museum colleagues to copy the style and amenities of the new centers of civic life, the department store [Leach, 166-167]. Indeed both men went even further, promoting the use of museum workshops as incubators for good industrial design on the grounds that it was not sufficient to encourage taste with old masterworks. Good industrial design could also be purchased and thus possessed; reverence could culminate in tasteful consumption—the wafer made flesh [Leach, 168-169].

It is worth quoting at length a standard commercial history in order to understand the appeal of the nineteenth-century department store as both temple of commerce and arbiter of taste to a largely rural and egalitarian society. It aestheticized the experience of shopping and gave enhanced worth and dignity to women.

The department store brought to the central business district an elegance previously unknown there, and this led directly to the modern downtown as the beautiful heart of the city. The parade of women into and out of the new stores . . . gave a whole new look and feeling to the central business district . . . and led to the phenomenon, never before so fully realized, of a feminine public. [Marrone, 106-107]

As Gordon Selfridge, the American who founded the London department store bearing his name, understood, the appeal of such emporiums to women was so much more than as a shop; it served as their community center, and thence of their emancipation from the isolation and drudgery of domestic work. "Shopping," as Paulistas fully appreciate, is more than an adventure—it has become a calling.

Women of all classes, who could never visit one another's homes or even neighborhoods, were equally attracted to and welcomed by the new downtown. The department store with its sumptuous splendor gave [at least] the illusion of equality. [Marrone, 108]

This equality was reinforced by the new white collar occupation of store clerk as an alternative to manual labor or domestic service, by the store's egalitarian policy of "first come, first served" regardless of social rank, by clearly marking prices to avoid the embarrassment of haggling, and above all, by the many amenities (restrooms, nurseries, post offices, inexpensive cafés, etc.) to which even a poor woman could avail herself without shame.

And perhaps most important for our purposes, shopping became intimately tied to "taste," as women hunted for the latest in fashion, greeting each change in style with exultation as an opportunity to display their sense of elegance and modernity. Hence the museum as arbiter of taste was left behind as women in particular took on the mantle of determiners of good fashion and ratified their judgments with material goods mass produced.

III. *Lexis: The Fine Art of Display*

We must now turn briefly to the tactics of display that were drawn from the new merchandise emporiums. Where, in the pre-industrial era, an impresario's goods were heaped in small "stockpiles" in the fashion of an outdoor fruit market, once goods were manufactured in massive amounts and set out for the customer's convenience, the artful display of goods became an end unto itself, an art which was appropriated by museum curatorial staffs by the turn of the century. A few examples may suffice: use of electric signs both inside and outside the store to arouse excitement, open use of skylights, airy spaces, and artificial lighting to make the visibility of the goods more pleasing, use of mannequins, dioramas, display stands and racks to make the goods more animated (to make them "come to life"), making store entry and circulation easier (eliminate steps, install revolving doors, lifts, escalators), added amenities (restrooms, restaurants, fashion shows) to encourage lingering and browsing, window displays to dramatize the exotic and unusual character of the merchandise (to encourage the common man or woman to dream of possession), highlight, spotlight, backlight, filter light—devices to add elements of mystery or the surreal to otherwise common objects, glass showcases and mirrored walls adding to the theatricality of the experience of inspecting goods for possible purchase—these, and many other merchandising tactics whose common aim was to heighten appreciation and to arouse the desire to possess the merchandise, were applied in museum display to encourage reverence and estimate of worth by the viewer.¹

Taken as a whole, these various merchandising elements served to move the museum away from the concept of a carnival fun house and more to its mercantile equivalent—a temple of material desire—with the exception that

until recent decades (and the full-fledged metamorphosis of the museum into an emporium) the desire thus aroused culminated, not in purchase, but in appreciation and reverence for the unattainable treasures housed on display in the museum. Of course when Thomas Hoving assumed directorship of the Metropolitan Museum in 1967, there was an unexpected reversion toward the notion that a museum must be "fun," and must cater to the basest of the material appetites (witness the King Tut "blockbuster" exhibit, which featured a mundane bust which nevertheless contained 23 pounds of solid gold).²

IV. The Boutiques in Our Future

The American retail industry experienced a similar shift with an emphasis toward major retailers pursuing multiple locations in American malls throughout the country. Before the "mall of America," the museum and the magazine had been intimately connected. The recent trend of American retail, especially in New York, is toward establishing flagship designer boutiques that resemble palaces more than stores. This development echoes the palatial temple of an earlier day; it also returns us to the thread that unites the museum and the magazine. Ralph Lauren's purchase and restoration of Rhinelander Mansion on Madison Avenue at 72nd Street leads the industry in a return to splendor. The aim of retailers in these ventures is not profit since most do not recoup the millions of dollars spent to purchase, renovate and run flagship stores like Calvin Klein and Ralph Lauren. [Mason] The flagship store serves as a showcase of itself, an idea that resonates themes first sounded by American retail in the early 1900s.

In 1908, John Wanamaker opened the House Palatial in New York. The precursor to Ralph Lauren's mansion, the House Palatial created the impression of entering a private estate. Like the Rhinelander Mansion, it contained staircases, butler's pantry, period furniture and accouterments of the gentry (such as golf clubs) propped against the walls to provide a lived-in look. Likewise, Ralph Lauren's mission is to sell "life style" and not product. The mansion is used as the showcase to turn an elusive concept like "life style" into something tangible. This strategy, too, harkens back to an earlier time. A decorator at John Wanamaker's advised in a 1912 essay: "Let one central idea unify the goods. People do not buy the thing, they buy the effect. Subordinate the details to one central idea. Make the whole store a brilliant showplace" [Leach, 83].

What the merchant princes lent to the museum in their day was the rhetorical concept of the object as symbol, the capacity of certain objects acting as tokens (icons) to engage the viewer in an act of remembrance by which he or she came to recognize how the material objects, located in isolation, in juxtaposition or in ensemble awakened a primordial cultural sense in himself or herself of belonging to a wider cultural community [Gadamer, 31]. With the shift of attention to the object, the impresario and the curator both became engaged in the business of directing the eyes of the shoppers or the museum-

goers. It was the sense of audience recognition, which artful display served to trigger, that lent a theatrical air to both museum and department store, and which culminated in a moment of epiphany in the one and the urge to purchase in the other.

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Notas

1 [Leach, 21-92.] Each of these items deserves extensive examination. For contemporary applications to museum display, see Borden. One of the most insightful investigations of the aesthetics of glass in display is Freire.

2 See Hoving. Berenson documents one of several instances of the excess to which this fashion was carried.

Conferências

Avaliação em Arte: diagnóstico

Quilata Diagnostic Assessment of Art Understanding

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The Diagnostic Profile, an assessment that characterizes students' written statements about works has been implemented in a number of studies (Cason, 1996; Diket & Stavropoulos, in press; French, 1992; Short, 1996; Stavropoulos, 1995, 1996). These application studies provide useful information on the relationship between instructional methods and learning outcomes. However, there are not yet estimates of relative performance for individual students or groups to which comparisons can be made. Sufficiently detailed normative data would facilitate data analysis and interpretation of Diagnostic Profile instrumentation in assessment research studies. Therefore, normative data based on age and/or developmental outcomes for groups are urgently needed.

Instrumentation

A criterion-based rubric for art education referred to as a Diagnostic Profile provides a means to analytically and holistically assess written and verbal statements about works of art. The Diagnostic Profile has been well-received by art teachers and other professionals. Grounded in cognitive conceptions of learning, the Diagnostic Profile extends our ability to gauge the scope of student understandings of artworks. The Diagnostic Profile is unique in that it goes beyond description by: (a) delineating the student's construction of