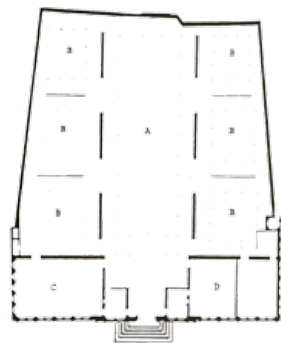
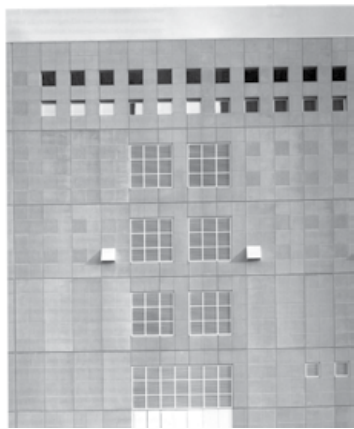
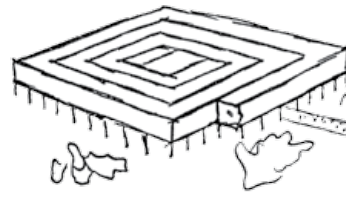
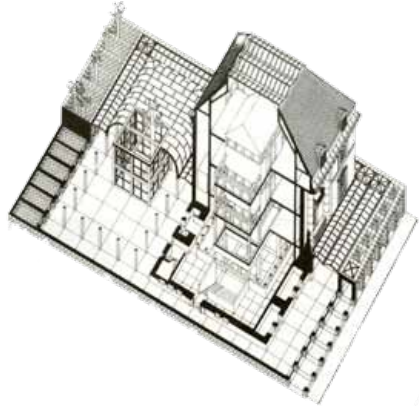
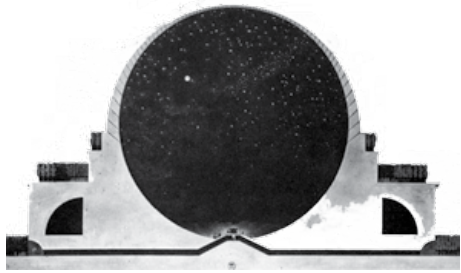


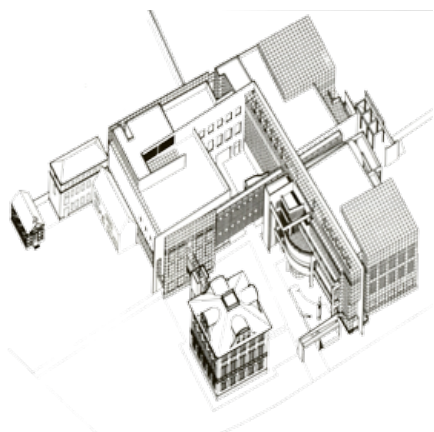
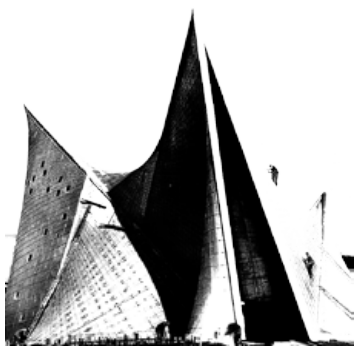
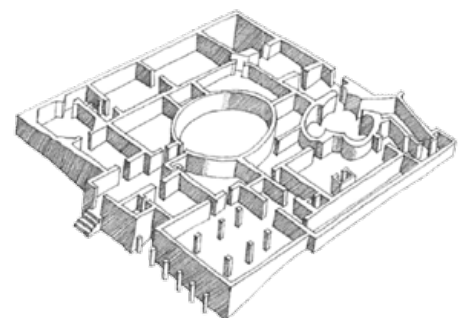
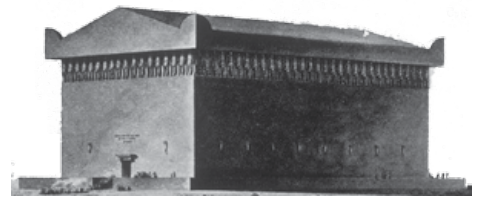
Museum Futures

A SPECULATIVE INVESTIGATION OF MUSEUMS PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

a collection of interviews & essays gathered by Katherine Rose Clark, Christopher Lee Kennedy and Pablo von Frankenberg



A GREAT HALL B. MUSEUM COURTS C. PUBLIC LECTURE ROOM
D. ACADEMIC LECTURE ROOMS
GROUND FLOOR PLAN



**WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN
ONE WOMAN'S 58-YEAR COLLECTION,
A NOMADIC ASSEMBLAGE OF QUEER
EPHEMERA, A HIGH TECH TEEN HANGOUT-
LABORATORY, AND THE TREASURED
REMAINS OF A FISHING TOWN?**

Beginning in a lake Michigan lagoon and sustained through trans-continental Skype conversation, Museum Futures is an interview project developed by three people with a shared investment in the dynamic ways a museum can perform. Although, we often think of a museum as a static collection of objects to be kept a safe distance from, behind a seemingly impenetrable identity is a network of individual actors that have a stake in their museum's future and its collections. Whether it be through the vehicle of a button jar, an ipod touch or a fish trap, a museum has the potential to perform as a dynamic public commons and a place to confront the Other. In the spirit of such possibility, Museum Futures provides a glimpse into the work of educators, anthropologists, consultants, and curators who are re-thinking the performance of the museum's past, present, and future. To share a story visit:

museum-futures.tumblr.com

December 2011

Dear Kate, dear Chris, dear Pablo:

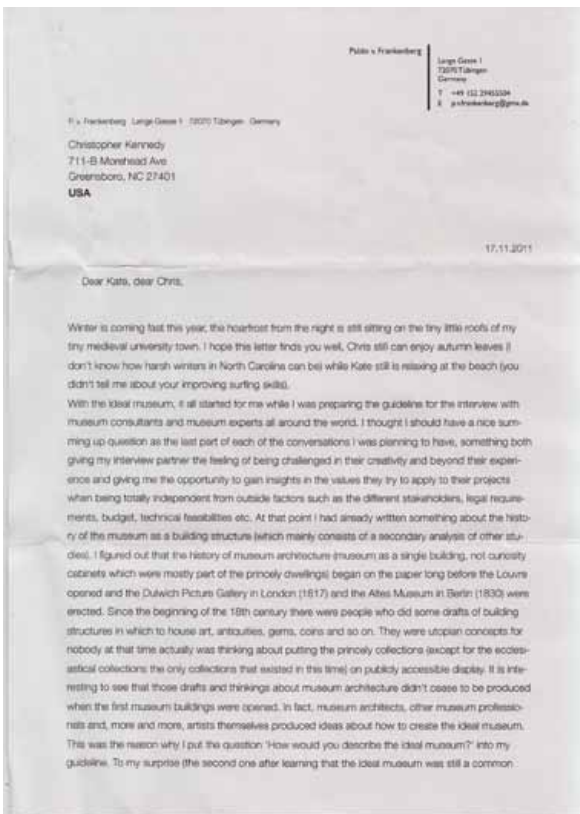
Winter is coming fast this year, the hoarfrost from the night is still sitting on the tiny roofs of my medieval University town...and I've decided my desire for our project is researched based, an investigation about the museum, its essence and how it could and should develop: How would you describe the ideal museum?

The museum can be a steam cave, can't it? The museum as an elemental altar perhaps? Those marble pillars and granite steps as the anchor to maybe something metaphysical? Well maybe...unlike other more clearly defined institutional spaces, the museum has the potential to embody this flux, presenting and producing non-linear cultural activity: a way that is sorely needed in our largely future-forward societies.

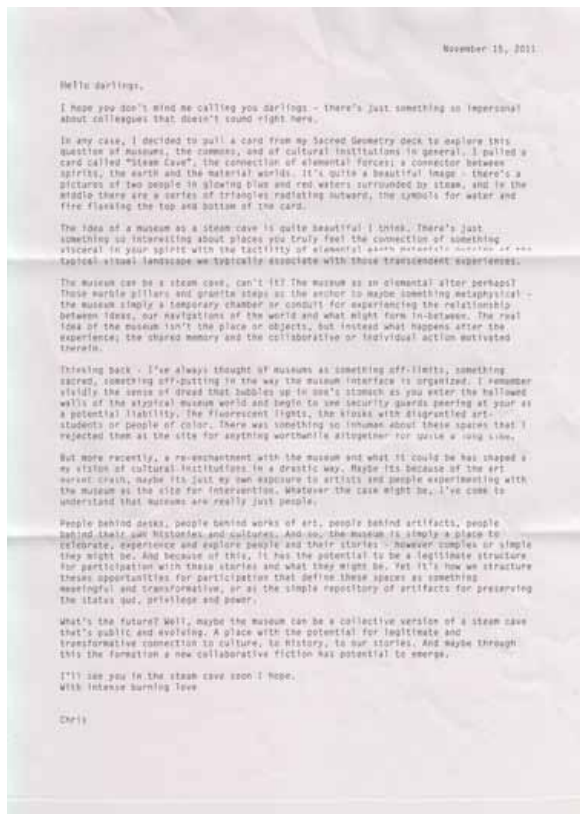
Yet, we also find ourselves in a compelling moment, in a system that "hasn't been built but is already in ruins," ...the museum can behave as leviathan, laboratory, classroom, kitchen, archive, jewel box, ballroom tabula rosa, etc. People behind desks, people behind works of art, people behind their own histories and cultures. The museum is simply a place to celebrate, experience and explore people and their stories. How they can be used and built is up to us, but it is vital that we consider them as both memory agents and catalysts. Here I hope this will serve as platform to to example different ways in which people are engaging with these questions as well as to share other sets of inquiry into the past, present and future of the museum. What trends and textures are we observing, designing, enacting and poeticizing? It remains to be seen.

It's noon and the hoarfrost is all gone, nevertheless the sun is low and I should hurry to go rowing before it's dark again. I really should have said yes the moment the old witch in the black forest wanted to sell me some spring fever.

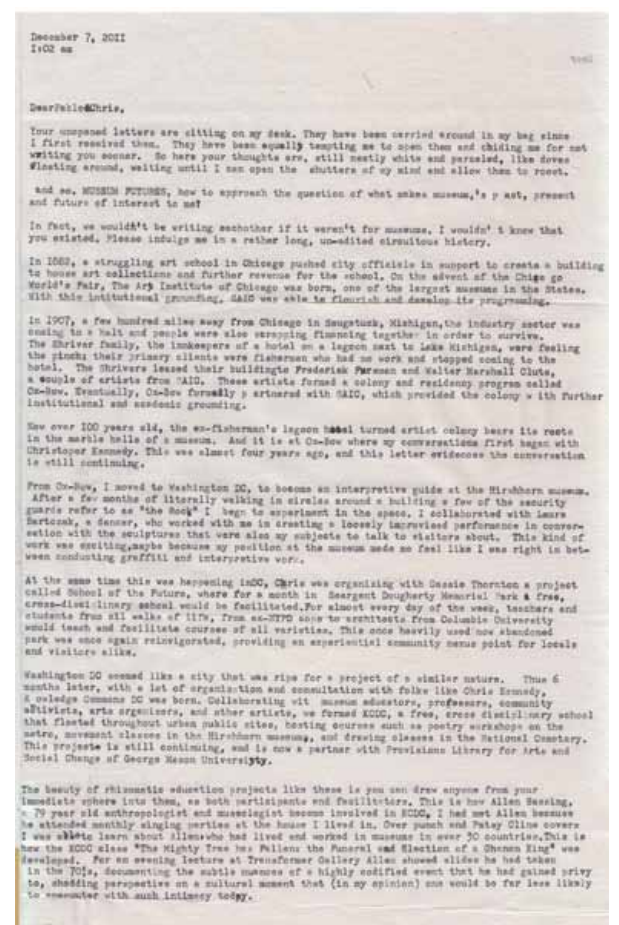
Yours, Sincerely, with Intense burning love,



Pablo Von Frankenberg (11/11/2011)



Christopher Kennedy (11/16/2011)



Katherine Rose Clark (12/7/2011)

Contributors



KATHERINE ROSE CLARK

Artist, organizer and educator currently working in San Diego, CA



CHRISTOPHER LEE KENNEDY

Education Curator at Elsewhere, a living museum inside a former thrift store in Greensboro, NC



PABLO VON FRANKENBERG

A scholar and writer searching for the meaning of the Ideal Museum at the University of Tuebingen in Germany



HUGH RYAN

The Founding Director of The Pop-Up Museum of Queer History



BRET LUNSFORD

Education Curator at the Anacortes Museum and native to Anacortes - a town of 15,000 people on Fidalgo Island in Washington State



LE CORBUSIER

(1887 - 1965) Architect, designer, urbanist, and writer who developed the "musée à croissance illimitée" or museum of infinite growth



JEAN-NICOLAS-LOUIS DURAND

(1760 - 1834) A French author, teacher and Neoclassic architect who influenced the design of museums in the 18th century



LOUIS-ÉTIENNE BOULLÉE

(1728 - February 4, 1799) A French neoclassical architect and teacher at the Académie Royale in Paris



ALLEN BASSING

One of the first international museum consultant, on ideal museum architecture



STEPHANIE SHERMAN

Artist, curator and writer who co-founded Elsewhere and Kultur Park, a project to re-activate an abandoned amusement park in East Berlin



LAUREN LOCKHART

Assistant Curator of Exhibitions at the New Children's Museum in San Diego, California.



LUDWIG MIES VAN DER ROHE

(1886 - 1969) Prominent leader of the German Bauhaus movement who plotted the plan for a Museum für eine kleine Stadt (museum for a small city)



TERRY RILEY

Terry Riley is the former Philip Johnson Chief Curator at MoMA and director of the Miami Art Museum, now partner at K/R Architect



RYAN HILL

Ryan Hill is the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden's Director of digital learning programs



GEORGE SCHEER

George Scheer is a writer and creative instigator, serving as the Collaborative Director of Elsewhere a living museum set inside a former thrift-store in Greensboro, NC

Introductions



Museum Futures began as a conversation between three people in different parts of the world, the letters on the previous page, some of our first communicae. We identified a common interest in what museums could and should be, and decided to investigate ourselves. Over the course of a year we collected interviews, essays and ephemera from museums in our own communities and those we have become a part of.

Museum Futures in History



Pablo Von Frakenburg *Tuebingen, Germany*

Pablo von Frankenberg is a scholar, writer and thinker who recently received his PhD from the University of Tuebingen in Germany.

About one hundred years before the first intentional museum was opened, ideas and thoughts surrounding the collection of objects already existed. However, these ideas were never put into practice. Instead, they remained 'ideal' museums, having a great impact on the development of the museum as a public institution. As a concept, the 'ideal' museum evolved in the beginning of the 18th century, at a time when collections were housed almost exclusively in the palaces of kings and lords. The elites considered their conglomeration of works of art, naturalia, historical artifacts, gems and coins as proof of their supremacy and taste. When the first 'ideal' museums evolved, it was a critique of the circumstances in which the existing courtly collections were maintained. The palaces often were humid and moldy, the light conditions were miserable, and objects were neither cataloged nor protected from fire or other possible damages because their owners considered them ornaments for their salons and boudoirs.[1] Primarily the 'ideal' museum indirectly criticized the lack of public access to collections by proposing an architectural structure detached from the palace.

The Ideal Museum in the 18th Century and the Académie Royale

The first known draft for an 'ideal' museum was produced by the German polymath Christoph Leonhard Sturm in 1704. It consisted solely of a floor plan with no elevation. The plan shows a single building with a sequence of rooms where a typical princely or royal collection could have been displayed. Each room was intended to house a specific part of such a collection (objects of wonder, jewelry, antiquities, art). Sturm numbered the rooms according to their contents. In doing so, a tour through the museum evolved in response to newly arranged classifications of these royal collections. The draft does not state whether the museum should be accessed publicly, but it is clear, that the structure is not connected to a courtly dwelling. Thus it possessed an outer entrance that would have made it accessible for a broader audience. Sturm's ideal museum was visionary given the fact that there was nothing similar to his project at the time he published it.[2]

In the second half of the 18th century several 'ideal' museum plans evolved from two competitions of the Académie Royale in Paris,

France. Whereas the first competition in 1754 asked for a small salon des arts, the second competition in 1779 explicitly invited participants to outline a muséum des arts. Grand structures were created for this second competition in which François Jacques Delannoy gained the first prize, the prix de rome. Then, in 1884, the French architect Louis-Étienne Boullée entered the scene of the ideal museum. The most prominent exponent of French revolutionary architecture and teacher at the Académie Royale, Boullée dwarfed with his "projet pour le muséum" all drafts of previously drafted ideal museums. The horizontal projection that Boullée used to frame his idea was based on a Greek cross. In the middle of this draft Boullée placed a giant rotunda resembling a larger version of the Pantheon in Rome. The four sides were flanked with grand halls lined with columns. In contrary to Sturm, Boullée wasn't invested in the content of the objects displayed in his museum, it was the architectural possibilities linked with this new building design that attracted him. With this he established a new form of representative architecture. It no longer represented a single person – the king – but rather the individual who stands in the middle of a grand edifice. This shift in architectural thinking both reflected and influenced the self-perception of the public. Consequently the architectural historian Paula Young Lee sees these first 'ideal' plans as the birth of the museum as a public institution – not the opening of the Louvre in 1793.[3]

Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand's design for an ideal museum, used in his lectures at the Royal Academy from 1802-1805, can be seen as a summary of the plans generated in the 18th century. It was published in his textbook *Précis des leçons d'architecture*, which had a great influence on museum architecture in the 19th century in France and abroad.[4] Like many of his predecessors he structured the building as a square, subdivided by a Greek cross with four patios to maximize lighting. In the center of the cross he placed a rotunda, a highly visible dome from the outside, which could be thought of as a community gathering space. Long colonnades covered all four sides of the building. Durand avoided one main entrance in favor of a plurality of entrances in order to make all parts of the building easily accessible.[5]

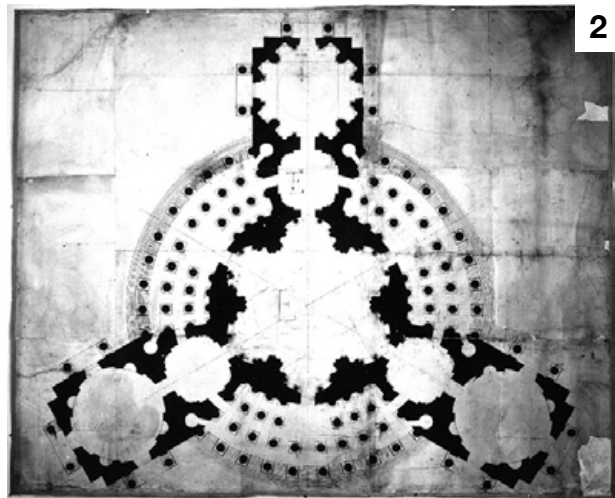
The Ideal Museum in the 19th and 20th Century: A Critique against Existing Museums

As the first museum buildings were erected in the beginning of the 19th century (Dulwich Picture Gallery in London in 1817, Altes Museum in Berlin in 1830), ideal museums did not cease to be produced. On the contrary, the ideal museum is a constant companion of the museum. In their early evolution, the ideal museum was a critique against the elites and a dream of something that did not yet exist. It then became a way to think about different approaches to a more stable and crusted institution. Projects like the Ideales Museum by German architect Gottfried Semper in 1852 and the purely functional model by the museum reformer Alfred Lichtwark in 1924 are witnesses of this development.[6] Semper tried to shape an encyclopedic museum that offered space for a collection representative of objects categorized by groups of material. Lichtwark criticized contemporary museum architecture as being far too trendy to serve the museum's purpose, inevitably interfering with the objects on display. Lichtwark's plan was to eliminate all conventional ornamentation from the façade to achieve a more or less neutral container for the exhibits – 15 years before international-style MoMA opened its gate and 50 years before the white cube debate reached its peak.

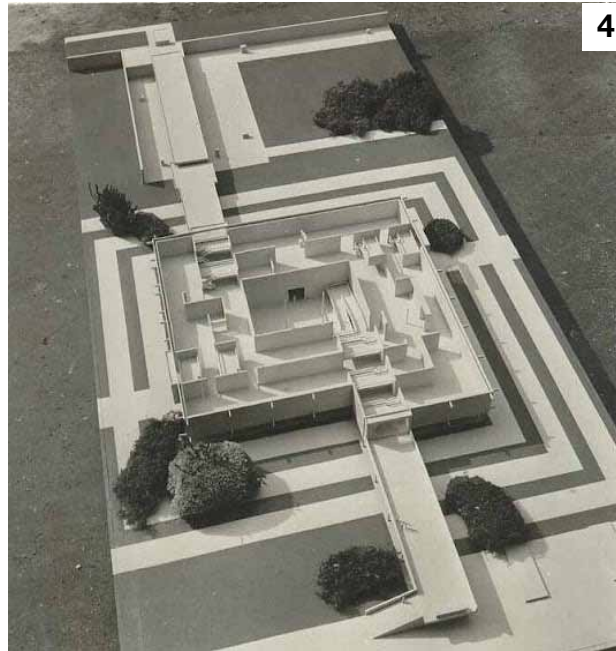
Then, in 1931, in his "musée à croissance illimitée" [museum of infinite growth] Le Corbusier focused on a different challenge of this rising institution. He presented an ideal concept for an art museum that faced the problem of continuing artistic production and acquisition of art, and consequently, a lack of space. Le Corbusier's ideal museum is made up of standardized elements, with its horizontal projection resembling a spiral. In theory Le Corbusier's museum had the possibility of a cheap and easy extension through the use of an elongating spiral. In practice nearly every wall had to be an exterior wall, which would have made the design more costly. Moreover, there would have only been a one-way circuit, a fact that made it inexpedient for exhibition design and uncomfortable for visitors. Considering these problems Le Corbusier reworked the museum of infinite growth in 1939, adding openings into the walls and hence abandoning the standardization of the wall elements.[7]



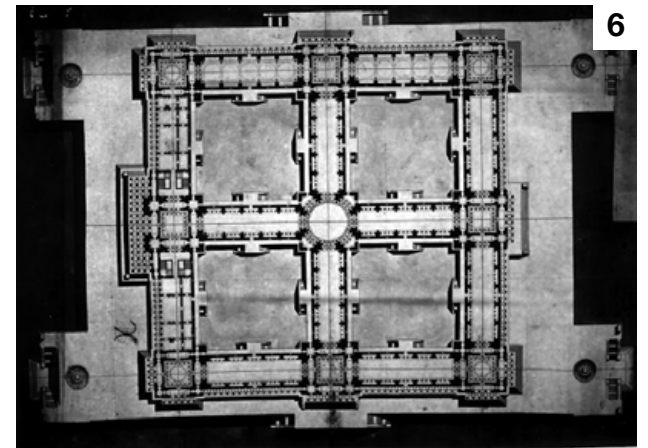
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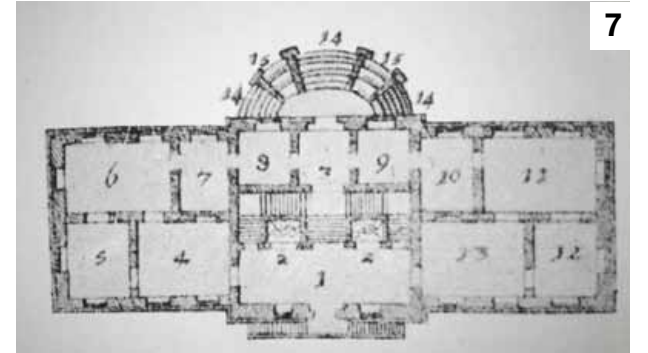
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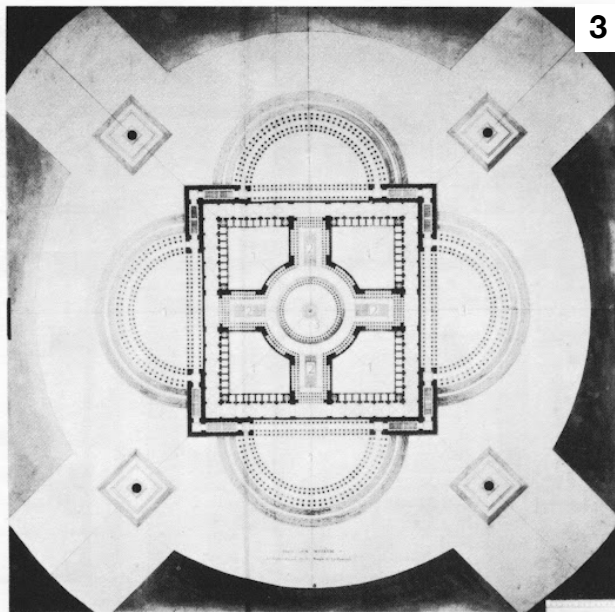
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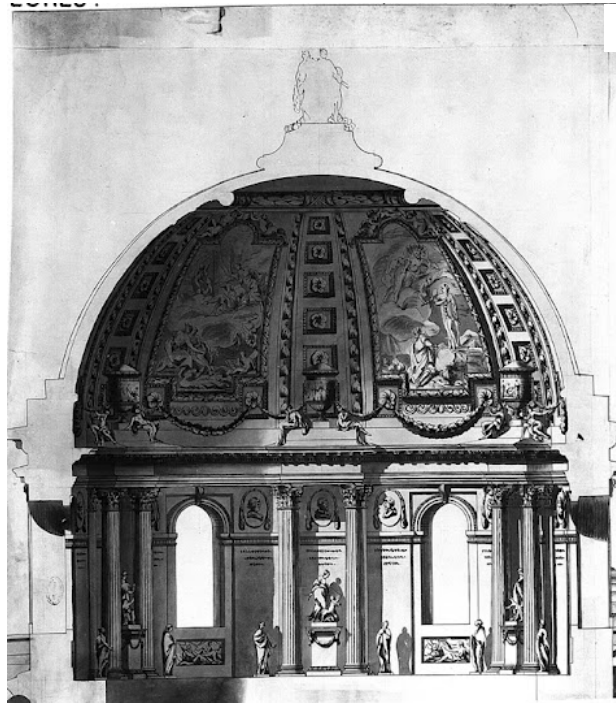
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1, 6. François Jacques Delannoy, Museum des arts, 1806
 2, 8. Jean-Rene Billaudel, Salon des arts
 3. Louise-Etienne Boullée, Tetradic symmetry
 4, 9. Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, Musée à croissance illimitée (project), 1939
 5. Jardin, Salon des arts
 7. Leonhard Sturm, Ideales Museum, 1704

After emigrating to the United States in 1937 the prominent leader of the German Bauhaus movement Ludwig Mies van der Rohe plotted the plan for a Museum für eine kleine Stadt [museum for a small city], in which he criticized the connection of architecture and art as numb. [8] His ideal museum was built up of one single room to allow for utmost flexibility for displaying art and an undisturbed enjoyment of art. In this one big room Mies also located staff and administration. The blending of visitors, artworks and staff can be still seen as a revolutionary program. Mies' aim of his museum for a small city was to dispose of all barriers between art and life. The museum should serve the community as a meeting place for the cultural life in the city. The environment around the museum was projected to be a sculpture garden without enclosure. City and museum coalesced.

One of the most famous ideal museums was imagined by Irish artist Brian O'Doherty: the white cube from 1976. The white cube still acts like a magic term in the discussion of art museums. With his idea of a white cube, O'Doherty described a platonic vision of an art museum: "The ideal gallery subtracts from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is 'art'. The work is isolated from everything

that would detract from its own evaluation of itself. [...] Some of the sanctity of the church, the formality of the courtroom, the mystique of the experimental laboratory joins with chic design to produce a unique chamber of esthetics." [9] This is the starting point of a critical analysis of the museum world through O'Doherty's awareness of the "white wall's apparent neutrality is an illusion". [10] With this concept of an ideal museum he tries to figure out ways of interaction between artist, art, and museum – an interaction which in sum should be paradoxical and ironic. This conclusion derived primarily from a distillation of the architectural interaction of the museum.

There are many other ideal museums created by artists who were discontent with existing museums or who wanted to offer a different view on the conjunction of contemporary artistic production and museums. Sometimes these concepts served as an extension of the designers' and artists' own work, like Marcel Duchamp's boîte-en-valise (first edition in 1941), a suitcase with reproductions of some of his artworks to be carried and displayed anywhere. On the other hand there are concepts like Georg Baselitz' Bilderbude, a highly reduced architectural structure for selected artist friends of his, planned to be shown on the sixth documenta in 1977.

A recent example of an ideal museum is The Delirious Museum, outlined in the book of the same name by architect and museum consultant Calum Storrie in 2006. He describes his ideal museum as follows: "a place overlaid with levels of history, a multiplicity of situations, events and objects open to countless interpretations". [11] Like Mies he didn't want to draw a line between the museum and the surrounding city. He rather superimposed the city with the museum. Like many of the ideal museums in the 18th century the draft of the Delirious Museum shows a central rotunda, but unlike all other ideal museums Storrie's draft is characterized by a succession of extremely distinct rooms, partly quadrate, partly polygonal, partly round. Each room is fitted with specific works of art that are intended to reflect the processes of negotiation between the objects on display and the museum. Storrie's goal is not to replace the existing museum as an institution, but rather to bring "a new level of 'messy vitality' and 'richness of meaning' to the museum". Consequently the Delirious Museum "cannot be made; [...] it can only be brought into existence retroactively", which leads Storrie to conclude: "The architecture of this museum is neither here nor there." [12]

The Museum as Utopian Space

Considering ideal museum concepts throughout time, one could say the ideal museum always is here and there. Save for Duchamp's project none of the drafts were realized, in fact, most of them weren't even intended to be realized. However, the motivation of each of those projects was clearly expressed. They argued for the creation of specific buildings to display objects, for public access to courtly collections, and for building museums which are more adequate to specific ideas or exhibits.

Each ideal museum concept longs for something that is neither here nor there, yet given the elaborate descriptions and drawings is, without a question, something worthy of striving for. Unbound, experimental, utopian thinking is not necessarily an intrinsic characteristic of the museum as an institution whose purpose (amongst others) is to preserve things and therefore to build a stable and formalized structure. Why then are these ideal, utopian

concepts a constant companion of the museum in the different stages of its development?

What all ideal museums have in common is the exclusion of place in relationship to the museum's form and content. The purely text-based ideal museums as well as the drawings do not show where these structures were meant to be erected. This is a fundamental component of a utopia as Michel Foucault defines it: "Utopias are sites with no real place. They are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society. They present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces." [13] The lack of placing enables an analysis and a critique of society or the museum respectively. It enables an external perspective. Hence, the ideal conceptions open the museum to a more reflective viewpoint. Through the lens of utopian ideas the established and static institution of a "museum" is questioned and made vulnerable. The museum is transformed into a suggestion that can be negotiated by anyone at anytime. The

"unreal space" of utopian thinking can transform the museum into a real social space where people can congregate and discuss what they see rather than simply absorb what is on display. The ideal museum is a constant companion of the actual museum because it has proven to be an effective tool in its advancement.

The history of the ideal museum is far from finished as recent publications and conferences demonstrate. It still remains a platform for critique and change. Durand's sketch had a great impact on 19th century museum architecture and O'Doherty's white cube was influential on the museum world of the second half of the 20th century. Currently, it is presumably not a comprehensive concept aiming to revolutionize the museum as a whole but is a conglomeration of thoughts touching only certain areas of the museum world. In other words: for museums today Utopia is hidden anywhere. For a predominantly conservative institution this might seem hazardous, though it is a great opportunity to literally become a 'public' institution.

References

- [1] See James J. Sheehan (2000): *Museum in the German Art World. From the End of the Old Regime to the Rise of Modernism*. Oxford/New York, p. 21 and 51. See also Kristina Kratz-Kessemeier/Andrea Meyer/Bénédicte Savoy (2010): *Einleitung. Museumsgeschichte. Kommentierte Quellentexte 1750-1950. [Introduction. Museum History. Commented Source Texts]* Berlin, pp. 11-16, here: 14.
- [2] For a more detailed description of Sturm's 'ideal' museum see Nikolaus Pevsner (1976): *A History of Building Types*. Princeton, p. 114.
- [3] Paula Young Lee (1998): *Standing on the Shoulders of Giants: Boullée's Atlas Facade for the Bibliothèque du Roi*. In: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 57 No. 4, pp. 404-431, here: 415.
- [4] See Helmut Selig (1967): *The Genesis of the Museum*. In: *The Architectural Review* 141, pp. 103-114, here: 110. The *Précis* is also called „*Le petit Durand*“.
- [5] See Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand (1817): *Précis des Leçons d'Architecture Données à l'École Royale Polytechnique*. Paris: 57.
- [6] See Gottfried Semper (2010 [1852]): *Ideales Museum*. In: Kristina Kratz-Kessemeier/Andrea Meyer/Bénédicte Savoy (see note 1): pp. 36-43. See also Alfred Lichtwark (1924): *Briefe an die Kommission für die Verwaltung der Kunsthalle*. Edited by Gustav Pauli. Hamburg.
- [7] See www.fondationlecorbusier.fr (01.02.2012). Le Corbusier already experimented with the spiral in 1929 for his design of the „*Mundaneum*“, a museum of the history of humanity in Geneva. Traces of his ideal museum are to be found in his National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo, completed in 1959.
- [8] See Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1986 [1943]): *Museum für eine kleine Stadt*. In: Fritz Neumeier: *Mies van der Rohe. Das kunstlose Wort – Gedanken zum Bauen*. Berlin, pp. 385-386.
- [9] Brian O'Doherty (1986 [1976]): *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: 14.
- [10] *Ibid.*: 79.
- [11] Calum Storrie (2006): *The Delirious Museum. A Journey from the Louvre to Las Vegas*. New York: 2.
- [12] *Ibid.*: 3 and 64.
- [13] Michel Foucault (1986): *Of Other Spaces*. In: *Diacritics*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 22-27, here: 24.

they handed me a **Crowbar**



Allen Bassing
Washington, D.C.

Allen Bassing is one of the first international museum consultants on ideal museum architecture

In 1959, Allen Bassing and his wife decided to travel the world. Starting off in Paris with a Citroën 2CV their journey continued for the next 15 years and took them to numerous countries in Europe and Africa. One of the Bassings' early stops was London. Every Saturday they went to the flea market in Portobello Road to stroll through the booths, buying what they liked. This was Bassing's start as collector. He was interested mainly in graphic material from Oceania and Africa that was offered on the street: "We didn't know anything about these things, we guessed them truly aesthetically. So we were taking them to the British Museum to get documentation. After a while a museum staff member said, you seem to be so enthusiastic about this, how would you like to work here?"

Trained as a market analyst he then helped the British Museum to reinstall its collection, which was transferred to the countryside because of the danger of the British Museum being bombed in World War II. Bassing was hired in 1961, when most of the exhibits were still stored in countless transport cases: „They handed me a crowbar and with the curators we went down to the second level and opened up these boxes.“ In doing so he learned the museum business from scratch.

In 1964, the UNESCO Nubia Campaign began. It was one of the greatest challenges of archaeological engineering at that time. With the help of an international team of stonecutters and engineers the Great Temple of Abu Simbel in southern Egypt was dismantled, carved up and moved to another site – like many other Nubian monuments the construction of Aswan Dam, completed in 1970, would have set the over 3,000-years old temple underwater. When Bassing heard about this campaign he decided to leave for North Africa: „I told my wife, let's quit our jobs

and hitch-hike down there. So we did it and saw it there and I said why don't we just keep going? So we went to Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania.“ In Tanzania Bassing worked at the National Museum in Dar es Salaam. It was the transition period between colonization and independency. The colonial powers left and didn't care much about what they left behind. When Bassing started working at the National Museum it was still named Museum of King George V. although the exhibits predominantly were from Tanzania. Bassing's job was to create ways to entice the population to go and visit what was formerly an institution by and for the colonial rulers, and alien to them. Then he went to Cape Town and gave advice to the South-African Museum on conservation matters. Back again in the U.S. for a short visit he was approached by the Peace Corps to support their work as a museologist. Coming home permanently after volunteering for the Peace Corps (which brought him once again to Africa), Bassing worked for the Renwick Gallery in Washington D.C., a branch of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. During his time as a curator at the Smithsonian he was hired as a consultant for several museums in Barbados, Bolivia, Malaysia, Guinea and other places. He was not only one of the first international museum consultants but he also worked in places where present-day consultants and big museums attempting to expand fail to gain ground – Africa and South America.

Being asked how he would describe the ideal museum in light of his vast experience, his answer is simple: „Where? Every country is different. What I might do in South America compared to what I was supposed to do in sub-Saharan Africa might be very different. There is no all-encompassing way of saying this is it.“ The museum thus is an institution, which

nowadays can be found nearly everywhere in the world but which on the other hand should be as multifaceted as the places it is built in. This aim, in Bassing's view, is to be achieved not only by the museum itself but also by the architects designing it. By that, he is referring to his experience in colonial and post-colonial Africa. People there didn't feel the museums were built for them as they were designed in a colonial style completely unsympathetic to local conditions. Bassing is observing this tendency even in today's museum architecture. To reach a more site-specific museum architecture that relates to the perception and needs of the local population he claims: „Always bring the architects out there, and not just for an overnight visit. Take them around the country, introduce them to people who they can talk to. Let them talk to the people in the ministry of culture to get a sense of the country itself. This is very important. Because otherwise you will put up something which is alien.“ One might think of this as the standard approach of a museum architecture project, but it is not. Museum architects often work internationally and spend only a short amount of time being on the ground where their design is realized instead of in their studios to master their other assignments. Museums usually don't have enough funds to pay the architectural team for vast field excursions. If the answer to the question about the ideal museum is as 'simple' as a museum expert like Bassing puts it, maybe the ideal museum does not exist – what exists, though, are people striving for ideal museums.

the New Childrens Museum



Lauren Lockhart
San Diego, CA

Lauren Popp is the Assistant Curator of Exhibitions at the New Children's Museum in San Diego, California.

How did the New Children's Museum begin?

NCM opened in 2008. We were formerly the San Diego Children's museum, which opened more than 25 years ago in La Jolla, and eventually moved to a warehouse that was on the same site that we are in now. A local architect known for his sustainable building practices, Rob Quigley, designed our beautiful, green building that opened in 2008. The former museum always had an interest in working with artists and commissioning original work, but when we reopened and changed our name to the NCM we made a decision to use contemporary art as our primary vehicle to deliver content to our visitors. Today we describe ourselves as a hybrid institution, a contemporary art museum and a children's museum. As far as we know we are unique in the world in that we identify ourselves as a children's museum, but we exclusively commission contemporary artwork in all media, that is always highly participatory, in order to develop our thematic, museum-wide exhibitions.

How would you describe the engaging contemporary artists in developing work that is specifically for intergenerational communities?

It's a challenge of course, but I have found that the artists we've had the good fortune to work with have been incredibly open and excited about making work for children and families. I think the exciting challenge of my role here is to support the artists we work with to help them realize work that is absolutely reflective of their work but that is also mindful of and responsive to the specific needs of our audience. We show work that is complex, that has many different access points. I love the idea of a family coming together and the parents being able to appreciate different levels of the work than the children do. My hope is that every visitor will walk away from an experience at NCM feeling that contemporary art is approachable, fun, and relevant to his or her life.

In terms of developing work that is safe and built to withstand the physical attention it receives from visitors to NCM, durability is a critical issue. We are striving to become material experts here so that we can help artists to source materials

that will hold up to thousands of little hands and feet, but still reflect their desired aesthetic for the work. We never want to tell an artist, we love your concept, we'll just need to coat it in plastic to protect it! . Sometimes we budget for things to be completely rebuilt halfway through the show in order to avoid that route. It's hard to communicate to artists who haven't made artwork for this audience the incredible strength of children. One example I always share is of a beautiful work called Texture Forest by Tanya Aguiñiga in our first exhibition. The work had what resembled cattails coming out of a pond, which were re-bar mounted into concrete—and a toddler pulled one out! I remind artists that however strong they think they've built the work, it can always be stronger.

Reminds me of the strength of an ant colony! How does being an intergenerational space play out in the curation of a museum?

Well, contemporary art is such a wonderful way of communicating with all ages because it addresses issues that impact everyday life. The work that we show here appeals to multiple generations of visitors because it's accessible, and touches on topics that are relevant to them. What makes it really exciting, is that the open-endedness of the artwork we show allows a five-year old and their grandparent to both have a meaningful engagement with the piece, though of course each has a drastically different take away from the experience. When we receive a proposal from an artist, I do my best to consider what the take away from that artwork will be for visitors of all ages. With our current exhibition, TRASH, several artists actually collaborated with our members in developing or prototyping their piece, which was incredibly informative for both the artists and our staff in terms of helping us to understand what's meaningful to them, and what types of experiences are most effective in communicating the content of the work. If a proposed artwork feels as if it only has one entry point, or one interpretation to be found, or really would only be relevant to select members of our visitorship, we know that it's not the right project for us. As an intergenerational space, we want families to play together. We're a children's museum, but we want to show art that excites and involves the parent just as much as the child.

So there's a big push towards the experiential rather than the didactic?

Yes, absolutely. The former museum had the privilege of collaborating with Allan Kaprow on multiple projects, and his approach to the experience of art, his emphasis on the viewer activating an artwork, is something that we continually look back to and strive to model here. Many of our families are first time museumgoers, so it's critical that the work we present draw them in, and make them feel welcome and confident in their ability to engage with the artwork. We hope that our visitors feel that all the experiences and interpretations they bring to a work are valid, while still providing interpretive tools that address the artist's intent. KC: It's interesting to hear that you are setting a precedent for Children's Museum in the push towards the experiential form of curation, since you see that is becoming the norm for contemporary art spaces.

Could you talk about why this place does feel like an anomaly in the world of children's museums?

The work that we are doing is building on Kaprow's legacy and of course reflects the trend relational aesthetics in the broader contemporary art scene. And although many children's museums collaborate with artists occasionally, we are the only children's museum using the model of working exclusively with contemporary artists, designers and architects to realize our exhibitions. Many children's museums rely on a proven and successful model of core exhibits that allow children to enact and practice everyday life skills through pretend play, such as the grocery store display, or the costume space that lets children try on various professional uniforms. At NCM, we share the belief in the value of learning through play that traditional children's museums advocate, but we've made a conscious decision to create unstructured play opportunities through original artworks. Frankly it's been a challenge. At times, some people have been perplexed by the idea of contemporary art for kids (laughing). But we are proving that it works. Unlike adults, children don't come to the museum with any preconceived ideas about what art needs to be, which makes them so receptive and open to contemporary artwork.



You are setting up works that have lots of different levels of approachability, but on the opposite side, you are curating shows with specific, directed themes. Could you talk about the decision making process that goes into that?

We have to insure that the themes we choose to focus on are appealing to our audience, and ideally, that visitors have a personal relationship to that subject, that it is a part of their everyday life. Equally important, the topic has to be a rich subject for artists to respond to. Our current exhibition TRASH has the added benefit of the subject not just being of interest to artists today, but also having a long art historical tradition to draw upon and illustrate for our visitors. It's also critical that the exhibition theme have as many interdisciplinary applications as possible to make it relevant for families and educators. My hope is that the artwork we commission will give visitors new, complex, and playful perspectives on the topic and challenge their assumptions about that topic. When we get this right, it leads to families talking and thinking about the theme long after they leave the museum, and hopefully, returning again and again to the exhibition because the artwork offers so many vantage points from which to consider the subject.

In terms of contemporary themes that are important to address, what other themes are you tossing around for shows?

It's not official yet, but I am working on an exhibition proposal related to food, which, as a subject of course has been reaching a fever pitch of debate and discussion for many years now, but it's an especially complex and rich subject for artists. It's also incredibly interdisciplinary. Artists are using food as a means to explore issues of politics, ecology, sociology, economics. Our exhibitions themes have to be flexible in terms of how an artist can approach it. . Even with a topic like trash, we're certainly not the only museum to deal with this theme, but we hope we are coming at it from a new angle. For example, I found a lot of people asking "Oh, so it's about recycling?" and we would say, "yes, it will touch on recycling, but

it's called TRASH for a reason. We didn't want to reiterate lessons of the 3 "Rs" that children already hear in school. We wanted to invite artists to introduce our visitors to trash issues that aren't discussed as often, and to reveal the ability of art to transform discarded materials.

In a way, it seems like you are following the traditional model of children's museums in that you are taking these building block themes and expanding them so it still continues a need to educate and expose basic life processes.

Yes, in that way we are building upon the approach of traditional children's museums. What distinguishes us of course, is that while we may address a building block theme or topic, because contemporary artists are the ones interpreting that theme, our exhibitions are not didactic, not intended to offer visitors a comprehensive understanding of that topic. Rather, we hope that looking at this theme through the lens of contemporary art prompts questions, and sparks meaningful conversations among families about what role trash, for example, plays in their life.

Could you talk about your experience of working with researchers and scientists for these interdisciplinary exhibition themes?

With these interdisciplinary themes, we want the core of the exhibition to be really open ended, but we also feel a responsibility to provide our visitors with some factual information on the topic. In preparation for launching TRASH, we consulted educators and scientists from the Birch Aquarium on issues of plastic trash in the oceans, a public information officer from the Miramar Landfill who toured myself and multiple artists through the landfill, and architects and urban planners to understand how trash is dealt with in different regions. These experts were instrumental in helping our exhibition team become better informed about what happens to our trash once it leaves the curb. I want to consult as many sources as possible to educate myself on the issue, and to be able to offer our artists useful contacts they could reach out to as needed.

How do you sense children's museum adapting or evolving over time?

I think that the shift of involving artists, designers, and creative individuals in all aspects of museum programming will continue to grow over time. This is such an effective strategy for infusing new ideas into a museum's operations. We recently invited Machine Project, a collaborative run by Mark Allen in LA, to design a pneumatic donation machine for the museum. It has been hugely successful, and I think proves that museums should be consulting artists for innovative approaches to everything that we do, from how we engage our visitors to how to fundraise.

What is the benefit of having a fixed space for people to return to as compared to having a program that goes into public schools? What is the role of an architectural space for people to return to?

Clearly we need both. Our hope in having a permanent site is that we want to be a community center for visitors. We want to offer a space where families want to return to often to learn and play together, but also to relax, to celebrate, to experience a unique setting that was designed with them in mind. There's a father and son who come here every Thursday to work on homework together in our café. That's the kind of usage of our space that tells me we're doing something right, when a family not only wants to play here, but they find the environment we've created to be a great setting for everyday activities as well. We are in the process of developing our first formal outreach program for schools, which will be a critical step for us in bringing our unique programming to underserved communities and audiences that may not be able to visit the Museum.

New Childrens Museum

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ArtLab

Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden



Ryan Hill
Washington, D.C.

Ryan Hill is the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden's
Director of digital learning programs

Describe for us the interpretive guide program at the Hirshhorn:

Ryan Hill: The interpretive guide program actually started at the Guggenheim before I began working at the Hirshhorn and basically consists of museum's using inquiry techniques to create audience and visitor engagement within the structure of a tour. There is already an implied power dynamic within the structure of the traditional tour. The person giving the tour becomes the expert and the attending people are there to learn. The learning is never considered to be a two way process.

So I was working through this idea of inquiry – and the interesting thing about inquiry is that it's really not just asking questions, but asking questions in a way that calls for open responses. Open response is not something that everyone can get. So, with that all said, I found that I wanted to go outside of a tour structure in order to create these kinds of experiences.

At the Guggenheim there was an opportunity to engage security guards in a hybrid program between visitor services, security and education in which I trained educators in light security tasks, to do security and also gallery interpretation with visitors. From that program I developed what was called gallery guides. These were paid positions to be doing both light security and also supporting visitor interpretation.

As an artist I'm interested in putting the visitor in the place of the creator and have them think about artistic choices as if they was theirs. Artists' work in museums tends to become validated through academia. And I think that's not always what the artist is interested in. It's important that whoever is an interpretive guide be someone who either has an artistic bent or has a sympathy with the artist or the visitor. That's philosophically what the program is about. It's been running at the Hirshhorn for about 5 years now and it continues at the Guggenheim but in a different form.

Could you talk about your transition in working on the ArtLab?

I was really interested in how technology could be interpretive. But also too, technology can be very emancipatory because what it does, is it gives voice to personal interpretation. This challenges institutions and also give feedback to institutions on how to be more responsive to what their audiences really need. So I saw the opportunity to work with a community of teens and interacting with the art as a way of empowering them, especially if they're considered high risk or not getting the usual channels and access to technology. I also saw it as an opportunity for the museum to learn from the teens. These teen groups I'm working with are actually going to be the people who come to museums in the future. And if there is a narrowing amount of funding available to museums, we're going to have to figure out ways to reinvent ourselves. The Smithsonian is lucky that we get government funding. It allows me to do these kinds of programs, so I don't have to be completely responsive to an elite interest.

The most innovative stuff that's happening is not happening at the big institutions at all. Because they're too slow and not very responsive. It's really happening in smaller towns, with nonprofit spaces, in places where they need to be more responsive to their community. Larger institutions are so driven to be global and be engaged with prestige they start to neglect the innovation that could come from being responsive to community. Because the community can now be global, it's not that hard. Once you have access to digital media, you can do it. So that's where the innovation is, looking at how to be responsive locally and taking that globally. And talking about how that can be a model for other places. And then it's more about an exchange. But I don't think exchange actually helps institutions completely reinforce their authority. A lot of them are afraid of that dialogue.

But I'm curious in terms of design, how the ArtLab is physically separate from the museum. So in terms of thinking

about the work that's being produced in the ArtLab – how do you see that as overlapping with the actual institution of the Hirshhorn? Is there much crossover?

The problem was, the ArtLab was originally supposed to be in the lobby. The ambitions of the museum were to build a state of the art educational space – but those ambitions exceeded our funding. So in order to implement what our funders wanted, we had to go to the ArtLab in order to give us more time and immediately do it. Right now the way that we are a part of the infrastructure is through content. So we have some community responsive workshops, and some museum workshops. Sometime they're a blend of both. And because the museum is also a community were serving. We use the model of a design firm, and the design firm always has a client, and the teens are always the designers. Their challenge is always to serve that client. So whether the museum is the client or the community they have to analyze what the clients needs are and then produce with that goal in mind. And we find that that actually – as much as I love unending process – we find that with teens, that goal can have real-world products and gets them excited about being invested. And this is actually lessons learned from the Learning Institute and the MacArthur Foundation and all their philosophies on how to setup a space. There are spaces setup with the philosophy of HOMAGO – hanging out, messing around and geeking out. HOMAGO is about interactive zones, genres of participation that the teen can be a part of. What we're probably going to do is make the hanging out and messing around section be in the lobby of the museum, and the more geeking out be in the Artlab. Because the Artlab has a cave-like hermetic clubhouse feel to it. And we feel that it might be nice to keep that. The messing around and more social activities can be more exhibitionist in the glass lobby. It can be ways to connect the whole museum. We tried linking QR codes to works in the gallery – there are a lot of ways to do it.

So the ArtLab projects you choose to do – is there some kind of thematic or focus?

Each workshop has its own theme. Basically we do the workshops structured around the idea of a challenge or a mission. I hand over a lot of creativity to the mentors because each of them is coming from a different perspective and each of them is hopefully representing a perspective of kids that are coming in. So I kind of give them license to develop something that's responsive to the kids. The teens actually have to tell us what they're invested in, then we make our workshops based on that. One of the themes is being responsive to the teens, just as interpretive guides are responsive to the visitors. So it's the same model with a feedback loop.

Do you have a future vision of the ArtLab or Hirshhorn's education program in general?

One of the things I want to have happen is to have one of the arms of Hirshhorn to be community responsive. We're trying our best but we're not reflecting the community we're serving. And one of the ways we could do that is by beginning to hire the alumni of the ArtLab so that over time

the community that's coming to the ArtLab will be the community that's teaching its own community. But also at the same time those people are bringing a sensibility into the art museum that is far more down to earth. They can balance out what the museum is doing.

The other thing is, I'd like to do programming that's intergenerational where we have teens actually not only being mentors but teaching adults how to use technology. So that there is this bridging of the gap between older folks and younger folks. And that's also mentoring that could happen within that intergenerational exchange. The older folks can say, hey, these are the lessons we learned, we don't have the language you have with technology but that perhaps there is something you can learn from us. By teaching us...I think this network of digital labs, digital centers can fill in the blanks that public schools aren't filling in. And be responsive in terms of technological needs and professional development that kids need and aren't getting in high school. So what I think is happening is the rich are able to send their kids to schools that will get them into college, to schools that will prepare them to be able to really teachable in a college environment. They also have the money to tutor them whenever the schools are failing them and what I would like to see that these digital labs be tutoring centers

that use digital media but also help anyone get into college because of the biggest divide is a linguistic divide. Populations that have different cultural vocabularies and unless your institutions are generous in who they're looking for then a lot of people could be disadvantaged and not be able to be a part of higher education. Because they don't speak the same language, because they don't sound or look like someone who would be an academic candidate.

There is class, gender, sexuality throughout our culture. So in the bigger picture if we're talking about a safe space. And also a space that empowers anyone to have access to knowledge... and I would just hope that the ArtLab could be something like that, or a model for allowing anyone to have advances to higher learning and institutions. Because they have access to the Smithsonian by being in the ArtLab and that is paid for by the government so that its accessible to anyone. I would hope that places like the ArtLab would spring up all over to give people access to all kinds of institutions so there isn't kind of an elitism and so that there isn't that 1% who is only getting access with that information.

Or sustaining a history that only supports the identity of that 1%.



ArtLab, Hirshhorn Museum

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AQUISITIONS

the risky game of museum mis-management

SUGGESTED RULES OF PLAY

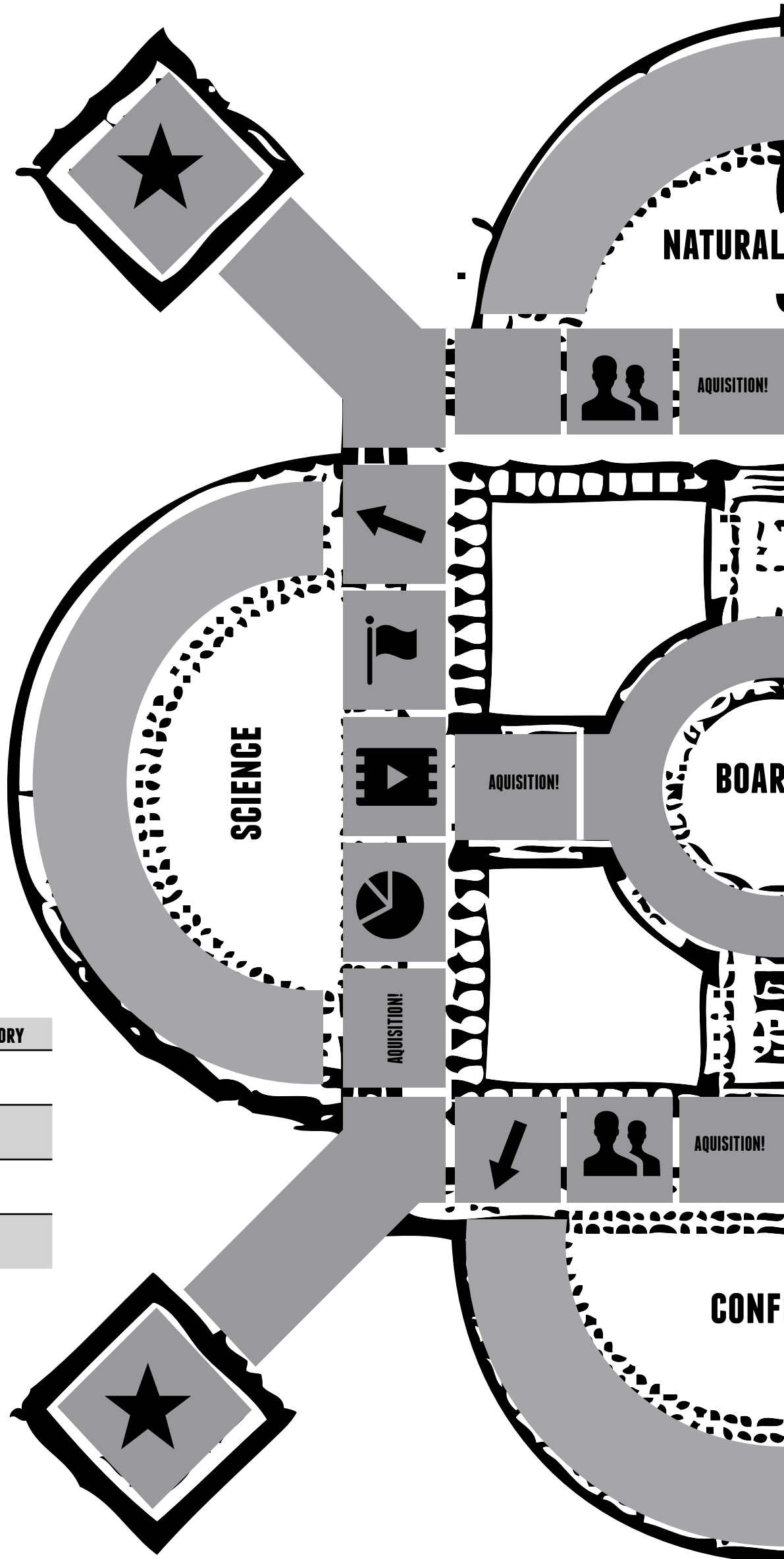
Acquisitions is played with one or two dice with the goal of the game to move through the ranks of a museum - managing its collection, curating its exhibits and raising money to become chief curator and lead of the Board.

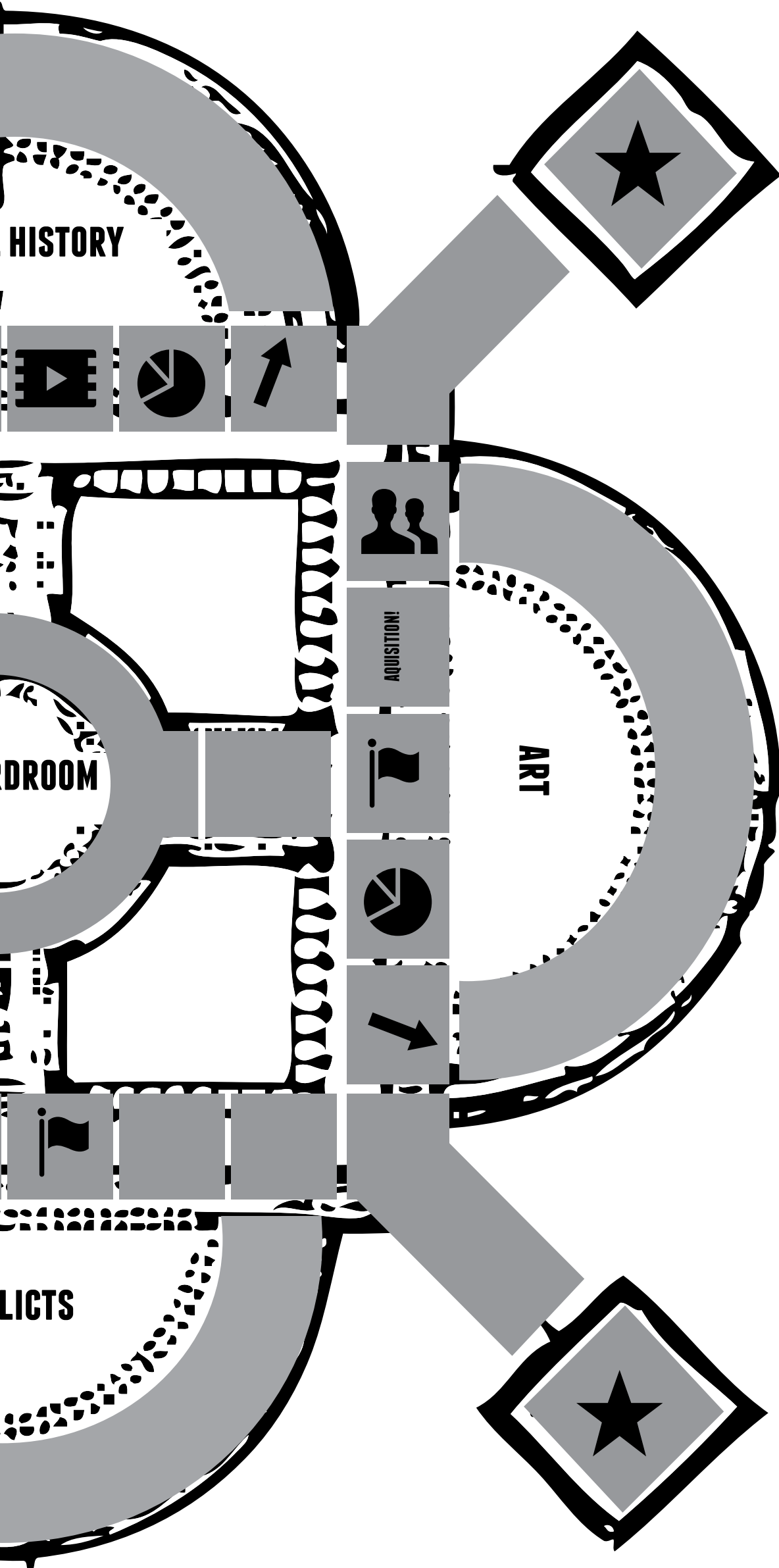
To start, each player selects four pieces of the same character, and places them in their "vitrine," or starting area. Pieces enter play onto the space to the left of the vitrine and continue counter-clockwise around the board to the home path directly in front of the player.

Each player rolls a die; the highest roller goes first, with the object to get each one of their pieces into the four wings of the museum and then into the Boardroom for final negotiations to become Chief Curator. You can only enter each wing by landing on a star and answering a question moderated by your peers. Similarly, along the way you'll land on various spaces - - choose from one of the scenarios. Read the scenario aloud, explain what you would do if you were Chief Curator. If all the players agree this is a good move, you'll advance to the nearest wing of the museum of your choice. If a player lands on the "acquisition" square, they win the chance to acquire the collection of one other player, forcing them to start from the beginning.

SCORE

PLAYER	ART	CONFLICTS	SCIENCE	NAT. HISTORY





SCENARIOS

Funding Woes

- Recession! You have to create a blockbuster exhibition to increase funding at a Historical Museum in a small city. How do you increase patronage, increase ticket sales and market the hell out of history?
- You work at a small museum dedicated to the wonders of Oil sponsored by Mobil Exxon. Attendance has dropped each year by 10%. How do you increase attendance?
- You've been asked to increase Gift Shop sales by 25% at a local museum dedicated to your hometown - or you'll have to start looking for a new job.

Cultural Re-appropriation

- You just botched a show featuring a local native American tribe by not inviting anyone indigenous to the opening. A news crew is outside your office and you're ready to jump out the window but realize you're on the 5th floor. What do you do?
- You're in hot water because a local history teacher using an old curriculum from your museum was caught disavowing the existence of several key historical figures who were of color or indigenous descent.

Public Dis-engagement

- During family day at your local art museum, a little boy somehow set his macaroni picasso art on fire damaging an entire wing of the museum. His mom is defending him saying he was bored... and the educators on staff were underpaid and also bored. What do you tell your boss?
- You've just landed the exclusive contract with conceptual artist Hans Hanis. After 6 months of waiting for a proposal you receive a fax outlining his idea to fabricate a giant lamp shade that won't fit inside the gallery. It's over budget and he wants to take down an exterior wall. What next?
- A Board member at a large natural science museum asks you to curate a special show on Creationism in return for a 5 million dollar endowment. Do you say yes, and how do you curate the show?

Personal Issues

- Your entire art handler crew and staff has gone on strike because of low wages. You've got a show to hang that opens in 2 days.
- You just found out your Chief Preservationist went \$90,000 over budget on a personal crusade to preserve a statue of an old white man who led the massacre of thousands of indigenous peoples in your area.

Kultur Park



Stephanie Sherman Washington, D.C.

Stephanie Sherman is Creative Director at Elsewhere a living museum in Greensboro, NC and Director of Research Projects for Provisions Library at George Mason University

How did Kultur Park develop?

This all happened when George [Scheer, executive director at Elsewhere] and I took a trip to Berlin in the Winter of 2007. During a dinner party somebody told us that she has taken photos of an amusement park with trees growing through the center of roller-coasters. It was Christmas Eve and we were going out there, hopped the fence, played around for a good hour and a half before we got caught. We videotaped it and put it aside. Then we got invited to apply for a grant through the foundation Art Matters, which funds international artist research. The next time when we went there we found the security guard and set up a relationship with this guy.

That was not the one who caught you the first time?

It was the same guy but he didn't remember. He sees a fifty or a hundred people a day coming through. So we paid to have a tour. He showed us all around, up to the center of things, let us photograph. We were Americans, showing up in the middle of Berlin looking at an amusement park. We knew it was going to be hard to communicate the social care that we had for it and also why are we doing this, why is it useful for us to put all this energy and time in this thing that is not ours and not for us and not for the people around it. As outsiders, one of our strengths is to build up communities that wouldn't otherwise meet or intersect. That is the power of the stranger, there is a bit more flexibility. We decided we would do something similar to Elsewhere, we would invite artists and creative groups to come and explore this place and do projects with it. The aim is to start with what is there, to ask what are the different states of time, what is the whole constellation in this place?

How did you get all the information about the park?

First we met with artists who had already done work there, who made a film or a sculpture. Over the time an amazingly network has built up. Then George went to the Berlin Treptow archive.

He is doing all the historical research. It's artist research, it's not about understanding a fact, it's more about understanding a situation that could become an art project.

What happened when you came back after applying for the grant?

We saw the park open. This was really amazing because first of all, as Americans, part of our concern was insurance and security. In America you could never do this. When we saw the park open it was clear we are going to make a statement about what a public park is. Our investigation was about this land as a place with a fence around it. This was the switch, it now is about what parks are and what they can be, what 'parkitecture' could be and that this concept might be taken to other places, turning a place to a social meeting ground not for the sake of commerce but just for the sake of coming together and exchanging.

The fence is something quite important to you.

Absolutely. The fence makes it a public secret. We never want to lose the myth and these other qualities of this place. When you have to traverse a fence you go through a very physical, kinetic process of coming into that space. One of our artists says the fence is the new ride. Jumping the fence is the same feeling when you ride one of the machines. Even when the gates were open people still jumped the fence because they didn't know the gate was open all the way around.

What kind of a fence is it?

It is a very broken fence with many different parts fused together in different times. It's beautiful, some parts may be original GDR, other parts are from construction sites. Where all of these pieces fit together are holes. It's the same thing as in the conceptual part of our project. Where the pieces of history fit together there are gaps where you can leak through. This place feels like a time machine. You are going back in time but you are also zooming to a future.

In the museum world these days, everything is about breaking down the fence, making it accessible. You are focussing on the fence instead?

It's also about how do you make something open in the most generous way but also to keep the mystery. Sometimes things die because they become so accessible, if they were not a shared mystery, if it was just like: lay it all out! But there always has to be something more to be dug up. Give people a shovel! That's why our artists are making works there that are setting up public interactions and experiences. They only take it the first half. The public co-creates the experience. For example, a group of young architects called Hither Yon proposed a series of projects that will research memory in the park with different age groups. So if you are four to seven years old you do drawings that shall respond to this place as a magical land. And from seven to thirteen you start thinking about it more as a structured experience. Later then it becomes about sustainability. People will add drawings and will make a huge archive collection of all these public responses to it. This kind of research is also about if anybody tries to buy back the park or use the land in a terrible way you can point to thousands of people's responses. It's an armory against terrible development but also a memory and a story of it of just a moment in time.

The park has undergone a transformation from communist to capitalist to now a kind of communist, collaborative, independent status.

Totally. But we are doing art and not politics. In the end it is an aggregated affiliation. It is the composite of all these different pieces. It seems like the whole point of our history is that we forget to keep what is good about things or what is useful about certain elements of the system. So let's just puzzle it all together, it's already all there! You just have to rearrange it in a different way.

The family who ran the amusement park after the German reunification became bankrupt with over 15 million Euro owing debts. The amusement park is closed down. Who owns the park right now?

The bank owns the land but the family owns everything on the land. The bank can't sell it or it is very hard to sell it because it is in the middle of a conservation area. To buy the land you have to follow all these regulations so that nobody really wants it for development. So who owns it? No one really. It is between public and private space.

The artists have to apply for a project to do something in the Kulturpark but they have to fund themselves?

Yes and no. None of us are paid to be here. We get a little bit from Art Matters Foundation and that keeps us going and that's how it's going to be the whole time. The artists aren't supported financially, but their projects will raise money to support their projects. For example we are saying to our light designers, you guys already were sponsored by the electrical company in the past, so you will be a better way to connect

to them than we are. People are representing different interests and helping to reach out to their networks to get sponsors. There is hundreds of thousands of euros in the works but zero in the bank. That's how producing these projects goes. Another big part is the exchange program. We are going to have university groups that are coming from the U.S. and sending students. They will be attending the lectures and discussions and the students will support the projects as well.

Are you planning to get in contact with the bank? This is a question right now. We have people recommending that we do but then at the same time, do I need to be alerting them to the fact that I'm doing a project on their land that I'm not paying them for? On the other hand our work is very valuable to the bank. They should be supporting us for bringing the whole kind of cultural attention to the place.

Until now it seems that you don't have many sponsors?

That is a big part of our considerations, we don't want logos all over the project at all. The very point is to bring out the jungle and to bring out the nature in conflict with the recent collapsed industry. Logos of sponsors interfere with visual space. I'm not interested in corporate symbols in visual space. It's a tough intention. I would rather have a smaller project for not having all this. At a certain point it starts to replicate the structure of an amusement park which is what you don't want to do.

Is the Kulturpark a museum?

No. The only reason why I say that is because it doesn't care for things. It cares for the land. You could think about it as an open air museum. It's a park. Sometimes museums can function like parks and parks can function like museums. I hope more parks could be like museums. In fifty years maybe you could ask again and hopefully the definition might have shifted enough that we could work with it. I imagine more museums could be in this kind of dynamic shift. Not those clean, perfect spaces, but also museums as places to use and reflect and be a part of a history.



Kultur Park

📍 Plänterwald
Berlin, Germany
🌐 kulturpark.org



Anacortes Museum



Bret Lunsford
Anacortes, WA

Bret Lunsford is a founding member of the band Beat Happening and is the Education Curator at the Anacortes Museum

KRC: How was the Anacortes Museum founded?

BR: That touches upon a lot of the question of changes in technology and how people interact with archives. It was around 1950 that Wallie Funk came back to Anacortes and bought the Anacortes American newspaper. One of the first editorials he wrote was on the neglect of history. He started to collect historical photos for the newspaper. He made copy negatives of these original pioneer photos of Fidalgo and Guemes island, and enlarged them to 16x20. 100 some images were put on display at city hall and given an opening where hundreds of people came. That was the start of the Anacortes Museum. The museum moved into the old Carnegie Library building in 1968. It was mainly a volunteer organization, but they started to have some paid staff. At a certain point Wallie donated his vast collection of images. He did weddings and school shots. Wallie Funk also paid 20 dollars to Fern Brady for a truck full of negatives that he was hauling to the dump, saving thousands of crucial photos of Anacortes. But of course there are plenty of collections that were taken to the dump or dispersed.

KRC: Could you talk about the relationship to the community museum as a brick and mortar space?

BR: In very simple terms, with web based businesses developing a virtual economy, it's caused difficulty amongst businesses that have to pay rent and maintain staff during operating hours. These brick and mortar spaces are at a competitive disadvantage.

As it applies to museums, when I'm sitting on a chamber of commerce meeting and I'm listening to retailers on Commercial avenue and they're talking about their sales dropping, and seeing online sales increasing 15-20% yearly, there's a point which you have to wonder how retailing on Commercial Avenue is going to evolve. City programs and government and non-profits who are tied into the tax revenue that are tied to the

brick and mortar retailers, they are pondering the same question that a museum is pondering: How am I going to get customers through the door, how am I going to compete? What am I going to do differently?

When I was running the Business, I referred to it as the Living Museum of Independent Retail. I joked that we should sell tickets at the door for people to get in and what they would buy from us would be gift shop items.

As a museum, we are a city institution, but we really are charged with looking past other organizations in how they look at their archives. Most of them don't think of archives, they think of things that are of use, and things that are not of use. So if the school district has that mentality, and they have a room full of archived basketball videotapes, and they've reached a point where they need to remodel that room, well, maybe a handful of them are distributed to interested people, the rest of them are thrown away. How many people in this town would love to have access to films of them playing basketball in high school, or any other sport, or the high school play? Those things are in the collection. You might want to show some of your plays that you were in high school to your kids. Do you still have your copies?

KRC: I don't think so.

BR: And so who does? Those are the kinds of questions as a community, especially a small community that drives me. We are a small town, we can get to the edges of collecting and do a pretty good job of filling in the gaps, and so there are only a few missing teeth.

That was the case with the Croatian Fishing Families of Anacortes book I wrote, you had the ability to get to the edges of everything that was covered and at least reference what wasn't. For example, I wanted to find a particular person, such as the artist Harry Smith in an elementary school photo. In his era, there weren't formal ways of taking school pictures, they were sporadic, before it was the business it became. What does

it take to collect all of those school photos from the school district? I went to the school district and most of the people in the offices had them, so we scanned them at the museum. Once they are made available, then people in the community can identify them for genealogical work. I think that it's a way to say, "we think that the history of this town is important and here's why. We are this kind of people. Here are some examples. Here's what we did, here are some of our accomplishments athletes, or dramatists, or artists."

We have as a culture past 20 or so years, shot how many hundreds of hours of video, and watched what percentage? Where is it stored? It is the people who have stored it well, labeled it well, who have done a good job of exposure and focus; they are going to form the core collections. The people who are going to have their stuff sold at garage sales, and all of the sudden you are watching people's personal sex tapes, that you bought along Toy Story. And though that's a scary thing to consider, I think that video archive is going to be something for people to get into.

KRC: How do you see brick and mortar Spaces relating to newer forms of technology and communication?

BL: Technology trains us in how we are going to interact with the world and what we are going to spend our attention on. Everyone has their facebook page, social networking time; all of the sudden now you can invest in what was a nonexistent part of leisure has now grown to squeeze everything out, such as visits to the museum. The items in the museum, or the shop, pale in comparison to the vastness, if you want to have sky is the limit selection.

My sense is that if you walk into a museum that doesn't have screens than you are setting a tone, maybe it's a tone that you want to set, but it strikes me that you are missing out on an opportunity to connect with people who have grown dependent on screens as a means for information. It's so dominant in other people's lives, and whether or not it's articulated, I think it's absence felt.

But I think that with this new technology there can be a democratization of the collection without any risk to the fragile objects. The information and the images can be made available for interpretation to researchers that could become publishers or exhibitors that would come back to the museum.

The first step is to get the collection searchable for students so they can explore on their own terms. Once that door is open, I think there are all different kinds of projects. One idea I had would be to publicize the searchable database by for a people's choice exhibit. You would say, "Hey, go online, pick the images or objects you want to see exhibited and send us an email saying why." People want to have personal involvement and that their voice is heard.

KRC: The screen is one way to connect people to the space, what about the content itself? Right now at the museum there's an exhibition about local native plants, before that there was an exhibition about colorful characters of Anacortes. Outside of the methods of how the information is being shared, how do you see the content of the museum evolving?

BL: The building was remodeled and renovated. Now it looks closer to its state when it was the Carnegie library. There was a period in the space during the 70's where someone told the museum that you couldn't have any light touching any part of the museum because it was going to

burn everything, so they boarded up all the windows, and covered the fir floors. When that was all changed back closer to the original it had a noticeable effect on the room. When people now come to the room, they feel like they were in a historic building. I think that feeling of the building has as much to do with their experience of the museum than any particular exhibit content.

KRC: It's interesting to hear you talk about the characteristic physical aspects of the museum. As you said, people are virtually creating their own personal archives, and a lot of the content that we are producing forms a closed circuit. If that seems like an opposite experience to the creaky floor museums, how could they meet?

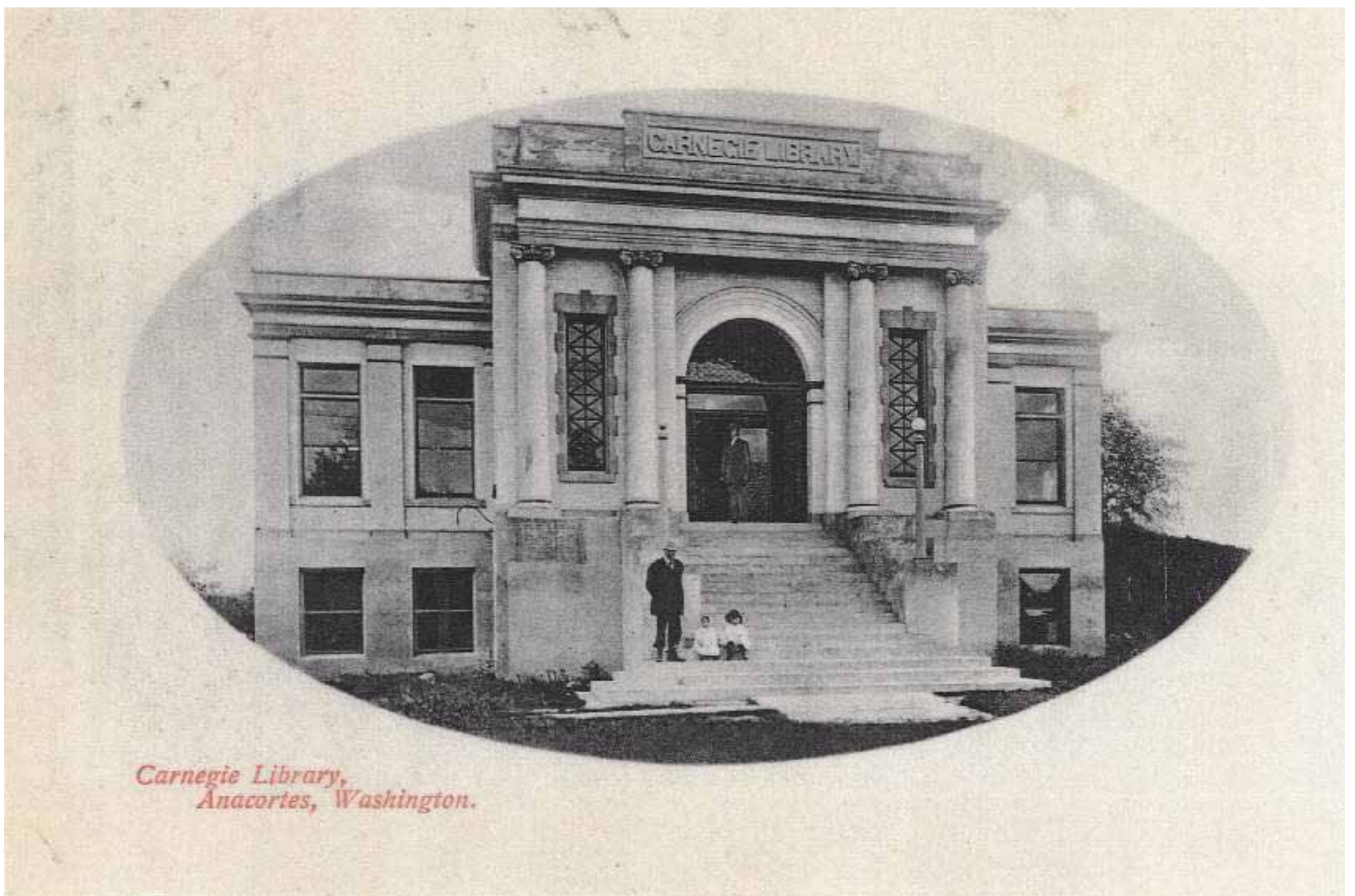
BL: I guess it's a question of pace, jumping onto the moving conveyer belt. Are we at a point where everyone's used to being able to slideshow a hundred images they've brought up to their particular interest in that moment. So the idea of going to an exhibition that's static for two years, is a really different pace than people are used to intaking information and entertainment, so that's already a situation. Maybe the Anacortes Museum takes it into the meditative sensory deprecation pace, where people go in and they suddenly are in a different universe.

KRC: I wonder than too, how long does this trail of object collecting go on to? As our town rattles on throughout history, is our tail of things going to get longer and longer? Does it shed off eventually? It's interesting considering the collections you mentioned of video and film in our garages. For all practical purposes, these potential artifacts are dealt with when their holding spaces transition: when the room needs to be remodeled, or the owner dies. So the community archive has always been materially lagging by half a generation, following typical life cycles.

BL: Maybe you have a centennial celebration, and there's a seal that's made, you know there's manufactured significance there. But for example, whenever everyone has a particular kind of crab pot, maybe the old ones that have cotton mesh that were dipped in tar, new technology comes in, and for the next 20 years the old ones are garbage. It's only the people that saved their old crab trap in the rafters of their garage. "Remember how we used to have those?" Maybe that's an important part of the story to Anacortes.

Anacortes Museum

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the Pop-Up Museum **of Queer History**



Hugh Ryan
New York, NY

Hugh Ryan is a writer and traveler currently based in New York City, and co-founder of the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History

CK: Can you talk a little bit about what the idea of a “museum” means to you? Does it have a particular responsibility to “do” or “be” something to someone?

A historical museum is a place that contextualizes the past in a way that is meaningful to the community viewing it, and opens up that history for examination. It presents questions, not answers. This is especially true in a queer context, as sexual and gender identities are unstable both cross-culturally and trans-historically. This is part of the reason we chose to use the word “queer” in our name, as it encompasses the vast array of non-heteronormative sexual orientations and gender identities, without imposing any specific ones upon the subjects of our exhibits. We see it as our duty to disturb the presumptive heterosexuality that is often imposed upon the past, but not to replace it with a monolithic presumption that all sexual and gender identities can be mapped onto the ones that we currently recognize in our society.

CK: What are your first memories/ experiences of a “museum”? What did it smell, look, and feel like?

My first memory of a museum is from a book. In the 3rd grade I read *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, in which a brother and sister run away from home to live in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. They experienced the museum in a personal way: behind the scenes, up close, interactive. They became interested in pieces and researched them, taking an active part in creating and learning the history the museum had on display. I loved the intimate relationship they had with the past: it was something in their home, and something to which even they, as kids, could contribute.

This ethos of community involvement and sharing is one that The Pop-Up Museum of Queer History

values greatly. Queer history has often been kept, if it is kept at all, hidden in our homes. The process of seeing oneself and one’s community as a valid subject for historical study goes hand in hand with believing that you have a story worth telling.

When was the inception of the Pop-Up Museum? How do you feel place/context informs the construction of each pop-up museum? And does a community form around its creation?

The idea for the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History came to me shortly after the conservative attack on the Hide / Seek exhibit forced them to remove David Wojnarowicz’ piece “A Fire in my Belly” from the show. I was frustrated that the Republican establishment and the whims of governmental funding could so easily play political football with both art and history. I wanted some way to both protest the removal, and provide an alternative venue for queer histories. Around the same time, a group in New York City called Queers Organizing for Radical Unity and Mobilization (QuORUM) put out a call for events. They were organizing a week of queer workshops in queer homes, and they were looking for a space big enough to hold the kick-off. At the time, I lived in a large industrial loft in Bushwick, and I proposed a one-night only museum show. I put a call out for exhibits over Facebook, not really knowing what kind of response I would get. I was floored when more than thirty people – many whom I didn’t even know – wanted to create exhibits and performances. They ranged from the whimsical (e.g. a gingerbread scale replica of Stonewall) to the meticulously researched (e.g. a talk about and performance of the works of composer Jean-Baptiste Lully). A curator and artist named Buzz Slutzky stepped up to co-curate the show, and dozens of other people volunteered to help install the works.

Our one-night engagement was scheduled for the evening of January 14th, 2011. It was freezing cold that evening, but more than 300 people showed up for the show – including 14 police officers, who shut us down for fire concerns shortly after midnight. They also gave me a ticket for disturbing the peace when I refused to let them into the apartment without a warrant. I guess it wouldn’t be a real queer historical event without a police raid...

Even as the cops were forcing us out of the building, people were asking when the next museum would pop-up. Queer people were hungry for our history, told by our community and to our community. Buzz and I quickly realized that this wasn’t a one-time event, but rather the beginning of an organization. Creating a nonprofit was different from creating a one-night show, however, and we needed help. Graham Bridgeman joined us as our development expert, and the three of us formed the nucleus of the organizing group that has created the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History as it exists now – along with dozens upon dozens of volunteers, artists, historians, archivists, and committed community members, without whom we could not exist.

Because the exhibits for our shows are created by a wide variety of individuals, not by a staff of paid professionals, we have an automatic community of interest over and above those who would normally come out for a queer history event. This gives each of our shows an incredible vitality and a unique feel. Although the space that a particular Pop-Up inhabits also defines the event, I believe it is the people who coalesce around it that create each show’s unique heart. This project is a labor of love for everyone who participates. Without strong community support none of our shows could have ever come together.

What's the logistical background of getting spaces to create these pop-up museums like? Is it about networking and finding agreeable landlords? How have you navigated this?

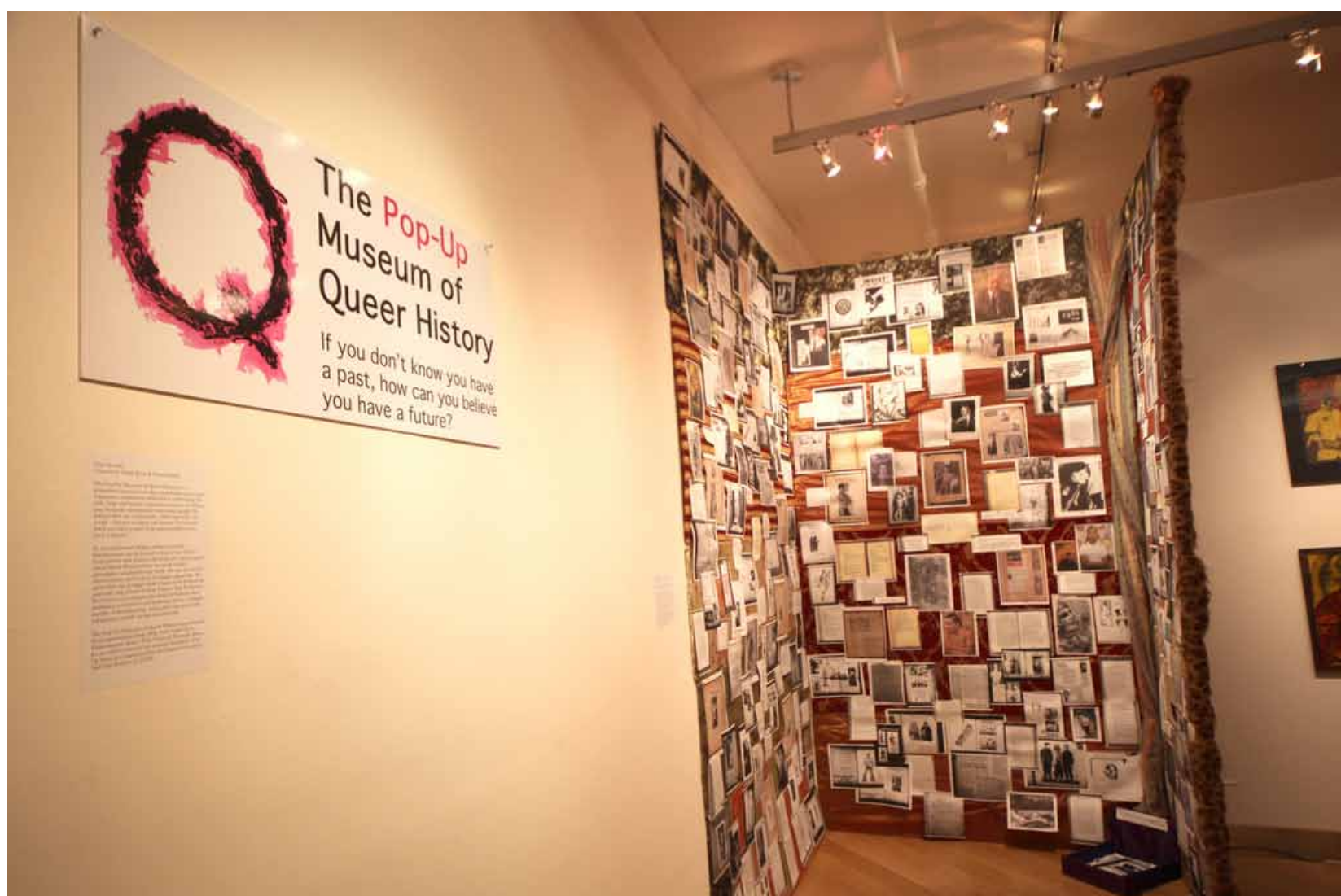
Every Pop-Up has been housed differently. So far, we have installed shows in galleries, community centers, schools, and personal homes. For each show, we work with a local partner organization that knows the lay of the land in their city, and together, we choose the best location for that particular installation. Finding a space depends just as much on networking and community involvement as does filling it with exhibits, and we spend months working with partners to develop all aspects of the show, including the space. This not only keeps us accountable to our grassroots, but also helps imbed the Pop-Up in the specific needs and desires of the local community.

Do you feel there is an urgency to tell the "story" of glbtq struggles/histories/stories etc.? How is that connected to your mention of youth involvement?

Having a past is an essential component to believing oneself psychologically healthy and emotionally worthy. Isolation and a sense of aberration are two of the main forces that drive so many queer youth to depression, drugs/alcohol, and self-destruction. The straightwashing of history leaves these youths without ancestors. Unlike other marginalized communities, few of our children have positive older role models in their family circles to give them their history. Children who do not identify as queer are left viewing their queer peers as weird, unusual, or wrong, and thus easy targets for schoolyard cruelty. A more honest and comprehensive approach to sexuality and gender identity throughout history is as important as anti-

bullying and tolerance campaigns. In fact, when Stoke Newington secondary school in London integrated queer history into their standard curricula, they succeeded in "more or less eliminating homophobic bullying" over a five-year period (citation: <http://m.guardian.co.uk/education/2010/oct/26/gay-history-lessons-bullying-schools?cat=education&type=article>).

Furthermore, we are all robbed of a complete understanding of ourselves and our culture when our own norms and identities are applied willy-nilly to other cultures and times. Without an understanding of the ways in which our own gender and sexual identities are socially constructed, how can we possibly understand



Pop-Up Museum of Queer History

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Elsewhere

a living museum



George Scheer Greensboro, NC

George Scheer is a writer and creative instigator, serving as the Collaborative Director of Elsewhere a living museum set inside a former thrift-store in Greensboro, NC

Consider a store, filled to the brink with consumables, one day decides that its inventories are collections, its merchandise is no longer for purchase, and instead it will practice as a museum. Everything else remains the same; visitors may browse, touch, and play, but they just can't take things with them. What values change in that not so subtle shift between people, things, and the common space shared between them? Since 2003, Elsewhere Collaborative has been exploring the role that collaboration plays at the intersection of the store and museum through its living museum and international residency program set in a former thrift store in downtown Greensboro, North Carolina.

My grandmother, Sylvia Gray, was both proprietress and collector, amassing a vast inventory of things at her store from 1939-1997. Her business, and ours, has always been about surplus. The business began with Sylvia and her husband buying repossessed furniture from NY during the Great Depression. They sold army surplus in catalog sales to boy scouts. After her husband's sudden death in 1955, and with three children to raise, my grandmother grew the store, purchasing the ends of fabric bolts and ribbons from local mills, secondhand clothing, toys, dishwares, books, and an assortment of knickknacks to sell. After her passing in 1997 the building remained shut, filled to the brim with things knotted, tied, and bagged in chaotic organization.

In 2003, my collaborator Stephanie and I began an excavation, declaring nothing for sale. Our archeology did not aim to uncover the hidden voice of my grandmother, but instead to begin an ongoing practice of recreation. Over the past seven years, this exploration has been undertaken by a staff of artists and more than 35 creators each year participating in our residency program. Over time the movement and arrangement of things trails a layered aesthetic that convey histories and narratives of changing communities passing through this unfolding three-story artwork. Elsewhere's Living Museum, open daily, offers

audiences (average 300/week) an exploratory environment to play within and a site where creative practice is made public and the artwork and museum are themselves in a constant state of flux. By calling ourselves a museum, we respond to those cultural institutions that have separated practice from production, exhibition from process, and work from play.

Elsewhere's story is written in attics across the country, pieced together bit-by-bit in distribution centers—thrift/antique/junk shops—and holed up in buildings ready to be dispersed. America's overabundance, a diagnosed case of cultural hoarding, has left us all in possession of stuff, collections with no other future but to watch them decompose, critically or materially. At Elsewhere, however, the intervention of things into daily life has a profound effect on creative practice of both artists and publics. Resource, production, and exhibition meld within this site-specific environment, and cultural and personal histories intersect with those of a changing artist community to form a layered aesthetic of social and creative exchanges over time.

One of the first discoveries audiences make at Elsewhere is a giant toy bin, chest height, with mounds of plastic toys that extend beyond the fingers like an oversized sandbox. People dig in, exchanging treasures with one another like tactile memories, constituting the personal as part of a public commons. Often people exclaim, "I had this," laying claim to a personal memory contained in a mass-produced object while relating the infinitely distributable value of storytelling. Whenever we show and tell, we pass things between us, and in this model of sharing values we may begin to understand how museums are trusted with public commons as much as they are with public meaning.

Elsewhere's challenge today is how to continue modeling the public commons by practicing social exchanges through our set of things. A back alley garden and performances in our storefront are just a few ways we are reaching

publics that might not otherwise adventure into a thrift store-turned-museum. With a large refugee population in Greensboro's outskirts and a quickly gentrifying downtown environment, the challenge persists to determine how our site, concept, and collection can produce both artwork and cultural transformation. Our most recent model for exploring outreach possibilities surrounded the recently commissioned project of textile artist Frau Fiber. Drawing from her interest in materials and textile histories, we brought together third generation mill village families, textile industry professionals, and Latina women seeking basic sewing and mending skills. Through interactive quilting, skill share workshops, and the creation of a new sewing facility we were able to create a network of individuals that brought historical, economic, social service, and artistic interests to bare on Elsewhere's textile collection.

Through the generative potential for use and re-use of things, Elsewhere has arranged a public commons in the form of a shared resource. By positing ourselves as a museum, the resource becomes part of a collection and therefore must express forms of care and generosity in its handling. The great challenge is how to build reciprocity in all social relations and ensure that we are both serving and developing the values of our community of artists and publics. Time and again we discover that in the collection of things, with their inherent array of perspectives, interest and references, we have both the source and resource to continually arrange and re-model the museum as a public commons between people.

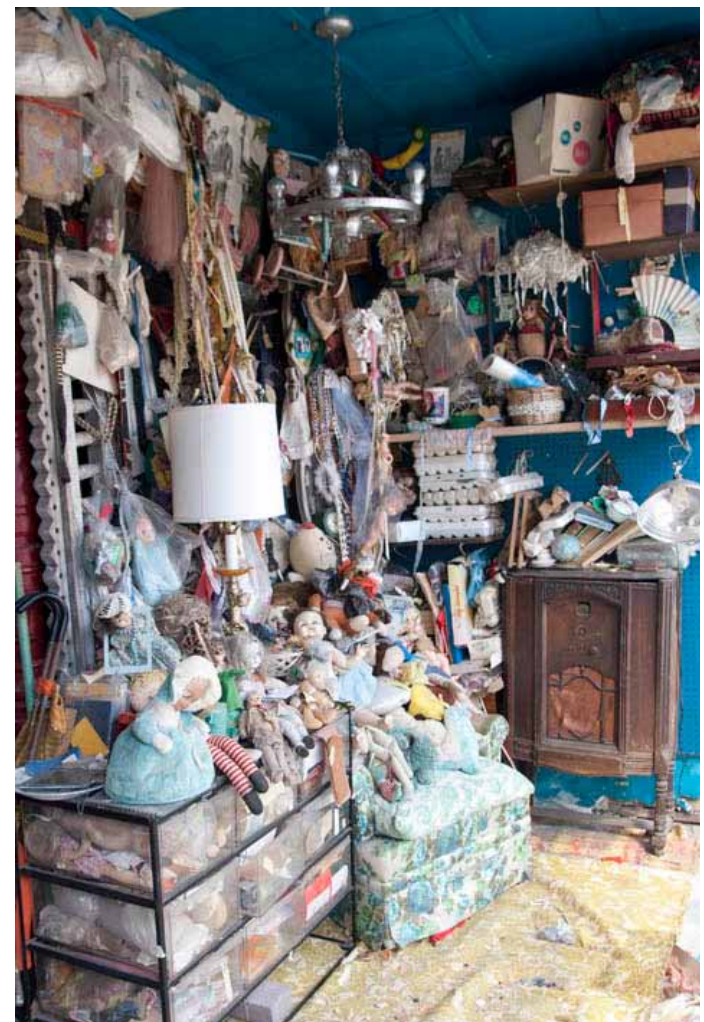
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A place of *focus and concentration*



Terry Riley New York, NY

Terry Riley is the former Philip Johnson Chief Curator at MoMA and director of the Miami Art Museum, now partner at K/R Architect

One measure of a museum's institutional health is the degree to which it balances its competing interests. The one quality of all good museums, like any truly public space, is that nobody knows who exactly is in charge. In other words, good museums are museums where the attitudes of the curators, the trustees, public, are in a constant state of dynamic tension. There are certain museums where the curators are treated as infallible and the only measure of success is the opinion of a very narrow circle of specialized critics. In these cases, the museum usually fails to ever develop a substantial audience outside of the so-called "art world". And there are other institutions where as soon as you are walking through the door you realize the trustees are wielding all the power. In some very bad examples, the museum's galleries are not only very prominently named for donors, but a policy exists whereby the donor's gifts of art works are actually retained in "their" galleries. The result is, of course, that the curators have little opportunity to install the collection in ways that might have a larger meaning. Finally, there are all too many museums where the exhibition program is virtually determined by the marketing department. The goal is, of course, to attract the largest attendance, but the result is that most people just wind up seeing what they already know. A good museum needs curators, it needs leadership, and it needs the public. But we need to recognize that each of these constituents has different perspectives - perspectives that are at times complementary and at other times oppositional. Either way, the underlying structure of a museum has to somehow prevent any of its constituents from diluting or overcoming the other.

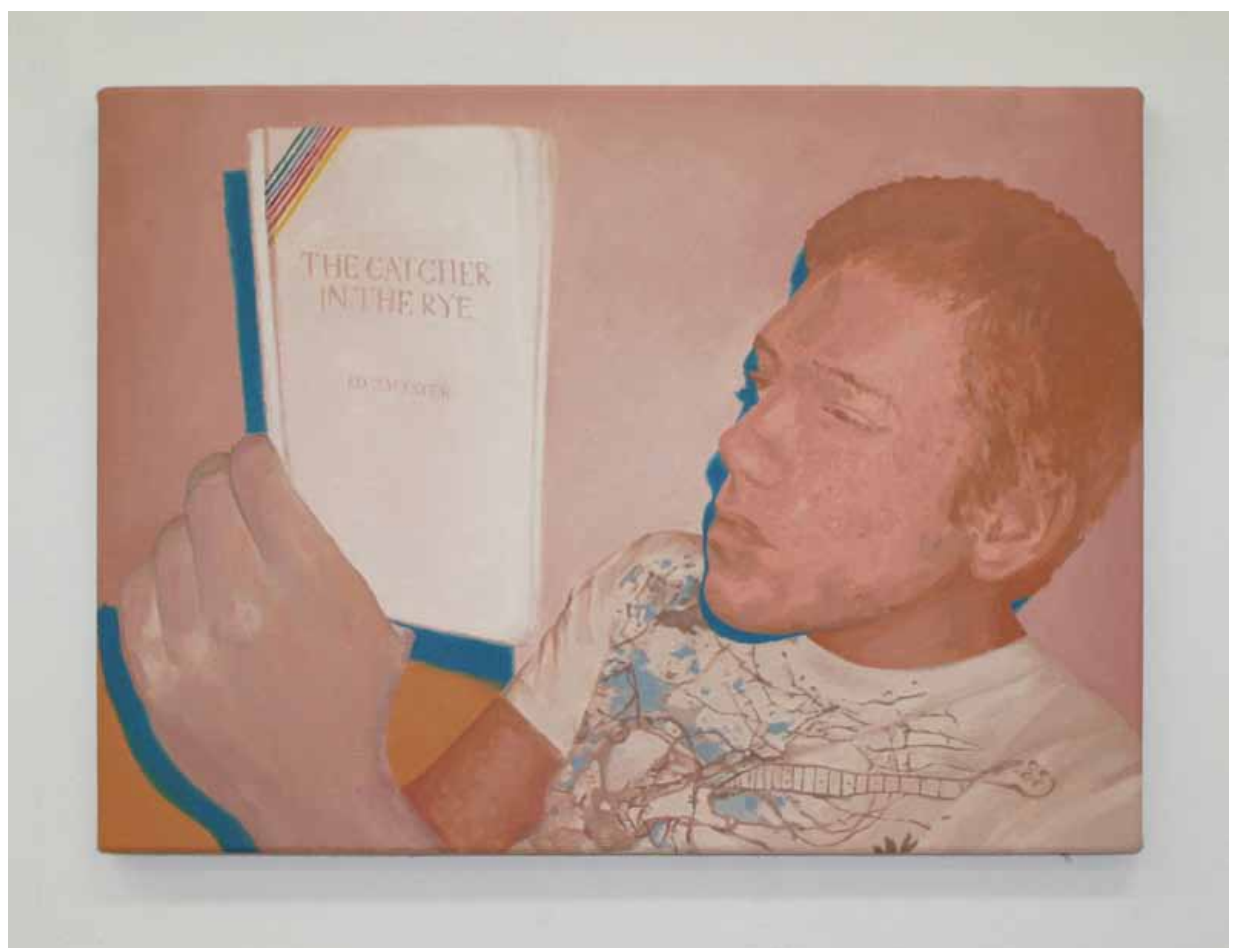
In a less analytical, more poetic way, I would say that a good museum is one that Holden Caulfield would approve of. School and home are the two principal poles in the life of young people like Caulfield, the teenaged protagonist of J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. When he is kicked out of school, he wanders about Manhattan for as long as he can before resigning himself to returning home. Part of Caulfield's wandering involves exploring adult things, such as having a drink in a bar and flirting with women

of the night. Another part involves visiting two museums, which are depicted in a very sympathetic way - as a safe and familiar havens for young person searching for himself.

I've come to think of Holden Caulfield as the ideal person for whom museums should be designed: not a child but not quite an adult - a person that is trying to understand his or her position in life. So, as museum curator and director, whenever I was making a big decision I would ask myself, "Is this going to create the kind of place that someone like Caulfield would visit? Is this the kind of experience that will help people find out not only about the world but also find about themselves?" It was too much to think that a museum curator or director could create a space that specifically addressed a young person's questions: "Who am I? What do I want to be?" But, I did try to imagine whether we were creating a museum where such an individual would feel those questions were important. Structured education programs can often be a catalyst in sparking answers to complex questions, but I also kept in mind that Caulfield was looking for a place with a very low

threshold for entrance, a place that was easy to get into without a lot of official scrutiny, a place to be left alone without being alone. In the end, such a museum would be a place that would be an important place for all visitors, not just the young. It would be a place of focus and concentration, in distinct contrast to the seeming randomness of daily life.

How do you create such a place? The architecture of a museum often sets the overall mood and unalterably determines how the visitor feels, how the visitor relates to the work on display, etc. Yet, there are too many architects who think that a museum is a technical problem. What's the temperature, what's the humidity, what's the light level? Too often, these architects think it's all statistics and if you get all these technical things correct then you will have a good museum. I see the design of museums as a much more complex problem. As Caulfield noted, the museum stays the same, it's the people who are changed. How museums change people is the most important question and the greatest goal in museum design.



Julian Rogers, *Teenager Reading Salinger*, 2012

the museum is a theater of time



Christopher Kennedy
Greensboro, NC

Christopher Kennedy is the Education Curator at Elsewhere, an avid mushroom hunter and is working through academic capitalism at the University of North Carolina

The museum is perhaps the greatest durational and ongoing performance modernity has ever encountered. From wonder rooms and cabinet of curiosities, to taxonomical libraries and mummified remains, the museum performs a specific version of history, by preserving certain artifacts for their display and adoration. Art museums in particular, play a pivotal role in translating historicized artifacts into a language of culture, but do so in a way that displaces the context and meaning of these works from their original form and experience. (Jeffers, 2003) In so doing, museums are not just a conservator of specific pasts but rather a political and social instrument that shapes our collective identity and preserves the status quo. Although, this may be something museums continue to address, Maleuvre (1999) and others warns us that the “undoing of museal culture”, is still relevant today: “the community-aware, decentralized museums, which aim to find a mode of museum exhibition authentically tied to the life of the surrounding society, show that such concerns are still with us.” (pg. 2)

Yet, what we don't see in the prevailing discourse on museum culture and institutional practice is a willingness to step far outside the bounds of the accepted culture – and to reconsider and deconstruct the museum as something different altogether. The museum perhaps as a platform, a hub, or an atelier that is fundamentally shaped by the contextual and relational circumstances that defines its physical and conceptual boundaries, and the people that activate these concepts in the everyday. In this way, a museum can be much more than just a repository of artifacts, information and experiences – it can actually be a place of antagonistic confrontations with the ‘Other’, a place to deconstruct layered histories of oppression, and to find ways of ongoing adaptation and expression. Sheikh (2010) points out “we cannot talk of art's spaces as a common shared space we enter with equal experiences.” (pg. 15) Rather, we must imagine the museum as an unfolding arena where there is no generalized spectator but instead public spheres, where the notion of publicness is challenged in “opposition

to the normative bourgeois public sphere.” (Negt, O. & Kluge, A., 1993) In this negotiation, a kind of ‘counter public’ space can unfold – where “other or oppositional discourses and practices can be formulated and circulated.” Here the architectural framework as Sheikh puts it, remains unchanged – yet the behaviors allowed within this space changes drastically. The counter public arena then allows for a more reflexive and relational kind of sociality to develop within a museum space, allowing it to organically circulate strategies for membership.

The museum has a central role in defining culture, and with this comes a responsibility to go far beyond the preservation of artifacts that tell a particular story of history, and to instead provide a space that allows us to confront the ‘Other’, to tell histories untold, and to imagine new ones altogether. The needs are not budgetary or fiscal, but rather ideological. Here we must shift our view from the emergent politic of community engagement and toward something more vulnerable and intimate – of integrating living systems, embodied experiences, of creating counter-public realms where the goings on of a community of people merge alongside disruptive practices that provide opportunities for dialogue and real exchange. This will not happen in the form of a seminar or lecture, in the arts and crafts family day, in a conventional museum tour – but emerge in the ambiguous and relational nature of liminal spaces – an encounter just outside the museum, in the navigation of awkward lobbies, the gaze of security guards, in unexpected chance encounters with artists, with other people. Here the durational performance of the museum becomes an unfolding inquiry into life itself, as is perhaps disrupted with a cup of tea or something just as simple.

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