NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, tests publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30.

Canada

Museums and Mediation:
Locating the Exhibition Experience

Jennifer Fisher

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Media Studies

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada

March 1988

ISBN 0-315-44809-1

ABSTRACT

Museums and Mediation: Locating the Exhibition Experience

Jennifer Fisher

This thesis explores the phenomena of exhibitions as communications media. The term "museum" has been used to refer to sites of specified architecture where material culture is presented for public viewing. As such, museums can include not only national art galleries or natural history museums, but artist-run centres and the Walt Disney theme parks. Exhibition discourses operate as sets of statements which, in contextualizing artifacts, mediate them in various ways. To this end, museums are examined in light of their discursive functions and practices. The determining aspects of taste, tourism, the museum tradition, institutional practices, the rhetoric of curatorship, and the roles of patronage, the public, audience and viewer are considered in relationship to their framing of exhibitions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to thank my director, Marty Allor, and my committee members, Maurice Charland and Reesa Greenberg, for their generous support and sharing of knowledge. Their insight was invaluable in focusing my ideas throughout the writing of this thesis.

I also would like to thank my family, especially Joan Fisher-Marien, Agnes Fisher and Ted Fisher for their unconditional support and patience in seeing me through the process.

Finally, I am most grateful of the encouragement of my friends, particularly Beth Seaton and Marla Lowenthal for their enthusiasm, Mark Achbar for introducing me to WordPerfect, and Greg Brothers for bringing me to the exhibition sites at Louisbourg, St. Augustine and Walt Disney World.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with exhibitions as communications media. Exhibitions can generally be defined as the presentation of meaningful arrangements of objects to people at institutional sites. The term museums will henceforth be used to refer to exhibition contexts which are marked by architectural forms and institutional practices. As such, museums can include communication apparatuses outside those traditionally termed "museum," whether "Art," "History," "Wax," or "Ripley's Believe It or Not," to describe all institutions which function as framing devices which move people through exhibition experiences. As such, museums can include galleries, zoos, artist-run centres or even the Walt Disney Theme Parks. Museums, then, exist as sites of specified architecture where particular practices articulate space in specific ways for the consumption of artifacts.

Exhibitions at marked sites which frame particular experiences will be examined in their discursive functions. Victor Burgin points out:

> In viewing the institution in its discursive aspect we should not confine the concept of discursivity merely to language itself. For example -- to speak of the academy -- the architecture of the lecture theatre, the arrangement of chairs in a classroom, are also "statements" in a discursive formation. Foucault cites, as an example of the discursive "statement," the empty space which forms the margin on the page of an official report -- made wide in order to receive the comments of a superior. In the contemporary art institution, all works are made with, in effect, a "margin," which awaits the inscription of the master narrative, or the critical judgement, (most often they amount to the same thing) (Burgin,1985:26).

Similarly, Allen Sekula defines discourse as "...in the most general sense, the context of the utterance, the conditions that constrain and support its meaning, that determine its semantic target" (Sekula,1984:4). Exhibition discourse, then, exists as overall sets of statements which operate as large scale contextualizations at different kinds of exhibition sites. Such distinctions include assumptions about culture, taste or class, as well as practices implicit in the exhibiting institution itself. These constitute everything that provides the context for the main attraction of the artifacts themselves. To use a common analytical distinction from the study of art, exhibition discourse is in effect the overall "negative space" of exhibition. At the level of discourse, distinctions are formed and exist as seemingly invisible yet powerfully determining factors in

the exhibition experience. It is my intention in this thesis to reveal the nature of these distinctions, to question what is often assumed to be obvious in exhibitions. Exposing the assumptions which determine and inform particular exhibition contexts implicitly unmasks their ideological functions.[1] The areas of analysis cut across a number of discursive categories and their practices: questions concerning taste, tourism, the museum tradition, institutional critique, patronage, and communications theory.

In relation to these questions of determinism, the active role of the visitor/reader must be considered. The exhibition event involves a play between the visitor's subjection -- to the text presented as a meaningful relationship of elements -- and free choice -- the viewer's decisions involving the time spent, the selection of objects of focus and a route through the exhibition itself. Within the study of mass communication, exhibitions are significant because the viewer has the opportunity to create his/her own text. By a process of inductively exploring the relationship between the exhibition discourse and the visitor's experience, I hope to chart some of the territory often unconscious to many of us, and thus provide a base for

---

1. It is important to note here that exhibitions are not specifically ideological in themselves, but exist within, and are conditioned by, an overall system of social networks.

becoming aware of our assumptions involved in reading exhibitions.

The museum tradition provides an appropriate starting point for the examination of exhibitions. From their beginnings, a principle role of museums within the overall culture in which they exist has been one of selection. Museums originated with both the development of cities and the implementation of literacy. The earliest known museum was founded in Egypt during the fourth century by Ptolemy Philadelphus as an extension of the great library at Alexandria (Mumford,1961:109). This link between the library and the museum reflects their common origins in the functions of classification and assimilation of material culture.

During the eighteenth century, museums developed concurrently with other media which were used to order knowledge, such as encyclopedias (as personal libraries) and stamp albums (like miniature museums). The nineteenth century marked the museum age. Public exhibitions of all kinds proliferated during the urbanization of Europe and North America. In Mumford's anthropomorphic view of the city, museums function as organs of digestion for its vast cultural resources (Mumford,1961:562). Here digestion can refer not only to selection processes, but also to those of transformation. In creating contexts for the viewing of objects, museums mediate what they present.

This paper focuses on locating and grounding exhibition texts as events. Exhibitions exist within a range of intersecting practices particularly the cultural, the institutional and the social. Each play a role in mediating the exhibition experience by positioning the visitor in particular ways.

In Chapter II exhibitions are examined in their mediating functions as communications media. The legislation of meaning is described as it is tied to discourses surrounding taste. Taste will be shown to be socially determined and reflected in particular formations. Second, what I have termed the "monument" and "forum" functions implicit in the formations of exhibition discourse will be defined and explained.

Chapter III grounds the discussion of exhibition discourse in a description of practices within exhibiting institutions. The communication of socially shared assumptions will be analyzed as it occurs at the level of the institutional apparatus, in practices of structuring the exhibition continuum, and within the profession of curatorship itself.

In Chapter IV, the question of how such practices determine modes of engagement will be addressed. The social articulations involved in the relationship between the exhibition and its reception will be described. First, the terminology used to describe viewers as "audience" or

"public" will be defined and differentiated. Then, the role of the viewer will be explored considering not only how exhibitions determine the consciousness of the viewer, but also the viewer's creative role in the exhibition experience.

References for Chapter I

Burgin, Victor. "Some Thoughts on Outsiderism and Postmodernism," Block 11, 1985-86. pp. 19-26.

Mumford, Lewis. The City in History. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1961.

Sekula, Alan. Photography Against the Grain. Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design Press, 1984.

CHAPTER II

THE EXHIBITION MEDIUM

> I am interested to encourage an analysis of art, but through the pleasure of looking, that's all. I would like to see us be a little more anthropological in the way we assess our own cultural production. I feel that art now functions to keep people apart, to reinforce and maintain class boundaries, and to encourage exclusion and inequality through the cult of "taste." I think this is wrong; yes, I am moralistic about this. I hope that my work might play some role in the analysis of this situation, and I hope it does so by bringing some pleasure into the discovery that the problem does not necessarily lie with art but with those forces which work to legislate its meaning (McCollum,1985:44).

This statement by artist Allan McCollum raises the problematic of the "legislation" of meaning, as it is tied to class and more specifically taste. He asserts the need for a paradigm shift from an "educational" definition of culture to one that is "anthropological." These two notions of culture are traditionally antagonistic. On the one hand, an educational notion of culture <u>prescribes</u> social behaviour from assumptions centered in academic scholarship. From this

view, only culture sanctioned by elite discourses of the academy or museum is worthy of serious consideration. On the other hand, an anthropological definition of culture describes the habitual practices, objects, institutions and other systems of integration in a given society or subculture (Ferguson,1985:108). Here the researcher makes no assumptions about being objective, but rather, is concerned with the identification of specific models and sites.

This chapter will set out to first describe taste as it is determined by the social formations surrounding exhibitions. The location of the practices of taste cultures at various institutions allows for deconstruction of their discursive functions. After this, the course of the thesis establishes metaphoric models which can be used to describe the functions of exhibition. The art museum tradition will be used as a basis for analysis, providing a firm well-known reference point enabling the articulation of the practices at other exhibition sites as well. Methodologically, this chapter is the result of an inductive process which seeks to ~~chart~~ the nature and function of the exhibition medium. Using an ethnographic approach to cultural analysis, the argument will be honed by locating the commonalities, distinctions and spaces between exhibition discourse at various sites.

The Determinations of Taste

Taste cultures can be described as social groups which share a particular sensibility. Orientations of taste play a fundamental role in determining the exhibition experience. Assumptions of taste are neither natural or innate, but are socially constructed. Taste cultures, as discursive formations in the overall culture, can be ideologically unmasked by looking at how they appear to be "natural."

The most commonly known taste culture within the art museum tradition is that of connoisseurship, which has been used to legitimate a particularly privileged point of view. A connoisseur is someone who positions him/herself as an expert judge in matters of taste, especially in the arts. Generally connoisseurs tackle questions concerning the authenticity and attribution of works of art (painting and sculpture specifically) placing them in time and place and ascribing them to an author on the basis of formal elements. The word "connoisseur" derives from the French word "connaitre," to know. Hence connoisseurship functions as an epistemological frame determining what "art" is.

The task of connoisseurship requires long, intimate or primary experience with original works of art (Kleinbauer,1971:43-45). Judgments concerning taste by connoisseurs ("those-in-the-know") warrant further investigation because only a privileged few can have such intimate visual knowledge. Access to the world's great

collections in the past was by noble birth, wealth, or proximity to either of these two categories. Even today, articulations of "good" and "bad" taste are closely tied to the tradition of connoisseurship.

A genealogy of the word "taste" undertaken by Dick Hebdige traces its evolution into a legitimating factor at the root of particular ideologies. According to him, the word "taste" originally denoted physiological sensations such as the sensations of the palate in response to food. By the eighteenth century "taste" evolved to describe both aspects of society and aesthetic forms. On the one hand it described social judgments concerning the rules and codes of polite society ("good taste"), while on the other it discerned the formal values of aesthetic objects. What is particularly significant is that the "laws" and "rules" which were invoked to authorize such judgments were seen as "Godgiven, universal and timeless" (Belsey,1980:4). Where judgments of taste are legitimated using such ultimate principles, their deconstruction exposes assumptions rooted in notions of privilege and superiority.

Hebdige points out how taste cultures define themselves to some degree by the rejection of other taste cultures. Value and recognition are created, particularly in the art world, by the creation of difference. "Taste is a purely negative category constituted in the refusal of adjacent taste formations" (Hebdige,1985:3). This sets in

motion a process where institutional definition is sharpened in rejection of the "other," usually those who embody opposing values: capitalism vs. socialism; private vs public; central vs. marginal. Similarly, Martha Rosler asserts: "The truth is that like all forms of connoisseurship, the social value of high art depends absolutely on the existence of a distinction between a high and low culture." (Rosler,1984:312). At the same time an economic logic is created. A commercial, establishment art gallery would never consider showing Gay Asian Video. Conversely, a community based artist-run centre would not be interested in exhibiting and selling the watercolours of popular wild life painter. Such activities would be considered abnormal to each institution, the characteristic response to a proposal of this nature being ridicule and overt rejection. On the one hand, the commercial gallery would find an exhibition of Gay Asian Video a bad prospect for sales, while the artist-run centre would reject wildlife painting as "too commercial." In short, these activities would be considered outside the sensibility, taste or particular discourse of the gallery. Hence, the discourses of the two galleries can be viewed as being socially determined, and defined in relation to opposing taste cultures.

Pierre Bourdieu has established a system of correlations between the cultural values (ie. taste

preferences in food, music, photography, fiction etc.), the education and the social origin of the consumer. Cultural disposition, values and competence correspond to the nature of the cultural goods consumed. Bourdieu locates such consumption as occurring either materially, by the purchase of particular objects, or symbolically, by participation within a specific audience. The assumption and expression of "taste," then, is socially determined by class. Here he distinguishes between the "aesthetic disposition," characteristic of the wealthy classes and elite art, and the "popular aesthetic," referring to the working classes and popular art. Such distinctions between high and low culture form a dialectic which, in opposition to an "other," enable an articulation of taste as social expression.[1] Extensive education and/or bourgeois social origin would guarantee, in most cases, the capacity to adopt the "aesthetic disposition." Such pre-conditions would enable the development not only of the necessary perception for the "aesthetic disposition," but the linguistic tools which enable its expression. Bourdieu terms the incorporation of knowledge in this process as "cultural capital." Cultural capital, then, as the result of academic training or social

---

1. Bourdieu's distinction between high and popular culture gives ideal types which are useful for the analytical framework of this thesis. It is not my intention to valorize one over the other but rather to look at how they function in relation to each other with a view to revealing their inherent assumptions.

conditioning, becomes the basis for perceptual competence regarding a work of art. Bourdieu notes that removal from economic necessity, for example in bourgeois adolescents and women, indicated a propensity towards aesthetics and aestheticism. The "aesthetic disposition," then, presupposes economic security as the taste culture of a socially privileged position. Ultimately, the "inspired encounter" with a work of art is not available to anyone by virtue of their natural perceptual ability, but is specifically determined by their social-economic class (Bourdieu, 1980: 225-254).

The motivating intention in the display of an artifact is in itself the product of social norms and conventions and determines whether it will be perceived as an "art" object or a "utilitarian" object. On the whole, Bourdieu distinguishes the intent of the "aesthetic disposition," which favours form over content, from that of the "popular aesthetic" which subordinates form to function. The distinctions between these taste cultures reveal their underlying assumptions.

Locating the Aesthetic Disposition

Bourdieu's "aesthetic disposition," characterizing connoisseurship, is based on the assumption that aesthetic pleasure should be dispassionate, disinterested, critically detached and rooted in a relationship defined by distance.

Its "pure gaze" implies a break with the world, a systematic refusal of involvement with human passions, emotions and feelings. He notes that the modernist avant-garde rejected themes which were inherently accessible or pleasurable in favour of an aesthetic which was cleansed of any identification with the art object.

> The aesthetic disposition which tends to bracket off the nature and function of the object represented and to exclude any "naive" reaction -- horror at the horrible, desire for the desirable, pious for the sacred -- along with all purely ethical responses, in order to concentrate solely upon the mode of representation, the style, perceived and appreciated in comparison with other styles, is one dimension of a total relation to the world and others, a life style, in which the effects of particular conditions of existence are expressed in mis-recognizable form (Bourdieu, 1980:251).

The aesthetic disposition, the educated vision, is not only demanded by the art museum, but has been institutionalized by it. The museum frames objects, promoting their status as "art." The juxtaposition of objects in art museums demands attention to form over function, technique over content. The museum, in providing a context for the "pure gaze," creates a cacophonic rupturing of the meanings originally associated with objects. A crucifix or funeral mask loses its original sacred function in the art museum.

> A crucifix stood for Christ, a funeral mask for the dead; and the idea of their being someday brought together in the same museum, in order that we might study their lines and masses, would have struck their makers as nothing more or less than a profanation (Malraux, in Solomon,1979:564).

Within the aesthetic disposition, the original meanings of objects give way to an emphasis on their formal aesthetic values within the exhibition context. Thus the original functions of objects in providing a means of identification are superceded by the notion of "art." The work of art in the museum context serves the interests of art-for-art's-sake where beauty is formally defined by the form, structure, and sequence of objects within the architectural frame. The pleasure of the "pure gaze" exists in recognizing the object within the fine art tradition as a connoisseur. The suspension of disbelief in a direct relationship with the object is not encouraged. Rather, the "pure gaze" refuses identification which is viewed as facile. Indeed, it is within the museum context that Kant's notion of separation of "the pleasures" from "that which gives pleasure" is assured (Hebdige,1985:9-11). Although identification is denied in such a dissolution of realism,[2] it is not absent. Rather, it shifts from a representative to an abstract level; from "the thing represented" (the pleasures) to "the means of representation" (that which gives pleasure). The <u>that</u> which gives pleasure is the discourse surrounding the aesthetic discourse itself, be it that of modernism, art history or critical theory. As such,

---

2. By "realism" I mean the immediate comprehensibility of figurative images by the majority of people in Western culture.

identification becomes a privilege of those in-the-know, educated or trained to enable discursive identification.

Locating the Popular Aesthetic

Where the "aesthetic disposition" denies overt identification, the "popular aesthetic" celebrates human identification with realism, the body, the emotional and sentimental aspects of life (Hebdige,1985:14). As such, the popular aesthetic constitutes a discourse of pleasure. Its corresponding "naive gaze" (Bourdieu,1980:238) privileges the function of the object over its form. In contrast with the distancing of the "pure gaze," participation occurs in direct identification with the work's content. The popular aesthetic encourages suspension of disbelief to take place in relation to works which are immediately comprehensible. The individual is allowed to become lost in the collective experience of the exhibition. To illustrate this, Bourdieu describes the department store as the paradigmatic "poor man's gallery."

> The department store is, in a sense, the poor man's gallery: not only because it presents objects which belong to the familiar world, whose use is known, which could be inserted into everyday decor, which can be named and judged with everyday words (warm/cold; plain/fancy; gaudy/dull; comfortable/austere, etc.) but more specifically, there people do not feel themselves measured against transcendent norms, the principles of the lifestyle of a supposedly higher class, but feel free to judge freely, in the name of the legitimate arbitrariness of tastes and colours (Bourdieu, 1980: 238).

The deliberate "naive gaze" offers more immediate satisfactions than the formally oriented "pure gaze." Taste is oriented towards people enacting rather than perceiving their roles. Thus, the popular spectacle assures the transmission of cultural meanings and customs by both individual and collective participation.[3]

Bourdieu's definition of taste cultures locates them in either high culture (the museum) or popular culture (the department store). Taste, rather than being inherent, is presented as a social accomplishment. Bourdieu's consideration of the social production of taste provides a basis for the larger question of discursive framing at exhibition sites.

There exist a plethora of designed architectural sites where a specific "gaze" oriented to taste consumption has been framed: segregated off from the everyday world for the production of specific experiences. Exhibition sites provide places within society where a multiplicity of discourses overlap and intersect. An historical museum, for example, could present more than one exhibition discourse simultaneously. Antique paintings prized by connoisseurs could be presented simultaneously with a more "popular" exhibition of clothing from Hollywood films.

---

3. In this way Bourdieu's popular aesthetic is similar to John Dewey's notion of the emancipatory quality of a social and utilitarian art which overcomes alienation by a process of doing and undergoing.

The following section will examine two sites of exhibition, each representing the institutionalization of a taste culture. Germain Bazin, a proponent of the "aesthetic disposition," laments the popularizing of exhibitions at the world famous Louvre, while Tony Benett and Grahame Thompson's consideration of Blackpool Pleasure Beach in England explores an embodiment of the "popular aesthetic" at a site designed for the sense pleasures. Where the Louvre presents the "aesthetic disposition" in the continuum of its one-of-a-kind art collection, the Pleasure Beach presents simulated environments which re-represent aspects of popular culture.

To some degree the "aesthetic disposition" and the "popular aesthetic" define themselves by rejecting each other. Bourdieu claims that the "popular aesthetic" is characteristic of the working classes and constantly obliged to define itself in terms of dominant aesthetics.

> Popular taste is predicated on a knowledge that it is both raided and despised by its "betters" and that the difficulty of avant garde art and legitimate taste despite the protestations of their adherents that they long to "educate" and "elevate" the public and "popularize" the classics, derives, on the contrary, <u>precisely from the will to keep the masses out</u> (Hebdige,1985:14).

Such exclusivity is evident in Bazin's book <u>The Museum Age</u>, which demonstrates the institutionalized "aesthetic

disposition" of his experience at the Louvre.[4] He laments the museum's shift from directing its programmes to an audience of connoisseurs, to a more popular orientation. He views the masses as having "stolen" the museum from the connoisseurs which originally founded it.

> The contemporary museum is, paradoxically, least geared to the individual most likely to understand it. But does the general public at least profit from it? (Bazin,1967:276).

Bazin's patronizing and contemptuous view of the popular audience exemplifies the aesthetic disposition's refusal of the popular aesthetic. He views the museum's orientation to a public outside the connoisseurs as providing "predigested culture" which satisfies only superficial motives for cocktail conversation. He perceives this as a shift from exclusive scholarly appreciation of the museum "notebook in hand" to a "hedonistic aesthetic." Here the elitist appreciation of abstract discourse ("that which gives pleasure") is defined against direct involvement with the sense pleasures ("the pleasures"). Hence Bazin considers

---

4. The Louvre is the symbol of high culture. Three quarters of the objects housed at the Louvre came from former Royal collections. Under Louis XIV, the royal collections were opened to artists to enable them study works of quality. Henceforth, the collections began to form a background for intellectual and artistic activities such as annual exhibitions. With the French Revolution of 1792-93, the king's property was nationalized, The Republican government decided that the palace of the Louvre should be opened as a public museum. The Louvre ultimately became a symbol of nationalism and patriotism, whose treasures belonged to "the people" (Wittlin,1949:118).

"the aesthetic disposition" as the only valid epistemology. His view presumes that the popular hedonistic aesthetic is irresponsible.

> The public rejects knowledge and the attendant responsibility for a hedonistic aesthetic. But what does it matter? All the efforts are worth it for the few who do care. As for the rest, as long as they are distracted, that is able to forget themselves for a while, that suffices (Bazin,1967:276).

Throwing up his hands in elitist frustration, Bazin laments the accommodation of the popular aesthetic as the proverbial casting of pearls before swine. His attitude clearly patronizes the mass audience, "...let them distract themselves for a while." The assumption here is that the public's taste, because it does not incorporate a scholarly, initiated, elitist discourse, is invalid. What is worth it, his ultimate concern, is reaching those few connoisseurs who do care. Bazin shows no concern for the alienation which is produced by the aesthetic disposition in relation to a mass audience. Where socialization and/or education gives the elite audience an understanding of the intention behind works of art, those unaware of such aesthetic codes would feel incapable of making distinctions between good and bad art, and might therefore find formally oriented work disconcerting.

Ultimately, the subject position of the viewer at the Louvre is framed by laws of behaviour which do not invite transgression. One must consent to accepting a particular

discursive point of view, that of the aesthetic disposition, in order to have the experience intended by the curators.

It is in opposition to the assumed superiority of the discourse of high art that popular culture takes its stance. Hebdige states, "Knowing that it is despised by high culture, its mood is one of insolence, carnival and category inversion" (1985:14). Popular culture undermines the laws of elite culture by reversal, carnival and parody which ultimately produce a sort of emancipatory laughter.

Thompson and Bennett's descriptions of Blackpool Beach in England reveal such a popular exhibition discourse. In contrast with the abstracted, alienated mode of identification particular to the aesthetic disposition, Blackpool Beach was specifically designed to evoke the sense pleasures. As an early working-class version of Disneyland, Blackpool Pleasure Beach presents the spectacle of a modern carnival. The experience of Blackpool Beach can be described in terms of fun, amusement and play, and especially of pleasure and consumption (Thompson,1983:125).

The site occupied by the Pleasure Beach was originally a gypsy camp during the mid-nineteenth century. In the summer gypsies would offer traditional entertainments including astrology, fortune telling, palmistry, phrenology etc. Mechanical rides were developed in the 1880s. As the century turned, the gypsies were evicted in efforts to give pleasure "an air of bourgeois respectability

(Bennett,1983:40). However, the nature of the carnival remained. Each ride at Blackpool Beach presents a simulated reality which presents a context for identification in participating in particular sensations, rules or themes. Like the laying out of a deck of tarot cards, the magic of Blackpool exists in both upright and inverted positions. On the one hand, opportunities exist for identification with the rituals of commerce in the straight purchase of commodities. While on the other, the inversions of carnival provide opportunities to free oneself from the normal and acceptable. For example, at Blackpool the normal behaviour of trying to avoid hitting another car is reversed in the bumper car ride where the object is to hit the next guy. Thus the authority of social laws are inverted or suspended at the pleasure beach. Participation in the carnival exists as one transgresses the normal order of things.

> (a carnival)...is a rebellious event in which prohibitions and their transgression co-exist and so specify an ambiguous representation. Carnival is a play without a stage. The participant, both actor and audience, looses a sense of individuality by passing through a zero point of carnivalesque activity and splitting into a subject of spectacle and the object of the game. The player is rendered into a <u>double</u>. This is not simply parody, which would tend to reinforce the law of the acceptable. This laughter is more provocative and serious - it undermines that law by laughing at it (Thompson,1983:133).

Here the invitation to participate in transgressing the dominant order of things promotes identification. The carnival celebrates the emotional aspects of life

characteristic of the popular aesthetic. Blackpool Beach, in institutionalizing the popular aesthetic, is a carnival which allows for fissures within discourse, and thus, change and transformation. However, ultimately the rupture of hegemony is delimited by the codification of such pleasures for consumption. As Thompson points out:

> Where the body may be whirled upside down hurled this way and that...the dominant order remains solidly intact and unwaveringly the right way up (Thompson,1983:153).

Ultimately, both the "popular aesthetic" and the "aesthetic disposition" exist within the overall system of commodity relations. Where the aesthetic disposition denies identification and promotes distance and abstract relationships with the objects presented, the popular aesthetic promotes and even inverts identification. These two taste positions can be seen as ideal types which exist within an overall cultural context, both subject to similar political and economic forces outside their institutional borders. Existing contradictions within these types at particular sites are quite revealing.[5] For example, popular art is frequently valorized by elite art institutions, as seen in the recent trend towards presenting street graffiti as art in a gallery context, or conversely, popular media apparatuses can present the elite art discourse, as occurs

---

5. Where such levelling of taste is characteristic of postmodernism, a closer examination of this phenomenon is outside the scope of this thesis.

when "artists" are depicted on daytime soap operas on network TV.

In sum, "the aesthetic disposition" and "the popular aesthetic" have been described here as models of taste cultures. While taste cultures form significant discursive formations, they do not, in themselves, constitute the singular discourse of exhibitions. Bourdieu's aesthetic distinctions are useful as ideal types to consider when characterizing exhibitions as discursive clusters within the overall cultural context.

Communication Bias in Exhibitions

Exhibitions mediate the objects they display in two particular ways. First, exhibition sites enshrine particular values within communities. This I shall refer to as the "monument-function." Second, exhibition sites function as social forums where discourse is created and disseminated. This, in turn, will be referred to as the "forum-function." The introduction of these metaphors for describing the functions of art institutions parallels Harold Innis's theory that communications media are biased by either "time" or "space."[6]

---

6. I am using Harold Innis' concepts of time and space bias metaphorically to describe particular functions of exhibition sites. Innis' analysis of communications media allows an expansion of the traditional temple versus forum debate within museology (see Cameron,1971:11-24).

According to Innis, the bias of communications media by either space or time corresponds with particular forms of institutions and interests. The distinctions of bias are inherent in the material of the medium itself. On the one hand, media that are durable and difficult to transport, such a clay or stone, would be "time binding." Due to their durability throughout time, they would perpetuate a concern with history and tradition. In turn, this would support hierarchical forms of organization, which favour contractionist (ie. drawing power to themselves) types of institutions. On the other hand, media that are light and less durable, such as paper or television, would characterize a "space bias." Space bias is characterized by the quick transmission of information through space which favours expansionist types of organizations typical of technical and secular institutions. In addition, space bias favours an orientation to the present or future. In short, where the qualities of time biased media characterize the sacred, moral and historical, those of space biased media evoke the secular, technical and the "now." A metaphoric examination of these functions within exhibitions provides models for the ways display mediates objects.

The Monument-function of Exhibition Sites

According to Innis, the durability of "time biased" media fosters a concern with the history, rituals and

traditions of a particular society. Expressions of power sustained in static form, in turn, correspond to the growth of hierarchical organizations, particularly types of elite priesthoods. The "image" of a museum can be seen to characterize such expressions in a social context. Indeed, the architecture of any exhibiting institution functions as a time bound monument emphasizing the ritualistic and mythic function of consolidating valued objects. While this monument-function exists in the exhibitions of both elite and popular culture (for example, Cinderella's castle at Walt Disney World functions as a monument), the following section describes its functions in relation to the museum tradition.

Carol Duncan and Allan Wallach characterize the architecture of museums as "ceremonial." Ceremonial forms of architecture also include temples, churches, shrines and certain kinds of palaces. Duncan and Wallach point out how the structure of the institution itself becomes a key agent in the production of ideology.

> ...(the museum) is not merely a collection of art objects but an architectural experience whose real content and subject matter is what happens in its spaces...ceremonial architecture promotes, produces or imposes upon the various people who pass through or occupy it a particular consciousness with a definite structure and set of values. It creates an environment in which outlooks and beliefs about individual experience are directly lived (Duncan/Wallach, 1978: 48).

The production of consciousness described by Duncan and Wallach is integral to time binding media's concern with

ritual. Hence, the monument-function of museums can be located in their architectural conventions.

Although no universal architectural vocabulary exists for museums, the monument-function, which is common to all, is often expressed as a response to classicism (Ghafouri,1987:94-102). Many metropolitan museums built during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and at the turn of the twentieth century display appropriated classical forms such as columns, pediments, rotundas and grand stairways. Classical facades refer to the masterpieces of Greek and Roman antiquity which, in turn, affirm the history of western civilization. The grand staircase originated during the Renaissance and came to be associated with libraries, palaces and museums where they provided a ceremonial passage through the entrance way to the "higher world" of the collections themselves (Greenberg, 1987).

Since the Second World War a broadening of the museum's social functions has led to a broadening of approaches to architectural design, however, self-consciously monumental forms have persisted. Modernist museum architecture, typified in buildings of the International Style, presents abstracted classical forms. In the Guggenheim Museum, Frank Lloyd Wright translated the traditional elements of grand stairway and rotunda expanding in an upward and outward spiral. The visitor is initially lifted by elevator to the top of the building, corresponding to her/his transport into

the higher reality of art. Similarly, in postmodern terms, the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris reinterpreted the principle of the grand stairway in the form of an external escalator which moves people up the side of the building to the art galleries at the top of the structure. Modern ceremonial works are enduring monuments to the creative genius of an elite priesthood, the profession of architects itself.

In any community, museum architecture functions as a pedestal for the collection it presents. The enduring presence of architectural forms in prominent positions in urban culture is characteristic of the monument-function, and reinforces the traditional view of museums as temples of art.

Museums provide a context which simulates a particular consciousness, a quiet space where contemplation of rare, original and/or historical objects is encouraged. The experience of coming into the presence of enduring works, existing within the domain of tradition is characteristic of time-biased media. An important aspect of the museum ritual exists as the visitor encounters what Walter Benjamin has termed the "aura" generated by original works of art. Benjamin asserted that the presence of the original is a prerequisite to the concept of authenticity. The accumulated history of the object in relation to its succession of contexts was a key element of its aura. In

turn, the ambience generated in museums by original art works is an important aspect of the monument-function.

There is a corresponding political dimension to the time bias which relates to what Innis has termed "hierarchical forms of power." This can be correlated with the traditional ties between museums and their patrons: royalty (the court) or religion (the priesthood). In present times very rich collectors, both private and corporate, form a constant substructural support to the art world, and have a great deal of leverage with museum and gallery directors and curators, often themselves being trustees or board members of art institutions and granting agencies (Rosler,1984:318). The hegemony that results in these central institutions imposes a characteristic dynastic power over museums, which perpetuates over time. Where patrons constitute the apex of the administrative hierarchy, their authority constitutes monopolies of knowledge which define which attitudes and values will be celebrated and affirmed. Such ideological biases are often inherent in the patronage of museums[7] by corporations or governments which promote specific traditions. The monument-function encompasses the museum's role in the production of a tradition of "cultural meaning," specifically a hierarchically based imposition of sacred, moral or

---

7. Corporate patronage also determines the rhetorical thrust at exhibiting institutions such as the Epcot Centre operated in Florida by Walt Disney Enterprises.

historical values. In short, the monument-function corresponds to the museum's role as an architecturally inscribed ritual script and as a site of hierarchically based cultural power. Overall, the centripetality of the monument-function generates a singular, unifying context in relation to the exhibition of artifacts.

The Ritual Script: The Discourse of Tourism

Duncan and Wallach characterize a visit to a museum as a performance by the visitor as they follow a "ritual script written into the architecture and its decorations" (1978:48). The ritualistic essence of the monument-function can be examined within the broader discourse of tourism. Modern tourism, like participation in anything which constitutes a diversion from the ordinary, such as the arts, ceremonials, sports, or folklore, typifies human exploratory behaviour (Nelson, in Graburn,1977:17). People seek artificial sources of stimulation to make up for the shortcomings of the everyday environment.

> Tourism as a form of leisure activity structures the personal life cycle to provide alternative periods of work and relaxation...in general, a tourist is a temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change...Tourism as defined...does not universally exist but is functionally and symbolically equivalent to other institutions that humans use to embellish and add meaning to their lives (Graburn,1977:17).

When people travel, exhibitions often become a focus for activity. It is no accident that articles on the world's

museums appear more often in the travel section of newspapers rather than in the arts and entertainment section. North Americans might go to Europe to see the masterpieces of western art while Europeans might go to the United States to see Walt Disney World. Even in the city where we live, a visit to an exhibition is like a tour outside our normal daily life.

The tradition of tourism is linked with other rituals of self-discovery throughout history, often related to an arduous search for an absolute "other" outside one's original cultural context. In positioning him/herself discursively in relation to the other, the individual is transformed. Such rites of passage by individuals as tourists have evolved paradigmatically.

> ...what begins as the proper activity of a hero (Alexander the Great), develops into the goal of a socially organized group (The Crusades), into the mark of status of an entire social class (the Grand Tour of British "gentlemen"), eventually becoming universal experience (the tourist) (MacCannell,1976:5).

The rewards of traditional pilgrimages were the accumulated grace and moral leadership in the home community. Similarly, the grand tour of the English gentleman brought respect and good connections once he returned home. The rewards of modern tourism are values we now "worship": mental and physical wealth, social status, and diverse, exotic experiences (Graburn,1977:24). In his book The Tourist, Dean MacCannell describes the mind of the tourist as a

metonymic model for universal experience in the apprehension of modern civilization. He sees everyone as a potential tourist. Disclaiming the intellectual tendency to deride tourists and tourism, he asserts:

> The rhetoric of moral superiority that comfortably inhabits this talk about tourists was found in uncomfortably prejudicial statements about other "outsiders," Indians, Chicanos, young people, blacks, women (1976:9).

Within the overall discourse of tourism, tourists define themselves in rejection of those seen as outside themselves. A hierarchy is thus created within the mass audience itself. The tourist's critique of tourism is based on the desire to go beyond other "mere" tourists, to have deeper, more authentic experiences.

> The rhetoric of tourism is full of manifestations of authenticity of the relationship between tourists and what they see: this is a typical native house; this is the very place the leader fell; this is the actual pen used to sign the law; this is an original manuscript (MacCannell,1976:14).

Clearly, authenticity is the special magic of tourism in general. Tourist attractions become fetishistic aspects of the commodity form, organizing meaning and enticing desire for experience beyond one's basic material needs. A visit to a tourist attraction goes beyond witnessing the sight itself and becomes participation in a collective system of values. Such visits constitute rituals, defined by Erving Goffman as a "perfunctory conventionalized act through which an individual portrays his respect and regard for some object

of ultimate value to its stand in" (Goffman, in MacCannell,1976:42). The tourist attraction stands as a representation for "ultimate values" perceived by the viewer. Thus the meaning of the attraction is infused by the tourist as witness. The exhibition/attraction persuades by offering pleasure in involving participants symbolically in a common enterprise which calls attention to joint interests in a compelling way, promoting conformity and satisfaction in conformity (Horne,1986:69).

MacCannell describes the semiotics of tourism as an empirical relationship between a "tourist," a "sight" and a "marker," which together constitute a "tourist attraction" (MacCannell,1976:187). A tourist, as viewer, visits a marked sight. "Markers," corresponding to signifiers, indicate the sight at the level of psychological fact, mental image, or idea. Markers can take many forms: guidebooks, signs, information tables, slideshows, travelogues, souvenir postcards etc. Similarly, the "sight" itself corresponds to the "signified" element of the semiotic relationship. The sight exists as an objective fact. It is the marker that invests it with meaning. For example, the Bonnie and Clyde shootout area at Quaker Ridge, Iowa, is simply a patch of wild grass marked with an elaborate sign provided by the motion picture industry and a listing in a state tourist brochure (MacCannell,1976:14). Once the sight has been framed by its marker, it connotes a "sacred" tourist

attraction. In turn, the ritual attitude exists in the tourist as the duty of lovingly performing the "must sees" of the touristic process. Overall, the authentic touristic experience involves not merely connecting a marker to a sight, but participation in the collective ritual in which one connects one's own marker to a sight already marked by others (MacCannell,1976:187). The extensive framing of tourist attractions has rendered entire countries into museums. Egypt, for example, is marked in books, brochures, film and TV as a land of splendid antiquities. One might see the quintessential modern pilgrim at the pyramids of Giza carrying a Michelin guide as a devotional text (Horne,1984:21).

Exhibitions give the tourist-visitor the opportunity to experience the past, provide new perspectives on the present, or provide a respite from the work week in a tour of an alternate reality. In each case, s/he returns to normal life in some way renewed. The nature of this experience parallels anthropological studies of sacred rituals where experiences of altered reality mark the passage of natural or social time. We might remember the "year we went to Europe" or "the time we went to Disneyland" as having a specific significance. The "sacralization" of the visit elevates participants to a state where non-ordinary, marvelous things happen. Conversely, the process of "desacralization" marks the return to everyday life.

Visits to exhibitions, then, can characterize non-ordinary (or sacred) experience in alteration with normal (or profane) life.

In addition to marking time, a visit to an exhibition can be seen as stepping from one time continuum to another. The viewer becomes, in effect, a "tourist in time." Where some exhibitions offer a contemplative opportunity to witness authentic objects existing as they did months, years, centuries or millennia ago, others offer the opportunity to participate in environments which simulate the future. The tourist becomes politically neutered in an escape to absolute pasts or futures because, outside of the present, actions have no effect. The current interest in establishing and expanding museums can be seen as a nurturing instinct in an insecure age. A walk through a museum provides the security of participating in narratives where the outcome is already known. Similarly, science museums and the Disney theme parks present simulacra of the future. As escapes from the present, they provide an alternate to the anxieties and vertigo produced in an exponentially accelerating world described by Arthur Kroker, where everything moves faster and faster and faster. Exhibitions offer enchantment as a respite from living time. The monument-function exists in this escape from time-which-passes (historical time) to time-which-endures (absolute time). Exhibitions, then, constitute a suspension of time

within an otherwise inevitable procession of days. Where real life is unified from one year to the next in memory, events taking place in "absolute" time provide very specific memories which substitute for myths and religion. These myths constitute created realities embodying particular ideologies which invite willing participation.

As a site of human exploratory behaviour, an exhibition gives the visitor the opportunity to "see-for-oneself." This reflexivity takes the form of a performance with the visitor as the performer. In order to see an exhibition, the visitor must move through it, a process of selecting views, deciding focus and allotting time in the perception of each view. The museum, in turn, provides a script of "doing-codes" to be performed (Duncan and Wallach, 1980:450). The experience is self-reflexive in that the seeing-for-oneself, in combination with the given play of elements, creates the overall experience. In his consideration of performance art, anthropologist Victor Turner introduces the concept of "liminality" to describe the symbolic nature of any public show. "Liminality," literally meaning "on-the-threshold," designates the states and processes that exist between normal day-to-day culture and society (Turner,1977:33-83). The structures of liminality can be used to describe the state induced by the museum's "doing codes."

Turner typifies liminal time as being similar in feeling to the subjunctive, a mood tense. Liminal time is not controlled by the clock. It is rather a time of enchantment when anything might (or even should) happen. Correspondingly, liminal socio-cultural processes invoke actions and states not as facts, but as things to be entertained or emotionally viewed as a matter of doubt, desire, will, possibility, etc. Like the potency and potentiality indicated in the subjunctive tense itself, "If Marilyn Monroe were alive today, she would look like this...," the notion of liminal time is full of experiment and play.

Liminal experience functions as a kind of passage. Exhibitions, for example, serve as vehicles of transition from one socio-cultural state and status to another. Similar to rituals marking timeless events, the liminal experience allows for the affirmation of collective cultural experiences. Turner elaborates on the stages of ritual within time which I will illustrate using a visit to Walt Disney World.

Walt Disney World is an elaborately marked and framed tourist attraction. The visitor must drive for miles through toll booths with Mickey Mouse ear motifs, to parking lots named after cartoon characters, finally arriving via auto-trains and ferry at Fantasyland. As the viewer approaches, there is a simultaneous transformation from

ordinary time into ritual time. At the gates of Fantasyland, as the viewer pays a $21.50 admission fee, the "margin" or "limen" stage is entered -- a limbo between the past and present modes of daily existence. For every visit to Fantasyland, the sense of time remains essentially the same. Its central turn-of-the-century walkway, Mainstreet U.S.A., is perpetually everyone's hometown.

The potentiality of the subjunctive mood can be considered at Disney World in relation to the contextually delineated possibilities, the "what if's." The ride Forty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, for example, evokes subjunctive potentiality: "If Jules Verne's novel could come alive, it would have been like this..." The ride stimulates the senses, surrounding the viewer in movement, sight and sound: opening up the realm of possibility. This simulated experience of adventure and nineteenth century nostalgia is intended to fascinate the viewer.

The final state of the Disney theme park ritual marks the return to everyday. Turner terms this as "re-aggregation" -- the return to mundane life, either at a higher status, or in an altered state of consciousness or social being. The visitor returns with souvenirs and photographs, having "done" Walt Disney World. The money that was spent is presumably equal to the amount of pleasure had. Graburn's description of the symbolic functions of spending money correlates with Turner's stages of ritual.

> For most people the financial aspects of tourism parallel the symbolic. One accumulates enough money with which to vacation, much as one progressively acquires the worries and tedium of the workaday world. Going away lightens this mental load and also one's money. Running out of money at the end of a holiday is hopefully accompanied by running out of cares and worries -- with the converse accumulation of new perspectives and general well being. The latter counteract the workaday worries with memories of more carefree times (Graburn,1977:23).

Notions of both sacred and liminal time are ordered by rules of procedure, written and unwritten. In addition to his considerations of procedures in time, Turner states that all performances require framed space set off from the routine world. Even huge public events which use everyday spaces for their stage, in fact hallow these spaces for the duration of liminal time. In exhibitions, liminal space exists in the framing of images and symbols sanctioned off for scrutiny, assessment and if need be, remodelling and rearrangement. Liminal space, like liminal time is rigid and ordered by ritualistic procedure. Conversely, carnivals by trespassing the laws of framing, allow for more flexibility. Liminal rituals are framed, while carnivals in essence refuse framing.

Within liminality, the viewer experiences the "wonder of the presentation." The sobriety and solemnity of the museum ritual dramatize paradigms of axiomatic value and uphold established principles and truths (Turner,1977:39). As such, museums provide a context where meanings can be imposed on objects which would have distinctly different

meanings outside the institution. There is also a social dimension to liminality in museums, for the will to participate is in itself a framing device. The visitor must accept to some degree the given axioms within the art discourse as "the willing suspension of disbelief" in order to comprehend the experience.

The Forum-function of Exhibition Sites

We have seen in the above the liminal aspects of the monument-function as it relates to the viewer. This function has been characterized by a metaphoric reference to Innis' notion of time bias. At this point, I will turn to the other function derived from Innis: the notion of space bias which will be shown to be allied to the museum's forum-function. The forum-function of exhibitions corresponds to their role in disseminating information, encompassing activities and stimulating debate. Where the rigid and ordered framing of liminality corresponds to the monument-function, the axiomatic laws of the museum frame are open to being transgressed in its concurrent forum-function. This is possible because the forum-function exists in the present where action is possible.

As "forums," the museum's functions include travelling exhibitions, bureaucratic networking with other institutions and the use of television and other communications media for outreach programmes. According to Innis, the visual arts,

writing, and TV are forms of technology which emphasize space over time. The light and easily transportable qualities of space bound media ultimately favour the growth of centrally disseminated political authority. Museums characterize a space bias in their huge extended size, their focus on centralized administration, and their tendency to gage success quantitatively in terms of quantities of visitors and size of collections. In addition, museums reflect the space bias' privileging of technology over meaning when priority is placed on the scientific conservation of works, and decentralized authority in the institution of management training and exhibition technique.

Andre Malraux's proposal for a "museum without walls" emphasized a space bias when he spoke of a decentralized and disseminatable museum. It was to consist of a collection of photographically reproduced art works. His intention was to reveal art through photography by enabling the public to survey reproductions of art from any historical period. These images, in turn, could be arranged in any order. This use of photography hampered a direct relationship with original artworks by deliberately emphasizing specific conventions: close ups, lighting, special angles to bring out detail etc (Wilson, 1965). Thus the use of photography to reproduce art mediated the auratic status of the work. To Malraux, the museum was an affirmation, while photographically reproduced artworks constituted an

"interrogation" (Malraux,1967:162). Though Malraux was aware of the work of art as an encounter with time, his "museum without walls" implicitly privileged space bound media over time bound media (Malraux, in Solomon,1979:565).

In sum, two functions exist simultaneously in museums: The forum-function is based in politics while the monument-function is based in tradition. Thus the dissemination of reproduced material by the museum is distinguished from its more traditional role of enshrining original works of art. In this regard, Walter Benjamin's assertion that the reproduction of the original object separates it from the realm of tradition correlates with the museum's monument and forum functions.

> One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the realm of tradition. By making many reproductions, it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder and listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced. These two processes lead to a tremendous shattering of tradition which is the obverse of the contemporary crisis and renewal of mankind (Benjamin, in Solomon, 1936;554).

The technique of reproduction (characteristic of the forum-function), plays a role in detaching reproduced objects from their "auratic" state (characteristic of the monument-function). Benjamin foresaw the effect that the reproduced "museum without walls" would have concerning the conditions of art production and viewing. With the physical decontextualizing of art works through mass reproduction,

their accumulated contextual "present" was dissolved. They were no longer relics. Benjamin posited that because of this, a total severing in the function of art would take place.

> ...to an ever increasing degree art is designed for its reproducibility...the instant that the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based in ritual, it begins to be based in another practice -- politics (Benjamin, in Solomon,1936:557).

Mechanical reproduction of art by photography, offset lithography, or TV images dissolves the ritualistic function of exhibition, marking the possibility of a politics of exhibition. This takes place in the decentralized control of, what Innis would term, "empire" --the centralized authority of the fine art discourse. Ultimately, Malraux's formal proposal for a "museum without walls" has been superceded by the contemporary printed art discourse constituted by museum catalogues, art journals, books and calendars which transmit information concerning art from the large metropolitan centres of the world. This "museum without walls," in its reproduction of original works of art, feeds on the monument-function in its function as the "mausoleum of aura" (Wollheim,1986:22-26).

The forum-function can be located where the art discourse intersects with the museum itself. Most recently the political debate concerning museums has involved the valorization of art-as-commodity on the one hand, and a

critique of art institutions themselves on the other. One position is marked by a concerted effort by cultural bureaucracies, museum, corporations and the art marketplace to marginalize and suppress the criticism of art institutions and to encourage the perception of traditional fine arts categories as marketable commodities (Crimp,1984:49-81).

However, in opposition to this, artists as a social group have responded by transgressing their institutionally "appointed" places. Artist's critique of art's institutionalization has taken the form of exhibitions which function as discursive interventions into the museum itself. These serve to reveal normally invisible institutional politics and economics. Such political artistic practice focuses specifically on revealing assumptions concerning the context of art.

The definition of art by its context within a gallery has been in place since Marcel Duchamp exhibited his "urinal" in 1917. As modernism progressed, a reversal occurred where the context of art became the actual content of the work. This often occurred in exhibitions where objects introduced into the gallery "framed" the gallery and/or assumptions about it. Contemporary artists who have attempted to resist cultural hegemony by critiquing institutional discourses include Hans Haacke, Daniel Buren, Martha Rosler, Garry Kennedy and others. This political art

both exists as, and reveals, a politics of exhibition. The medium of photography and the artistic strategy of appropriation (borrowing elements and placing them in different, often subversive, contexts) have been key elements. Such practices pinpoint the often hidden agendas of art institutions, raising questions such as the ties between gatekeeper functions and the ideologies of economic and political positions. These artists work from a subject position within the art institution critically and analytically.[8]

The political aspect of the museum as forum exists, as well, in subject positions operating outside art institutions. Emerging out of a critique of mainstream art institutions, artists in Canada created their own alternative gallery system which eventually became known as ANNPAC (The Association of Non-Profit Artist-run Centres). Artists generated significantly innovative exhibition discourse founded upon their rights to access venues for exhibitions. Stuart Hall's description of the nature of alternative practices is appropriate here.

> By developing practices which articulate differences to a collective will, or by generating discourses which condense a range of different

---

8. Hans Haacke, for example, has exposed how art becomes a legitimating agent for the contemporary economic order. Where the aura encourages uncritical admiration, Haacke's strategy is to undermine the auratic qualities of art by calling attention to its social origin.

> connotations, the dispossessed conditions of practices of different social groups can be effectively drawn together in ways which make these social forces not simply a class "in itself" positioned by some other relations over which it has no control, but also intervening as a historical force, a class "for itself" capable of establishing new collective projects (Hall,1985:96).

For many artists during the late 1960s and early 1970s, mainstream art institutions were impenetrable in their hierarchical organization and perpetuation of an art star system. Early artist-run centres were funded by Liberal government grant programmes which recognized artists' organizations as suitable community initiated projects to fulfill their aims for national unity and job creation at a grassroots level. Later, under the auspices of Canada Council, the ANNPAC network of artist-run centres was established. In contrast to the highly structured mainstream institutions, the emphasis in these centres was on providing access to local constituencies of artists to control of context of their exhibitions. These marked significant political innovations in exhibition discourse because artist-run centres worked to transform artists' social vision into one that was community based (Nemiroff,1983:16-19). As such, artists constituted a subculture which produced discourse which was distinct from that of mainstream institutions. This articulation of marginal political practice generated links to others cultural constituencies including gays, feminists and ethnic

subcultures. Rather than focusing on success in a top-down mainstream hierarchy, artists could become known by working collectively within the art community. These activities provided a stable base for innovations in exhibition practices. The result was that art practice and exhibition practice became one.

> Artists activities might be better understood historically not simply in terms of artworks produced, but also through artists relationships with their institutions, through the formations they create (Kibbins, 1985: 13-19).

The politicization of art practice increasingly encompassed social, cultural and political discourses. Politically astute artist-run centres have provided an important historical counterpoint to hierarchical museum discourse. They embraced critical practice as integral to their institutional functioning. As such, these institutions continue to constitute a forum of debate. However, while artist-run centres originated as counterpoints to mainstream institutions, they now constitute a full blown institution themselves. They therefore no longer have an "outside" position from which to criticize.

The forum-function of exhibition institutions works with its own specificity to the social framework which supports it. It operates via the disseminating functions of museums, creating space within them for debate and questioning, or outside, in the formation of alternative institutions or the "museum without walls" of the art media.

In contrast with the eternal time of the monument-function, the forum-function exists "now," in determining issues within the present. In short, where the monument-function manifests in centripetally produced contexts, the forum-function is marked by centrifugal movements of information.

The monument and forum functions co-exist, and are represented, simultaneously in any exhibition site. Even the most radical forum oriented exhibition site is marked by its monument aspect which sets the precincts which define it from quotidian life.

References for Chapter II

Bazin, Germain. The Museum Age. New York: Universe Books Inc., 1967.

Belsey, Catherine. Critical Practice. London/New York: Methuen, 1980.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Marxism and Art. ed. Maynard Solomon. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979.

Bennett, Tony. "A Thousand and One Troubles: Blackpool Pleasure Beach." Formations of Pleasure, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Aristocracy of Culture," Media Culture and Society 2, 1980.

Bronson, A.A., and Peggy Gale. Museums by Artists. Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983.

Burgin, Victor. "Some Thoughts on Outsiderism and Postmodernism," Block 11, 1985-86. p.19-26.

Cameron, Duncan. "The Museum, A Temple or The Forum," Curator XIV/1, 1971. p. 11-24.

Carey, James W. "Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan," in McLuhan: Pro and Con. ed. Raymond Rosenthal, New York: Funk and Wagnalls,

Duncan, Carol and Wallach, Allan. "MOMA: Ordeal and Triumph on 53rd Street," Studio International. Vol. 194, No. 988, 1978.

_____. "The Universal Survey Museum", Art History. Vol. 3, No.4, December, 1980.

Ferguson, Bruce. Space Invaders. Regina: Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1985.

Ghafouri, Mehdi. "The Museum and Its Architectural Function: The Art Museum As Monument," Parachute 46, Winter 1987, p.94-102.

Graburn, Nelson H. H. "Tourism: The Sacred Journey" in Hosts and Guests. ed. Valene C. Smith. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977.

Greenberg, Reesa. "Museums and Contemporary Architecture." Lecture. February 6, 1987.

Hall, Stuart. "Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates," Critical Studies in Mass Communication, Vol.2, No.2. June 1985. p.91-114.

Hebdige, Dick. A Report on the Western Front; Postmodernism and the "Politics" of Style. unpublished manuscript, November/December 1985.

_____. "Towards a Cartography of Taste: 1935-1962," Block 4, 1981. p.39-55.

Horne, Donald. The Great Museum. London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1984.

_____. The Public Culture: The Triumph of Industrialism. London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1986.

Innis, Harold A. The Bias of Communication. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951.

Kibbins, Gary."Cultural Democracy," Fuse. Vol.8. No.6. Spring 1985. p.13-19.

Kleinbauer, W. Eugene. Modern Perspectives in Western Art History: An Anthology of 20th Century Writings on the Visual Arts. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1971.

MacCannell, Dean. The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class. New York: Schocken Books, 1976.

Malraux, Andre. Museums Without Walls. London: Secker and Warburg, 1967.

_____. "The Work of Art," in Marxism and Art. ed. Maynard Solomon. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979.

McCollum, Allan. (from an interview with D.A. Robbins) Arts, October 1985, pp.40-44.

Mumford, Lewis. The City in History. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1961.

Rosler, Martha. "Lookers, Buyers, Dealers and Makers: Thoughts on Audience," Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation. Ed. Brian Wallis. Boston: New Museum and David Godine Publisher, 1984.

Thompson, Grahame. "Carnival and the Calculable: Consumption and Play at Blackpool," Formations of Pleasure. London: Kegan and Paul, 1983.

Turner, Louis and Ash, John. The Golden Hordes: International Tourism and the Pleasure Periphery. London: Constable and Co., 1975.

Turner, Victor. "Frame, Flow and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality," Performance in Postmodern Culture. ed. Michel Benamou and Charles Caramello. Madison, Wisconson: Coda Press Inc., 1977.

Wittlin, Alma S. The Museum: Its History and Tasks in Education. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd. 1949.

Wollheim, Peter. "The Politics of Memory: Re-Reading Walter Benjamin," Vanguard, March 1986, p.22-26.

CHAPTER III

EXHIBITION PRACTICES

The presentation of an exhibition can be understood as a language where mental events are encoded into the exhibition by its organizers, and then realized by its visitors as social phenomena (Hall,1985:99). Exhibitions not only speak about things, but they produce things to think about. For example, an art museum not only presents exhibitions of art, it also plays a legitimating role in the formation of art as "art" within the high art discourse. Similarly, Disneyland not only presents the opportunity for the visitor to experience pleasure within a fabricated world, it becomes a particular symbol of "fun" within American culture -- nothing less than "the thrill of a life time." Exhibition discourse, then, establishes a frame around shared expectations of meaning.

In the previous chapter, discourse as "the context of the utterance" was shown to exist in the formations of

exhibitions, and their particular expressions which filter ideology into experience. Exhibitions were examined from the point of view of communications theory to establish their particular mediating functions. This chapter deals more specifically with how exhibition discourses are expressed in specific practices. Exhibition practices operate as framing devices which communicate the shared assumptions of discursive formations, connoisseurship for example. In my consideration of exhibitions, I will be making distinctions between the practices of institutional apparatuses, curatorial practices and the signifying practices of different typologies of exhibition.

First, the institutional apparatus of exhibiting institutions will be considered in relation to economic, political, and/or social practices. These factors, in turn, will be shown to affect the structures which produce the exhibition and govern its consumption.

Second, the signifying practices of various types of exhibition sites will be described. Signifying practices, in channelling the selection and arrangement of objects at particular sites, constitute particular systems of meaning. These manifest in the marking of the object: in situating it, in labelling, catalogues, lighting, floor-plans, guided tours, advertisements etc. Umberto Eco introduces the term "proxemics" to refer to signification within space:

> You would agree with me that spatial forms in this room (in every building and town) are conceived in

> order to suggest, to induce types of behaviour. A new branch of semiotics, proxemics, assumes that this is not a matter of suggestion or mere stimulation, but that this is a process of signification, any spatial form being a precise conventional message conveying social meanings on the basis of existing codes (Eco,1973:59).

It is not only the relative position of objects, one to another, but their incorporation into the overall context, which constitute the text of an exhibition. Prototypes based on linguistic tropes will be used to distinguish particular frameworks, styles and typologies of exhibition.

Third, curatorial practices will be viewed as existing somewhere between institutional apparatuses and the general typologies of exhibition. They operate within institutional constraints, while using signifying practices of larger cultural structures. Practices of curatorship involve positioning the visitor within a particular site to receive a reading of the exhibition text. Curatorial practices, in their roles of inscribing "preferred readings" can be described as forms of rhetoric.

The role of exhibition practices is to bring exhibits and participant-viewers together. To visit an exhibition is to enter into a set of relations encompassing economic, social and personal transactions.[1] Exhibiting institutions,

---

1. The realm of individual experience, where meaning is received or decoded, will be examined in Chapter IV. What is important to mention here is that the meanings that people give to their experience of an exhibition can vary from one individual to another. There is no way of universally determining how an exhibition will be received.

like any other type of communications media, may appear to be nonpartisan. However, like television, newspaper or radio, they maintain particular operational agendas which are rooted in an overall system of social networks.

> The way that pictures are hung (or objects are displayed) makes assumptions about what is offered. Hanging (or exhibiting) editorializes on matters of interpretation and value, and is unconsciously influenced by taste and fashion. Subliminal cues indicate to the audience its deportment (O'Doherty, 1976:27).

In exhibitions the selection and mode of presentation of content, in itself, confers particular readings of the text. Those who organize exhibitions function as gatekeepers between the institution and the viewer, in effect translating what gets communicated. What appears to be "obvious" in exhibitions, actually advocates a particular point of view. Where the investment of meaning remains hidden in the presentation of the exhibition itself, the question that needs to be addressed is "Whose interests do particular exhibitions serve?"

A multiplicity of ideologies compete and intersect at any one exhibiting institution. In turn, a single institution can represent many, or even contradictory exhibition discourses. Generally, exhibiting institutions can be viewed as a combination of economic, political and social interests. These, in varying ratios depending on their orientation, determine what will be communicated.

Private, profit making exhibiting institutions characterize a primarily economic orientation. These include Walt Disney World, Wax Museum, some zoos, commercial galleries, and some private specialized museums. Private museums are supported by the paying visitor, by admission charges or selling souvenirs, or, in some instances by corporate interests promoting particular products within the exhibitions themselves. Their orientation is ultimately geared to reaping profits. They must appeal to the paying public by aligning themselves to current trends within the overall culture.

Public institutions, on the other hand, are primarily political in orientation. In these museums programming is legitimated in the name of the public: to raise public awareness, provide public access to art collections and stimulate debate concerning culture. They are generally funded by taxes or by patronage by government bodies and corporations. These include large metropolitan museums such as the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and provincial, state or civic museums. Ultimately, these types of institutions must be accountable to an authorizing support system whose agenda colours the nature of their programming.

Exhibiting institutions which evolve primarily out of a social context occur in smaller, grass roots communities which emerge at the margins of culture. In this category are institutions such as the ANNPAC network of artist run

galleries. Also in this category can be found small regional museums operated by the community in which they exist, such as the Fisherman's Life museum in Jeddore, Nova Scotia. These types of institutions function as vehicles of expression for constituencies within the overall culture.

Whether their operational agendas emerge out of an economic, political or social orientation, exhibiting institutions institute common practices in presenting exhibitions. These will be examined in this chapter.

The Exhibition Apparatus

Exhibiting institutions, whether those of museums, art galleries or amusement parks, constitute what Louis Althusser has termed "ideological state apparatuses."[2] Ideological state apparatuses appear in specialized institutions of the private domain: the church, education system, family, political system, communication system and culture. While not directly organized by the state, they produce ideological assumptions which are channeled through practices which function as frameworks for thinking and calculation about the world "...the 'ideas' which people use to figure out how the social world works, what their place

---

2. In his analysis of the relation of power to class, Althusser distinguished between "repressive" and "ideological" state apparatuses in relation to state power. While repressive state apparatuses use power directly and repressively in the public domain (ie. the army, police, courts, and prisons) ideological state apparatuses exist in the private domain and function on the basis of consent.

is in it and what they ought to do" (Hall,1985:99). According to Althusser's theory, exhibiting institutions would function to reproduce the myths and beliefs necessary to preserve the dominant social order. While this may operate in the exhibition experience to some extent, Althusser's ISA theory assumes that the human subject is not capable of experience outside, or resistance to, a singular dominant ideology. In his well known article on this subject, Stuart Hall points out that Althusser does not allow for the articulation of ideologies of difference, exclusion or deviation (1985:91-114). For Hall, it does not follow that because all exhibition practices produce ideological representations, that they are nothing but ideology. Further, he asserts that unifying all differences under one "dominant ideology" is no longer possible because there is no longer one dominant discourse, but a plurality of discourses. It is not a question of a dominating ideology triumphing over subordinant ones. Rather, ideological state apparatuses function as sites for class struggle as they incorporate the articulation of opposing tendencies. The ruptures and fissures occurring between discourses within museums provide a means for a variety of possible positions.

A survey of institutional practices within exhibition apparatuses reveals their complex operation as a multiplicity of discursive chains.

The Practices of Exhibition Apparatuses

Museum practices are legitimated by particular definitions of collective cultural identity. Many exhibiting institutions claim to operate under such absolute terms as "impartial scholarship." A typical assumption appears in the Canadian Museum Association's publication Basic Museum Management (which constituted part of their correspondence course in museology).

> Museums, like all other educational institutions, must maintain freedom to seek out and present the aesthetic, scientific and historical truth (CMA,1969:15).

Where the "aesthetic, scientific and historical truth" may be presented as obvious, it is an assumption, party to the particular value system which supports it. One must examine "whose truth" is being represented. This particular "truth" privileges the museum as an elitist institution whose role it is to dispassionately guide the viewer. Where assumptions of such a singular truth exist, so do, perhaps, idealist delusions. Exhibiting institutions may be unaware that their discursive frameworks may be reproducing particular cultural points of view. An acknowledgement of an institutional point of view provides for clearer communication as institutions enter the battlefield of discourse.

> Those people who work in the media are producing, reproducing and transforming the field of ideological representation itself. They stand in

> a different relationship to ideology in general from others who are producing and reproducing the world of material commodities -- which are nevertheless also inscribed with ideology (Hall,1985:104).

Hans Haacke, a practising visual artist, has played a significant role in the transformation of ideological representation within museum institutions. His installations reveal that the institutional practices of museums function as a collusion between institutional, artistic and economic interests. Haacke wishes to unmask the ideology propagated by exhibiting institutions by revealing their political functions.

> Every museum is perforce a political institution, no matter whether it is privately run or maintained and supervised by governmental agencies. Those who hold the purse strings and have the authority over hiring and firing are, in effect, in charge of every element of the organization (Haacke,1984:13).

Haacke asserts that, because exhibiting institutions play an important role in the inculcation of opinions and attitudes, the term "culture" should be exposed in its camouflaging of social and political consequences. He sees the hesitancy to use industrial terms by the art world in relation to art as part of a lingering idealist tradition which associates art with "the spirit," hence outside the economic sphere. Haacke's work cuts through assumptions that art world activities are innocuous by exposing how art has become a legitimating agent for the contemporary economic order.

An appointment to the board of directors of major public museums is a prestigious position reserved for those of privilege (typically, white and wealthy). In turn, their decisions reflect their political, social and economic interests. The board is ultimately powerful: responsible for the hiring and firing of the museum director and approving other staff positions.

The tradition of elitism in museums, originating in the aristocratic patronage of the arts, continues to affect the staffing of museums. The first directors of North American museums were often men of great wealth who had no need for an income. Indeed, until recently a western European accent was considered a sign of refinement, and preferred as a signifier of connoisseurship. However where once great wealth was an historical prerequisite for the job, contemporary public institutions require personnel with sufficient cultural capital -- a developed aesthetic disposition. Working at a museum is still perceived as a "privilege." This is reflected in the salaries of museum professionals. While their positions often require training equivalent to that of university professors, they earn significantly less.[3]

3. The 1981 income figures from Statistics Canada state following national averages: female university professors earned $26,565; male university professors, $35,944, while female museum professionals earned $20,459 and men $28,102.

Increased professionalism and specialization in North American art institutions have led to split directorships in galleries, where authority is shared between a business manager and an artistic director. Haacke criticizes the practice of training business managers at prestige business schools, primarily in production and marketing, because it produces "technocrats " with a problematic lack of emotional attachment for the art products they promote. The museum director, as the chief executive officer, is the bridge between the board of directors and the museum staff. The role requires that one be politically astute: going to the right parties, connecting with the holders of political power, or soliciting corporate support, to insure that the museum receives all possible endowments.

Other staff positions at mainstream museums reflect the values of the boards of directors. While the tradition of women in the arts provides some positions for women as art museum directors, women are still marginalized to less "important" education and volunteer programmes. The predominance of women in art museum education reflects the traditional roles of women associated with the caring of children. Similarly, museums and galleries have a long tradition of volunteers, usually women, trained as docents. Their primary function is to give tours to the public, and organize special (often fundraising) events. In addition, they aid the efforts of the paid staff. It is assumed that

these women have no need of income, because traditionally these roles were filled by the wives of wealthy men. However, the role of women volunteers is becoming a problem in contemporary society where women expect to be paid for their work, and further, resent being channelled into jobs extending woman's traditional role as hostess and nurturer.

Another area of volunteerism that can be problematic in museums, is the use of young people. "Training programmes" can push the limits of exploitation to the limit. These offer job experience for young people on a short term basis where much is expected for very modest pay, and no future guaranteed employment. Young people are often forced to repeat this cycle of training for years. Overall, museum administrative practices reflect the privileged assumptions of the boards of directors. The corresponding practices concerning personnel, offer employees prestige -- or symbolic cultural capital -- as a substitute for poor pay.[4]

At this point, I will turn from considering practices within museums themselves, to look at practices which extend outside the museum's walls to interrelate with other

---

4. The perception of employment positions at exhibiting institutions as privileged or glamorous, and therefore justifying poor pay is characteristic of other sites as well. At Walt Disney World, for example, personnel practices reflect the Disney discourse of "selling happiness" where on-the-job entertainment is substituted for good pay. The hiring of a person is assumed to be a reward in itself.

discursive sites. Exhibiting institutions may be tied to other industries such as real estate, tourism or corporate sponsors. For example, in conjunction with their exhibition sites, Walt Disney productions have created a utopian tourist community within Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. Huge hotel complexes exist within the precinct of the park equipped with direct transportation to the exhibition sites. Similarly, in New York, the Museum of Modern Art's recent expansion included an apartment tower. Art-world chic has become a beacon indicating where the next real estate boom will take place. There is a long tradition of artists moving into low rent neighborhoods and fixing up loft and studio space which is then quickly exploited by real estate developers. This has happened in New York's Soho and Lower East Side, and in Toronto's Queen Street West, areas where transformation from tenements to condominiums was catalyzed by the ambience of an artistic community.

Another industry that can be tied to the institutional practices of exhibition institutions is that of tourism. In regionally depressed areas, such as Nova Scotia, tourism has become a primary industry. Here provincially supported art institutions have close ties to provincial politics and exhibitions reflect this link, representing regional folk art, local artists and crafts-people. These are marketed as "attractions" to appeal to the tourist industry. There is a danger in Canada's Maritime Provinces that the tendency to

"sing for one's supper" in satisfying perceived needs of tourism will create dependencies and erode the existing culture by contriving institutional practices to suit the tourist market. An example of tourism carried too far can be seen in "historical" St. Augustine, Florida where virtually the whole town has been transformed into a tourist attraction including Ripley's "Believe It or Not" Museum, The Old Jail, The Fountain of Youth and the Tragedy Museum. The restored sections of the old town function as facades where souvenirs and ice cream are sold. Here, an exhibition discourse which originally emerged out of local history, has been consumed and commodified, and thus transformed by practices of the tourist industry.

Finally, corporate sponsorship of exhibiting institutions has begun to play a major role in determining their institutional practices. The expectations of corporate patrons have resulted not only in the consent to corporate administrative practices, but the actual embodiment of corporate ideology within exhibitions themselves. In recent years, gallery and museum directors have found dramatically increased funding in the private sector which has helped to offset cutbacks and restraint in public sector funding. In turn, corporations including AT&T, Exxon, GE, GM, IBM and Mobile have recognized the public relations benefits of being good corporate citizens. Massive advertizing campaigns coinciding with sponsored

exhibitions which emphasize the company's cultural interests as "social responsibility," have proven to be effective lobbying tools to shroud the company from criticism of corporate misconduct. Where polls have reflected low public esteem for large corporations because of company involvement in environmental pollution, production of military technology or investments in South Africa, corporate alliance with prestigious cultural institutions helps to solve their image problems. Dependence on corporate funding can create a type of internalized self discipline once institutions know what type of exhibitions might be suitable to draw corporate funding -- usually politically benign ones. Temporary exhibitions which promote critical awareness are most unlikely to attract funding. The danger here is that without exerting direct pressure, corporate sponsors have effortlessly gained the power of veto in regard to exhibition programming. Hans Haacke points out that in the art world:

> Through naivete, need or addiction to corporate financing, museums are now on the slippery road to becoming public relations agents for the interests of big business and its ideological allies (Haacke,1984:17).

Ultimately, as a consequence of this trend, control in the arts is shifting from the social elites (the state or connoisseurs) to corporate elites. This shift has been manifested in huge corporately funded blockbuster exhibitions which function as advertizing for the company,

and, to a lesser extent corporate involvement on the boards of directors of arts institutions. The loyalty of corporate board members on museum boards is allied to a corporate, not a personal, point of view.

> Since corporate board members are less likely part of a tightly organized elite status culture, their interest in social and cultural exclusivity is secondary to their interests in the economic survival and, often, the expansion of the organization itself (DiMaggio/Unseem,1982:196).

As corporate membership increases on museum boards, the incidence of corporate ideology informing institutional practices increases.

Similarly, corporate involvement is entering into previously privately run exhibition centres. This exists in the Epcot Centre of Walt Disney World which is like a world's fair with theme exhibitions sponsored by major corporations. Future World at the Epcot Centre represents various theme pavilions including World of Motion, Universe of Energy, The Land, and Journey into the Imagination, each presented by a major corporation. While these theme attractions are contextualized within the overall Disney Discourse of "entertainment" they, in effect, function as advocacy advertisements. Here the discourse of exhibition is a language of corporate slogans masked by themes of progress, science and entertainment. For example, EXXON's Universe of Energy exhibits exhibition practices similar to those at Fantasyland. First, there is a multi-image film narrated voice-of-God style. Then the visitor, positioned in

a cart to become the "lens" of a filmic exhibition script, is guided through a series of events. These include a simulated primeval rain forest, audio-animatronic dinosaurs, earthquakes and an erupting volcano. The final feature is yet another wrap around movie. The proclaimed purpose is to provide a better understanding of energy, but the rhetoric throughout privileges fossil fuels, which of course furthers the corporate interests of EXXON.

At this point, I will turn from considering how the practices of institutional apparatuses determine exhibitions, to look at practices of signification within exhibitions themselves.

Practices of Presenting Objects

Exhibitions are a means of transforming objects into languages of culture. In exhibitions, objects are selected and presented according particular codes constituting what Eco terms "proxemics": the signification of objects within space. By practices which frame objects within their contexts, exhibitions confer particular readings of the exhibition text. These codes, differing from culture to culture, constitute an exhibition discourse. Whether presented in the larger discourse of high art, popular art, ethnographic artifact etc., exhibitions legitimate objects as significant in relation to that culture, valorizing them in various ways. Museums, in effect, legitimate art as

"art." Art is most often defined by its context within a museum or gallery where powerful ideas about art play a role in signifying particular objects. During the twentieth century the white, ideal, gallery space has became the archetypal context for art.

> A gallery is constructed along laws as rigorous as those for building a medieval church. The outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling becomes the source of light. The wooden floor is polished so that you click along clinically or carpeted so that you pad soundlessly, resting your feet while your eyes have the wall. The art is free, as the saying used to go, "to take on its own life." The discrete desk may be the only piece of furniture. In this context a standing ashtray becomes almost a sacred object, just like the firehose in a modern museum looks not like a firehose but an aesthetic conundrum (O'Doherty,1976:25).

The practice of exhibiting objects in museums or galleries valorizes them, connoting quality, good taste, connoisseurship and high culture. The quality of museum objects has become a standard for excellence. Since the refining of museum collections in America during the 1920's, when pieces not considered masterpieces were sold off, the term "museum quality" has become common.

Jargon appropriated from elitist art discourse has been used by the advertizing industry to frame commodities to attract the discerning consumer. Estee Lauder's "private collection" of cosmetics and the Movado "museum watch" market the aesthetic disposition to those who wish to consolidate their economic ascendancy at the level of taste.

The links between museums and retail trade have not functioned in one direction. Museums, too, have appropriated exhibition techniques from the retail store trade. When Queen Mary visited the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, which had been newly refurbished after the war by its director, she found the exhibitions transformed from crowded display cases to single objects in harmoniously lit cases: a subtly lit Sung bowl in one case, or medieval embroidery in another etc. When the tour was completed she congratulated the new director and added "But what a pity that everything looks as if it's for sale" (Robertson, 1971:58). The exhibition context frames objects by implementing practices which are specific to a variety of exhibition discourses, such as those of high art or retail display.

Practices of exhibiting objects can be analyzed more precisely with the introduction of particular typologies of exhibition which pertain to the selection and placement of objects within museums. A recent CBC Ideas programme made the distinction between "art by metamorphosis" and "art by designation" in relation to the origin or museum artifacts (CBC Ideas transcript,1982).

"Art by metamorphosis" describes objects which have been removed from their original context and placed in an exhibition continuum. In effect, they have been first appropriated, and then inserted into particular discourses.

In this context, objects are presented in exhibitions where meanings are created and projected upon them which may not have been intended by their creators. These objects may have had different functions in other cultures or in the past. In effect, their function has been metamorphosed. If tribal artifacts are placed within a series of objects in a museum, for example, they become "art." The "art by metamorphosis" approach to exhibition is apparent in the exhibition of African Art in the Rockefeller Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The curator responsible for this installation, Susan Vogel, states:

> ...I was concerned that our galleries not look different from the other galleries of the museum in any way that suggested that this art could not stand on its own. It has to be presented as art, pure art, high art, the equal of any in the building (CBC Ideas transcript, 1982:11).

These artifacts have, in effect, been transformed into "art" by their placement within the overall exhibition "look" of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The original function of these objects was to be utilitarian, not that of static display. The imposition of this system of display and classification actually says more about the exhibition practices of the Metropolitan Museum than the original culture of the objects.

Similarly, from within the popular context, Ripley's "Believe It or Not" Museum presents oddities, curiosities and exotica from throughout the world which have also been removed from their original contexts. These objects have

been brought together in a collection, a modern day anachronism of the museums of mid-eighteenth century America, boisterous carnival-like commercial ventures that combined art with scientific and historical curiosities (DiMaggio/Unseem,1982:188). The collection is described as being as indiscriminate and eccentric as Ripley himself:

> ...style, period and historical significance had little interest for him and as the collection grew, highly valuable pieces were happily placed alongside what the experts labeled "junk"! A Ming Dynasty vase displayed upon a table of human bones did not bother Ripley in the least (Copperthwaite,1978:7).

Included in the collection are early Chinese coinage, clothes, peg clocks, fork and spoon sculpture, oriental religious art, a hair threaded through a hair, a two headed calf, and a wax model of the midget Tom Thumb. These are some of four thousand specimens which evolved out of Ripley's souvenir hunt in his travels to one hundred and ninety eight countries. Ripley is presented as a well loved eccentric, a man of humble origins who became a millionaire at the height of the depression through his genius in picking subjects which appealed to the readers of his syndicated column "Believe It or Not." These objects are displayed as his legacy although they have been somewhat extended upon and copied since his death. The Ripley's "Believe It or Not" Museums now constitutes a chain throughout North America. The theme is always the same -- challenging our "accepted" belief by presenting a remarkable

object which in some way confronts this supporting discourse. The Ripley discourse makes assumptions that are now outdated and often ethnocentric. For example, in the 1980s the view of oriental artifacts as "unbelievable" presents what amounts to a racist world view.

These examples of "art by metamorphosis" from the Metropolitan Museum of Fine Art and Ripley's "Believe It or Not" Museum rearticulate objects within a particular, nationalistic context by extracting them from their original contexts and placing them in exhibition continuums. In both cases the meaning the object had in its original culture is overshadowed by exhibition practices which express the discourses of high art and amusement respectively. It is possible that the same artifact, for example traditional African currency, could be exhibited in both museums. At the Met it would be presented as "high art," while at Ripley's as "an amusing curiosity." In both cases the interests of an imperialistic world view can be seen to filter through exhibition discourses and practices, privileging the American point of view while obscuring that of the original culture.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, characterizing what Duncan and Wallach have referred to as a Universal Survey Museum, gives credibility to Western Cultures's invasion and appropriation of artifacts of other cultures presented in a context which promotes the imperialist culture <u>over</u> that

originally associated with the object. In this case we see the "museumization" of a native culture into high art. Similarly, Ripley's "Believe It or Not" Museum reflects American imperialist ethnocentricity in the way that its collection is presented. This is particularly noticeable, in the "Guide to the Collection" given out at the ticket sales desk. The Table of Contents terms foreign money as "Funny Money," collections from Africa and New Guinea as "The Primitives" and displays of specimens and reproductions of freaks nature as "The Weirdos." It is important to note that while the "art by metamorphosis" promotes a bias, it may not necessarily be that of ethnocentricity.

In addition to the "art by metamorphosis" type of exhibition which inserts objects into exhibition continuums, there is that of "art by designation," which consists of objects which are created particularly for an exhibition continuum. In the former sense, objects become art because of their framing by a museum context. In the latter sense, objects are "designed" (or intended) by their creators to be exhibited in art galleries and museums. For example, in site specific artworks of the '70s and '80s, the gallery context is integral to the realization of the work as in the case of the work of Hans Haacke previously described. These exhibitions are intended by their creators to be presented as "art," and further, their inclusion in a museum context legitimates them as such. Another example of objects

designed specifically for exhibition contexts occurs in the simulated world of amusement parks. Here again, the intention of the designers or artists is to create a context for entertainment, often an overall simulacrum where the artificial is novel -- more real than real. Objects are not taken from original contexts and transformed by the exhibition continuum. Rather, meaning is encoded into the exhibit at the point of its creation.

"Art by metamorphosis" and "art by designation" functions as a typology which qualifies the practices of contextualizing objects in relation to their creative origin. From the examples cited, The Metropolitan Museum of Art can be paired with Ripley's "Believe It or Not" Museum because they both remove objects from the place they were originally created. On the other hand, Walt Disney World has common functions with artists interventions because, in both, the creators of the objects fabricate the exhibition continuum. The practices of both "art by metamorphosis" and "art by designation" have the capacity to cross institutional boundaries or even exist simultaneously within one institution.

Another typology in the signification of objects considers the display itself as a mode of representation. Stephen Bann's analysis of the re-representation of history describes various mechanisms which determine characteristic configurations of museum display. Bann theorizes that it is

possible to relate the formative procedures and principles of exhibition to two different historical epistemes. Bann draws from literary terms his model of two rhetorical tropes, metonymy and synecdoche, to describe exhibitions as forms of representation.

Metonymy is a trope which functions when the name of one thing is applied to something else with which it is closely associated, thus the two become interchangeable. For example the word "crown" can be substituted to mean "monarch," or collectively, "Bluenoser" can be used to describe "Nova Scotians."[5] According to Bann, metononmy in relation to exhibition practices is reductive and mechanistic. The metonymic model, like the enlightenment's scientific method, draws specimens, discrete objects removed from their original contexts, and then imposes upon them rationalization and classification. In no way does this approach try to give a sense of the original totality. Rather, what is presented is a chaotic arrangement of objects, each separated from the next, where no interrelationship between the objects themselves is intended. Specimens are often dead or associated with death: such as fossils, bones or the works of dead people. Hence the metonymic type of museum can be characterized in its most extreme form as a mausoleum of classified objects.

---

5. The Bluenose is famous Nova Scotian racing schooner which appears on the Canadian dime.

The Rockefeller Wing of the Metropolitan Museum, for example, characterizes a metonymic model in that each object represents a microcosm of the culture from which it originates, yet no total representation of that culture is attempted. In this way, the metonymic model corresponds with that of "art by metamorphosis" previously described. In both types, a narrative has been imposed on objects in their presentation within the exhibition discourse of "high art."

In contrast to the reification of objects from their contexts formed in metonymic exhibition types, synecdochal exhibition models establish an interrelated chain of objects. Synechdoche is a trope which identifies a part when referring to the whole. For example "She's all heart" refers to the "woman" herself. Synechdochal exhibition types attempt to recreate the whole period it is representing, to create "living history." Period rooms of authentic artifacts where the context has been recreated characterize the synecdochal model. According to Bann, synecdoche correlates with the romantic episteme characterized by the relic.

The reconstructed Fortress of Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia is a recreation of a moment in time, the summer of 1744 when it was a military capital of the French Colony and on the verge of a war. Louisbourg Fortress represents a synechdochal model because its exhibitions suggest a totality in a recreation of an

historical period. The tourist brochure encourages the visitor to participate in "a series of small experiences" in order to get a sense of the overall experience.

> ...a file of marching soldiers...a drink at a sailor's tavern...a shingled roofline...the swirl of a woolen cape...a fisherman at work...a child engrossed in play...the sound of a wind slammed shutter (Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Parks Canada, 1984).

The synechdochal model is characterized at Louisbourg by fragments of experience which together recreate a history. The exhibition experience is made up of authentic period pieces, reconstructed architecture, the elements of wind, water, earth and vegetation, and theatrical performance of costumed people in specific roles. The exhibits in themselves demonstrate how lace or bread were made for example. All exhibits are part of a whole, the fortress itself a living documentary, framing a permanently sustained moment in time.

The use of metonymic or synechdochal forms of exhibition structure the arrangement of objects in particular practices. On the one hand, the specimen is presented as a microcosm of the culture, reified from its original context, while on the other, the fragment is presented as part of a whole, which itself is also presented.

Of course, these two models of exhibition are not pure types. An interesting integration of metonymic and synechdochal types occurs in the art of Marcel Broodthaers

which addresses both the language and architecture of the art discourse. Broodthaers considers both the museum and the artist's studio as institutions containing the art discourse. In his piece La Salle Blanche (1979), he has produced a container within a container. The studio, complete in all architectural details, is presented within a museum, roped off from access. Here the place of art's origin (the studio) and the place of its destination (the museum) have been reversed and integrated, revealing assumptions about the neutrality of display practices. On the one hand, this piece functions metonymically in that the studio is a specimen, an art object reified from its original site presented as an object of "high art" itself. On the other hand, it functions synecdochally in that living history is recreated with reference to the practices of the artist in producing art (Buchloh,1983:45-56).

In sum, codes of signifying objects within an exhibition context may be seen according to types of practices which position objects in particular ways. These typologies constitute a language which is used by curators with particular emphasis.

Curatorial Practices

To curate is to intentionally position objects through particular practices. Curatorial practices exist within definitions imposed by institutions, while at the same time

signifying objects according to generally accepted languages of exhibition. Curators, then, must respond to both internal and external practices in their production of exhibitions. They are authorized to speak for their institutions; to in effect, translate the exhibition discourse through exhibition practices.

The official role of a curator in a gallery or museum is to collect, care for and systematize collections, and to arrange exhibitions. As well, the curator is expected to apply a degree of scholarly knowledge to the interpretation of art (Town,1986:37). The curator functions as a gatekeeper who decides what works will be exhibited or bought. In addition, the curator confers values upon objects as they are placed in mediating exhibition discourses. Hence curatorship functions ideologically.

> The fact that curatorship is ultimately the purposeful creation of meanings through the systematic collection, documentation and exhibition of objects or natural or human history means that curators are involved with the formulation of ideology, whether or not their training and inclination prepares them for such a role (Lord and Lord,1986:11).

Curatorship is located within a set of relationships. These constitute a nexus where the wills of authorizing bodies, the curator's professional peer group, culturally sanctioned practices of exhibition and the perceived interests of the public intersect. The nature of institutional power and the

social conditions of the curator have a decisive effect on the role s/he will play in communicating meaning.

Museum and gallery curators, in acquiring or exhibiting works within the institutional frame, play the roles of tastemakers, evangelists and connoisseurs within the world of art commodities. Curatorial opinions have become integral to both the aesthetic and monetary worth of works by individual artists (Meyer,1979:64). The tradition of authenticity scholars includes men like Kenneth Clark, who provide validation for art buyers wishing to believe that work was genuine, fitting "somewhere in an ordered canon of scholarship stretching back to the painted cave of Lascaux" (Meyer,1979:180). The expectation that scholarship will legitimate works as authentic is now widely assumed. However, there are ethical complexities in the position of taste validator, for it is here that ideological assumptions are dictated in a most direct manner.

> No one has ever devised a method of detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position or from the mere activity of being a member of society (Said,1979:10).

Historically, curators were the well educated children of wealthy families whose position was similar to a patron in that no or little remuneration for their services was expected. Furthermore, their social milieu placed them in a good position to gain funding for their institutions. In short, they were connoisseurs who exhibited the taste and

scholarship expected of their class. The result was that the interests of wealthy families, and thus big business, were closely tied to museum acquisitions which was mirrored, in turn, by the art market. Today, as well, museum acquisitions and art investment are interrelated. Selections of works by art by museums increase their status. This occurs either by legitimating works by living artists within the "discourse of excellence," or by leaving fewer works by dead artists on the open market.

The role of curatorship in investing a work of art with meaning or significance, what Bourdieu calls cultural capital, is akin to that of a bank manager. The ethical stance of curators and their reputations within their social milieu constitute a value, a status which gives them "the right to speak." This is to say that along with cultural goods themselves, the "prestige" or "authority" of curators functions as a "credit" which guarantees, to some degree, economic profits.

> For the author, the critic, the art dealer, the publisher or the theatre manager, the only legitimate accumulation consists in making a name for oneself, a known recognized name, a capital of consecration implying a power to consecrate objects (with trademark or signature) or persons (through publication, exhibition etc.) and therefore to give value, and to appropriate the profits from this operation (Bourdieu,1980:262).

The more cultural capital curators have, the more power they have to consecrate objects within the discourses in which they work. A symbiotic relationship exists between curators

and artists. Curators, in addition to situating objects, create texts to supplement exhibitions which disseminate abstracted meaning concerning the work. This activity constitutes a power to valorize art. For an artist to attempt to valorize his/her own work would be both ineffective and ridiculous within the fine art discourse. Thus an uneven power relationship exists where artists are dependent on curators to qualify their work.[6]

The role of curatorship is defined by certain limitations. First, exhibiting institutions exist in specific social and cultural contexts out of which particular discursive formations emerge. An exhibiting institution might display historical or contemporary artifacts, be commercial or non-profit, install temporary or permanent exhibitions, be located in a metropolitan or rural centre. These provide the site in which the exhibition is read and out of which the curator emerges and serves. The value conferred on an art work by a curator must be consistent with the overall cultural context within which s/he works.

---

6. Curators have been accused by artists of appropriating the artistic role. Daniel Buren states:"...the 'artists' of today are the art gallery directors, exhibition organizers, art critics, art historians, art collectors -- all endowed with the power to create, to decide, to arrange, to juxtapose, to add, to cut out and invent..." (Buren,1980). Buren asserts that contemporary museums, rather than reflecting artistic creation, reflect their own image. Hence today the "authority of the institution" becomes the only medium available to the artist.

In addition, the curator is also defined by the profession of curatorship itself as a social discourse. The professional peer group constitutes a significant factor in determining the curatorial practices of the individual. The concerns defined by the group both define and legitimate the curator's right to speak. For example, the role of a curator at a small regional museum would most likely evolve out of a personal (or group) interest in the history of the community in which s/he (they) live. Exhibitions are typically permanent, a recreation of a past time. An example of this type of museum is the Fisherman's Life Museum in Jeddore Ponds, Nova Scotia.[7] The role of the curator would consist primarily of identifying objects that are part of the lived history of the community. However, the role of professionalization in museology would also play a part in the imposition of curatorial and exhibition practices from outside the community. The systems of classifying, preserving and presenting objects would, to some extent, homogenize the presentation.

In some situations, the professionalization of curatorship plays a central role. At large metropolitan museums a national and, preferably, international role in the profession of curatorship is expected. A curator at the

---

7. Here the home once lived in by an inshore fisherman's family houses a display of the ordinary things of rural Nova Scotian life during the nineteenth century: a pump organ, hooked mats, grandmother's favorite dishes and a wood stove.

Art Gallery of Ontario, for example, would emerge from the fine art discourse as someone with sufficient cultural capital (published, previous exhibitions, education etc.). Within the institution, the curator would be further legitimated as a professional by cues in the institutional surroundings: the office with its library, files, magazines, slides, taste in art etc. His or her contacts in the international art discourse (other institutions, art magazines, critics etc.) would be key elements to their role.

The word "curate," new enough in the English language not to be included in dictionaries, is used to describe the process of putting together an exhibition that is not sufficiently denoted by words such as "choose," "select," or "organize" (Town,1986:42). To "curate" includes the creation of meaning by using a learned discourse of exhibition (high art) with its formal codes, grammar and metaphors. The curator's first allegiance is defined by this discourse. Curatorship incorporates the curator's position as author, as one who confers the legitimacy of cultural capital. In other words, the verb "curate" takes the curator's role farther than that of simply collecting, conserving, identifying and making statements about objects to include the act of speaking, the context in which it is done, and the position of the curator as author.

Exhibition practices embodying different discourses compete within institutional sites, making the practice of curatorship equal to that of rhetor or speaker. Where intentionality exists on the part of the curator, exhibition practices can be viewed as forms of rhetoric. Rhetorical discourse asserts that something is, or is not, the case; is, or is not, to be valued. Rhetoric functions as a signifier of ideology. According to Kenneth Burke, "...the basic function of rhetoric (is) the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human beings" (Burke,1950:41). Because non-verbal elements can persuade by their symbolic character, Burke extends the use of rhetoric to include "all other human symbol systems, such as mathematics, music, sculpture, painting, dance, architectural styles etc." (Burke, 1966:28). Any meaningful arrangement of symbolic elements, then, constitutes a form of rhetoric. Where exhibitions are a selection and arrangement of objects and other elements in specific contexts to evoke specific effects (entertainment, awe, aesthetic pleasure), the mediation of these objects by the exhibition context can be considered a rhetorical act. The curator speaks through practices which can be examined as a rhetoric of exhibition.

The rhetoric of exhibition involves both the presentation of objects and the organization of the visitor's movements. The installation of an exhibition

exists as a determined sequence marked by didactic elements, such as labels, acoustic guides or signage, inserted on occasion. These markers constitute the tools of curatorial rhetoric. The site of the rhetorical act, the museum itself, also determines the exhibition experience through its architectural script "...spacial forms in room(s) are conceived in order to suggest, to induce types of behaviour" (Eco, 1973:59). The curating of an exhibition can be viewed as the formation of a rhetorical structure (the exhibition elements) within a rhetorical structure (the script determined by the context).

> The activities may vary, but the devisor has imposed his (her) will upon a monumental decorative scheme, upon even the most privileged spectators and, as it were, participants...at the very least, one should acknowledge that...ambulation is channelled, manipulated, doubtless can even be "devised" so that one does what <u>needs</u> to be done without quite realizing it (Johnson, 1984:129).

A building's features influence those who look at it (as a monument) or use it in both their attitudes and performance within it. If a museum is palatial, the visitor might feel or act in a courtly manner, or feel intimidated and act defiantly. Similarly, the ritual script inscribed into the exhibition floor plan is also a form of rhetoric in the sense that people are persuaded to perform certain actions. The script invisibly structures the background of experience. It exists in the viewing angles, the arrangement of the exhibition itself, the building layout,

and the furnishings provided. For example seating arrangements, whether carts at Walt Disney World or benches in galleries, control the spectator's field of vision, rhetorically transforming curatorial statements into lived experience.

Burke describes two generating principles of rhetoric: "persuasion" and "identification." Persuasion is a traditional key term for rhetoric. It ranges from the bluntest quest for advantage exhibited in sales promotion and propaganda, through courtship, social etiquette, education, to a "pure" form which delights in the process itself without ulterior purpose. Persuasion may be considered in its role of maintaining or changing the social order in cultural institutions (Burke, 1950:XIV). As we have seen, exhibitions may persuade people to accept an ethnocentric point of view. Here the "quest for advantage" is a key element in the exhibition rhetoric. As previously noted, incorporating objects from other cultures into a discourse of "high art" is an imperialist means of privileging Western meanings over those of the original culture. Persuasion also exists in exhibition discourses which oppose hegemonic artistic practice, for example, in the work of Hans Haacke. His discursive interventions in art museums persuade us by offering evidence which undermines the hidden agendas of institutions by exposing them.

Burke's other generating term, identification, also constitutes the rhetoric of exhibition. According to him, identification ranges from the politician who, addressing an audience of farm boys, says "I was a farm boy myself," through the systems of social status, to the mystics devout identification with the source of all being (Burke,1950:XIV). Regarding exhibitions, then, identification can be said to be working where a situation evokes a sympathetic response in the viewer/participant. The potential for identification is particularly evident in living museums, where an entire cultural history can be experienced by the viewer.

The Fortress of Louisbourg, for example, is a site where identification is integral to the exhibition experience. Identification comes through the senses and the freedom to negotiate oneself through the town as people did then. The visitor can act just they did; eating food prepared and presented as it was in the eighteenth century. Lunch could be a bowl of pea soup served in a pewter dish with a huge hand forged spoon. The experience of eating soup in this manner allows the visitor to experience the weight, size, limited maneuverability and physical sensation of eating and, most importantly, to understand how these qualities influenced such things as etiquette. In essence, it allows the viewer to ritually reexperience the daily life of the past. This ambience is reinforced by guides dressed

in period costumes who will either act "in character" (as soldiers, lace makers, stone cutters etc.) or step outside their prescribed roles to have a contemporary conversation with the viewer. The choice of whether to identify with the historical or contemporary role is up to her or him.

I have correlated Burke's terms, identification and persuasion, with the overall, intertextual experience of the exhibition rather than its individual elements. Describing curatorial practices according to Burke's rhetoric is based on ideal types, which may function neatly in theory, but may be messy in practice. The correlations I just outlined could also exist in reverse in a consideration of aspects of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, or the Fortress of Louisbourg. For example, within an art exhibition at the Met, identification could occur between a visitor and a particularly compelling individual artifact; or the viewer could identify with the high art discourse at a level abstracted from the objects themselves. Similarly, in considering the Fortress of Louisbourg, persuasion could function in relation to the didactic panels which exist to suggest to visitors "what to do" during their visit.

In conclusion, this chapter has described and located exhibition practices with a view to understanding how they determine the exhibition experience. First institutional apparatuses were described in their economic, political and social functions. Then, the signifying practices of

exhibition were analyzed in relation to typologies of representing objects drawn from linguistic tropes. Finally, curatorial practices operating within institutional constraints and agendas, were considered in their rhetorical roles. All practices described play a significant role in encoding meanings in exhibitions. In the next chapter, we will consider in more detail the visitor's practices involved with reception.

References for Chapter III

Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus," Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays by Louis Althusser. London: New Left Books, 1971. pp.127-186.

Bann, Stephen. "Poetics of the Museum: Lenoir and Du Sommerard," The Clothing of Clio: A study of the representation of history in nineteenth century Britain and France. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Berger, John. Ways of Seeing. London: BBC and Penguin Books, 1972.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Production of Belief: Contribution to an Economy of Symbolic Goods," Media, Culture and Society. London: Academic Press, 1980. pp. 261-293.

Buchloh, Benjamin. "The Museum Fictions of Marcel Broodthaers," Museums by Artists. Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983. pp. 45-56.

Buren, Daniel. Around Ponctuations. Lyon: Daniel Buren et Nouveau Musee, 1980.

Burke, Kenneth. A Rhetoric of Motives. Berkeley/L.A./London: University of California Press, 1950.

_____. Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on life literature and method. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966.

CBC Transcripts. "Old Images/New Metaphors: The Museum in the Modern World," Ideas, November 29 - December 26, 1982.

Copperthwaite, Derek R. Ripley's "Believe It or Not" Collection: A Guide Ripley International Ltd., 1978.

Crimp, Douglas. "The Art of Exhibition," October 30, Fall, 1984, pp.49-81.

DiMaggio, Paul and Michael Unseem. "The Arts in Class Reproduction," Cultural and Economic Reproduction in Education. ed. M.W. Apple. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982. pp 181-199.

Duncan, Carol and Allan Wallach. "MOMA: Ordeal and Triumph on 53rd Street." Studio International, Vol. 194, No. 988, 1/1978.

_____. "The Universal Survey Museum," Art History, Vol III, No. 4, December 1980. pp. 28-51.

Eco, Umberto. "Social Life of a Sign System," Structuralism: An Introduction. Ed. David Robey. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973. pp. 51-71.

Haacke, Hans. "Museums, Managers of Consciousness," Art in America, February, 1984. pp. 9-17.

Hall, Stuart. "Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates," Critical Studies in Mass Communication, Vol.2, No.2, June 1985.

Heath, Stephen. Questions of Cinema. Hong Kong: independently published, 1981.

Johnson, W. McAllister. "Once More the Galerie Francois 1er at Fountainebleau," Gazette des Beaux-Arts #103, April 1984, pp.127-144.

Lord, Gail D. and Barry Lord. "Curatorship and Culture," Provincial Essays, Vol.3, ed. J. Oille, Toronto: Coach House Press, 1986. pp. 7-13.

Meyer, Karl E. The Art Museum: Power, Money Ethics: A 20th Century Fund Report. New York: William Morrow and Company Inc., 1979.

O'Doherty, Brian. "Inside the White Cube, Notes on the Gallery Space," Part I, Artforum, Vol.XIV, No.7, March 1976, pp. 24-30.

Parks Canada. The Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, Parks Canada, 1984.

Robertson, Bryan. "The Museum and the Democratic Fallacy," Art in America Vol.59, No.4, July 1971, pp.58-65.

Rosler, Martha. "Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and Makers: Thoughts on Audience," Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation. ed. Brian Wallis. Boston: The New Museum and David Godine Inc., 1984. pp. 311-340.

Said, Edward W. Orientalism. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

Towne, Elke. "The Case of the Independent Curator," Provincial Essays, Vol. 3. ed. J. Oille. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1986. pp. 37-44.

CHAPTER IV

THE RECEPTION OF EXHIBITIONS

In the previous chapter, the encoding of exhibition discourses was considered in relation to the practices of institutions, of the positioning of objects and of curatorship. Here we saw that the meaning of exhibitions as cultural forms exists not only intrinsically, but depends on the codes into which they are inserted. In this chapter, the focus of analysis will shift from the production of exhibitions to consider the social articulations involved with reception. The production and consumption of exhibitions determine each other in various ways. While exhibition practices situate the viewer, the reader actively and creatively constructs meaning from a socially located point of view. With this in mind, the structures of meaning and power that position the practices and terms of reception will be examined.

First, I will explore terms most often used to describe exhibition viewers. The "public" and "audience" are abstractions which are commonly used in reference to exhibition attendance. These function as discursive formations, the analysis of which helps to situate the context of the viewing experience. Second, exhibitions will be considered in relationship to the visitor's experience of reading, interpreting or otherwise decoding the exhibition text. Here the level of analysis will focus on the subject's active and creative role within exhibition discourse, while at the same time locating the determinating factors of the exhibition context.

The Terminology of Reception

The terms "public" and "audience" are abstractions which are used ostensibly to describe people who attend exhibitions. However, these terms are more complex than this for, in themselves, they function as discursive frameworks. I will, henceforth, qualify these terms to situate them in relation to the discourses surrounding the reception of exhibitions.

Exhibiting institutions often speak of the "audience" and the "public" interchangeably. However, while the audience makes up the public, it is not identical with it. For my purposes, the term "audience" is used to label people in their practices of consuming media, while the term

"public" is connected to distinctions concerning exhibiting institutions as sites of political decision making. A further exploration of the differences between these terms reveals their differences.

An audience can be defined as a group of people made up of individuals. "The 'audience' is by definition an additive phenomenon: we identify and count if possible, the individuals and groups recorded as making it up: no one present can be disqualified from membership" (Crow,1986:5). A particular audience can be identified by social class, education, or political orientation, or by other discursive formations. Thomas Crow distinguishes the "audience" from the "public" in this way:

> In empirical terms, we are confronted only with the gross totality of the audience and its positively identifiable constituent parts: individual and group categories defined by sex, age, occupation, wealth, residence etc. The public, on the other hand, is an entity which mediates between the two, a representation of the significant totality by and for someone (Crow,1985:5).

Thus while the term "audience" deals with the general consumption of exhibitions by individuals, the term "public" is characterized by particular formations which involve collective "will" which is represented by spokespersons. In short, where the audience is identified by its parts, the public is identified as a collective entity. Where both terms are abstractions, the "public" is more of an abstraction. Actual audiences may empirically exist, but

publics must be spoken for. Hence, the act of speaking for the public, that is, acting in the public's behalf, inherently involves the motives of the speaker. Because any articulation in the name of the public involves assumptions about collective values and interests, the term public functions ideologically.

Contemporary theorists have problematized the term "public" because it creates a "false unity" which excludes random audiences from creating their own formations (Foster,1987:27). The notion of the public, is perceived as "imaginary" and hence as ideologically loaded. Because the singularity of the term implies a transcendence of difference and hence is exclusionary, it has been dismissed in preference of analysis of various audiences. This position precludes the possibility of more than one public existing. Actually, innumerable publics have existed from the beginnings of social life,[1] not only as the cohesive publics of states, but also as more marginal publics which struggle to maintain their identity (Bitzer,1978:82).

The Public

A public can be defined as a "community of persons sharing conceptions, principles, interests and values, and

---

1. Where traditional publics were defined by geography and traditions of people, more recent publics have been shaped by communications media which influence popular belief (Bitzer,1978:71).

who are significantly interdependent" (Bitzer:1978,68). Out of this common interest institutions emerge, such as museums, schools or courts. A public is marked by its duration through time which allows for the formation of these institutions, and by the power of authorization by the people which legitimates particular truths and values (Ibid.). In their public role, then, museums can be viewed as storehouses for "public knowledge." Also important to the public functioning of museums, is the representation of the collective will by museum officials as "speakers."

Lloyd Bitzer holds that shared knowledge, implicit in the notion of the public, grounds the choices of a community in common ideas, values and interests. Public knowledge is located in the public sphere, in its enduring institutions, and authorized by the public itself. Implicit in the term "public," are normative commitments related to democracy. That is, power ultimately comes from the public. A competent public would be one to which public knowledge is accessible, allowing a basis for public authority on which the democratic process is based. On the other hand, an ill-informed public would be one whose authority was ultimately ineffective.

The discourses of museums are interrelated with the discourses of the state and their ideological formations. Museums are institutions which house public knowledge, particular truths or assumptions concerning culture in its

material forms. They present objects within historical locations and traditions which are legitimated in the public's name. This raises the question of who decides what constitutes the particular traditions and knowledge presented. In fact, in most instances, shared traditions are articulated by an elite group of public servants. They may base their decisions on "good reason" consciously, or on the other hand, may be quite unaware of the values they present as they are inscribed in the codes, practices and language that they use. In turn, people can be excluded from apprehending public knowledge if knowledge of a particular discourse is a prerequisite to its comprehension.

The question of who speaks in the public's name is a thorny one. Do speakers truly represent the public, or do they create it? In museums, public officials speak in the public's name. This or that exhibition is said to provide a particular element of public knowledge. According to Bitzer, this knowledge is based on assumptions about what is "reasonable" in the public sphere. Where Bitzer's notion of public knowledge is philosophically based (in reason and logic), Michael McGee and Martha Martin assert that public knowledge is ideologically based (in power and will), so that rather than representing the public, the speaker creates it. McGee holds that authoritative reasoning in the public's name is inherently ideological. In museums

authoritative reasoning, by experts, constitutes a form of rhetoric which in fact creates a public.

The practices of a public museum speaker exist in contradiction. McGee and Martin point out a fundamental paradox of public service: how can someone be at once an authoritative speaker "educating and enlightening the public" and a humble servant "serving the public" (McGee/Martin,1983:51).[2] Museum speakers, at the same time, must serve both their governing administration and the public who give their consent for this authority. This involves coupling praise and criticism for the administration of which s/he is a part, with self-reflection in their actions. How can museum speakers provide expertise (enlighten and educate people in presenting particular meanings) while at the same time serving (allow people to construct their own meanings)? Curatorship, for example, operates by selecting material and thus privileges particular discourses and social groups over others. Inevitably, exclusions occur. On the other hand, the question of giving people "what they want" within museums raises concerns of whose interests get represented, and whom

---

2. Under absolute monarchy, the master and servant roles were unified in the role of the king or queen. The ruler was the mouthpiece for both the monarchy and the people. The dispersion of the power of monarchs involved the creation of a third entity -- the public servant -- who must serve both the (master-) administration and the people.

gets access. It is impossible to locate the praxis of public speakers without this contradiction (McGee,1983:48).

The term "public" functions as an abstract, singular term which we can see functioning in museums as sites of public knowledge and public speaking. As a discursive term, it is grounded in specific practices concerning the collective will of a society. The assumptions involved in invoking "public interest" are the result of chains of connotations about what the public is. The preoccupations of the connoisseur, private corporation, or other institutions which disseminate culture have been articulated in the "public interest." The term "public," when used to legitimate particular acts, functions ideologically. A further consideration of the public relates to practices concerning public access.

Public Access

The term "public" can be a classification which contains inherent limitations concerning who actually enters exhibiting institutions. Practices involved with public access are not absolute or static, but shift in relation to given historical conditions and particular social locations.

This leads us to consider the question of when public access to exhibitions originated. Before the Enlightenment during the eighteenth century, there was no shared public culture. The display of the ruling classes dominated towns,

courts and churches. In the public sphere, access was given to view works, but the audience had no role in determining what was shown. Private collections of patrons were displayed only to guests, connoisseurs and scholars with the same tastes and level of knowledge as themselves. Alignment with aristocratic taste was "de rigueur," and reflected in clothing, conversation, mannerisms, etiquette and other aspects of style. Collections of art functioned as celebrations of the personality of the collector, proclaiming their owners as "adventurers," "men of science," or as otherwise worldly, wealthy or much travelled people. Indeed, Kenneth Hudson correlates the instinct to collect art as being typical of the "great amorists" of history -- the desire to possess being common to both art collecting and sexual conquest. Famous connoisseur-lovers include Augustus of Saxony, Catherine of Russia or Vivant Denon. Accordingly, those from outside the aristocratic classes were excluded from private collections as they would have been from personal harems. Within this episteme, viewing a private collection was perceived by all as a privilege, demanding a response of gratitude and admiration; for criticism would have been most inappropriate (Hudson:1975,6). Overall, private collections and museums were used by the elite for the elite: for social advancement, to satisfy curiosity and to meet other cultivated people.

Public exhibitions originated with the French Revolution during the eighteenth century. During this time in France, the "public" emerged as a third entity between the patron classes and artists. Public "Salon" exhibitions were instituted by the Academy of Painting and Sculpture in 1737 at the Salon Carré at the Louvre. These marked the removal of art exhibitions from the control of a hierarchical aristocracy in the first, regularly repeated, free display of contemporary art in Europe offered in a secular setting. The audience of spectators came from many social classes, and the encounters between the social classes in the crowded conditions of the Salon "provided constant material for social commentary" (Crow,1985:1).

As a result of the Salon exhibitions, a "public" emerged, spoken for by journalists and critics -- and responded to by state backed arts officials in their decisions in the public interest. Here, a community of interest was first formed, marking a break from the tradition of elite, aristocratic culture. Salon guides and catalogues were published speaking in the public's name. These achieved a public consensus which had the effect of actually changing the dominant style of painting from the sensual Rococo (favoured by the aristocracy) to a more moralistic Classicism (preferred by the new public). Hence a shift in power happened as the public, rather than the

aristocracy, started to determine issues of taste. The Salon, then, is important as the site where a coherent public voice emerged out of an actual audience (Crow,1985:22).

Where the dictates of the elite may have been contested in eighteenth century France, in other early public exhibitions they were enforced. For example, after the opening of the British Museum in 1759, the notion of public access implicitly carried over autocratic traditions established in the private collections of the aristocracy. While the museum was designated a public institution, entry was retained as a privilege and favour. A list of statutes and rules relating to the inspection and use of the British Museum stated that those who visited the museum had first to make a written application, including their occupation, name and address, and give this to the porter. At a later date, after their credentials were investigated, they could call to pick up tickets entitling them to a visit. The procedure was likely to take at least two weeks, and the investigations into credentials could take as long as several months (Hudson:1975:9). Other early museums with mandates to "educate the public" implicitly privileged the higher classes. At The Prado in Madrid and the Altes Museum in Berlin, preference was shown to scholars of sufficient symbolic capital (education, social class or wealth), over a wider notion of the public (Horne,1984:15).

A more inclusive notion of the public occurs when the public begins to be admitted as a paying customer. This first occurred during the long succession of world's fairs which started with the Great Exhibition in London in 1851 and continued until World War I. These large exhibitions were possible because of the age of the railways, which were used to transport both materials for the exhibitions themselves, and visitors -- members of a new bourgeois class of tourist. The importance of these international exhibits extended beyond their commercial success to affect the social climate of the time, where capital itself triumphed over the symbolic capital of elite taste cultures. Large numbers of paying visitors from all classes resulted in a broader definition of culture and compelled governments to realize the political importance of the arts (Hudson,1977:8). Here the ideological implications of "serving a public" extend beyond a geographically imposed boundary. The public begins to be constituted out of a mobile audience defined by their consumption of communication media.

Today, entry to public, government supported museums is considered a right rather than a privilege. However, the line between public access to museums, and public profit-making exhibitions is becoming less defined with the institution of admission fees to public art museums. In Canada for example, fees have been instituted at the

Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the Art Gallery of Ontario. The concept of user-pay situates the public differently, limiting the repeat visits necessary for extended contemplation. Ultimately, the museum experience is becoming more of a spectator event, and in this way, similar to popular spectacle.[3] In the same way that the critical public caused a shift in academic painting of the eighteenth century salon, contemporary fine art institutions are responding to public enthusiasm for cultural industries like Disneyland in their preoccupation with blockbuster exhibitions. Museum practices, then, can be seen to shift in relation to perceptions of collective public demands.

The Audience

Where the notion of "public" is collective, that of "audience" is constitutive. Anyone who visits an exhibition can be considered part of the audience. Traditionally the audience was considered as a singular entity, existing as an abstraction often undistinguished from notions of the public. The concept of a singular audience masks the

---

3. As museums become more popular we see a corresponding shift in the positioning of the spectator. The frequency of benches and chairs, the furnishings necessary for extended contemplation, have tended to decrease in favour of open rooms which encourage the quick herding of visitors through blockbuster shows. While increased public attendance is considered desirable by funding agencies, the emphasis on quantities of people over the quality of their experiences has changed the nature of viewing.

variations of individuality within it. More recent studies of audience reveal this.

> We speak for convenience about a mass audience, but it is a fiction. The audience today is numerically dense, but highly diversified...fear of the Amorphous Audience is fed by the word "mass." In fact, audiences are specialized by age, sex, hobby, occupation, mobility, contacts etc. Although the differences may not be rankable in the curriculum of the traditional educationalist, they nevertheless reflect and influence the diversification which goes with increased industrialization." (Lawrence Alloway in Hebdige,1983:67).

Any individual brings a constellation of inter-related discourses to their exhibition experience. These constitute a kind of coloured lens through which perception occurs. The individual experiences an exhibition as the interrelationship of pre-constructed discursive positions and the passage through the exhibition continuum. Audience practices, then, are the site where personal and curatorial positions and practices intersect.

The positivist, behavioralist tradition of communication research looks at the communication process as linked to marketing. With a similar orientation, many exhibiting institutions have, in recent years, adopted market research methods to discern the nature and composition of audiences. Audiences are viewed as consumers of exhibitions. Surveys regard the viewer and exhibit as isolatable entities, delineating the viewer's residence, occupation, level of education etc., statistics which provide facts concerning average income levels, and social

class. Statistics can be useful to describe how acquired attitudes due to social class or accumulation of education correlate with the intended readings of particular exhibition practices. However, the question of who is compiling the statistics for what reasons is crucial to an understanding of their worth. Marketing research can be skewed to privilege the dominance of a particular point of view which might exclude and marginalize other possible audiences. To study the relationship between the audience and the exhibition, it is necessary to also study the relationships between many elements in the many lives composing the audience. As Martha Rosler points out, "There are...no explanations (of the audience) in the brute facts of income and class; only a theory of culture can account for the composition of the audience." (Rosler, 1984:312). In other words, the exhibition context in relation to the multiple discourses the individual brings to their experience cannot be simply described in terms of quantities: of years of education, of dollars, of frequency of visits. It is essential to recognize that subjective positions of individual audience members are defined by their social context. Here begins a consideration of the discourses involved in the social location of individuals.

The multiplicity of possible discourses involved in an individual experience can be described by the following hypothetical example. Consider two individuals within an

audience: a black, Jamaican immigrant, youth, working class, Protestant woman and a white, Canadian-born, middle aged, upper class, Protestant man. Both social locations implicate the individuals in discursive networks. Where both may be Protestant, the young woman is marginal in every other sense. She inhabits multiple discourses of the "other," which exist outside mainstream culture. She is female, black, an immigrant, young, and working class: positions denied power in the overall culture. In turn, the middle aged man represents the positions of the hegemonic values of Canadian society. He is white, Canadian born, in his prime, and wealthy: positions which implicitly privilege him. These qualities would significantly determine their respective readings of an exhibition. Given the example of a show of Group of Seven paintings at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the man would relate to the work in a particular way: he might be invited to the opening where he would see many other people like himself; he might be a patron of the museum; the paintings depict his country; the artists were contemporaries of his parents; possibly he could afford to buy one. The young woman on the other hand would be positioned within another experience: she would most likely pay admission to view the show; the paintings depict her adopted country; the artists are white, male and of a culture that is foreign to her; she might only be able to afford a reproduction of one of the paintings. This

comparison illustrates just two possible social locations amongst many. The audience, then, consists of unlimited discursively framed groups within the social, each of which determines possible readings of exhibitions.[4]

People can and do create their own relationship with cultural texts. Where, in theory, access is provided to all people by public institutions, in practice institutions have had a role in excluding particular groups. Audience research undertaken at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, the Netherlands, investigated discourses of "the other" by examining the terminology used for those traditionally excluded, by choice or circumstance, from visiting museums.

> The fact that not everyone in the Netherlands visits museums has been very worrying to museum organizers for some time. Who are the non-visitors? They have been defined at various times as "The lesser man" (1873), the "plebs" as opposed to "the moneyed classes" (1918), the less well-off (1918), the "simple people" (1926), the "workman" (1930), or "mass youth" (1932). They are deemed to belong to the workers' movement (1920 onwards), rural associations (1932) and workers or staff associations (1957) or they are described in the apparently objective terms of our own times as the "non-public" (1970), or the "broad strata" (1972) or "lowest category" (1975) of society, or in a previous version of the recent government memorandum on museums 1976-7, as the "underprivileged" (Overduin, 1976:270).

These statements assume the inherent superiority of a dominant culture. Such terms as "plebs," "lesser men," or "less well off," people are positioned in opposition to the

---

4. Mainstream art institutions have traditionally privileged men over women, white races over those of colour, the educated over the uneducated, and the wealthy over the poor.

elite, "greater men" who are well off. The terms "simple people" or "lowest category" exhibits the patronizing attitude of educated "highest" category. Finally, terming people who do not visit museums as the "non-public" reveals the ideological bias of a particular institutional-centric orientation.[5] There is the assumption here that singular discursive categories, particularly economic ones, determine the museum visitor. A contradiction to this sort of reasoning is raised when one considers that most artists in Canada themselves fall under the poverty line, thus a significant portion of museum audiences is actually "poor." People can exist simultaneously within, and outside of, cultural discourses represented in museum exhibitions. In addition, museums are not static in their representation of exhibition discourse, rather, they respond to the social and cultural context in which they exist.

Marketing research, in emphasizing quantities of visitors over qualities of experiences has, in effect, diverted energies from maintaining the polarization of taste. Where traditionally cultural capital was a prerequisite for exhibitions within the high art discourse, and actual capital a prerequisite for exhibitions within the popular culture discourse, there has been a shift towards

---

5. Overduin's content analysis of the image of museums in Dutch pulp fiction illustrates how the museum represents an "unattainable dream world," amongst the working classes -- a way of life to which few, but the chosen, have access.

considering any audience as a potential consumer of the exhibition experience. Both museums and amusement parks tend their box offices with a view to increasing attendance.

Critical Positions Regarding Audience

Traditional audience research has assumed not only a singular public, but also a critical position outside that of the audience. For example, in the 1930s the orientation of museologists to the audience was distinctly elitist in orientation. The deemed task of the museum was "to edify" to enrich and uplift the general public. In The Museum and Popular Culture, published as World War II began in 1939, T.R. Adams writes:

> It is this element in museums -- their use as modern weapons in the struggle for popular enlightenment -- that caused them to flourish so successfully in our times..." (p.15)

Here the role of the museum as a "weapon" for enlightenment is presented as an ethical imperative to elevate the viewer to the sublimity of art. Clearly, this openly asserts the museum's ideological role.[6]

While the intent in the pre-war '30s was to get the people into the museum to be educated, in the cultural revolutionary '60s attempts were made by museum personnel to make art more "accessible." Correspondingly, museum

---

6. While this metaphor for the function of museums as weapons is very provocative, a consideration of exhibiting institutions as agents of global hegemony is outside the scope of this chapter.

programming extended beyond the walls of institutions in attempts to reach people in their own environments.

At the Van Abbemuseum, between 1964-1973, community oriented policy was instituted with the conviction that, since the museum was maintained with community funds, it should have significance for a large portion of the population. Museum reforms attempted to introduce more comprehensible exhibitions: using interpretative "sub-exhibitions" to aid in comprehending avant garde exhibitions; and involving public representatives in museum policy and activities. Director Jean Leering instituted museum experiments which involved artists in social activities in the outside community. A new type of "social-cultural" exhibition emerged, of which one example entitled De straat (The Street) is best known. This show, on the theme of the street in a community, was largely determined by public participation. The intention of this exhibit was to reach a section of the population which was not normally interested in what happened in museums, and to thus raise attention and discussion (Van der Schoor,1979:32). In addition, the interactive aspect of the exhibition was used to gather information on the constitution of the audience.

As we can see from the above, innovations involving the audience sought to "meet visitors at their own level," rather than attempting to "edify" or "educate" them. In contrast to the '30s, forms of elitism were self-consciously

avoided by museum personnel in relation to the audience. It followed that objective and neutral terms were given to former education departments such as "information division," or "communication services." However, again in the position of the doers, museum personnel were assumed to be external to the audience. Where the approaches of the '30s and '60s have opposing strategies in the means of reaching an audience, they both assume a singular audience which was to be benefitted by a paternalistic institution "for its own good."

At this point I will turn from considering what is meant by the abstract terms "public" and "audience," and their relationship with exhibiting institutions, to consider the experience of reception by the viewer.

The Determinations of the Exhibition Experience

We have seen in the previous discussion some of the determining factors involved in the exhibition experience, particularly how the individual is socially located first within an audience, and second, within a public. Here I have shown how these discursive contexts, usually invisible within abstract terms, not only describe viewers but to some extent prescribe their experience.

Institutions produce exhibitions with intent which is positioned through a range of practices. The exhibition is mediated not only by its context, but also by social

relations and activities. Significantly, the meaning of exhibitions is also created in the reading of the text by individuals. The problematic of interpretation is central to questions concerning reception. We cannot assume a "silver bullet" theory of response -- a transparent unmediated acceptance of the intended meaning. People attend exhibitions for various reasons: to see art, to go out on a date, to get out of the rain, to tick of an "attraction" on their Michelin guide or to eat lunch at the museum cafe.[7]

In learning to read exhibition discourses, an individual develops a skill, habit or way of seeing things. The subject, in entering into a relationship with the exhibition assumes the role of observer, the first person, the "I." The "ritual script" presents the author's, designer's or curator's statements so as to become the subject's own. In turn, the subject may choose to accept the doing codes in response to the given cues, or invent them, hence creating unique intertextual relationships. A visitor to an exhibition, while assuming the "I" delineated by the curator may, at the same time, be very aware of the seemingly invisible practices which determine their

---

7. It follows from Grossberg's analysis that a visit to a museum may be marked by a particular "indifference to content," that is, the specifics of the visit to the museum may be more important than viewing the exhibition itself. For example, the Saturday afternoon ritual of seeing galleries, meeting friends and having coffee may be the dominant content of an exhibition experience (Grossberg,1986A).

experience. For example, the visitor's relationship with the doing codes could then be ironic rather than transparent. In short, we are not simply dupes within the exhibition experience. What is then necessary, is to investigate what it is that allows the visiting subject to assume the "I" position within exhibitions.

Ultimately, people are rarely totally manipulated or repressed, but negotiate their own relationships and correlate their own experience with the meanings presented. Within institutions, competing discourses can be articulated and special interest groups can compete for the allocation of power. "Truth" is not absolute, but relative. As we have seen, the communication skills of the curator become essential to his or her ability to compete at the level of discourse. The discursive struggle occurring within exhibiting institutions creates space for the participant to manoeuvre in their relationship with meaning.

The reader ultimately creates his or her own text. There is no way of universally determining how someone will respond to an exhibition and therefore impossible to know what constitutes the bounded text which is actually consumed (Grossberg,1986:10). Barthes takes the problematic of interpretation to an extreme stating that all meaning originates at reception, proclaiming the death of the author:

> The reader is the space on which all quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any

> of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography, psychology: he is simply that someone who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written (or exhibited) text is constructed (Barthes,1977:148).

Barthes banishes the author's intentions altogether from the ultimate creation of meaning. While this may be somewhat extreme, to a greater or lesser degree the unity of the exhibition experience does exist at its destination -- invisibly within the viewer. The subjective nature of interpretation at this level of analysis exists as a theoretical wild card. Exhibitions are polysemic, that is, they exist at many levels of meaning. There is no way of universally determining what meanings are generated by the visitor.

Locating the exhibition experience can only be described in fragments, in terms of how the exhibition context could possibly determine particular experiences. I will start by considering experiences which are institutionally determined, which the viewer may knowingly or unknowingly incorporate into his or her experience.

As the viewer surveys the exhibition, he or she is also being surveyed by complex security systems integral to exhibiting institutions. Such observation of visitors ultimately functions self-reflexively. Where surveillance in various forms exists throughout the overall society and

in its institutions, in art exhibitions the surveillance network is clearly visible, having immediate effects upon the visitor's experience. Gallery attendants, security guards, docents, lighting and closed circuit video form an integrated security system which functions continually to survey visitors.[8] Ostensibly these means of surveillance satisfy problems of security concerning the exhibition of art: that the works are not damaged or stolen. As individuals enter the enclosed, segmented space of the exhibition, they are positioned for observation at every point. They move through the space as lights, eyes, and camera lenses focus on them. The apparatuses of surveillance function as disciplinary mechanisms which maintain order -- protecting the art and insuring efficient passage of the viewers through the space. Foucault describes how disciplinary mechanisms, such as these, originated during the middle ages in efforts to meet impending plagues with order, and thus increase chances of survival (Foucault,1979:197). It is an interesting irony that "the plague" is an appropriate metaphor for museum personnel's contempt of the tactile curiosity of some viewers in relation to the safety of art works.

---

8. I am using in this analysis an ideal type of traditional museum. Of course there are exceptions evident in recent exhibitions which provide darkened exhibition spaces. This allows the viewer some privacy in relation to other viewers.

The control of visitors through surveillance again brings up the question of entrance to museums as either a privilege or a right. Though visitors may have rights of access, they do not have the right to touch works of art. Touching works is a privilege of ownership. To some degree, then, surveillance systems function to limit the rights of public ownership. The viewer is positioned in a way similar to the visitor to a private collection -- a position based on privilege rather than right. Public ownership is then distinct from private ownership and the surveillance mechanism maintains the distinctions in behaviour between looking and touching.

Surveillance goes further than controlling the quantities of visitors or protecting the art work to create a field of self-consciousness which functions in the visitor self-reflexively. As visitors experience the exhibition, the obvious surveillance they are subjected to becomes internalized to the point where the individual practices self-surveillance. It soon becomes obvious to the novice museum goer that touching a work of art results in embarrassing reprimands by guards or gallery attendants. Because the visitor knows s/he is being observed, s/he remains "virtuous" in relationship to imposed rules. In a museum, surveillance works as a power which is visible, in the sense that the guards or camera are visible, but

unverifiable: the visitor never knows when observation is taking place (Foucault,1972:201).

> He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection (Foucault,1972:103).

The visitor, never really knowing if observation is taking place or not, submits to particular laws of behaviour in museums. These serve to intensify self-consciousness in the visitor's movement through the exhibition space: at the same time, looking and being looked at. It is an interesting aspect of museums that people watch each other as much as they watch the art and, perhaps, it is this underlying self consciousness (of being watched) that stimulates our interest in surveying others in museums.[9]

According to Stuart Hall, "People have always had to make something out of the things the system was trying to make out of them...People make history, but not in the conditions of their own making" (Hall, in Grossberg,

---

9. In contrast to public art exhibitions, surveillance at popular culture exhibitions is less overt. At Walt Disney World, for example, surveillance is unobtrusively done by costumed security guards. The visitor doesn't know she or he is being screened for evidence of drugs, liquor, "unethical dress" -- skimpy attire on women or political messages on buttons, patches or T shirts. Surveillance only becomes visible when the standards of the Disney theme park authorities are transgressed.

1986:70). Hall uses the term "articulation" as a model for understanding concrete cultural or signifying practices in relation to the social conditions involved with their reception -- what people do. A theory of articulation allows us to move from a consideration of the factors which determine the exhibition experience, to consider their effects.

> An articulation is thus the form of the connection that <u>can</u> make a unity of two different elements under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. You have to ask, under what circumstances <u>can</u> a connection be forged or made? So the so-called "unity" of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be re-articulated in different ways because they have no necessary "belongingness." The "unity" which matters is a linkage between that articulated discourse and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected (Hall in Grossberg,1986:53).

Articulation identifies the visitor by considering how the discourses of history, economics and class structure, for example, are linked to complex subjective conditions and practices. "The struggle is over how particular practices are positioned, into what structures of meaning and power into what correspondences, they are articulated" (Grossberg,1986:65). Ultimately, the subject is considered to both be subjected to power, and capable of acting against that power. The theory of articulation provides a bridge between the determining aspects of exhibitions and their effects.

The Exhibition Experience

The exhibition context is marked both by the time it is produced and by the time it is witnessed. The architecture of many exhibition contexts was produced for a preferred reading that was possible only in the past. Where the architecturally encoded production of the exhibition script remains static, the actual experience of visitors to exhibitions evolves constantly in the present. We know that any exhibited object carries with it its aura -- its accumulated historical patina. Hence, the production of the exhibition context, and the production of meaning within the cultural context of its receiving audience, can be seen as existing at different historical times. Visitors to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts experience exhibition contexts created by architects Edward and W.S. Maxwell in 1912 when the building was built, as well as Fred Lebensold's addition of 1976. Similarly, visitors to Disneyland witness exhibition continuums produced by Walt Disney himself who has been dead since 1968. A phenomena exists, then, in exhibitions which bring together the architectural scripts of one time and audiences of another. The ultimate effect is a sense of the simultaneous presence of two different time periods within the same "present."

The social relationship of visitors to such static reference points can be examined using Raymond Williams'

concept of "structure of feeling." The structure of feeling describes cultural meanings and values as they are actually lived and felt at various historical periods. It exists as a continual formative process existing in a specific moment. It is defined by the personal relationship to "this," "here," "now," "alive," "active," "subjective." It exists in the first person, the "I," in the essence of changes in style, manners, dress, buildings and history. The structure of feeling, then, is a particular quality of social experience and relationships which give the sense of the shared experience of a generation or period (Williams,1977:31). One modality of the structure of feeling is the relation of fashion and visibility to elements of style. While short hair, white socks and bowling were rejected by the hip counterculture of the '60s and '70s, the rejected "geek" style became chic during the new wave '80s.

Regarding exhibitions, the historical moment in which an exhibition is produced is interrelated with assumptions of a particular audience in time. Audiences for exhibitions may exist in the present, the future or the past. Bourdieu points out:

> One has only to think of a particular field (painting, literature or theatre) to see that the agents and institutions who clash, objectively at least, through competition and conflict are separated in time and in terms of time. One group, situated at the vanguard, will have no contemporaries with whom they exchange recognition (apart from other avant garde producers), and therefore no audience, except in the future. The other groups, commonly called the "conservatives,"

> only recognize their contemporaries in the past (Bourdieu,1980:290).

Here we can see that different structures of feeling, as social and cultural entities, can exist simultaneously in the present. Where conservative structures of feeling typical of popular wildlife painters, for example, find their audience amongst conservatives and in the past, the structures of feeling of avant garde or cutting edge art production might have a very small audience currently, becoming well known only to audiences in the future. Similarly, the architectural context of buildings is integral to the structures of feeling of the time that produced them. The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts is typical of other Universal Survey Museums commonly constructed during the turn of the century in North America. These types of museums, appropriating forms of other imperial cultures into their architecture, were closely related to the rise of America as a world power. Today, as we witness another time of concentrated museum construction, museum architecture functions as a postmodern metaphor for the fragmentation and radical juxtapositions of cultural elements within the larger cultural field. Overall, tastes characterizing particular structures of feeling can be dated and correlated with the different social groups which compose culture.

Raymond Williams' analysis of structures of feeling is derived from attempts to understand affective social

content. Structures of feeling exist where social reality of audiences and cultural text of exhibitions intersect. They collapse the differences between encoding and decoding by articulating the social into the cultural. The structure of feeling functions below the surface of the text, mediating how the audience is able to interpret it. For example, the structure of feeling can be historically determined: to visit Disneyland now would be a distinctly different experience than visiting it twenty years ago. Similarly, the same text has different qualities determined by its geographical situation. One could see an identical exhibition in two different cities, in two different ways. A travelling exhibition of original art works has a distinctive ambience in each exhibition site. In the same way, the simulacra of reproduced exhibitions such as Disneyland in Japan, would be qualitatively different that visiting Walt Disney World in Florida.

Williams' notion of structure of feeling, as a plane of analyzing sensibility, has been restructured in the work of Lawrence Grossberg in his theorization of the concept of "affect."[10] Grossberg describes "affect" as a plane of analysis that describes the "politics of feeling" (ie. good,

---

10. In his theorization of affect Grossberg pushes Hall's theory of articulation to another level which recognizes the contradictions within the ideological. He sees the failure of cultural studies (theory of articulation) in its limitation of the sense of discursive effectivity to one plane.

bad or indifferent). It is similar to William's notion of structure of feeling in two ways. First, a problem central to affect is to understand how historical conditions determine particular feelings. Second, the level of affect focuses on the cultural text as it intersects with the social audience. The plane of affect is most obvious in cultural activities such as leisure and romance, but in itself is not limited or isolatable. Rather, it functions as "feelings" are articulated into various discourses, allowing for the combining of various historical, political and social factors.

> Affect points to the (relatively autonomous) production of what is normally experienced as moods and emotions by an asignifying effectivity. It refers to a dimension or plane of our lives that involves the enabling distribution of energies (Grossberg,1986:73).

Like William's "structure of feeling," Grossberg's theory of "affect" allows for a plane of analysis which is not reducible to ideology alone. From this position, it is possible to "deconstruct the assumed rationality of signification and ideology, and look seriously at the sensibility of 'desire' and 'passion' -- those feelings often considered irrational" (Grossberg,1986C:73). Grossberg is concerned with how these affective states energize and connect specific social moments, practices and subject positions.

The affective context can be determined by looking at practices inherent in the event. Grossberg's analysis of

the plane of affect operative in TV provides a model with which to compare the affective context of exhibitions. First, while exhibitions demand the viewer's performance, as nomadic movement through the exhibition space, television, in contrast, allows the visitor to sit in one place to receive the text. Exhibitions exist in the public realm: the visitor must leave their private home to visit an exhibition. On the other hand, TV exists in the private realm: the viewer, most often, watches TV at home or in a hotel room. Exhibitions often include artifacts from the private realm, exhibited for the public: for example utensils and artifacts of historical cultures, private collections, mummies, treasure. Television, in contrast takes corporate products, in the form of programming and advertisements, into the home. The time the visitor designates to attend an exhibition is "special" time, privileged over the quotidian. Large blockbuster exhibitions even sell advance tickets requiring even more planning. Television, is not demanding in this manner. You turn it on, you can do other things, you can talk. Where exhibitions demand that the visitor physically interact with the cultural text presented in order to have an experience, television doesn't make such demands (Grossberg,1986A). Moments of affect, while shaped by the continuing institutions of everyday life such as work or home, also

exist where pleasure consists in stepping outside of the quotidian.

The oppositional qualities of affect occur not in resistance but in struggles over interpretation of cultural texts. Practices of reading exhibitions can be considered in relation to the empowerment of the audience by the exhibition, and, in turn, how the practices of exhibition are empowered by the audience.

At this point, to ground an analysis of the functioning of affect, I will return again to the Fortress of Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island. The affective sensibility at Louisbourg is especially powerful because it is condensed within an account and positioning of history as it is recreated to evoke particular sensibilities and moods. This exhibition site combines real and simulated elements in very interesting ways. Where the geography, location, landscape and weather are real -- the same elements the original fortress witnessed -- the reconstructed fort and its actor-guides are simulations of the real. The architecture at the Fortress of Louisbourg has been carefully reconstructed over the past twenty years using the original plans. In addition, artifacts from France of the period have been used to furnish interiors. Actor-guides populate the fort, each playing a particular role that demonstrates an aspect of Louisbourg's original culture. The reconstructed structures house the traditions of daily life which are acted out. It

is this simulacrum of community that "captivates you" providing "a sense of romance" making ordinary life from one period extraordinary in the present.

The Fortress of Louisbourg is thus the articulation of the popular consciousness of two times -- 1744 and the present; to the political contexts of two times -- the French economic and military power of 1744, and present proffering of Canadian culture by Parks Canada. Reconstruction was possible because, unlike most city ruins, Louisbourg had never been rebuilt. Parks Canada, a federal agency, proclaims in its brochure for Louisbourg that the "Fortress of Louisbourg lives again." What is the ideological significance of this spectacle within the present? Why did the reconstruction of a French fort justify the spending of millions of federal dollars?

There are ideological issues surrounding reconstructed history generally as a particular point of view determines any given reconstruction. Why was this particular time chosen? The Parks Canada brochure describes that in 1744 Louisbourg was at its height as a commercial and military power before a fall into oblivion after a war that was yet to take place. As such, it is historically significant as a military port which blended the traditions of Louis XV's France with those of the New World. But perhaps more significantly, the reconstruction of a French fort at a location outside Quebec during a period of Quebec

nationalism balances the emphasis of English forts as historical attractions, such as Upper Canada Village and the Halifax Citadel. However, the celebration of French culture in the New World, captured at a moment when it was about to fall in a war against the English could be seen as an implicit warning against Quebec nationalism.

At the level of affect, popular consciousness of two times has been articulated into the ambience at the fort: feeling has been encoded into architectural relationships and social interaction. Louisbourg provides an ambiguous exhibition frame. If it wasn't located on its original site it would feel different. Here the real and unreal combine. Louisbourg relocated would be more like Disneyland. Its natural environment, the landscape, wind, weather and harbour exist as the authentic context. Authenticity, as the special magic of museums, thus frames the exhibition which simulates the original fort. The mood created here relates to the synechdochal type of exhibition -- where all parts combine to create the whole. One fifth of the town has been rebuilt, and the interrelationship of elements provides an environment in which the viewer is invited to act. The details are complete, the gardens, homes, kitchens, available food, care of animals, distinctions between social classes, are all presented within the context of daily life. At Louisbourg national history has been

reduced to ordinary lives. The politicization of the audience is possible by personalizing politics.

What is most interesting at the level of affect, where the cultural collapses into the social, are the actor-guides. Usually students, their summer job is to perform carefully researched roles as soldiers, lacemakers, maids, bakers, stonecutters etc. in recreated attire authentic to 1744. Their relationship with the viewer can exist on two possible levels. Either they can be addressed "in character" or as "students being actors." On the one hand, the actors live in their roles implicit to their simulated "daily life" demonstrating the use of artifacts while interacting with each other in character. On the other hand, the actors can be addressed as "actors" working in the present. They will drop their roles to discuss how long they have been working at the fort, where they attend university, whether the fort has been busy this week, or where the clothes they are wearing were made.

Upon entering the fort, the viewer is challenged by a soldier at the Dauphin gate. Here the collapse of two historical periods into one becomes apparent. We may respond to this as a confrontational act thinking "Is this guy for real?". In the context of Louisbourg the ambiguity is constant: "yes" he is real and "no" he is not. In the actors, as in the fort itself, the real and unreal coexist quite comfortably. Somehow the ideological seriousness of

1744 is made ironic in the present. The soldier's threat is not really a threat. The actors act their roles in an ongoing spectacle which lasts a whole summer -- April to September. Because of this long duration, the actors' attitudes are less focused than they would be in a play, and yet what is particularly significant is that they live their characters in real time. At the affective level, reality and artifice slide into each other. At night you may run into the guide you talked to that day in the town bar nearby wearing jeans.

There is a sense of lighthearted play in the visitor's interaction with the actors, which empowers one to be an actor too, if one wishes. In other words, the audience is empowered by an affective commonality in relationship to the actors. In this respect, the visitor is supported by both the reconstructed context and in the personal relationships with the guides. In addition, the scarcity of other visitors because of Louisbourg's remote location would help the viewer be less self-conscious. Or, choosing not to act, the visitor can feel free to inquire within the present, to discuss more immediate concerns. The visitor, then, is free to step into another life time to act, or address an actor who leaves a role to step into the present.

The plane of affect at Louisbourg exists as the grounding of experience in particular sensibilities. This occurs on many levels: where past and present are collapsed

into "real" experiences, where mood is created, where the spectator is empowered to "act" in particular ways, and where the ambiguous roles of the actor-guides deconstruct, to some degree, the seriousness of ideological positions.

Overall, on the affective plane of analysis, whether at the amusement park or museum, the visitor must interact in very specific physical and perceptual ways with exhibitions in order to receive the text. Exhibitions are powerful because the spectator must participate in them in order to experience them and thus they directly influence the body and consciousness.

References for Chapter IV

Adams, T.R. The Museum and Popular Culture. New York: American Association of Adult Education, 1939.

Barthes, Roland. Image, Music, Text. trans. Stephen Heath. London:Fontana, 1977.

Bitzer, Lloyd F. "Rhetoric and Public Knowledge," Philosophy and Literature: An Exploration. Ed. Don M. Burkes. Purdue University Press, 1978. pp. 67-97.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Production of Belief: Contribution to an Economy of Symbolic Goods," Media, Culture and Society 2 London: Academic Press, 1980. pp. 261-293.

Crow, Thomas E. Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985.

Foster, Hal. Discussions in Contemporary Culture. Seattle: Bay Press, 1987.

Foucault, Michel. Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

_____. Power/Knowledge. Ed. Colin Gordon. New York:Pantheon Books, 1972.

Grossberg, Lawrence. "Strategies of Marxist Cultural Interpretation," Critical Studies in Mass Communication 1 (1984). pp. 392-421.

_____. The Indifference of Television, or, Mapping TV's Popular (Affective) Economy, unpublished, 1986A.

_____. "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall," Journal of Communication Inquiry, Vol. 10, No.2, Summer 1986B. pp. 45-61.

_____. "History, Politics and Postmodernism," Journal of Communication Inquiry, 1986C. (Ibid.).

Hebdige, Dick. "In Poor Taste: Notes on Pop," Block 8, 1983.

Horne, Donald. The Public Culture: The Triumph of Industrialism London/Sydney: Pluto Press, 1986.

Hudson, Kenneth. A Social History of Museums: What the Visitor Thought. London: MacMillan, 1975.

_____. Museums and the 1980's: A Survey of World Trends. Paris: UNESCO, 1977.

McGee, Michael and Martha Martin. "Public Knowledge and Ideological Argumentation," Communication Monographs, Vol.50, March 1983.

Overduin, Henk. "That's Not for the Likes of Us: It's Their Turn Now," in The Modern Art Museum at Issue. Eindhoven: The Van Abbemuseum, 1976.

Real, Michael, R. Mass Mediated Culture. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1977.

Rosler, Martha. "Lookers, Buyers, Dealers and Makers: Thoughts on Audience," Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation. ed. Brian Wallis. Boston: The New Museum and David Godine Inc., 1984. pp. 311-340.

Van der Schoor, Frank. "The Van Abbemuseum 1964-1973: The Ideas," in The Modern Art Museum at Issue. Eindhoven: The Van Abbemuseum, 1976.

Williams, Raymond. Marxism and Literature. Oxford University Press, 1977.

Wolff, Janet. The Social Production of Art. New York: New York University Press, 1984.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored exhibitions as communications media. My approach has been descriptive rather than prescriptive: to identify discursive models and practices as they intersect behind the main attractions at exhibition sites. At the level of discourse, distinctions were revealed which exist as powerfully mediating factors, in effect, positioning the exhibition experience.

In creating contexts for viewing objects, museums were shown to function in particular ways. First, discursive structures related to social position were shown to relate to particular institutionalizations of taste. Here Bourdieu's notions of high culture's "aesthetic disposition" and popular culture's "popular aesthetic" were described in their framing of the viewer's identification. Next, structures inherent to the museum medium were described. Harold Innis' notions of time and space bias provided a

starting point for developing metaphors to describe the museum's functions. The "monument-function" was shown in its roles of preserving "aura" and enshrining tradition, ultimately operating as a pedestal for collections by providing the precincts for a cultural totality. Within monumental ceremonial architecture, the visitor was shown to manoeuver along a ritual script as a tourist in time. In contrast, the "forum-function" was described as it related to the politics of exhibition and the museum's roles of dissemination. The disseminated "museum without walls" exists as the contemporary reproduced art discourse composed of journals, postcards, travelling exhibitions and catalogues. The monument and forum functions were shown to coexist in any exhibition. For example, even in a temporary street exhibition the monument function exists as the liminal precincts which define it from quotidian life.

The third chapter shifts from considering discourse as localized framing devices to look more specifically at practices: particularly practices of the institutional apparatus, practices of "proxemics" (that is, codes relating to the signification of objects in space), and practices of curatorship. Museums were described as sites of discursive struggle where voices of artists, the tradition of connoisseurship and corporate patronage compete for influence. Institutional practices were described as they related to internal administrative practices and external

ties to the industries of real estate and tourism. In addition, the influence of corporate sponsorship on museum practices was investigated. Next, practices of structuring the exhibition continuum were described in their role of inserting objects into languages of culture. Two typologies of exhibition were introduced to provide analytical distinctions. First, the distinction between "Art by Metamorphosis" and "Art by Designation" provided a basis for describing the differences between objects in relation to their originating context. If their creators did not intend them to be placed in a museum continuum, their original function is transformed. Similarly, Stephen Bann's distinction between Metonymic and Synechdochal exhibition types located the object respectively either as an object removed from its original context upon which a new meaning has been imposed, or as maintaining its original function as part of a totality -- as in living history museums. Again, these exhibition types were shown to exist as analytical models in which contradictions could occur. In the space between institutional practices and generalized proxemics, curatorial practices were located. Practices of curatorship were shown to be determined by a dialectic between institutional agendas and professional codes. And these practices, in their concern with generating preferred readings, were presented as a rhetoric of curatorship.

In the fourth chapter, there was a shift from investigating the determinating aspects of the exhibition experience, to consider the visitor in relationship to reception. The abstractions "audience" and "public" commonly used interchangeably to describe museum visitors were distinguished in that the audience is constitutive, while the public is expressed as a unit of collective will. The term "public" was linked to museum roles in relation to public knowledge, public speaking and public ownership. In turn, the term "audience" was shown to be constituted from many social locations existing as combinations of simultaneous discursive positions.

Finally, the visitor's experience was explored. Within given conditions, people were shown to have an active role in creating their experience. Hall's notion of "articulation" provided a model to bridge the determining aspects of exhibition in relation to particular social effects. An articulation was defined as a conditional link between different discursive elements under particular conditions. In other words, the social relationships of visitors in relationship to static cultural formations will not always be the same, but can be re-articulated in different ways under different historical, geographical or economic conditions. Ultimately, the visitor is both subjected to the preferred reading presented by museums and capable of acting against it. The articulation of social and

cultural contexts were considered in light of Raymond Williams' notion of "structure of feeling" and Lawrence Grossberg's notion of "affect": theories that attempt to incorporate "feeling" as a level of analysis.

Throughout this paper, linguistic terminology has provided models for the functioning of discourse at exhibition sites. Metaphors described the communication bias of the museum medium, rhetorical tropes identified models for the signification of objects in space, the semiotics of tourism allowed an analysis of exhibition "sights" and "markers." And in this way, this paper has attempted to sketch out a language of exhibition. However, exhibition discourse is unique, standing outside the linear, sequential character of the written word. Exhibitions enclose not only real space, but lived ambience, moods and emotion. It is the points where such social experience is articulated into the cultural event that determines the exhibition experience.