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AESTHETIC CONTINGENCIES:  
RELATIONAL ENACTMENTS IN DISPLAY CULTURE

Jennifer Fisher

A Thesis  
in  
The Programme  
in  
Humanities

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at  
Concordia University  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

August 1995

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## ABSTRACT

### AESTHETIC CONTINGENCIES:

#### RELATIONAL ENACTMENTS IN DISPLAY CULTURE

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The project of this thesis is to investigate how the category of the aesthetic can be recuperated to qualify perceptual aspects of display culture. This thesis argues that, in addition to functioning as a complex product of discourse, "the aesthetic" constitutes an experiential process entailing apprehension. I focus on how cultural studies describes, and may be extended to encompass, a concept of the aesthetic as a connective category which accounts for the performative mediation of display contexts. My argument emerges out of readings of recent museological literature, but addresses the lacunae of agency in deconstructive approaches by accounting for creative process in display culture. Thus, as distinct from analyses which consider museums solely in terms of their determinant aspects, I posit museums as potential sites of enunciatory agency which can be enacted architecturally, curatorially or artistically.

This thesis inquires into the epistemological stakes of the aesthetic -- as a way of knowing -- while at the same time



elaborating and employing a conjunctural aesthetic theory as a methodology for the study of museums, collecting and art practice. Interdisciplinary in scope, this thesis brings together the literatures of feminist aesthetic theory, cultural studies, media studies, postcolonial inquiry, the anthropology of the senses, the sociology of art and the fields of art history and criticism. The thesis deals with three areas of inquiry. First, I recuperate and revise the aesthetic as a relational category. Second, I identify how the aesthetic may be mobilized in relation to the museal through the analysis of key museum sites, representations and uses. Finally, I ground the theoretical findings of the thesis in relation to the aesthetic engagements of both women collectors and artists.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks go to my committee members with whom it has been both a privilege and a delight to work with: Dr. Martin Allor, my supervisor, whose integrity, generosity and gift for theoretical engineering made this project possible; Dr. David Howes, whose work in the anthropology of the senses provided a context for exploring aesthetic mediation pertaining to the haptic and proprioceptive senses; and Professor Reesa Greenberg, whose perspective and insights in the field of art have provoked many ideas herein, and whose ongoing support has kept me connected during the more tenuous times of this project.

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to the memories of my grandmothers Agnes Fisher (1896-1992) and Kathleen Golding (1896-1991), and my great-aunts Lillian Gallop (1890-1988) and Kathleen Fisher (1895-1993).

*Jennifer Fisher, August 1995*

*Sadgurunath Maharaj ki Jay!*

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis investigates how the category of "the aesthetic" can be recuperated to qualify articulations of museum experience. Recent years have been witness to a climate of aesthetic retrieval. I aim first to show how conjunctural theories within cultural studies can elucidate the notion of a dynamic aesthetic. I will then explore how the aesthetic can be redeemed and developed to account for the processes and contingencies of museal enactments.

According to Mieke Bal, "the museum is essentially a social institution which has the debate on aesthetics at its center" (Bal, n.d.). It is, of course, true that aesthetic practices are linked and contextualized by the diverse apparatuses of the art system, its institutions of exhibition, its disciplinary systems, its organs of publication and commerce. Much recent critique of exhibition practices, however, has placed the question of aesthetics to the side. In the wake of (post)structuralism, the theory comprising "the new museology" proliferating in recent anthologies has characterized the museum as a discursive frame where exhibitions function as texts.<sup>1</sup> Other approaches have evolved which work against the kind of Kantian transcendence only available to a privileged subject. For example, Hal Foster's

anthology The Anti-Aesthetic (1983) framed critical approaches favouring an "interested," as distinct from "disinterested," approach by locating exhibition practices within the specificity of particular sociological and ideological contexts. Within a feminist perspective, Theresa de Lauretis (1988) has elaborated the notion of a "deaesthetic" to deconstruct "the aesthetic" as constituent to an absolutist theory of art or fixed criteria of judgment. Likewise, Susan Buck-Morss (1993) uses Walter Benjamin's notion of an "anaesthetic" within a project which seeks to undo "the alienation of the corporeal sensorium."

In the contemporary visual art context, generally, notions of "the aesthetic" have tended to operate as common sense assumptions. Conventionally, the term "aesthetic" describes a particular style, attitude or evaluative standard such as "an expressionist aesthetic." Or it can function to designate an object or practice as circumscribed by the art discourse, as in "the work's aesthetic dimensions."

Curatorial practice, of course, necessarily involves the meaning-making closures inherent in the selection, evaluation, and contextualization of artifacts. While the necessary judgments implicit in these practices may appear "obvious," the stakes of such "seeming obviousness" have tended to operate at the level of common sense in contemporary art

practice. As Lawrence Grossberg (1993) has warned (after Stuart Hall), when something seems obvious, ideology is surely at work.<sup>2</sup> And it is in the conjunctural politics of common sense, perhaps more aptly termed "uncommon sense,"<sup>3</sup> operating as aesthetic assumptions that constitute the ground for this thesis.

The term aesthetics was originally used by Alexander Baumgarten as an appropriation of the word aesthesis, an ancient Greek term which described aspects of sense perception. This meaning was retained in Immanuel Kant's aesthetic theory. But Kant's theory has been suspect because it relies on totalities of feeling that collude with ideological interests.

My concern here is not to elaborate upon aesthetic conventions having to do with a priori principles or terms of evaluation as such. Rather, I want to suggest that, in addition to functioning as a complex product of discourse, "the aesthetic" can also describe the relational and experiential aspects of exhibition practice.

Within cultural studies, Tony Bennett -- who, significantly, has written extensively on museum institutions -- has called for the abolishment of "the aesthetic," as "politically reprehensible" because its ahistorical and idealist legacies within Western philosophy contradict what he

perceives as the historical and materialist necessity of a marxist approach (1990:144). For him, "nothing of any political consequence hinges on the establishment of an aesthetic by any means, biological, historical or social" (149). It appears that Bennett's outrage at "the aesthetic" is the result of his fixation on the category itself because it presumes reconciliation through "transcendent" means within a rarefied and classist art discourse. While I can agree with Bennett's suspicion concerning the political implications of aesthetic transcendence, his dismissal of the term "aesthetic" altogether precludes its potential to operate in other ways.

The capacity of "the aesthetic" is fruitfully investigated and expanded by another cultural studies critic, Michèle Barrett, who rather than abandoning the term, reconstructs it as a grounded -- as distinct from transcendent -- category within a marxist problematic. As she has pointed out, contemporary critical practice has tended to focus on "meaning" over "experience." Barrett argues that the category of "the aesthetic," assumed to be inherently reactionary and bourgeois, is, in fact, not more limiting than such categories as "signification" or "pleasure." She cogently argues that "the aesthetic" is necessary precisely in order to account for the nondiscursive aspects of culture which would include, then, its processes, practices and states (1988: 697-714).



The experiential, lived and sensate aspects of "the aesthetic" have recently been rethought and mobilized, particularly in postcolonial and feminist critical practices. Trinh T. Minh-ha (1991), bell hooks (1985), Homi Bhabha (1991), Christine Battersby (1991), Hilde Hein (1993) and others have recuperated "the aesthetic" expressly in terms of its capacity to account for experience. As well, they conceive of "the aesthetic" in terms of complexity and multiplicity rather than as a totality. Likewise, within a neo-marxist problematic, Terry Eagleton (1990) has theorized "the aesthetic" contingencies of the perceptual faculties of the body from thought and sentiment through to intuition. For Eagleton, the binding force of "the aesthetic" constituting the "lived" dimension of sensate life is ideologically both complex and contradictory. For while "the aesthetic" can function coercively (by inserting power into bodies) or hegemonically (by colonizing bodily drives), it simultaneously holds the emancipatory potential to link people on an affective level of common experience. For me, the connective capacities of the aesthetic outlined by Eagleton invoke the constellatory epistemologies in cultural studies.

The complexities of my analysis require a range of literatures and what may appear to be discontinuous and diverse sites. The locus of the dissertation engages, for the

most part, the intersection of two areas of inquiry: that pertaining to "the aesthetic," and that relating to "the museum." A cultural studies problematic can be located in the connections that I will explore between institutional structures and lived experience as performative articulations of display culture. My concern here is to redeem and deploy "the aesthetic" in terms of its role in the creative processes of production and apprehension. While this involves augmenting the scope of "the aesthetic" to account for immanent engagements across a range of cultural sites, it is not my intent to provide a "new" unified theory of a singular aesthetic. Neither is it to limit the breadth of "the aesthetic" by providing closed definitions concerning its qualities (whether entailing beauty or not). Neither is my project to "aestheticize politics," that is, render political engagements ineffectual by disengaging them contextually. Such notions of "aestheticization" equate "the aesthetic" with "style" or "value" and, thus, override its capacity as itself a relational and, I will argue, potentially reflexive term.

Rather, as I will clarify in this thesis, my concern with "the aesthetic" -- in addition to its capacities to describe value -- is in its role as a connective category which imbricates the body and the senses. Therefore, I take up "the aesthetic" precisely to look at the performative mediations of

the museal, of display, of collecting and of artistic production. In other words, sites of aesthetic experience describe an immanent play of articulation. So, as distinct from investigating "the uses" of aesthetics, the corpus of the thesis traces "how museums are used and represented" as constituent to aesthetic processes, particular sites of engagement which involve the senses and apprehension.

### THE MUSEUM LITERATURE

There have been many excellent elucidations of museums as social systems which tend to produce particular socio-economic effects. Several studies come immediately to mind as insightful works on the ideological dimensions of modernist art-institutions. Hans Haacke (1984) has focussed on museums as "managers of consciousness" after Hans Magnus Enzenberger's notion of "the consciousness industry." He reveals how museal claims to impartial cultural scholarship often mask their political function, especially where corporations such as Exxon and Mobile use their philanthropic role as a shield against criticism. Carol Duncan and Allan Wallach have considered the museums a "ceremonial architecture" in which beholders enact a "ritual script written into the architecture and decorations" (1978: 48). In performing the "doing codes" inscribed in the architecture, the visitor's beliefs and

values are "directly lived" (Ibid.). Donald Horne takes up Duncan and Wallach's characterization of museum architecture's performative aspects in relation to the touristic enactments of ideology in the museums of Europe. In his book The Great Museum (1984), he describes the ideological significance of "touristic rituals" in relation to constructed histories of such "dominant ideologies" embodied in revolution, industry, nationalism and imperialism. While Horne considers museums as monumental spaces, Brian O'Doherty's "Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space" (1986), interrogates assumptions inherent in the display of art. He argues that within the art system of galleries and museums "things become art in a space where powerful ideas about art focus on them." In this way, he continues, the gallery space legitimates art as "art." For O'Doherty, the white gallery space is archetypical of twentieth-century art and functions to support itself in isolation from all distractions. He points out that as modernism progressed, context increasingly assumed the content of art to the point where the art-object, in fact, framed the gallery. The above texts form a corpus of ideological critiques which have formed the grounds for considering art's mediation by the configurations of power that contextualize it.

In addition, significant critiques of museums have developed in the wake of (post)structuralism. As Mieke Bal has asserted, "if there is anything that would differentiate the 'new' museology from the 'old,' or plain museology, it is the idea that a museum is a discourse, and exhibition is an utterance within that discourse" (Bal, n.d.: 1).

(Post)structuralist approaches -- stemming from the work of Louis Althusser, Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, among others -- have tended to emphasize the textuality of particular museological sites and to problematize the function of the reader or beholder.<sup>4</sup>

Authors who have mined Foucault's work on institutional discourses to identify formations of power-knowledge operative in visual display include Mieke Bal, JoAnne Berelowitz, Douglas Crimp, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, Tony Bennett and the collective writings of Sharon MacDonald and Roger Silverstone. For example, JoAnne Berelowitz (1990) has deployed Foucault's study of closely monitored social spaces as a useful theoretical model for rethinking systems of surveillance, exclusion and inclusion in museum institutions. After Foucault, she locates those "complex structures of practice in which the museum's objects, subjects, architectures and systems of support constitute distinctive discursive

formations" in order to trace specific historical shifts in the relation between museum space and the human body (70).

Likewise, in "On the Museum's Ruins" (1983), Douglas Crimp argues that within the field of art, the museum as a new institution of power necessarily arose interdependently with a new art historical discourse. Crimp traces the shift that occurs as the museum's homogeneous series are threatened by the advent of postmodernist heterological texts. He uses Foucault's project to suggest that the entry of photography into the museum was symptomatic of the end of the museum as a modernist institution. Thus unitary humanist taxonomies of "tradition, source, origin, influence, development, evolution" give way to "discontinuity, rupture, threshold, limit, transformation" of the museal discourse (45).

Tony Bennett's article, "The Exhibitionary Complex" (1988), draws from Foucault's work on institutional articulations of power-knowledge to account for the role of the museum in citizen formation (1988). Bennett's "exhibitionary complex" considers a wider range of institutions including history, science, art and ethnography museums, their disciplines (history, biology, art history, anthropology) and discursive formations (the past, evolution, art, aesthetic and man). He analyzes how the exhibitionary complex is linked to and taken up by popular culture with

particular effects. In contrast to Crimp's conception of the museum as continuous with Foucault notions of confinement and panoptic surveillance, Bennett argues that the exhibitionary complex in fact reverses such a disciplinary apparatus by foregrounding the display of power. For him it is the visibility of power at points of reception that renders viewers as subjects rather than objects of power.

Other work in cultural studies has attempted to bridge institutional and social museum critique by focussing on the museum's role in constituting its viewership. Sharon Macdonald and Roger Silverstone (1990) situate the museum's struggle for self-definition both at the level of its semantic claims as well as practically in terms of how experimental programming -- its new fictions -- are taken up by particular audiences contingent to questions of authenticity and representation.

The above perspectives, in describing how museums work on the bodies and subjectivities of beholders in particular ways, provide the grounds for enabling a problematic. Yet, my aim here is somewhat different. My argument emerges out of the museological literature, but addresses the lacunae of agency by accounting for creative process in display culture. Thus, rather than the supposed determinations of museums, I will

focus on sites of enunciatory agency, whether performed architecturally, curatorially or artistically.

Moreover, the relations of time, space and movement pertain to both the evaluation and production of museal knowledges and representations. I want to trace the aesthetic's contingencies to a morphology of the senses and clarify how articulations of museal affect can describe the kinds of feelings elicited in beholders as they perceive museum spaces and objects.

My fascination with museums resides in the contradiction that while they enshrine artifacts and carry the legacy of perhaps oppressive traditions, they operate simultaneously as precincts which protect the world of art as a free zone of innovation and cultural change. In this latter sense, museums function dynamically -- as cultural laboratories -- creating and opening new possibilities. It is the manner of the moves governing these practices which I want to elucidate by describing how museums function as cultural translators and metaphor generators.

#### METHODOLOGY AND VOICE

The thesis inquires into the epistemological stakes of the aesthetic -- as a way of knowing -- while at the same time employing a conjunctural aesthetic theory as a methodology for



the study of museums, collecting and art practice. I have drawn from works which overlap within the domain of cultural studies: the literatures of feminist aesthetic theory, art history, media studies, postcolonial inquiry, the anthropology of the senses, the sociology of art and the field of art criticism. The thesis deals with three key areas of inquiry. First, I recuperate and revise the aesthetic as a relational category. Second, I identify how the aesthetic may be mobilized in relation to the museal through the analysis of key museum sites, representations and uses. Finally, I ground the theoretical findings of the thesis in relation to the aesthetic practices of both women collectors and artists.

The first problematic of the thesis is to analyze and understand how the term "aesthetic" can be demystified and positively mobilized. After defining the aesthetic, I move on to focus on how conjunctural theorizing within cultural studies can elucidate a dynamic aesthetic. A review of the literature on the museological mediation of experience demonstrates this revised notion of "the aesthetic." I will argue that it is precisely this aspect of mediation that opens up a space to consider modalities of museum affect. Aesthetic experience, while engaging specular perception, also incorporates other faculties of the sensorium, particularly the haptic and proprioceptive faculties.

The second task of the thesis is to ground the analysis and to look at specific museum sites that provide distinctive morphologies for sensorial engagement. Simply -- and anthropomorphically -- put, museal affect functions in the wash of feeling which articulates individual experience to the museum's social spaces. Here the museum's surfaces and scripts are invested with attention, desire, exhibitionism, scopophilia, power, awe or even love. I will delineate how such perceptions and investments operate in recognition and naming, which through bridging unconscious impulses to conscious awareness, in effect mobilize the aesthetic. I also study the role of memory and recognition as museums are used in representations within popular culture in terms of aesthetic experience.

The third objective of the thesis is to ground its theoretical investigations in relation to the aesthetic practices of women collectors and artists. In the fourth chapter I examine the collecting practices of women as constituent to a proprioceptive aesthetic and the notion of presence. And in the fifth chapter, I work from interviews with four women artists, as well as from personal and periodical archives in order to understand the nature of their aesthetic processes. As a project which straddles art and academic contexts, the thesis endeavours to clarify some of

the conjunctural complexities of the museal as distinct from delineating a transformation of "the museum" as a whole.

Each of these areas of analysis describes particular kinds of aesthetic engagements. And, from time to time, my own engagements appear in the form of a more personal voice. I see my role as author not in proclaiming the meaning of museological or artistic texts, but rather in locating the dynamics of "the aesthetic" as itself an articulated category. While I must demonstrate academic competency given the nature of this inquiry, at particular junctures my writing voice evidences a more personal exploration emerging from recognitions immanent to the creative process of writing. The ground of my writing practice, while academic, has also involved working at an art magazine and teaching art criticism to graduate students in fine arts. In addition, I have at times relied on intuition -- knowledge derived from the senses and experience -- as well as the discipline of rational thought. In this sense, this thesis itself has entailed a process of aesthetic engagement that can be conceived in terms of what it makes possible as well as in terms of what it names.

The problematics of thesis -- in attempting to open up ways of engaging, understanding and mobilizing "the aesthetic" proceed in stages through the chapters.

The aim of Chapter 1 is to situate "the aesthetic" in relation to work within cultural studies. The aesthetic is defined in two aspects: as a category which fixes value, and as an experiential process which negotiates the somatic and the lived. Perspectives from feminist aesthetics are introduced in order to open up the ground for elaborating a conjunctural aesthetic theory in cultural studies. A literature review provides a range of cultural studies perspectives pertaining to "the aesthetic." The writings of Michèle Barrett and Janet Wolff consider "the aesthetic" in relation to conjunctural theories within cultural studies, while at the same time accounting for disciplinary blindneses of particular approaches. Terry Eagleton's work on the aesthetic as an ideological category delineates the coercive, hegemonic and emancipatory aspects of "the aesthetic" as an experiential category. The potential of the aesthetic -- as itself a relational form -- is explored in terms of the work of Stuart Hall, particularly in its possibilities for enabling creative processes, both artistically and theoretically. The positivity of a relational aesthetic is further elaborated using Lawrence Grossberg's notion of "affect" which describes the social significance of feeling to "energize and connect" contingent to both identification and belonging. Synthesizing aspects of the above literatures, I propose that "the

aesthetic," in addition to describing affective "investments" at a social level, can account for affective "apprehension" as integral to the individual enactment of display contexts.

In Chapter 2 museums are explored as media of communication. The question of mediation is taken up simultaneously in terms of the sensorial, political and social effects of museal contexts. The role of aesthetic mediation is explored in its contingencies to the museal in situating and shaping particular sensorial morphologies and effects. Specifically, I introduce the notion of a haptic-proprioceptive aesthetic as it pertains to the "beholding" of museum space. The mediating aspects of the museal are further developed by drawing from Harold Innis' work on the social effectivities of media and Marshall McLuhan's writings on the sense bias of technology. The mediations enacted in performative liminality are explicated according to what Carol Duncan has termed "civilizing rituals" and analyzed in relation to the exhibition scripts and assumed "ideal viewers" coded in two Montreal museums. This chapter ends with an aesthetic experiment which involved MFA students who reflect on a museum visit. Their testimony concerning their "aesthetic experiences" indicate -- in the spirit of sociological investigation done by Pierre Bourdieu -- the importance of personal recognition to negotiations of the

museal. The results demonstrate the capacity for museal enactments to produce memory. The activation of a haptic-proprioceptive aesthetic in practices of mnemonic embodiment provides, therefore, another aspect of museum mediation.

In the third chapter, I bring a tighter focus to the issue of museal mediation taking into question the notion of a performative aesthetic. I distinguish public and private memory in order to introduce popular memory as a kind of hybrid that accounts for "collectively personal" recollections. I argue that traditional museums function to code "official" or publicly sanctioned memories that are realized as they are enacted. In this way, I suggest, the museum functions as a material manifestation of the mnemonic enactments of the ancient rhetorical exercises comprising the art of memory. Next, I delineate the potential of private or personal memory to interrupt official histories and thus destabilize their power. And finally, the research of Lynn Spigel and Henry Jenkins introduces popular memory in its associative and prototypical aspects.

This analysis is used to explicate how popular culture, communications technology and particular overlaps of avant-garde and commercial art forms have impinged on the museal. Sites of inquiry explicate how the museum itself has been mediated through use and cultural representation. I examine

how an aesthetic experience is sensorially mobilized by audio cassette tours in movement. I describe miniature museums -- museum games -- in terms of how they render representations of public culture manipulable. In turn, I consider at how representations of gigantic museum spaces are depicted through literary narratives.

Finally, I locate tropes of popular memory in an analysis of museum scenes from popular film. Here I suggest that such representations of museum contexts suggest the museal as a place where particular kinds of experiences happen. These performative enactments of museal space, I argue, precisely because they evidence the mediation of private and popular recollection, provide prototypes of a performative aesthetic which extend beyond conventional assumptions of aesthetic experience.

Chapters 4 and 5 describe the poetics of productive display culture constituent to what Michel Foucault has termed an "aesthetics of existence." In these latter chapters, the political and relational aspects of "the aesthetic" account for how work is produced and located within a particular contexts. While in Chapter 3 I focus on the performativity in space, in Chapter 4 I look at the temporal specificities of collecting as a form of practical memory.

The fourth chapter analyzes the personal collections of three women in relation to constructions of identity, ownership and the body of the collector. Drawing from the display rhetorics elaborated by Susan Stewart and Stephen Bann, I distinguish the metonymic operation of the collection -- "in the collector's name" -- from the synecdochic function of the souvenir which sustains the collectors's presence in syntagmatic arrangements. I elaborate, in turn, on the activation of synecdochic display rhetorics through haptic-proprioceptive processes. Using the later work of Michel Foucault on the aesthetics of existence, I elaborate on the role of the collection in relation to techniques of self-formation. The organizing principles of collections and their display is analyzed immanent to an embodied and performative aesthetic ethos. This discussion is grounded in an examination of the art collections of Madonna Ciccone, Ydessa Hendeles and Isabella Stewart Gardner whose collections function as articulations of affective and proprietary investments. Of particular importance is the examination of how these collectors mobilize their collections in the process of "telling themselves."

Finally, Chapter 5 charts the feminist aesthetic practices of four women artists: Irene F. Whittome, Barbara Lounder, Jana Sterbak and Linda Montano. The engagements of



these artists impinge on the museal in various ways. This chapter explores how artistic and aesthetic practices function as negotiations of public display culture. Moreover, this analysis addresses the lacunae of research devoted to relations between artists and museums. I investigate the diverse ways these artists have configured their artistic production through reworking tropes of collection, recovery and presentation. I identify how their aesthetic practices have significantly interrogated the museal in relation to institutions, constituent communities and aesthetic assumptions operative in the art world. Such interventions constitute aesthetic practice in its negotiation, either tactically or in a more orthodox manner, through situated engagements with art's discourses and ranges of affect. The works discussed here provide examples which redefine such museal conventions as personal museums, alternative museums, curio-cabinets, community ethnographies, haptic processes and performative display rituals.

## Notes

1. See for example Peter Vergo, ed., The New Museology, London: Reaktion books, 1989; Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, eds., Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991; and Ivan Karp, Christine Mullen Kreamer and Stephen D. Lavine, eds., Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture, Washington and London: The Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992.
2. Grossberg points out that hegemony is circumscribed by a conjunctural politics of 'common sense' effected by late capitalist economies, mass communications and mass culture (1986: 69).
3. By "uncommon sense" here I am referring to the liminal production of knowledge as distinct from the class connotations inherent in the word "common."
4. Barthes' essay, "The Death of the Author" (1977), denies authorial agency altogether. Rather he privileges the "reader" with creating the text at the point of its reception.

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## Chapter 1

### LOCATING THE AESTHETIC IN CULTURAL STUDIES

The purpose of this chapter is to situate the category of "the aesthetic"<sup>1</sup> in relation to recent work in cultural studies. The literature review below provides definitions that I will both employ and work against as the thesis proceeds. Through examining a range of philosophical, feminist and cultural studies perspectives which either explicitly or implicitly contribute to rethinking the concept of the aesthetic, I aim to establish the basis for recuperating and reworking the term as a mediating category of the experiential.

Conventionally, the aesthetic has been conceptualized after Immanuel Kant in terms of the criteria of judgment. Undeniably, questions of aesthetic value operate as commonsense in the art world today. As anyone who has worked in the arts knows, there is "art," and then there is "good art." The inclusions and prohibitions concerning assumptions about art are both overtly policed and enforced by the gatekeepers of the art world as well as more subtly internalized in conventions which inform the display of both artistic objects and artistic selves. Yet there is another

aspect of the aesthetic I want to foreground in this thesis. Precisely, that "the aesthetic" itself constitutes a relational form which can account for the connections attendant in creative process, in spatial affect, in forming communities, in fracturing convention and in "pointing toward." That is, I want to suggest that the aesthetic, in addition to operating as a term of value or as a product of meaning, may be mobilized to qualify the processes and practices of perception. This expanded definition of the aesthetic circumscribes both the "terms" of aesthetic values and those "relational capacities" attendant in processes of evaluation itself.

My argument throughout this thesis is that, in addition to functioning as a complex "product" of discourse, the aesthetic constitutes an experiential "process" entailing apprehension. I will focus on how cultural studies theorizing describes, or may be extended to encompass, an "aesthetic" which accounts for how the somatic and the lived interpenetrate within particular cultural contexts. In this chapter, I will focus on texts which explicate, mobilize, or can function to extend the operative modalities of the aesthetic within contemporary art practice, museum institutions, and the social infrastructure of contemporary art discourse.

While work in cultural studies has contributed to thinking on taste, style and attitude, its explorations into sensibility have demonstrated the capacity to move beyond simply making distinctions. The purview of cultural studies investigates modalities of negotiation within the realms of the quotidian, the discursive, the institutional and the possible. As Lawrence Grossberg argues, "cultural studies has always been propelled by its desire to construct possibilities, both immediate and imaginary, out of its historical circumstances" (1988: 9). As a domain, method and creative vehicle, cultural studies is expressly concerned with describing the production of discourses stemming from the intersections of everyday life and institutional structures. Because its methodologies are productive, strategic and self-reflexive, approaches from cultural studies are aptly suited to addressing the shifts in formal aspects of art, art institutions and those aesthetic practices which shape the awareness of the nexus between them. It is in this sense that cultural studies provides a terrain where settled conceptions of the aesthetic can be rethought and elaborated in ways which expand the aesthetic's conventional designations of "value," to embrace an experiential definition which quite literally incorporates those states of engagement inherent to the perception and production of art.



Additionally, the concept of the aesthetic, I will argue, provides for a reflexive interrogation of the conjunctural theorizing now commonplace in cultural studies. This is because the aesthetic's grounding in the senses and contingency may in fact afford a means to identify the blind spots of a branch of theorizing that has settled into habits of formality and rationality. What I want to bring forward in this chapter is that whereas rational perspectives require "meaning," the terrain of the aesthetic-as-affect can describe the significance of perceptual "states." I want to make clear that where such states may not necessarily be "meaningful" as discrete entities, they are nevertheless significant in the production of knowledge.

In this respect, Michèle Barrett's work is noteworthy because it foregrounds the capacity of the aesthetic to account for experience. Barrett argues that cultural studies has largely focussed on "meaning" over "experience." This distinction is important precisely because, while there has been significant work on the distinctions of sensibility (style, taste, attitude), these function as particular (albeit provisionally fixed) aesthetic conventions in contrast to those processes and practices which qualify particular experiential states.

It is not my project to undertake a history of Western philosophical aesthetics. Nevertheless, the etymology of the word "aesthetic" is important to its redefinition. Aesthetics derives from aisthitikos an ancient Greek word that means "perceptive by feeling." In turn, aisthesis describes the sensory experience of perception (Buck-Morss, 1993: 125). Alexander Baumgarten, a German philosopher, drew upon these meanings in introducing the word "aesthetics" for the new philosophical discipline he intended to establish with his Aesthetica (1750-58). For Baumgarten aesthetics, as the "younger sister of logic," did for perception what logic did for intellectual cognition (Gregor, 1983:358). Baumgarten asserted that because the world is understood only through the senses, perception has at its end the perfection of sense knowledge as such, and thus entailed the need to develop powers of perception (365). Baumgarten's "disposition to sense acutely" delineated that where the external senses gave awareness to the state of the body, interior self-consciousness gives wit, acumen, memory and foresight (373-374). Thus Baumgarten's morphology of feeling and its practices must be understood as distinct from discourses of aesthetic value. Following from Baumgarten, Susan Buck-Morss (1993) points out that the sense organs constitute the mediating boundary between the inner and outer sensorium.<sup>2</sup> I

will elaborate further on the role of the senses in aesthetic mediation in Chapter 2.

### QUESTIONS OF EXPERIENCE

Within cultural studies, both Angela McRobbie and Colin Mercer have urged critical practitioners to account for empirical and experiential processes not only in order to ground their work but because these concerns, in turn, impel significant self-reflexivity. McRobbie (1991), addressing a theorizing context where she finds questions of "modernity and postmodernity" have displaced concepts of "ideology and hegemony," asserts that recent work in cultural studies has tended to examine culture as texts, images and representations rather than in terms of social relationships. Instead, she advocates analytic work which returns to the terrain of "lived experience" to examine processes accompanying the production of meaning rather than simply the end product itself. Such a connective and integrative approach, informed by feminism's concern with social relationship, becomes the basis for a return to empirical and experiential approaches (1991: 1-17).<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, Colin Mercer (1991) urges cultural theorists away from the preoccupation with cultural forms to a concern with how they are employed by people to shape "a sense of the body, lifestyle or community." He claims that critical

theorists who practice "prophetic decipherment" -- reading the signs of the times -- have forgotten that, apart from their textuality, texts have effects in how they are used, deployed, negotiated and managed. For him, practices of reading themselves constitute ways of knowing and attention must be given to how texts are used while at the same time situating readers in practices of reading.<sup>4</sup> Mercer, like McRobbie, encourages theorists to account for strategies of engagement as well as hermeneutic evaluation.

In this regard, Terry Eagleton's book The Ideology of the Aesthetic (1990) defines some key concepts to rethinking the aesthetic, especially in its capacity to link sensate and cognitive processes. Eagleton's project reviews the category of the aesthetic as one attendant to the recuperation of the body, the lived and sensational life within the field of theory. Eagleton deploys the issue of "sense" (of common sense) quite literally as "the senses," to redefine the aesthetic within an experiential perspective. Shifting the stakes of aesthetic inquiry away from interrogations of beauty, Eagleton elaborates a theory of power precisely in the aesthetic's capacity to function hegemonically through the senses as sentiments, habits, pieties, and affections as a binding force which precedes "knowledge" (1990: 20).

Eagleton recuperates the pre-modern definition of the word "aesthetics," the Greek aisthesis previously noted, which connotes sensation and perception as distinct from conceptual thought. He charts a territory of the aesthetic which includes attractions and aversions, work and body, gaze and guts (13). Thus released from Western philosophy's preoccupations with beauty as "phenomenal perfection," the aesthetic can also invoke terrains of "the lived," directly invoking somatic, sensational life and to the plane of "experience" (Ibid.).

For Eagleton, the aesthetic is both contradictory and complex in its capacity to operate simultaneously to both subjugate and empower through bodily drives. In this sense, he claims, the aesthetic is of particular importance in locating shifts from coercive to consenting forms of power relations. For while aesthetic experience is inseparable from the coercive operations of ruling ideologies, it also operates hegemonically by "ruling and informing the senses from within while allowing them to thrive in all their relative autonomy" (177). But even more importantly, the aesthetic cannot be reduced to its hegemonic or coercive effects. Beyond serving the interests of power, the aesthetic may also be inflected in a contradictory involvement of sensory drives mobilized in the interests of emancipatory sensate practices (28). For

Eagleton, the emancipatory potential of the aesthetic functions to link a community of subjects through commonly experienced sensuous impulses and fellow-feeling, opening up modes of self-determination. Moreover, he notes, such a liberatory aesthetic affords a means to transforming sets of relations "on the basis of custom, affection and sympathy" (Ibid.).

So Eagleton's definition of the aesthetic underscores its multiple functions. While the aesthetic may appear inseparable from the ideological forms of dominant culture, or operate through the consent of those it colonizes (and hence play a role in legitimating power), the aesthetic is not reducible to a coercive-consent binary for it incorporates the potential of emancipatory agency as well. As Eagleton asserts, a sensorially based aesthetic may also be the very means of refusing ideological confinement:

The aesthetic as customs, sentiment, spontaneous impulse may consort well enough with political domination; but these phenomena border embarrassingly on passions, imagination, sensuality, which are not so easily incorporable (28).

Where hegemonic struggles work towards achieving dominance within a particular social formation, their contradictory or "dangerous" dimension, according to Eagleton, is their seemingly ambiguous function which encompasses both how a system attempts to "make individuals" as well as "what

individuals make out of what the system is trying to make out of them." The paradox of the aesthetic posed by Eagleton is that while bodies have the capacity to resist the power that inscribes them, to extirpate aesthetic hegemony simultaneously destroys the body's capacity to authenticate itself (28). So, rather than being a question of uprooting the terms of hegemony, what is at issue here is re-thinking the "incorporation" of power. The most important effect of Eagleton's argument here is his assertion of the radical potential of the aesthetic as itself a mediating category. For Eagleton, it is this dynamic aspect of the term which holds the potential to qualify exchanges between "body, class and modes of production" (2). These interactions account for the relatedness of subjects and political positions within sensorial and apprehension processes which work against alienation.

Eagleton reviews Western philosophical aesthetics. Rather than attempting to compile an aesthetic history, he distinguishes the political contingencies of the term in relation to a range of philosophical positions. Eagleton admits his "left" perspective, and the necessarily collaborative nature of the project given his limitations as a philosopher. While disappointing in its recapitulation of the gender bias of traditional Western philosophy, his book does

serve to clearly delineate a concept of the aesthetic in relation to its traditional contexts.

What I find most useful in Eagleton's exploration is his investigation of the modalities of the aesthetic as a form of connection. And this is where his project pertains most acutely to cultural studies. While admitting the left's functionalist liability -- collapsing the complexities of positions -- he surveys the category of the aesthetic through philosophical streams which relate body and consciousness through what I read as a series of metaphoric articulations. These metaphors allude to particular modes of connection, and include the examples of Hegel's speech "dialectic," Kant's affective "gemeinschaft," Schiller's contiguous "hinge," and Schopenhauer's more traumatic "rupture."<sup>5</sup>

In accounting for the aesthetic, Eagleton proposes that up until Marx, the aesthetic is in fact anaesthetic, that is, it accounts for consciousness deprived of bodily sensation. In Eagleton's assessment, the three most important "aestheticians" of the modern period are Marx, Nietzsche and Freud because each connects the epistemological and phenomenological through "the body." In Marx's "labouring body" human productions are ends in themselves; in Nietzsche's "body as power" instinct incorporates reason; and in Freud's "body as desire" intense bodily sensations are central and art



is considered as contiguous with libidinal processes (196-197). Eagleton's elaboration of the aesthetic as a mediating category centres on exchanges between the "body" and class, state and modes of production in the context of a Marxist study (4). He insists that it is not the inter-cultural question of "art and life" but rather the relations of phenomenal and cognitive that is his focus: "material and immaterial," "things and thoughts," and "sensations and ideas" (13). In other words, his project pulls away from the distinctions of a high cultural aesthetic in contradistinction to the quotidian, to foreground the qualifying aspects of an aesthetic where power and the senses intertwine.

Eagleton opens up the potential of the aesthetic from its assumed closures of judgment to act in a dynamic modality. Following from Eagleton, the category of the aesthetic as I am defining it in this thesis can be revised to not only embrace its traditional function as a "criteria of judgment" but to acknowledge its modality as a "mediating category." In other words, while the aesthetic may be assumed to be congruent with conventions of "value" characterizing styles of art and objects, the aesthetic can also account for the activation of those zones of contingency or affiliative politics at work in processes of "how we give things value." As a term describing activation, the "aesthetic" holds the potential to locate the

practices and contingencies of experience: to qualify openings into the experiential as well as closures of value. While I acknowledge that the aesthetic designates and prescribes aspects of forms, modes, limits, specificities of objects and conventions, these aesthetic modalities both presuppose and provisionally fix the term itself. The term aesthetic is caught, as-it-were, entangled, in a priori regimes of significance. Unfixing the aesthetic defined as a "standard of evaluation," activates its potential to specify conditions of experience within the relational processes of an articulated plane.

The aesthetic, as I am defining it here, embraces two aspects. In the first, the aesthetic is a provisionally "fixed" convention of worth, style, or a particular formal sensibility. But it is the second aspect of the aesthetic that I want to focus on henceforth: the aesthetic as a qualifier of "experiential" processes where the particularities of the aesthetic as a "mediating" category come under consideration. In the latter sense, the terms of the aesthetic expand to account for states and processes which constellate as precisely those conditional, provisional and contingent aspects of experience. Given an aesthetic experience, then, the aesthetic functions to relate the modalities of experiencing as well as conferring the status of

the experience amongst others. This definition both involves and insists on pushing beyond aesthetic "quality" -- which categorizes judgments and values -- to its more immanent modality as a "qualifier" of the experiential.

Despite Eagleton's lacunae in accounting for gender, race and actual artistic practices, his critical work on the aesthetic's ideological implications opens up the ground for recuperation of the term. Moreover, the ideological implications of the aesthetic occluded from his book provide a place to begin to expand upon its contingencies: first, in accounting for gender and race as well as class; and second in situating the aesthetic in relation to actual art objects, cultural networks and practices.

#### FEMINIST AESTHETICS

Feminism has played a significant role in "interrupting" the theoretical legacy of cultural studies established at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham by opening up the area of subjective knowledge as an object of study, and establishing questions of gender and sexuality as central to theories of power (Hall, 1992: 282). Because feminism centres on the primacy of experience in the production of knowledge it links fundamentally with the aesthetic I have delineated it here. Moreover, feminist

aesthetic approaches reject the aesthetic as a totalizing concept. As Hilde Hein has argued, feminist aesthetics resists a single aesthetic paradigm, and instead involves the struggle of coming to terms with multiplicity and with the blurring of discrete sites of inquiry (1990: 282-283). Moreover, as Sandra Harding observes, feminist analysis pluralizes the terms of reference, accounting for the feminisms which result from variations, and even contradictory lived experience: those hyphenated states of feminist identity linked to class, race and culture (1987: 6-7). Likewise, Trinh T. Minh-ha resists aestheticism conceived in terms of universalism and idealism. Resisting binaries of separation and unity, difference and same, theory and art, she opts instead to explore aspects of the relations between categories. Rather than attempting to provide an "alternative," she calls for critical strategies "within a range of diversely occupied territories" which resists the transcendence of any one territory (1991: 229). Thus, as Elizabeth Young-Bruehl explains, feminist theorizing may be understood as a process of reconfiguring ideas within an everchanging constellatory epistemology (1989).

Sandra Harding argues for a feminist analysis which functions reflexively, that is, which places "the class, race, gender assumptions and behaviours of the researcher

him/herself" within the "picture that she/he attempts to paint" (1987: 8). This acknowledges that results are shaped by the point-of-view of the interrogator. Perspectives from feminist research methodologies can inform an aesthetic that opens up questions of experience as distinct from using aesthetic criteria as a telos for specific evaluations. Feminist theorizing poses itself as both an interested perspective and in interventional acts that -- rather than focussing on understanding the status quo -- endeavour to change it. According to Hein, the "pleasure of theorizing is in what it opens not what it seals off" (1990: 285).

Trinh T. Minh-ha asks, "Can art...be used to point to the limitations of theoretical discourse without being mystified itself?" She identifies a space of tension between art and theory and asserts the necessity for artists and critics to provisionally situate themselves but refuse to be confined by their locations. Trinh's notion of the "interval" enables a transformative aesthetic politics that neither assimilates nor separates, nor can it be reduced to a comprise. The interval enables an openness characterized by a "critical not knowingness" and "alert experience" (1991: 225-235).

~ In its aesthetic sense, processes involving modes of attention allow for an experience to happen without being predetermined by habitual closures of judgment. Thus

practices of awareness are focussed on states of active reception that allow for the discomfort of "not knowing." Not only does this contrast with prefigured certainties and possible projections entailed in apprehension, but Trinh's interval posits the knowledge of aesthetic experience without necessarily categorizing it. Additionally, she articulates the struggle to break with the purely specular economies which structure critical discourse in order to account for other dimensions of sensory experience.

Trinh, along with other feminist re-thinkings of aesthetics, indicates that where a feeling of relatedness between objects and subjects displaces the one-way consumptive viewing of objects, the contingency of touch may play a significant role in rethinking aesthetic experience. Notably, a 1976 essay by Silvia Bovenschen describes the terms of a "feminine aesthetic" which activates sensorially based perception:

Is there a feminine aesthetic? Certainly there is, if one is talking about aesthetic awareness or modes of sensory perception. Certainly not if one is talking about an unusual variant of artistic production or about a painstakingly constructed theory of art (1985: 49-50).

Bovenschen seems initially to propose a singular aesthetic which suggests a style of production. However, I choose to read her assertion as positing an embodied perceptual

engagement. Teresa de Lauretis reconsiders Bovenschen's article a decade later within a project of redefining aesthetic and formal knowledge in terms of a focus on the effects of texts as distinct from analysis of the texts themselves (1987: 131). Aesthetic perception, she argues, can be explored in terms of modes of address directed to women as subjects with particular recognitions. This opens the terrain of the quotidian -- everyday gestures, ways of speaking, and ways of being in public or private space -- as a domain of aesthetic inquiry.

While the immanence of aesthetic process is at the centre of my argument, I also want to assert the necessity of aesthetic judgment. We must recognize that any proposition requires a judgment or closure, however provisional. To assume a value-neutral point of view is to inhabit a purgatory of ineffectual relativism. It is in this sense that Christine Battersby has attempted to address the question of aesthetic value by reviewing the aesthetic in its historical specificity. Battersby's project to develop a feminist theory of aesthetic value takes up the radical potential of the aesthetic's eighteenth-century roots as a "science of the senses" as delineated by Baumgarten and taken up by Kant. She goes on to explain that the objectives of German philosophy were to discover how universal common experience could be

achieved amongst all people on the basis of individual sense experience (1991: 35). In Kant's view, aesthetic judgments are simultaneously subjective and universal (Eagleton, 1990: 93). Yet Kant's notion of universal experience is at its core absolutist in requiring that feelings and sensations be subjected to reason and duty (20). It rests upon an opposition between morality and sensuality that is only reconcilable by reason (21). As Eagleton notes, Kant's aesthetic insists on a split between the actual and the ideal: aesthetic experience can only be known in a state of transcendence and disinterestedness which excludes desire and ignores the body.

In contradistinction to feminist approaches which take a position "outside" aesthetics, Battersby negotiates a position within philosophical discourse in order to revise the question of aesthetic worth. With a radical end in view, she aims to recuperate what is useful in traditional aesthetics. She argues that marxist and feminist suspicions towards the "aesthetic" have to do with a confusion of "aesthetics" -- to do with the senses -- with "aestheticism" -- a doctrine of taste or consensus of properly educated connoisseurship (1991: 35). Battersby returns to Kant's eight characteristics of purely aesthetic judgement outlined in The Critique of Judgment.<sup>6</sup> She retains aspects of Kant's characteristics, for



example, that aesthetic judgment is made up of feelings of pleasure or pain and that it must involve an individual's experience of an object. Yet at the same time she asserts that feminists must reject Kant's notions of a "disinterested" and "pure" aesthetic experience that effects in the subject an state transcendent to its contingent objects. As Battersby argues, it is precisely the pleasure-power link engendered in "disinterestedness" that must be accounted for in a project which de-universalizes any notion of a "pure" aesthetic experience.

Battersby focuses on modes of aesthetic evaluation, specifically, in how they are built into descriptions of art work. For example such terms as "authenticity," "originality," "delicacy," or "forcefulness," are not purely facts but are inherently evaluative (1991: 37). Moreover, notions of what constitutes an "artist," and categories of artists, are also profoundly determining. Through a process of deconstructing terms, her aim is to refigure a notion of aesthetic value that decentres a singular artistic canon while at the same time resisting essentialism.

Concerning the question of aesthetic value, then, what is important is not simply judging something "good" or "bad" but rather exploring how good and bad are constituted (Aufderheide, 1990 :357). This entails rethinking and

redefining the aesthetic in light of its cultural location and those practices which constitute it.

So while I have used the work of Trinh, Hein, and Harding to explicate the grounds of a feminist aesthetic as immanent and experiential, in turn, I have reviewed Battersby's proposition for a feminist reevaluation of aesthetic value to underscore its potential as well. Given that the aesthetic I propose here is simultaneously experiential and evaluative, the conjunctural theories of cultural studies provide a means of exploring how these aspects of the aesthetic may be provisionally unified without reducing the specificity of its elements. In what follows, I will review in some detail the writings of Michèle Barrett and Janet Wolff, whose engagements straddle both cultural studies and feminist aesthetics.

#### AESTHETIC DISCLOSURES: BARRETT AND WOLFF

Michèle Barrett recuperates the aesthetic to extend the analytical processes involving judgment or "meaning" to incorporate the significance of the aesthetic as it encompasses extradiscursive sensual engagement. Barrett's assertions resemble aspects of Janet Wolff's proposed methodology for the study of art with certain distinctions which I will elaborate in what follows. Both authors delineate disciplinary blindnesses imbricated in the legacies of

"ideological" and "structuralist" criticism which underpin theoretical work in cultural studies, and posit the potential of the aesthetic in theoretical work.

Michèle Barrett recuperates the aesthetic from the margins of critical inquiry to reconsider its significance to the interpretation of culture. Writing in 1988 when questions of the aesthetic were generally viewed by left critics as "politically reprehensible," she warns that evading the issue of the aesthetic -- which for her encompasses "modalities of perception" -- leaves criticism unable to deal with the realm of popular art and sentiment (697-715). Deploying the aesthetic as a critical paradigm, she locates significant theoretical gaps in cultural theory, which she claims are attributable to the overemphasis on meaning in theoretical practice generally. Moreover, she asserts that the aesthetic is necessary precisely in accounting for experience. Barrett urges cultural studies to negotiate and account for the nondiscursive aspects of the spaces between positions.

Barrett reviews Janet Wolff's definition of the "aesthetic" as, first, "received by the senses"; second, "referring to beauty"; and third, "superior taste." In this latter instance concerning questions of taste, sociological approaches have explored the contingencies of taste to class. Barrett's concern, however is with the aesthetics in the first

two: its pertinence to "the senses" and to "beauty." In terms of perception, Barrett claims that the senses produce an "aesthetic mode of feeling" which engages the sensorium in particular ways (1988: 698). In terms of beauty, she argues that the art object perceived need not be "beautiful" to have aesthetic "value." Against the "beauty = value" conflation by which the aesthetic has been traditionally conceptualized, Barrett urges art theorizing to consider "how and why the particular formal properties of the work can account for the value assigned" (698). The dimensions of the "how" and "why" of art production work back from the "value" produced to include "the experience" of apprehension itself in its contextual specificity, thus bringing forth the aesthetic's experiential and empirical aspects.

For Barrett, the exclusion of the aesthetic from cultural studies results in particular "political-theoretical myopia(s)." She goes on to locate particular blind spots of critical paradigms. In the first instance, she argues that Marxist approaches which consider "art-as-ideology" are limited because they deny the text. While she acknowledges that works of art do encode ideological positions, she avers that their significance is not exhausted simply by deciphering ideological content. In addition, she notes that ideologically-based approaches to interpretation, based on

cultural totalities as they are, cannot account for the shifts in the production of meaning contingent to temporally specific points of reception.

Barrett contrasts ideological approaches to (post)structuralist ones. She observes that (post)structuralism and deconstruction in effect reject the subject. While acknowledging the political thrust of these approaches in disassembling the pretensions of "the aesthetic" as a universal, unalterable standard of value, she points out that structuralism's obfuscation of aesthetics belies an inherent antihumanism in its effective reduction the subject to text. So while (post)structuralism accounts for the text's internal powers of constructed meaning and the plurality of meanings produced in its consumption, it precludes the potential of agency in experiencing altogether (1988: 699). Moreover, Barrett makes clear that where (post)structuralism has enabled the crossing of disciplines, its formalism -- akin to the subversivity of avant garde approaches -- leaves important questions concerning cultural and aesthetic experience unexamined in both cultural studies and Marxist criticism (700).

Barrett indicates several dangers in overlooking the aesthetic in theoretical work (701). First, she notes that "principled relativism" -- that one work is better than

another -- is hegemonic in left art criticism. While it is necessary to interrogate conditions of value according to class, race or gender bias, it is unimportant if undertaken only in the interest of deeming a work "good" or "bad." Rather than evaluative judgments, she suggests the importance of pragmatic conditions of possibility. Another peril of overlooking aesthetic specificity may ignore that works are fictional and conflate the work with the author. Such collapse is evident in approaches which stress the "mode of production" as immanent to external historical conditions. In this regard, as I will explain, both Barrett and Janet Wolff concur concerning the importance of conjunctural analysis which maintains the specificity of both sociological and textual aspects (Wolff, 1990: 108). Barrett continues her argument by underscoring that the ideological and political implications of a work cannot be pre-given, rather they are produced in the consumption of the work.<sup>7</sup> And finally, ignoring the role of the senses in an aesthetic experience risks a mystificatory view of art, both disconnected from the body and separate from the social.

Barrett's point concerning the aesthetic's capacity to broaden cultural studies practice from what she deems "an overconcern with meaning," is pivotal precisely because it invites extra-textual investigation. Barrett returns to

marxist aesthetician Max Raphael because he explores the connections of aesthetic form to the senses. For Raphael, "aesthetic feeling" is produced in an exteriorization of the faculties, incorporating all the senses rather than favouring one. In Raphael's notion of an "aesthetic experience," an active viewer reconciles production and consumption. He acknowledges that the manner in which individuals apprehend varies according to historical and normative conditions of life. The experience of interrelated sense perceptions comprised, what for him effected, a more general "aesthetic attitude." This experience promised "resolution" (a form of connecting) to internal or external conflicts. In what Raphael terms "reconstitutive criticism," energies which produced the work are made available during its consumption. In his view, the task of art critics is to provide a description of the processes of producing the art work by noting the ways and techniques through which particular media have been translated into particular representations. Likewise, the materials used constitute the "conditions of existence" of the art work itself (Barrett, 1988: 703).

For Barrett, Raphael's theory concerning the artist-viewer relation contributes to marxist aesthetics by foregrounding an experiential dimension as an art work is "re-made" during its consumption. This involves a Brechtian kind

of active consumption which involves informing beholders of the techniques employed (skills may be acquired) as opposed to aesthetic models that are based on a reflectionist theory of art (whereby apprehension is focussed around an "icy crust of mere presence") (Barrett, 1988: 702-5). In Raphael's words:

[A]rt is an ever-renewed creative act, the active dialogue between spirit and matter; the work of art holds man's [and women's presumably] creative powers in a crystalline suspension from which it can again be transformed into living energies. Consequently, art by its very nature is no opiate; it is a weapon (Max Raphael, The Demands of Art, p. 187, quoted in Barrett, 1988: 706).

Here Raphael displaces Marx's claim that art is an opiate, arguing that the affectivity of art, rather than numbing people, can be deployed for positive ends. It is important to note that because Raphael's aesthetic theory was conceived during the 1960s, his preoccupations with formal analysis and the materiality of the art object must be understood in the context of the art movements during that time. Nevertheless, his mobilization of the aesthetic as contingent to the empirical dimensions of creative process certainly evokes the experiential within a theory of viewing. Just as Raphael's conception of "aesthetic feeling" may be seen as comprising aspects of creative process, his "aesthetic attitude" pertains to the relational conventions governing apprehension.



Barrett's exploration of connective and sensorial aspects of the aesthetic provides the ground for disclosing blindness in cultural studies where "culture" has been reduced to "meaning." She argues that the category of the aesthetic, often dismissed as inherently reactionary or bourgeois, is, in fact, no more limiting than such categories as "signification" and "pleasure" (1988: 712). By dismantling the basis of prejudice against the aesthetic -- assumed to be a judgment of connoisseurship -- she opens it to encompass categories other than beauty. Moreover, she recuperates the positivity of the term as a relational form, thus providing the means of moving beyond "signifying practices" to understand the contingencies of "cultural experience" (712).

Barrett considers the aesthetic in terms of what counts as knowledge. She labours to justify the aesthetic in terms of its epistemological capacities asserting that experience can be the basis for knowledge. In turn, Janet Wolff endeavours to draw from cultural studies theory a methodology for the study of art by exploring theoretical trajectories to locate their analytical limitations. These are methodological issues which examine how theoretical models can be mobilized in terms of art as a research site. In other words, while Barrett makes claims concerning the aesthetic in relation to meaning in the production of knowledge, Wolff provides a more

immanent perspective of how cultural studies theorizing can engage with the field of art.

Janet Wolff's proposal for analysis drawn from cultural studies in the study of art shifts the stakes of inquiry into a traditionally "aesthetic" domain. Like Barrett, Wolff situates an aesthetic critique in relation to the impasse of the ideological-structuralist binary, noting similar limitations in each position. Wolff hinges her critique upon the word "and" -- after the culture-and-society binary of Raymond Williams -- arguing that it functions to limit analysis "within" each paradigm (1992: 706). Like Barrett, she accounts for the complications in the critical legacies of cultural studies in what she names "culturalist" analysis on the one hand, and "sociological" approaches on the other. While these terms roughly correlate with Barrett's "structuralist" and "ideological" positions, Wolff, rather than accounting for the consequences of "excluding" the aesthetic, explores the "excesses" and "inhibitions" of these paradigms. In the context of her critique, Wolff's use of "cultural" risks confusion because she uses it to, in fact, refer to structuralist, poststructuralist and deconstructivist positions. Within the domain of cultural studies as I understand it, "culturalism" typically refers to the sociologically inflected legacy of Raymond Williams.

Nevertheless, given the seeming transposition of terms, Wolff's culturalist approaches include the discursively centered work of Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan and Roland Barthes. While discourse theory has contributed significantly to new art historical approaches which expose the myth of "aesthetic autonomy" by situating art within social power relations, Wolff argues that analysis remains at the level of textuality. In an argument resembling Barrett's, she points out the primacy of the discursive of these approaches reduces the social itself to text thereby precluding the possibility of mobilization and political action. These perspectives, she notes, cannot describe the persistence of lived social conditions. Like Barrett, Wolff claims that it is precisely the question of experience that is inhibited within the limits of categories (717). While acknowledging the politics of texts, Wolff asserts the need to account also for extra-textual conditions of social, political and economic relations in cultural analysis (Ibid.).

In turn, for Wolff, the limitation of "sociological" approaches, is that they do not allow for discussions of representation. These approaches, in emphasizing the ideological aspects of a text, tend to overlook the text itself. She cautions against mechanistic determinism which she deems "facile sociology" which reductively considers the

"reflection" of social processes in works of art (1992: 707). Similarly reductive in her view are critiques which, in considering the "use" of art, overlook the significance of the art object itself (Ibid.). Hence she locates the disciplinary blindness of "social production of culture" approaches precisely in their failure to engage with content. This occurs in the tendency to ignore art's products in favour of its processes. Thus Wolff would insist upon the effectivity of artistic texts and representation at their own levels of operation as distinct from functioning merely as mirrors or responses to the social (711). Moreover, she maintains that the "social" itself is a category which is never absolute and is continually remade in relation to a complex of discourses, processes and institutions (Ibid.).

For Wolff, cultural studies offers a way out of the impasse posed by the "and" reinforcing discrete analytical categories by providing a conjunctural theory which can account for the "significant relations" between the cultural and the social. She posits a method of "dialectical realism" for the study of art where the delineation of historically specific "constitutive moments" encompasses both the social power of subjects, processes and institutions and cultural constitution of the social in discourse. Thus, for Wolff, inter-disciplinarity does not equate with inter-textuality:

cultural studies approaches which emphasize relations between literary and visual texts do not necessarily engage with the interrelations of text and social processes.

Barrett and Wolff open the way for a broader consideration of the aesthetic contingencies inherent in a theoretical practice which brings together texts and lived experience. Where Barrett focuses on problems concerning the exclusion of the category of the aesthetic in (post)structuralist and ideological critical positions, Wolff is concerned with the limitations of these positions as they are adopted within the study of art. Both theoreticians disclose how these critical legacies account, or fail to account, for the aesthetic. It is as if they both take up the connective zone, yet perceive it in terms of different directional impulses. Whereas Barrett expands upon the category of the aesthetic "outside" structuralist and ideological positions, Wolff develops a conjunctural theory which works with the contingencies of bringing them together. Both Barrett's "outside" and Wolff's "contingencies," describe what I recognize as "the space of articulation."

In this respect, reconsidering the aesthetic as a relational form situates it as, what Homi Bhabha has described, a terrain of the "beyond," distinct from a transcendent criteria of judgment or a rarefied theory of art.

For Bhabha, the realm of the beyond puts the focus on "those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of 'differences.'" This defines a space between a multiplicity of territories where none remains in dominance in the Trinh's sense. Thus the practices of the "in-between" -- places of transit with neither clear beginning nor end -- constitute a trope of cultural space (1993: 62-63). Barrett, Wolff and Bhabha provide different but sympathetic grounds for redefining the aesthetic to account for the ways creative processes take form, and how the domain of experience is negotiated.

I want to argue that aesthetic practices, in forming connections, overlays, contextualizations and resituations, may be employed to both problematize practices of both art and theorizing. In particular, as I aim to show, the capacity of the aesthetic to qualify relations may be mobilized to describe the activation of what has become commonsense practice within theory building -- that of forming "articulations," "rearticulations," and "disarticulations." If one considers articulations in themselves as relational forms, then it is possible to expand upon the dynamic place of the articulation itself as both provisional context and practiced space.

## LOCATING EXPERIENCE:

### HALL'S THEORETICAL BRICOLAGE

In this section I aim to clarify how Stuart Hall's theory of articulation can contribute to rethinking the domain of the aesthetic. I will suggest that Hall's conjunctural theory -- while it is clearly not his intention to elaborate an aesthetic theory as such -- can elucidate the aesthetic in its relational modalities. And, on another level, a redefined aesthetic may, in turn, be mobilized to understand theorizing itself in its reflexively "aesthetic" aspects. Hall's connective approach to theoretical work may be read in terms of a creative process which, drawing from multiple approaches, functions to set theoretical and material elements in relationship. Rather than working within closed paradigms, or esteeming the certainty of mastery within such positions, Hall encourages the reader to think of theorizing as "an open horizon, moving within the magnetic field of some basic concepts, but constantly being applied afresh to what is genuinely original, novel in new forms of cultural practice, and recognizing the capacity of subjects to reposition themselves differently" (1986: 51).

While I am using Hall's conjunctural theory for my own purposes in redefining the aesthetic, it is noteworthy that Hall has himself drawn from art practice. Hall's admission to

being a "modernist," is interesting in this regard. He describes the early modernist practice marked by Picasso, Braque, Klee, Heartfield, Dada, Surrealism, and the Bauhaus "fantastically interesting" for him in its aesthetic and historical innovations, particularly in complicating the stability of discrete personhood (Ibid.). While Hall recognized the inherent impossibility of the modernist movement to transform the terrain upon which it operated, its iconoclasm of traditional pictorial conventions provided significant formal models. These included dissolution of the regime of linear perspective, transgressions of social and aesthetic "propriety" and disruption of chronological narrative. Previously, these conventions had enabled a comfortable "suspension of belief" on the part of the bourgeois beholder. Against such coherence, modernist practice deployed techniques -- whether visual, ethical or textual -- which collided without the expected connectives. In particular the modality of the connection-as-collage provided for radical innovation in artistic practice. I will suggest here that Hall's articulation theory has drawn upon the aesthetic legacy of modernist collage to enable unexpected conjunctures of aspects of distinct theoretical traditions, cultural objects and practices.



Using the grounds of the aesthetic as a relational form to rethink Hall's articulation model, in turn, problematizes its "central" position as a key theoretical tool in cultural studies. For while Hall's conjunctural theory has enabled much innovative work, its evolution into commonsense usage at the centre of cultural studies has tended to obscure the more reflexive dimension concerning how articulations are, in fact, formed. Given Hall's preoccupation with productive "theorizing applied ever fresh to new horizons," his project, in effect, inverts Williams' more analytical approach to cultural studies as a "critique of aesthetics" which considered a "totality of culture" as a whole way of life. In contradistinction, Hall's articulation theory concentrates on "connections" which not only maintain the specificity of difference but, I will argue, qualify the incorporation of agency in the act of theorizing itself. It is in this sense, then, that Hall's articulation model can bring forth a reading of the aesthetic, both in its connective immanence and experiential reflexivity. And it is in this way that cultural studies can provide the grounds for revising the category of the aesthetic.

Hall's theory of articulation mobilizes signifiatory and representational contingencies of discourse while preserving the provisional and conditional aspects of its coherent elements. The articulation model locates ideological

structures which encompass "common sense" through the "yoking together" of social practices and relations. To summarize Hall then, the articulation model describes two simultaneous actions. First, to articulate is "to speak forth, to enunciate" (1986: 53). This modality describes an utterance, a proclamation which is simultaneously event and product. In its second sense, to articulate is "to link in the matter of the connection between two trains (Ibid.).". Here the articulation is a form of connection that can make a provisional unity of discourses, social groups, political events, and structures of power in society. In its provisional coherence, the link may dissolve, be "disarticulated" or "rearticulated" in a different manner. According to Hall, the link is not necessarily given as a rule of value, but necessitates particular conditions in order to appear. The articulation of two or more practices does not mean they become identical, rather they maintain their specificity as "distinctions within a unity" (Ibid.). Hall's conceptualization of articulation as how elements cohere is particularly important here because it describes -- as simultaneously fact and act -- how intrinsic discursive and extra-discursive specificities are preserved within the provisional link.

Hall's conjunctural theory draws primarily from two theoretical legacies which account for experience. On the one hand, the "culturalist" legacy of Raymond Williams assumes that experience, bearing primary authenticity, has a "necessary correspondence" to class position. On the other hand, the (post)structuralist legacy of Althusser assumes that all experience has "no correspondence" with the real and rather is determined as the subject's position within discourse is endlessly displaced and fractured. Articulation in turn, provides for "no-necessary-correspondence" which accepts the displacing effects of ideology on experience and the instability of the subject from (post)structuralism. Yet Hall rejects the (post)structuralist abandonment of any real outside discourse and culturalist assumptions of fixed identities according to class (Grossberg, 1986: 63-70). The articulation, then, is determined by the particular historical, social and ideological contingencies within which it may be forged. While culturalism and (post)structuralism may seem to pose a kind of binary, it must be emphasized that the seeming opposition of these positions is neither polarized nor conflated in the articulation model. Rather a new zone opens up "in between" which, in its always-provisional closure, enables the connection of "theory" to "social practices."

It is this "zone" that concerns me as an "aesthetic" relational form. But before elaborating the complexities of this space, I would first like to trace how the legacies of these positions contribute to the category of the aesthetic. As previously mentioned, the legacy of Williams' "culturalism" comes out of a humanism which considers the social in terms of coherent "totalities." In this view, aesthetic experiences are conceived in terms of the determinations of social class such as "elite," "popular," or "folk" culture. Nevertheless, Williams emphasizes the potential creativity in cultural processes and the active autonomy of human practices, or praxis, which places experience as a primary and authentic source of knowledge and measure of social formations.

Hall underscores the impact of Althusserian structuralist formalism to interrupting such conceptions of totalized experience, by accounting for the differences, complexities and contradictions of social unities. Rather than assuming a necessary class correspondence, experience is understood by Althusser as a product of ideological positioning. In the case of art's apprehension, the discursive structures of the gallery, museum or other contexts produce the always-already conditions of aesthetic experience. Likewise the determinations of art's representation are understood to be inscribed within systems of power and regulation. While

Althusser accounts for specificity and difference, Hall notes the limitations of the Althusserian position in its reluctance to consider experience outside of discourse.

Combining the strengths of culturalist and (post)structuralist positions, Hall's articulation theory is concerned with theorizing the complexity of a unity (Hall, 1985: 91-114). Hall's conjunctural model accounts for both the intersection of ideologies as carried by discourses and in the relations between text and experience. Thus, for Hall, meaning is neither wholly produced by the receiver, nor embedded in the text, but articulated as a conjunction of historically specific relations between human beings, texts, culture and social conditions.

After Hall, the aesthetic may be located in relation to complex elements which are not given but rather are constructed or articulated contingent to historical contexts. It is in this sense, that I want to foreground the aesthetic as a category of relation in terms of its articulations of corporeal awareness, artistic practice and social and political struggle. Where Hall has clarified how ideology is experienced in the interconnections of meanings and discourses and how the means of representation locate social practices, consciousness, identities and subjectivities, I want to propose that the aesthetic can play an important role in

qualifying the relational forms of these articulations. After Hall's definition of articulation as simultaneously performative and connective, I want to explore two operative modalities. The first occurs in the performative dynamics of theorizing itself: acts of agency in articulating elements. The second describes the state of the connection mobilized after the fact to "qualify" its engagements.

As a connective category, the aesthetic pertains to both the perceptual and dynamic processes of articulation. Arguing that articulation shifts the question from "determinism" to "effects," Lawrence Grossberg points out that the politics of a text are not guaranteed in advance, but rather derived as the text is articulated with other texts, discourses, ideologies at different places and times. In this sense, as I will argue later, Grossberg's notion of effects work within a register of aesthetic value to describe fun, pleasure and feeling. I would like to push the concept of articulation to embody the activation of art, not only for its own sake, but contingent to its institutions and cultural conventions. I want to show that articulation can account for aesthetic experience both in its utterances and engagement, while at the same time maintaining the specificities of discursive conventions, cultural and social practices. But first, to invert this point somewhat, I would like to mobilize the

connective and actifying aspects of the aesthetic in relation to Hall's theoretical practice. The activation of an articulation, then, like forms of aesthetic experience, can describe the act of theorizing.

Hall's metaphor for theoretical work -- recalling the biblical theme of a painting by Paul Gauguin -- is "Jacob wrestling with the angels." Hall alludes to it when explaining his conviction that the only theory worth having is one that "you fight off." For, as he explains, even if a perfect theoretical fit is impossible, a "theoretical gain" occurs in the dynamics of the engagement, conversation or dialogue itself. In other words, even an argument can be a productive form of connection. Hall's invocation for theoretical practice is profoundly aesthetic in its conception of a first person struggle-as-engagement not only because it emphasizes the "worth" of theorizing as a creative process and therefore implicates judgment, but because it "qualifies the experience" of theorizing itself in terms of a conflictual relational state.

Another important and related aspect of Hall's theoretical practice which enables me to trace out its aesthetic subtext is evident in the formal dynamics of his approach. Hall states:

You have to ask, under what circumstances can 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 social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected (1986: 53).

The articulation produces meaning given the specificity of the contingency. Where the significance of the unity accounts for the effects, the modality of the connection -- in the activity of analyzing the (surprising) "found" contingencies, or producing unities in "bringing together" elements -- may be unpacked for its aesthetic significance. Hall distinguishes "the will to connect" of an articulation-as-relational-form from the cultural form itself. It is in this more dynamic sense of articulation that I will argue that the rhetorics of a performative aesthetic comprise ethical practices and artistic selves.

Moreover, I contend that it is in the modalities of connection, formed by a theorizing agent capable of moves "across" significant sites, that Hall's theory of articulation, itself comprises a medium -- the scissors and "provisional" glue -- of theoretical collage. In this respect, the creative role of theorizing, its immanent relations and contingencies, resembles the techniques of modernist bricolage



and montage which typified the artistic movements that Hall describes.

Theoretical collage -- articulating, disarticulating and re-articulating available discursive formations to particular social conditions of possibility -- thus may be deployed not only to critically interrogate, but to actually produce cultural formations. In turn, as Dick Hebdige has pointed out, Hall's articulation model encompasses the social through its capacity to qualify the making and remaking of the hegemonic category of "we":

[Articulation] is a continually shifting, mediated relation between groups and classes, a structured field and set of lived relations in which complex ideological formations composed of elements derived from diverse sources have to be actively combined, dismantled, bricolaged, so that new politically effective alliances can be secured between different fractional groupings which can themselves no longer be returned to static homogeneous classes (Hebdige, 1986: 95).

It is in the dynamic aspects of articulation -- in negotiating the politics of text, experience, identity, and culture in their materiality -- that theorizing takes on a creative positivity akin to art practice. As Trinh T. Minh-ha has claimed, "to create is not so much to make something new as it is to shift" (1991: 109). The significance of this is that creativity relies not in origins, or in authenticity, but in situationally specific moves. Similarly, Hall concentrates on

the issue of action over position, in the forging of contextually specific connections. Thus he shifts his focus away from being a particular kind of theorist, to questions of doing theory.

Hall's articulation theory is concerned with the conditional "fixing" of meaning within complex and changing conditions. It asserts both the struggle to produce and resist "structures in dominance" of hegemonic power relations incorporating both identity and discourse. Eagleton and Hall interrogate the possibilities for empowerment as people make sense (both as meaning and through engaging their sensorial awareness) of specific contexts. For both, ideology cannot be separated from experience. As Hall states:

[T]he term "live" ... connotes the domain of experience. It is in and through the systems of representation of culture that we "experience" the world: experience is the product of our codes of intelligibility, our schemas of interpretation. Consequently, there is no experiencing outside of the categories of representation and ideology. (1985: 105).

For Hall, cultural practices are signifying practices. "Meaning" exists not in the text itself (a fixed value) but in its social articulation. In other words, considering the text in its affiliations is the key to its political commitments. An affiliation brings together texts and subjects, holding the capacity to "bind" subject positions in the manner of what

Eagleton would term "fellow feeling." Thus the modality of affiliation, in accounting for the sensorial and experiential force of an articulation, simultaneously describes a connective aesthetic.

Affiliation connotes association, adoption and legitimacy which implicate particular kinds or modalities of emotional investment. With etymological roots in filius, "he/she whom the mother breast feeds," the commitments of affiliation quite compellingly pertain to Hall's imperative for theory's interventional and nurturing role in relation to "non-professional" intellectuals. This in turn, raises questions of power intrinsic to "ways of relating" which qualify the connection. The affective compulsions of critics themselves are evident in the practices of intellectuals in relation to particular cultural formations in such modes as: "cultivation" (Raymond Williams), ethnographer (James Clifford), "believer" (Cornel West, bell hooks, Patricia Mellencamp), "fan" (Larry Grossberg), or "listener in the crowd" (Dick Hebdige). Moreover, the question of illegitimacy -- given the question of adoption -- pertains aptly to cultural studies' questionable patrimony within the conventions of academia, its itinerant base regarding a disciplinary home, and its indistinct, multiple and site-specific methodologies.

In turn, articulation as a form of productive theorizing, engages with how collective and ideological subjects and practices are brought into being. It describes a realm of becoming woven between the discursive and conditions of social possibility (Grossberg, 1986: 66). Or, contrarily, articulation can describe how they are not brought into being. However, while articulation may be deployed metaphorically within a plane of signification, I would like to mobilize the term articulation in what might be construed as its more experiential implications: where "the place of the articulation" itself may be teased out to account for the states and spaces produced. And, in this way, the articulation, as a "relational form" accounts not only for the texts and politics of discourse, but for how processes of cultural conjunctures function to carry ideology within what I would term its aesthetic modality which functions to bridge the ontological and epistemological. "What matters," to use Grossberg's words, "is not the intrinsic or historically fixed objects of culture, but the state of play in cultural relations" (Ibid.).

This "field of play" of articulation theory encompasses social positions, social practices and social texts in process and as "shifting relations." Where the articulation model conceives of ideology as "fixing meaning," it simultaneously

engages the theorist according to his or her "will to connect" with particular cultural formations. The crucial point here is that the theoretical commitments described by affiliation, in accounting for "adoption" of cultural sites and subjects in theoretical practice, indicate an embodied criticism, an experiential politics which "holds" the charge of a relation across different sites and agents. As I have endeavoured to elucidate, both the critical collage of articulation and the state of agency-in-affiliation are relational forms which account for how cultural practices are enacted through the construction of signficatory and social formations.

Hall's articulation model -- in its modality as enunciatory act or as the "linking" of text and text, text and social, or in non-coherence -- functions to situate conditions of significance and to yoke together discursive and nondiscursive elements. It is precisely through the affiliative commitments and productive tensions of its contingencies that Hall's conjunctural theoretical practice embraces processes of becoming that can foreground the aesthetic in its relational form.

## WHAT TO FEEL OR HOW TO FEEL?

### MOBILIZING GROSSBERG'S AFFECT AS AESTHETIC

Grossberg's concern in theorizing suggests a visionary project, particularly in his conviction that the role of cultural studies lies in "constructing possibilities" -- both practical and imaginative -- within particular historical contexts (1988: 9). Of particular significance to thinking the place of the aesthetic in cultural studies is his claim that the power of theorizing is in forging links which direct identities, relations and practices in particular ways (1986: 73).

Grossberg's project grows out of his engagement with limits he observes in Hall's work. He points out that while Hall's conjunctural theory can locate the contingencies of value, taste, style or attitude, it is confined within a plane of signification and representation. Grossberg notes that while articulation describes the inextricability of representation and ideology to experience, it is incapable of elaborating the experiential once activated. This, Grossberg himself attempts with his theory of affect. According to Grossberg, while Hall recognized the need to both theorize and describe the issue of "sensibility" in mass culture, he left the question unanswered. Responding to this lacunae, Grossberg endeavours to develop a theory of sensibility within

cultural studies. Another limitation, in Grossberg's view, is that while Hall acknowledges that people are not "cultural dupes," his plane of analysis -- employing ideological and structuralist approaches -- precludes the possibility of elaborating positive agency (1986: 73). Moreover, Grossberg notes that Hall's privileging of structuralism and its preoccupation with "meaning" does not recognize that discourses may have contradictory effects, or can even be displaced (Ibid.).

Of acute concern for Grossberg, given the constrictions of discursive and institutional structures, is elaborating a theory which accounts for positive agency. His diagnosis of the "failure" of cultural studies to discuss modes of enablement in 1986, becomes a "scandal" by 1990 hinging upon the inability of cultural studies to explain the significance of the connections between "political struggles and popular culture and tastes (1988: 7). Grossberg's concern with qualifying the relations of an articulated plane brings his project within the purview of the aesthetic both in its (more obvious) concern with sensibility, and perhaps less obviously, in its evaluation of relational forms. Like Barrett, and perhaps drawing from her work, Grossberg exhorts cultural studies to consider the social articulations of taste.<sup>8</sup> While Barrett, as outlined previously, described the danger of

eliding the "aesthetic" which she carefully defines in its contingency to the senses, Grossberg takes up the term "sensibility," with particular reference to the nature of pleasure. He asks: What does pleasure do? Where is the pleasure of the text? How are texts used for empowerment? Grossberg notes that "pleasure," in itself, does not necessarily correlate with "empowerment" (as Meaghan Morris has also pointed out), for in some instances pleasure can be disempowering and displeasure empowering (1992: 85). Grossberg's linking of sensibility with pleasure has its antecedents within aesthetic conventions that assume the inextricability of "sensibility" and "pleasure" or "beauty." While this follows from traditional aesthetics, Grossberg's analysis convincingly insists on the politics of the pleasure-power relation in activating sensibility.

Grossberg's articulation of pleasure to the social in theorizing "sensibility" rests, as he acknowledges, on Raymond William's work on culture and society. For Grossberg, a key symptom of the crisis in cultural studies has been the marginalization of William's concept of the "structure of feeling" to the sidelines of theoretical practice, leaving it unable to account for experience. Grossberg reactivates the "structure of feeling" in his theorization of sensibility in constructing his theory of affect.



William's "structure of feeling" describes the concentration of experience in particular conventions of sensibility which give the "shape" to shared and felt reality of particular historical periods. The structure of feeling describes meanings and values as they are lived and felt in particular historical contexts. It defines a continual emergent process defined by the first person relationship to "this," "here," "now," "active," conditions. It can account for "the essence" of changes in style, manners, dress, buildings and history. Likewise it exists in interpersonal relationships and in the sense of the shared experience of a generation or period (1977: 31).

The "structure of feeling" is discernable in recurring configurations in a lived social formation which describe the depth and intensity of experience. Borrowing from dramatic conventions, Williams used the "structure of feeling" with reference to its performance and staging aspects, as well as in reference to the kinds of public spectacles in which it was evident, whether formal theatre or activist intervention. The "structure of feeling" as embodied and expressed in the cultural codes of a period, described particular conjunctions of stylistic and affective effects. Rather than fixed formations, the structure of feeling is conceptually liquid, its elements flowing together as inseparable parts of a

complex whole. Yet, simultaneously, the "structure of feeling" could account -- like ripples on water's surfaces -- for "emergent patterns of general experience" associated with historically specific generations of writers or artists. For Grossberg the capacity of the "structure of feeling" to theorize experience defines "the relationships that can exist between specific practices and the individuals within the formation ... it determines how practices are taken up and lived" (1992: 72). Yet, as he notes, the limitation of this concept, rooted in William's culturalist perspective, was that it could not account for a sense of conflict within a particular generation.

Grossberg mobilizes the empirical and relational aspects of the "structure of feeling" in constructing his theory of "affect." Grossberg's "affect," too, describes a plane of lived experience as moods or emotions which frame particular contexts. However, unlike William's "structure of feeling," it encompasses both the potentialities of agency and allows for complexities within signification. Grossberg's theory of affect enables multiple planes of effects and the politics engendered in collective sensations. By invoking sensibility, corporeality and connection, I want to consider Grossberg's affect as an aspect of aesthetic experience. In this respect, Grossberg's own choice of artistic qualifiers in his

description of "affect" is interesting because it explicitly deploys the terms of artistic discourse:

Affect operates across all of our senses and experiences, across all of the domains of effects which construct daily life ... affect is what gives "colour," "tone," "texture," to the lived (1992: 80-81).

Such formalist terms, when employed within art discourse to describe and analyze objects, usually emphasize the art object itself. Grossberg shifts the terms of a formalist art discourse away from artifacts, to qualify the social and political significance of collectively felt sensations.

Grossberg's definition of the term "affect," must be distinguished from Sigmund Freud's use of the term. For Freud, "affect" described the energy with which people relate to the world through such passions as pleasure, desire or even pain. Freud's affect is a concept of causal libidinal energy referring expressly to repressed emotions, disruptive pleasures as they break through the unconscious. Grossberg's affect, in contradistinction, occupies a different frontier and operative significance. Where Freud's affect occupies the interstices of unconscious and conscious processes within a discrete individual, Grossberg's affect links an individual to moods and feelings which play upon the surfaces of the external world. So while Baumgarten concern is with the senses' role in the surfaces of the discrete body, Grossberg's

interest is with the intensities of the spaces between the experiential and the social. Not reducible to emotion, Grossberg's affect designates an "articulated plane of effectivity" which accounts for how the subject's sensory state is shaped by the materiality of everyday life. Affect, then, as distinct from causal, libidinal energy, is in fact produced out of the contingencies of the relations between practices.

Thus, affect is a plane or level of articulation at the level of the social. Just as Hall's articulation model requires strategic essentialism of a necessary closure in signification, so too, affect describes provisional constellations located in the real world, always contingent to the structures it engages with. Grossberg avers that affective struggles operate politically to "energize and connect specific moments, practices and subject positions" (1986: 73). It is in this sense that I want to explore how the capacity of affect to "energize and connect" suggests an aesthetic relational form. For affect, here, implicates the senses as they are mobilized in aesthetic experience as a collective feeling, and in the intensities experienced between individuals and art's objects and contexts. Affect, then, is about affiliations within the social at the level of investment. It describes the intensity of engagement. Affect

accounts for the charge of how individuals invest themselves, the question of how commitments of sensibility extend across bodies and individuals within a social context.

Grossberg points out that power works to organize affect, to get human beings to feel particular ways about things. Of course, the more coercive aspects of display culture attempt to evoke particular responses to exhibitions of visual art. A term I like to use which describes this is "display rhetorics" which function as a kind of preferred reading or what Grossberg would call an "affective economy." A display rhetoric describes the deliberate arrangement of artifacts in space as a communicative act for particular signification effects and affective feeling. In addition, a display rhetoric requires the enactment of the beholder to mobilize its significance (de Certeau, 1984: 97). Yet, the effects of exhibition, as with other texts, can never be guaranteed in advance. While the "encoding" of intention on the part of the theorist, curator or artist predispose a particular display to certain effects and uses, cultural texts may operate differently in relation to different sites and audiences. Likewise, one can never be certain of the states of audience apprehension involving exhibitions. A person may visit an exhibition to engage with art issues of the day, to meet a friend, to display a new outfit, or to enact a seduction

ritual on a Saturday afternoon. These activities pertain to Grossberg's point that meaning and effect are produced in context, not just in a system of meaning. In other words, both discursive and nondiscursive factors have effects.

Underscoring the dimension of social articulation, then, Grossberg's affect can be mobilized to qualify the contextual specificity of cultural forms, to locate patterns and processes involved in the production and consumption of cultural texts.

Unlike the totality of the "structure of feeling," the plane of affect can account for contradictions between texts, meanings and the production of pleasure (or other states). Importantly, affect does not function as a negative dialectic, a struggle of resistance in the manner of Hebdige's subcultural style critique. Rather, what is important is that individuals invest energy in different ways. Specifically, the "investment" is what characterizes the agency of the subject to articulate his or her "will" to a particular "affective economy." It is in this modality of engagement that affect empowers and enables precisely by forging particular energies, states and possibilities (Grossberg, 1992: 85). Grossberg departs from the analysis of textual meaning to foreground configurations of discursive fields into what he terms

"mattering maps" which account for the effectivities of their articulated elements. Grossberg states that:

The power of affect derives, not from its content, but from the fact that it is always the vector of people's investment with reality, that it is the plane through which (but not necessarily on which) articulations are accomplished (1992: 104-105).

It is the vectors of sensibility that Grossberg mines in order to understand the significance of taste and power within particular social formations. Grossberg has encouraged cultural theorists to undertake typographies of taste and consumption -- after Dick Hebdige's analysis of "pop" culture -- to make sense of how people receive texts. For him, sensibility is produced at the intersection of affect and ideology. He notes that affect alone can never define why something should matter, and that it is the role of ideology to legitimate what matters (1992: 86).

Grossberg's early work on affect suggests the aesthetic in particular ways. His argument that "sensibility" depends on historical relations between ideology and affect posits taste as it negotiates feeling at the level of convention. This logic of affect suggests the aesthetic in its modality as an ideological articulation.

More specifically, Grossberg's notion of sensibility relates to the category of the aesthetic in two distinct ways. First, sensibility defines a mode of engagement in

historically specific ways of selecting and relating to cultural practices on the part of individuals living it. Second, sensibility, itself, constitutes a principle of articulation which links places, elements and intersections of effects to determine the "coherence" of a formation (1992: 72-73). Additionally, both engagement and articulation describe provisional conventions: whether in practices of apprehension or the adoption of attitude within a social formation.<sup>9</sup>

Taking into account McRobbie and Mercer's call for a return to the empirical and experiential in cultural studies, I want to suggest that Grossberg's affect operates empirically for it considers the intensities of affect within the contexts of a relatively stable external world. Moreover, it focusses on how the surfaces of this world contribute to experience by describing the conventions which determine them. For instance, examinations of particular "feelings" describe the fixing of sensibility, however provisionally. Grossberg's project of mapping sensibility must be distinguished from my own. While Grossberg's purview is the social, mine is more specifically experiential and praxical. I wish to extend Grossberg's affect to account more precisely for processes of perception immanent to those fluid intensities and states of apprehension. This notion of affectivity, I will argue, provides another way of considering the flux of the articulation-in-process. Thus, I



will deploy what I find most compelling about Grossberg's affect to explore its significance in accounting for aesthetic experience. The purpose of Grossberg's project is to map affect across bodies, the real and in relation keeping a discursive focus. I want to bring forward Grossberg's notion of "affective alliances" in the context of rethinking the aesthetic. My focus, therefore, is more localized in relation to individual aesthetic enactment and perception. My conception of affect-as-aesthetic pertains to modes of engagement which link viewers to artifacts as well as the connective dynamics entailed in exhibition apprehension.

#### THE PROBLEM OF FEELING IN CULTURAL STUDIES

For Grossberg, the articulated plane of affect indicates a "politics of feeling: whether good, bad or indifferent" (1986:73). Grossberg's affect, however is not reducible to "pure intensity" because, while it contributes to emotions, affect is distinct from them. For Grossberg, emotions result from the combination of meaning and affect or (emotions = meaning + affect) (1992: 79). In turn, I suggest that emotions are produced in experiences which bring together two forms of "enactment": one's internal "utterances" within signifying discursive structures on the one hand, and, on the other, one's "awareness" of an affective plane. While

Grossberg might assume that emotions can also operate unconsciously, his argument tends to posit a conscious enactment of affective investment. This implicitly assumes that the power of an articulation to connect representations and realities hinges to a person's "affective investment" (1992: 83). Grossberg stipulates that the "will" of the agent explains the investment, while the "moods" framing an experience define its affect (81). Additionally, he distinguishes the investments of "libidinal affect" -- having to do with desire, hidden truths, and repression -- from "non-libidinal affect" which is realized on the surfaces (Ibid.).

In Grossberg's view, affect qualifies the nature of concern, caring or passion in the investment. Thus affect can describe the charge and intensity of an aesthetic experience, an exhibition space, or a particular enactment of display culture. While he is careful to situate conjunctures of moods, desires or emotions within particular historical, political and social "structures," his accounting for perceptual processes themselves appears to operate somewhat transparently, especially given the question of agency in apprehension. The issue, for me, concerns his use of the term "investment" which underscores, as Grossberg intends, the use of will. Likewise, this term also implies an economics of "return on the investment" within the field of power relations

generally. But this "return" -- the intensity of affect in an experience -- does not itself account for the states of apprehension involved in "recognizing." In my view, Grossberg's model of affective investment seems to carry a unidirectional "logic of projection." I read its concern as centred on the observable surfaces of reality, an externalised "politics of feeling," whether good, bad or indifferent which functions by will within a climate of contagious moods.

I want to explore more deeply the issue of recognition as a counterpoint of Grossberg's investment. Perhaps it is impossible to know what someone is actually feeling inside, outside or between bodies, but beyond locating affectivity there is also a politics involved with "how feelings are felt." Shifting the grounds of affect from the empirical grounds of solid external reality, I would like to argue that equally important to an "affective investment" are processes of "affective apprehension" which -- operating through experiences produced-in-process -- implicate affect both experientially and performatively. This involves expanding upon Grossberg's claim that affect constitutes a plane of identification.

Identification, as a modality of affect, both identifies attitudes and involves more immanent investment in the attunment of feeling. Thus, it can both produce and describe

structured experience. In the latter instance, identification works in the manner of rhetorical address. As Kenneth Burke argued, identification involves claims to consubstantiality ranging from, for example, a politician addressing an audience of farm boys saying "I was a farm boy myself," through systems of social status to include the mystic's devout identification with the source of all being" (1950: XIV). It is in this sense that I want to employ identification to describe a process of embodied articulation linking a feeling subject to social, cultural and ideological formations. Identification, then, can be mobilized to describe the relational-state of the affiliation as the motivating impulse which qualifies an affective investment. Within a project of aesthetic recovery, identification describes the affective vehicle of engagement which operates between subject and object, subject and subject, subject and concept and so on. In this sense identification functions homeopathically, through mimicry of states, rather than by reaction.

In this sense Patricia Mellencamp's notion of "affective vehicle," which foregrounds identification process, is compelling to me. For Mellencamp, feminism's acknowledgment of the inextricable links between thought and sensation, public and private, and market and state provide the basis for opening up relations between affect and the body. Her work

provides a very useful model of how "states and processes" themselves, in addition to their "effects," may be accounted for and identified.<sup>10</sup>

The dimension of identification as an affective vehicle resembles Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's notion of "processes of becoming" which involves immanent agency as articulated to the dynamics and intensities of particular states. Identification, thus, invokes affect in its contingencies to both action and activation in perception. Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari's concern is with substantive dynamics of a transformative relation. A commentary on Deleuze and Guattari's processes of becoming "other" elucidated by Brian Massumi describes the extraction from a body (whether collective, individual or sub-body) as a "set of affects: ways in which the body can connect with itself and with the world," its recombination to singularity, and subsequent incarnation/resolution of body, self and world.<sup>11</sup>

This logic of identification, understood as a process-of-becoming, must be distinguished from the workings of projection and introjection. Within cultural politics, a logic of introjection characterizes critiques which unwittingly reiterate forces of domination. Grossberg's affect counters such introjection -- what Meaghan Morris has amusingly referred to as "cultural dopism" -- with its logic of

projection which asserts the positive agency of the social subject. Yet because it is reactive, it implicitly sustains the operative introjection-projection binary.

I would like to pursue Grossberg's claim that affect is a plane or mechanism of both identification and belonging (Grossberg, 1992: 84). Of course, "belonging" evokes both ontological "being" and desiring "longing" contingent to a position of social connectedness, "an inside position." In contrast, I am interested in the capacity of identification to account for a non-necessary location of the connection. In other words, it is possible to "long" in an unrequited fashion, and yet to be transformed through sustaining the state of identification itself. Thus identification functions as an affective vehicle to extend the self whether inside a social context, across one's state of being to an "outside" position, or immanent to a motile process. Aesthetic identification, as I have tried to make clear, is a relational form, a particular modality of becoming which, while it may incorporate desire, can also operate outside its economy. Identification also holds the potentiality for a kind of agency which does not implicate "will" in the sense that an "affective investment" does. Affective identification implicates agency in a way distinct from "investment," a way which I contend operates as an "uncertainly bounded"

relational space between acts of investment and states of apprehension.

The problem of feeling in cultural studies, then can be taken up not only in terms of how affect is invested, but also in terms of how it is perceived. Specifically affect effects an aesthetic in terms of its relations, its moods and its capacity not only to stand in for a value, but to qualify the articulated states of apprehension.

In this chapter, I have endeavoured to trace some connections between the aesthetic as a category of connection and the conjunctural theories of cultural studies. After reviewing the aesthetic as a category which entails sense perception, I elaborated how feminist aesthetic perspectives have set the ground for aesthetic redefinition through pluralizing the term aesthetic, through considering experience as an object of study and through perspectives which assume an immanent engagement. I have shown how the aesthetic articulates with -- or could potentially impact on -- theoretical work in cultural studies by reviewing the writings of Barrett, Wolff, Eagleton, Hall and Grossberg, sometimes, admittedly, through reading and appropriating their work as aesthetic theorizing. I suggested that the mechanics of affect can describe the constitution of the aesthetic as both a vehicle of identification and as a dynamic, relational

category. But in contrast to Grossberg's concern with how affective investments articulate to the social, my project concerns the capacities of affect to articulate the politics of feeling pertaining to more individuated states of apprehension.

To conclude, the problem of feeling in cultural studies centres on a problematic of accounting for processes of perception and apprehension, an area of inquiry which requires a conjunctural aesthetic theory. In the next chapter, I will discuss a specific terrain of aesthetic experience, one which incorporates the senses architectonically and involves performative engagement: the museum.



## Notes for Chapter 1

1. While I am reluctant to use "the aesthetic" because it implicitly confers singularity to the term, I can think of no viable alternative.

2. This sense of the aesthetic pertaining to principles of sensual knowledge was reinflected throughout the German aesthetic tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries including the writings of Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer and Neitzsche (Regan, 1992: 5).

3. The purpose of McRobbie's article is to "take stock of the contribution of postmodernity to cultural analysis" signalling, in particular, the crisis of neo-marxist thinking. "New Times" is a take on postmodernity (by contributors to the journal Marxism Today) which is concerned with the politics of consumerism (actually moving away from Marx) and is enthusiastic about new alliances and identities, and taking popular pleasures seriously. For McRobbie, neither New Timers nor postmodernists provide sufficient empirical material or historical specificity. She calls for a return to Marx as a critic of capital and to the phenomenological/empirical field; and asserts the mediating power of social relations (informed by feminism) which underpin, activate and bring to life the world of commodities, their texts, images and representations. In particular, she notes the need for more detailed engagement on the costs as well as the appeal of working in the self-expressive cultural industries. For it is not, as some would claim, always pleasurable (1991).

4. Mercer's project is one concerned with historicizing "reading and readers." It is important to note that his article contains a definition of aesthetic that differs considerably from my own. In the article he specifies a "critical-aesthetic paradigm" operative in cultural studies where the aesthetic as "codes, conventions, rules, regularities and structures" of "proper" reading practices (of a class of experts). My own definition accounts for both the conventions and relational processes of aesthetic experience (1991).

5. In Hegel, the form of connection is the "dialectic" of culture and politics where idealist virility penetrates objects producing Bildung, a mutuality of feeling and concept, content and form. Kant, focusing on consensus at a sensorial rather than conceptual level conceives of the aesthetic as a

relational form, a structure of uniting at an intuitive, affective level. Gameinschaft, then, accounts for the reciprocity of feelings, both marvellous and precarious, in a community as a way of overcoming alienation. Schiller's "hinge" offers yet another metaphor for connection, in this case accounting for a transitional stage between the sense drives (nature) and rational drives (freedom). In accounting for the ideological reconstitution of barbarianism and the political state, the hinge incorporates creative indeterminacy at odds with the material realm it is intended to transform. Schiller's aesthetic is "eternally subjunctive," a "telos" rather than a "means." Rather than affording a modality of connection as such, Schopenhauer's "aesthetic rupture" occupies an in-between space which functions as an escape from the constraints of subjectivity in the contemplation process. The aesthetic condition, as an alternative to appetitive egoism, functions to disengage rather than to unite by simultaneously acknowledging and fracturing the potential bridge (Eagleton, 1990).

6. According to Kant a purely aesthetic judgment has eight aspects: (1) that it is comprised of feelings of pleasure or pain; (2) that it entails immediacy, that is, is not based on a reasoning process; (3) that such judgment involves an experiencing individual; (4) that the judgment be non-conceptual or imaginative; (5) aesthetic judgments are simultaneously subjective and universal; (6) this universality is possible because a purely aesthetic response abstracts from the contingent features of experience, ultimately transcending all emotion and is therefore disinterested; (7) formal features of the art object provide the focus of the aesthetic attitude; (8) the aesthetic response of pleasure in the beautiful is based on disinterested appreciation (Battersby, 1991: 36).

7. Likewise Janet Wolff points out that "materialist aesthetics" have emphasized the production of the text itself while leaving the production of meaning in the reception process unexamined (1987: 97).

8. Grossberg's lectures at Concordia University in the late eighties made explicit references to Michèle Barrett's work.

9. Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "aesthetic sensibility" informs to a significant degree Grossberg's assumptions regarding a "disinterested" relation to the text which subordinates function to form, life to "art" (Grossberg: 1992: 73).

Bourdieu's "popular aesthetic," on the other hand, provides the basis of Grossberg's sensibility as a more embodied relation involving different effects upon the terrain of popular culture (Bourdieu, 1980: p. 251).

10. Patricia Mellencamp urges a reexamination of the premises involving emotions, bodies and faith, in particular, in recognizing the contradictions between thought and affect. Mellencamp introduces a recovery model for the affective crisis (appropriated from 12-step programmes) which centres on properly identifying and then learning to express emotions (1992: 230-235). Of particular concern for Mellencamp is the positivity afforded by "faith" which unites meaning and affect within an economy of belief (233). A signature narrative of Mellencamp's book describes her own situation of "high anxiety" in reckoning with the serious illness of a family member. She describes how consciousness, submitted to affective vehicle -- to faith in this case -- provided an antidote to anxiety.

11. Deleuze and Guattari account for bodies in several registers: collective bodies include states, institutions, and modes of production; individual bodies include human beings and animals; and sub-bodies include thoughts, desires, perceptions-sensations of affect (Massumi, 1992: 134).

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## Chapter 2

### PROBLEMATICS OF AESTHETIC MEDIATION:

#### THE MUSEUM AS MEDIUM

While in the last chapter I described the aesthetic as a conjunctural category which involves the performance, identification and structuring of experience, in this chapter I will proceed to ground the aesthetic in negotiations of the museal. Where debates on the aesthetic are at the centre of the museum, this chapter inquires into how the aesthetic -- as itself a modality of connection and transformation -- operates in the mediation of experience. I will proceed to establish the contingencies of such an experiential aesthetic to specific museum affectivities. In particular I will examine how the structuring of attention in museal space calls into question both discursive and non-discursive processes of engagement. These determinations of experience will be elucidated within a consideration of museums as communication media. In this sense, a view of museums as technologies -- which function both to "extend" and "invoke" the senses -- can be elaborated within a project which expands upon conventions which posit the aesthetic solely in terms of the visual by encompassing, in

addition, the haptic and proprioceptive aspects of aesthetic experience.

Positing museums as a means of communication immediately brings into question a problematic of mediation. I will examine the contingencies of mediation to an experiential aesthetic in two senses. First, in the sense that museums themselves carry particular biases, that is, produce specific effects. In quite another sense, people perceive museums according to their own proclivities. Thus, as media, museums are mobilized interactively as visitors enact their exhibition continuums. An exhibition script, as I am using it here, pertains to formations which frame artifacts for particular effect. Implicit in exhibition scripts is a rhetoric of arrangement which at once both encodes the meaning of the objects as well as an intended experience. Yet, and even against such determinations, exhibition scripts are individually created at the point of reception according to specific proclivities and habits of engagement. The viewer's attention rests upon, and shifts between, objects, spaces and other viewers in temporally specific intervals. At the same time, the body of the beholder engages with the contingencies of light, scale, temperature and presence. Problematizing the museal medium, then, must take into account both "determined" and "chosen" enactment of the links between institution,



subject and object. Importantly, while a "preferred reading" may be coded into an exhibition script, viewers may choose to ignore it, work against its grain or overlay their own reading. Yet whether the motivation is governed by submission or defiance, an aesthetic experience is produced.

The bias of museums as communication media -- their effects -- can be located across a range of formations including museum architecture, the governing discourses (of science, history or art) which authorize context and the curatorial inscriptions of objects and viewers. Recent debates have centred on production of cultural value by the museum in the context of nationalisms, identities or other aspects of representation. It is in this sense that Mieke Bal has asserted that "If there is anything that would differentiate the 'new' museology from the 'old,' or plain museology, it is the idea that a museum is a discourse, and exhibition is an utterance within that discourse" (Bal, undated draft: 9). Likewise, museum critiques formulated in the wake of Foucauldian-inspired (post)structuralism tend to emphasize the textuality of particular museological sites and problematize the function of the reader. Examples include Mieke Bal, Tony Bennett, JoAnne Berelowitz, Douglas Crimp, and Eilean Hooper-Greenhill.

Museal discourse includes the intended codings of programming content, the effects of their structured spaces, as well as, in the words of Mieke Bal, "those aspects of the museum that seem to pass unnoticed and uncriticized" or "natural" (Bal, 1992:561). Thus, museal discourse works across both sides of art's "figure-ground" relation. While museum programs conventionally centre on the "figures" of its content -- objects, collections and exhibits -- considering the museum as a media of communication involves analysis of the formal effects of its architectonics, exhibition scripts, and display rhetorics. Thus museum beholders embody the discursive aspects of museums as they enact its spaces. Interesting examples of this can be observed in the Museum Photographs of Thomas Struth which present museum spaces populated by people engaged in acts of apprehension depicting a variety of countenances and states of identification. The same photograph may also portray visitors as otherwise occupied: conversing, resting, reading, or writing rather than interacting with the art. Struth's photographs provide a view of the amorphous contexts of the museal, which belie its affective "grounds," and indicate significant gaps in attention between the determinations of its formalized discourses and extra-discursive ambiances and processes. Following from this distinction, my intent here is to combine an analysis of how display rhetorics relay a

particular aesthetic value with an exploration of how an aesthetic experience -- constituted in relation with museal discourses but not as a necessary outcome of it -- operates dynamically.

The following discussion addresses a lacunae in recent museological critique pertaining to questions of agency in the creation of museum experiences. Thus my concern here is to extend the terrain of knowledge production in museums by bringing forth the extra-discursive, empirical context for affect entailed in exhibition experience.

As I noted in the first chapter, Michèle Barrett has elaborated the (post)structuralist tendency to focus on meaning over experience. Similarly Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak sets value and consciousness in relationship with the warning that it is a common theoretical mistake "to turn a theory of value into an analogy for consciousness" (1990:98).<sup>1</sup> Both recognize the limitations of the closures of meaning and value respectively. Extending from these important distinctions, I would like to suggest here that it is precisely by moving out of the totalizing tendencies of signification that a category of the aesthetic may be recuperated and redeployed to account for the perceptual and ethical spheres of museums which, in contrast to the stasis of "states" provide particular climates for negotiating experience.

The question of "atmosphere," which entails an all-at-once dimensionality, perhaps most precisely relates to museum affectivity. On a practical level, museums are generally preoccupied with climate control, in maintaining professional standards of light, temperature and humidity requisite to the optimal conservation of works of art. In this sense "atmosphere" is conceived of as an unwieldy entity which can be policed through particular forms of technology: light meters, thermostats, hydrometers and other devices. Yet, what most concerns me here is another dimension of museum "atmosphere," one specific to the haptic sense, which charges affective relations and qualifies the ambience of engagement and mood. The haptic, entails the faculty of touch-in-space-and-time, a space of "pure connection" which operates step-by-step (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 493). This dimension of museum experience invokes a morphology of the senses, that is, how feelings are shaped in beholders. In museums, then, the atmospheric haptic involves processes of orientation, linkage, and unfoldment through enactment.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, Hall's theory of articulation -- which expressly engages linkages -- is particularly enabling as a theoretical model which can be extended to account for both aesthetic experience and value. Within the terms of the aesthetic I propose here, value judgments and perceptual

processes are incommensurable, yet are involved in the production of each other. Moreover, this is a fruitful tension. As distinct from approaches that, in effect, collapse creative process into art's conventions (resulting in a stasis which precludes the dynamic aspects of experience), I am interested in exploring the aesthetic precisely because its potential to qualify relations and process can account for the negotiation of the extra-discursive. Thus aesthetic articulations conjoin value judgment with experiential awareness, and experience with cognizance of its conditions of possibility.

The crucial point here is that in its dynamic aspect, the aesthetic can operate in that relational capacity which yokes the discursive and experiential. On the one hand, speaking about contemporary art is a privilege of initiates and requires the understanding of the necessary language and a priori assumptions. These intrinsically effect closure and distance in representing what is described. On the other hand, experiencing art must occur within an immanent and contextual present. As I will show here, where thinking "about" art implies the distancing of a discursive "scopic economy," the experience of relating "to" or "beholding" art dissolves its specular structure and re-territorialises it according to the contact of touch. Yet as both Trinh and de Certeau warn, to set visibility against tactility is to remain caught in reductive binarism.

Instead, what is necessary is to understand is how tactile-visual articulations simultaneously resist and relate to each other. In this chapter, I will describe the corporeal enactments of such performative aesthetic in relationship to architectonic rhetorics.<sup>3</sup> The opposing categories employed here -- temporal and spatial, tactile and visual, temple and forum, fixed and mutable -- are introduced precisely because it is the tensions between them which constitute sites of enactment of both particular aesthetic experiences and museal mediation more generally.

I am considering how aesthetic experience operates in an articulation paradigm where discursive formations and ontological states constellate immanent to a motile field of relations. In other words, perception constellates display rhetorics and perceptual beholding immanent to what I understand as a performative aesthetic. The aesthetic connects the dimensions of experience precisely through a process of enactment.

In what follows, I will introduce two display sites I have known intimately over a long time which comprise distinct parts of the exhibitionary complex of Montreal: St. Joseph's Oratory and The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. With the elucidation of a performative aesthetic in mind, I will try to make clear how the physicality of these display contexts, by

operating to both circumscribe values and to produce particular states in the spectator, set the conditions for shifts in awareness. While a later chapter will consider in more detail how museums function as metaphors aside from the actual museal sites, my intent here is to describe codings of aesthetic experience specific to actual museal contexts. I aim to show that the contingencies of an experiential aesthetic pertain to the affective dimensions of museum space in both framing and qualifying the contents of apprehension. While this section centres on the performative inscription of cultural values as experiential states, they are not necessarily determinant in and of themselves. Instead, through delineating a performative aesthetic I hope to clarify the necessary grounds for a later exploration of how embodied agency is implicated in processes of beholding.

#### CHALLENGING A VISUAL LEGACY:

##### HAPTIC ECONOMIES OF THE MUSEAL

As technologies of communication, museums affect the sensorium in particular ways as they are enacted. If, taking the lead from Angela McRobbie, we consider the museal in terms of how it is used and deployed, then the existence of museal bias indicates that use has effects. Just as feminists such as Silvia Bovenschen, Teresa de Lauretis and Trinh T. Minh-ha

have attempted to posit the aesthetic in terms other than its scopic economies, I, too, want to explore the aesthetic experience in terms of its morphology of the senses. One of the significant legacies of Marshall McLuhan was his point that while human sensory faculties work together to articulate perception, one sense is generally dominant according to its specific culture (McLuhan, 1964). Certainly the display culture of museums most obviously privileges the visual sense. This is reflected in the terms used to describe people who apprehend exhibitions as "viewers" or "spectators." At the root of these terms -- viewer from the Anglo-French voir, "to see," and spectator from the Latin spectare, "to see" -- is the faculty of sight. The emphasis on vision reflects the dominance of the eye in discourses of perception. Visuality, as particular discursive "ways of seeing" is of course integral to conventional neo-Kantian aesthetic experience which centres on distanced judgment, and linear viewing trajectories.

In contrast to the scopic terminology of spectatorship or viewing, I want to propose another term for apprehension, that of "beholding" because it more precisely implicates haptic and proprioceptive processes of involvement. The etymology of behold, from the old English behealden -- to hold firmly -- confers both intensity and contiguity to perception. Likewise, to "be" in space, to "hold" in the senses, pertains to the



performative affect of aesthetic experience. To behold is not to distantly "view" but to perceive spatial volume with the surfaces of one's whole body. To behold suggests a provisional merging with the intervals between colours, textures, objects and spaces. bell hook's perception of aesthetic experience is sensitive to its haptic nuances as "a way of inhabiting space, a particular location, a way of looking and becoming" (hooks, 1990: 104). To behold indicates that an aesthetic experience, rather than existing as an abstract principle or theory, rests in the senses and in a conscious process of awareness. The etymology of "behold" nuances the tactility of its proprioceptive modalities in very distinct ways which suggest aspects of action in space. "To behold" can mean "to stop and wait," implying that attention has a particular temporal duration. In this regard, attention is deliberate and measured. Taking the time to observe something is necessary to experience it. In its imperative form -- the archaic, churchy "Behold!" -- attention is invoked in a way that infers the "call of interpellation," yet with a distinct qualitative emphasis. Where the "Hey, you there!" of interpellation calls upon an already conscious personality-structure which negotiates the world on the front lines of the self, "Behold!" addresses the more obscure intuitive self, summoning it to consciousness.

Another meaning of "behold" involves the observance of duty or obligation which, I would like to suggest, hints at an ethical dimension to forming one's aesthetic practice and perception. In this sense "how one holds one's awareness" establishes the foundation of "how one sees." What is at stake here in learning to perceive is the formation of an aesthetic ethos achieved through particular practices of the self, which will be explored in depth in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

In yet another sense, "behold" implies "relating or belonging to" which suggests an inhabitation of specific "terms of relation" whether it may be Stuart Hall's "articulation," Trinh T. Minh-Ha's "interval," Homi Bhabha's "third area" or Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's "processes of becoming." Here the beholder absorbs the dynamic of the articulation between sites, objects, presences, affects. The activation of relating as an immanent process, implies the act of giving one's attention to, becoming absorbed in, or identifying with. Interestingly, an archaic use of "behold" was to "hold signification" or meaning. This evokes an ontology of connection in oral and storytelling culture where the "word" carried significant "weight."

The distinctions between "viewing's" visual economy and "beholding's" haptic one carry particular biases which focus different aspects of an aesthetic experience. As Trinh has

made clear, the pervasive overdetermination of the visual sense carries the implicit ontological blindspots of literacy's scopic economy (Trinh, 1991: 1-8). Where the visual economy of museums tends to focus upon art as a "thing" or abstract notion, reconceiving of exhibition experience in haptic terms emphasizes art as an "activity" which enables the agency of its beholders. In particular, while a visualist form of engagement may centre on the evaluations pertaining to aesthetic judgments, a haptic aesthetic may indeed qualify the interdependent affectivities of exhibition perception. For it is the haptic sense which comprehends synchronically nuanced, all-at-once affect as distinct from diachronically sequenced viewing scripts of strategically arranged objects. Disengaging from visualist determinations in museological critique expands the grounds for considering the manner of aesthetic experience as well as its effects.

Thus in contrast to spectatorship, tactile apprehension is constituted by the proprioceptive sense. It is touch that in producing and perceiving stimuli, enables the body to locate itself in space. Significantly here, without the faculty of touch human beings would only see in two dimensions. The haptic sense -- comprising both tactile and auditory faculties -- operates primarily at a vibratory level. Inside the body, both hearing and vocalization occur through resonance. The

production of sound occurs as the result of at least two elements hitting each other, sending vibrations through space which in turn hit the ear drum. Similarly, sound is produced as air animates the vocal chords. Outside the body, vibration is also operative as the proprioceptive sense connects the body's surfaces to space, objects, and presence. In this way, the faculty of touch enables the perception of spatial depth. It is multi-perspectival, surrounding and pervading. The tactile pertains to the sense of "space touching you" as place and affect are enacted in practices of apprehension.<sup>4</sup> The "beholding" of the tactile faculty suggests an ontology of feeling which, in interacting with a configuration of disparate stimuli, foregrounds intuitive connections. Submerging the body in volumetric space, the haptic field of tactile involvement is not wholly determined by architectural barriers. It is possible, for example, to hear around corners.

Given the predominance of visuality in museum apprehension, it is noteworthy that tactility is the focus of multiple prohibitions. What does the active policing of "touching" in museums suggest about the tactile sense in an aesthetic experience? Obvious reasons of conservation underlie museal inhibitions of the tactile. A child's first visit to a museum typically includes a chorus of commands which inhibit the haptic sense: "Do not touch the art!" "Do not run!" "Do not

talk loudly!" Such quelching of enthusiasm for active touching assures that apprehension occur "at a distance" from art works. Moreover, the restriction of the audio-tactile is reinforced by surveillance -- in the form of museum guards and closed-circuit video -- which, in effect, submits the haptic to the visual. Such customary surveillance in museum apprehension has resulted in the internalization of tactile prohibition in viewing conventions. Thus the privileging of a visualist economy in museums continues to overdetermine aesthetic experience in multiple ways.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast to the haptic-proprioceptive sense, vision requires unobstructed sight-lines in order for observation to take place. Visuality in fact requires distance which enables empirical analysis, positivist measurement, and "objective" judgment. McLuhan described how the functionalist effect of visualist dominance implicit in the phonetic alphabet impacted western culture with tendencies to create sequence, fragmentation and specialization. He also argued that literacy's capacity to extend sight gave rise to concepts of individualism in literate societies. Thus the visual sense was evident in the conventionalizing of detached perspective and individual "point-of-view."

Museums as visualist media, then, have traditionally relied on the separation of art from actual social processes,

and in establishing discrete precincts for art. As Brian O'Doherty has shown, the white gallery space functions ideologically to support art in isolation from all distractions. In his words, "things become art in a space where powerful ideas about art focus on them." This form of art production is inextricably bound to the legitimation of its contextualization (O'Doherty, 1976). Within twentieth-century art, then, the archetypal "white cube" of museums and galleries functions to, in fact, produce art.

The bias of museal discourse functions, as other literate forms, to strategically classify, collect, contextualize and disseminate. For example, collecting practices intimate those of writing in their inscription of objects into a system. As objects are represented in collections, they are subsumed into its governing logics and hence transformed. Representational practices displace the meanings of things as they are re-represented within the museal economy. In this way, the visualist bias of the museal can be understood, after Harold Innis, as continuous with media forms which effected the rise of empires -- as capitalist and conquering -- in terms of their accumulative functions within specific fields of cultural influence.

Museums evolved out of nascent literate culture as the "cumbersome ceremonies" of the oral tradition gave way to a

reading culture instantiated in libraries, collectomania and, to use the words of Innis himself, other "grooves which determined the channels of thought of readers and later writers" (1951: 11). A fable of the "first" museum, if we assume a point of origin at all, describes the extension of the library at Alexandria, Egypt during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus in the Hellenic period 285-145 BC. Novelist Luciano Canfora, after the philosopher Timon, fictionalizes this museum as a "cage of the muses" where scholars -- bred as a special cast of Egyptians -- lived amongst the books and objects as part of Ptolemy's property and instruments of his power (Canfora, 1987: 37). The museum included objects and specimens as a complement to written knowledge. Classification, book production, copying and annotation are all visualist-literate procedures which continue in libraries and museums to the present day. In museums it extends to the preoccupation with naming and framing, delimiting the context of objects and authoring of exhibition scripts. Thus the practices of literacy embodied what Lewis Mumford has termed "the rational form" of the museum as an instrument of selection:

[I]n its rational form the museum serves not merely as a concrete equivalent of the library, but also a means of getting access, through selected specimens and samples, to a world whose immensity and complexity would be far beyond human power to grasp (emphasis mine, Mumford, 1961: 562).

Where oral transmission required direct contact, literacy freed learning from its hierarchic orders because writing made it possible to detach knowledge from its authors, disseminate it through scribes, and organize it in libraries. Similarly, the selection and classification procedures of museums followed from literate models in the systematization of knowledge. Early museums metonymically contracted space as they inscribed specimens, objects and artworks of the world within particular perspectives of knowledge and power. Later, survey museums extracted objects from their originating contexts and reinscribe them within exhibitions modelled after particular metanarrative formations such as nation, art, or ethnology.

Twenty years after Mumford, a visualist bias persists in Tony Bennett's notion of a "political rationality of the museum." Like Mumford, Bennett addresses the functionality of vision in museums. But rather than focussing on objects, he considers the contingency of display issues to subject formation. Inverting a Foucauldian problematic, Bennett suggests that, in contradistinction of the disciplinary formation of Jeremy Bentham's panoptic prison, museal power-knowledge relations flip from incarceration to an overt "show and tell." This entails a corresponding shift in ways subjects are addressed. Rather than conceiving of subjects as "objects of administration," Bennett posits that museums position



viewers as "subjects of knowledge" through rendering power visible to people as their own. His argument focusses on the museum's hegemonic role in the formation of a citizenry within bourgeois-democratic societies. In this way, the "political rationality" of the museum functions discursively by positioning the public within a visualist rhetoric of address. Written into this role, the populace was made to align itself with the interests of the ruling class (Bennett, 1990).

With respect to Bennett and Mumford's positing of a rational museal form in terms of visualist discourse, André Malraux's proposal for a "museum without walls," describes yet another specular paradigm. Malraux's conceptualization of the museum departed from actual museal architectonics to focus on the dissemination of reproduced artworks. His photographic images -- intended to "reveal" art -- comprised a conceptual museum where the circulation of reproduced art works could be infinitely rearranged. Photographic conventions of close-ups, lighting, special angles and details mediated the auratic "originality" of the work. These interrogations, in effect, displaced the work itself. The easy dissemination and fragmentation of the "museum without walls" exhibits a visual dominance. Such a "reproduced museum" was anticipated by Walter Benjamin who suggested that the technique of reproduction, in detaching reproduced objects from the realm of tradition,

resulted in the shattering of that tradition (Benjamin, in Solomon, 1936:557). The physical decontextualization of artworks displaces a coeval experience with the art object. Like Malraux's "museum without walls," contemporary reproductions in the form of catalogues, press kits, post cards, books, calendars, puzzles, games, objects and other consumer items duplicated from museum collections, are circulated throughout the world.<sup>6</sup>

Benjamin claimed that politics "replaced" ritual once an object was reproduced, which, in effect, poses experience in opposition to cultural formations. Unlike Benjamin, Carol Duncan's work on "civilizing rituals" in museums argues that rituals of ideological enactment may in fact be profoundly political. I want to explore further how the question of politicized rituals, or ritual politics -- as evidenced in Grossberg's "politics of feeling" for example -- constellate as elements of a performative aesthetic: in its processes, temporal intervals, agents, contexts, objects and affectivities.

While discursive and (post)structuralist approaches have contributed significantly to the problematic of "reading the museum," the question of "how feelings are felt" is beginning to be rethought within an aesthetic problematic (Buck-Morss, 1992). Whereas the self-scripting of visitors may enable the

re-articulation of museal rituals to a personal point-of-view, visibility alone cannot account for how a work functions to charge affective volumes of space and mood. The tactile sense and its contingencies to oral tradition must be recuperated to consider the broader potentialities of museum experience. In this regard, the work of Canadian media theorists Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan may be mined to productively rethink the mediation of museums. While their work can contribute significantly to understanding the functionality of media, limitations must be simultaneously accounted for. Specifically, their work exhibits tendencies to think in terms of monocausal totalities. This deterministic model for human behaviour leaves no space for individual agency or cultural difference. Moreover, their technical rationalism rests upon a space-time binary which is biased toward reductionism.

Nevertheless, the contributions of Innis and McLuhan provide useful if formalist empirical insights concerning the contiguities of the visual sense, literacy and space on the one hand, and those of the audio-tactile sense, orality and time on the other. As Andrew Ross points out, following James Carey, a significant difference between Innis and McLuhan was that while Innis focussed on the cultural and social effectivities of communication technologies in terms of how they affected social organization and culture, McLuhan saw cultural technologies

primarily in terms of how they affected sensory organization and thought (Ross, 1989: 115). It could be argued then, that while Innis' elaboration of social effectivities exhibits a communicative ethics, McLuhan's "media massage" is more sensorially based. Following from Innis, McLuhan developed a populist poetics which celebrated the return of oral-tactile dominance, the "media massage" of electronic media. It is McLuhan's sense that I want to consider a "museum massage" within the terms of a haptic performative aesthetic. Despite the potentially troubling reliance of these communication theories on presumed "involuntary" bodily responses, as Ross warns, it is my contention that both approaches can significantly inform the aesthetic's ethical and sensorial aspects (Ross, 1989: 115). What I find interesting about Innis and McLuhan is that the question of mediation opens up consideration of the dynamic and transformative aspects of perception.

Both Innis and McLuhan wrote from Canada, where establishing a national identity required communication links across vast spaces. Innis argued that Canadian national identity was forged on the paths delineated by transportation technology, paths that began with fur trading routes which then provided the basis for the transcontinental railroad. These connections laid the framework for later communication links of

national CBC radio and television. The binding of Canada primarily in terms of its institutional agency has been reflected in the realm of fine arts with such national cultural institutions as the National Museums of Canada and, beginning in the nineteen-seventies, the Association of National, Non-Profit Artist-run Centres (ANNPAC). Such institutions exemplify notions of "technological nationalism"<sup>7</sup> -- the binding of cultural identity through its communication technologies -- because they were established to cultivate and maintain Canadian culture against colonization by the flow of information coming from the United States. Both theorists advanced the promise that a two-way, technologically-based dialectic through space-binding media would support national culture.

As Innis recognized the political efficacy of space-biased technology, he simultaneously lamented the dissolution of the oral tradition and its corresponding emphasis on the time-bias. For Innis, oral culture struck a balance between space and time. He stressed that while technologies which extended through "space" related to the sphere of the secular, power, domination and technology, those which perpetuated in "time" pertained to an ethical consciousness governing culture, history and tradition. Of particular importance to Innis was the capacity of the oral tradition to foster creative thought:

The oral dialectic is overwhelmingly significant where the subject-matter is human action and feeling, and it is important in the discovery of new truth but of very little value in disseminating it. The oral discussion inherently involves personal contact and a consideration for the feelings of others, and it is in sharp contrast with the cruelty of mechanized communication and the tendencies which we have come to note in the modern world (emphasis mine, 1951:191).

For Innis, the oral tradition -- involving feeling, action and intuition -- was important precisely because it pertained to situated experience. Innis acknowledged that oral tradition neither has the capacity to disseminate knowledge, nor can contribute to "progress" embodied in the individuation of western capitalism, yet he argued that, in contrast to the "brutal" closures generated with the representational displacements of literacy, the oral tradition encompassed the relational dynamics of interaction and response. Given the escalation of space-binding media in the communication context, Innis pronounced that if a balance was not maintained with the ethical sphere then civilization would be doomed. The oral dialectic as a method of inquiry confers both a temporal modality and performative aspect to the transmission of knowledge. The oral tradition consisted of cultural teachings related pangenerationally as stories in a context where the community is implicit in practice and discussion. Yet, at the same time, commentaries were given contemporary nuances to

enliven the bridge between fixed plots and changing quotidian conditions. So while the recitation of knowledge entailed mnemonic training, Innis argued that oral traditions were simultaneously elastic in their simultaneous incorporation of contemporary improvisations.

Another aspect of orality appropriated by Innis was to mobilize patterns derived from oral dialogue in his writing. This, he claimed, conferred an "instantaneous" quality to his textual practice in contrast to what he termed "the labours of classification." In effect, Innis' translation of oral form into his writing method was an attempt to shift from a "point-of-view" to a mosaic of elements thrown together without connectives, a style approximating the manner of speech. In this way, the connection of not-necessarily-related-elements generated insights through a model of "interface...the interaction of substances in a kind of mutual irritation" typified in conversation or argument (McLuhan in Innis, 1951: viii).<sup>8</sup>

On a physical level, Innis' foregrounding of communicative interface is pertinent to haptic modalities of museal engagement which implicitly foreground discontinuity or gaps in perception. Perhaps the most salient aspects of Innis' work to a performative aesthetic is his exploration of the relation of temporal and emotional processes to intuitive and

social relationships. In this way, tactile apprehension can be understood as it is constituted in repetitive communication forms which articulate experience, pattern recognition and gesture. These can be distinguished from visualist modalities which emphasize linear and causative thought processes. Yet, while a binary is posed here, my investigation is not continuous with such polarities. Rather, as de Certeau has clarified, orality and literacy are neither opposed terms which could be resolved by a third, nor are they in a hierarchical relationship which "should" be reversed. The configurations created by the disjunction of writing and orality, rather than constituting general categories, have specific historical effects. While the incommensurability of these terms, as outlined above, does not enable them to operate as equivalents, the difference between them can only be accounted for in qualitative terms. De Certeau proposes the interventional potential of speech acts as orality "insinuates" itself in particular ways into the "tapestry of literacy's scriptural economy" (1984:132). In a similar way, apprehension practices as spatial enactments suggest a performative agency within a given museal discourse.

While the conditions of discourse are necessarily qualifying and limiting, processes of proprioception involving movement have the effect of not only destabilizing static



museal elements, but actually put them into relational flux. Thus processes of beholding occur in the interstices between the limits of language and mutable ontological states. Museums suggest an "elsewhere within the here" of urban experience. As such, they function simultaneously as polemological and utopian spaces in de Certeau's terms. In the first instance they provide sites for ongoing cultural struggles, and in the latter, they serve as free zones for innovation where imagination may be deployed to question the "reason" behind hierarchies of knowledge and power (de Certeau, 1984: 17-18).

De Certeau's distinctions of utopian and polemological space resemble Michel Foucault's notion of "heterotopia." Whereas utopian space provides an ideal of perfection, an illusory elusion, often impossible to realize in everyday life, a heterotopia's ambitions are more modest in providing a place for practice outside quotidian convention. Foucault offers a governing logic for heterotopias which support how museums can function as sacred space in secular culture according to six principles. First, heterotopias exist in every culture. Second, a heterotopia can have a different meaning within its own culture than it does for another culture. Third, a heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real space several spaces, several sites in themselves incompatible.

Fourth, a heterotopia is most often linked to slices of time open to heterochronies. Foucault describes how museums and libraries are heterotopias linked to the accumulation of time oppose those of festivals and vacation villages which simultaneously rediscover and abolish time. Fifth, heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable; entry usually compulsory, or requiring permission or purification. And, finally, heterotopias have a function in relation to all space which remains in that they create either a "space of illusion" or a "space of compensation" (Foucault, 1986).

Recent debates in museology have taken up Foucault's term "heterotopia" with differing emphasis. For instance, Donald Preziosi mobilizes Foucault's sixth principle of heterotopia as a primarily compensatory space to describe the museum as "no simple utopic inversion of the world of daily life...not quite an escape from the world." Rather, "the museum works...more heterotopically, as one of a series of places within social life that anamorphically provide compensatory relief from the confusions and contradictions of social life -- themselves all the more palpable by contrast" (Preziosi, 1994: 144). Within Preziosi's perspective, the museal experience functions as a retreat yet simultaneously retains quotidian space as a primary referent.

In contrast to Preziosi, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill emphasizes the cultural relativism of a heterotopia. She writes,

"Heterotopias" function as sites that are real and lived, but which act as counter-sites, counter-utopias, special spaces that are simultaneously both mythical and material. The functions of heterotopias can be constituted and reconstituted according to the needs of the specific society within which they are located (1990: 58).

Thus, she focusses on Foucault's distinction that each heterotopia is culturally specific with correspondingly distinct meanings. Working against the taken-for-granted singular "identity" of museums which assume an "uninterrupted" evolution from cabinets of curiosity to the present day, or a totality of collecting as an "instinctive drive," she suggests the importance of foregrounding the temporality of the heterotopic. Thus the examination of discontinuities, disruptions in diachronic museological models, affords a way of interrupting linear histories, drives and desires concerning the "value" of objects to make way for the more relational dynamics of complementarity and paradox in material culture. Hooper-Greenhill inquires how museal heterotopias actually work in terms of "hidden presence of the sacred" -- as Foucauldian power and knowledge -- in terms of the relations which effect the division of space. As "other" (heter) "places" (topias),

museums are compensatory precisely as sites where quotidian routines may be disrupted.

#### "CIVILIZING RITUALS"<sup>9</sup>

Carol Duncan, sometimes in partnership with Allan Wallach, has explored the heterotopic aspects of museums in terms of architectonic enactments. Her research has articulated particular transitional aspects of museal space which frame it as distinct from quotidian places. In this sense, her research elaborates significantly upon Foucault's fifth principle of heterotopias, in showing precisely "how" museums "presuppose" an opening and closing, and in terms of the particular "permissions and purifications" involved in museum rituals. Duncan and Wallach describe a performative embodiment of museal ideology within a marxist problematic. Their analysis focusses on elaborating how museums "shape experience" as the museum visitor enacts a "ritual script written into the architecture and decorations." It is in the performative apprehension of particular "doing codes" in a museological script that certain values and beliefs are, in effect, lived (1988: 48). It is in this sense that the museum itself can be considered in terms of its "ritual architecture."<sup>10</sup>

Duncan and Wallach combine anthropological and art historical approaches to elucidate how an aesthetic experience is simultaneously determined by museum architecture and exhibition discourses. Their analysis of the spatial rhetorics of museums as ceremonial monuments draws from anthropologist Victor Turner's work on liminality in ritual. Like Foucault's notion of heterotopia, Turner's conceptualization of ritual enactment has common performative aspects regardless of its cultural specificity. His concept of liminal temporality, as Duncan points out, can be used to describe contemplation and "the quality of attention" within the structured experience of a museum. Liminality literally means "on-the-threshold" and, in contrast to the fixed place of the heterotopia, it designates the transformative aspects of changes in states and processes of becoming that exist in time set apart from the quotidian.

Liminal temporality resembles the ontology of the subjunctive tense: e.g., If I were alive then, it would feel like this. It evokes a particular mood: a time of enchantment or extra-ordinary happenings. It invokes actions and states not as facts but as things to be entertained as a matter of possibility, desire or even doubt. In turn, liminal affect accounts for people's emotional investments (the desire or will to be other) or awareness (the state of enchantment or possibility). Where everyday life may seem to comprise an

inevitable procession of days, liminal experiences provide an alternative to clock time. Turner suggests that because of its capacity to mark memories, liminal events substitute for the sacred in an otherwise secular society (Turner, 1977). It follows that in museums, then, performative liminality is crucial because it is precisely through the enactment of discursive structures that specific experiences are produced. Moreover, the embodiment of an exhibition discourse -- carefully framed apart from normal life -- establishes not only shared meaning, but the basis of collective aesthetic experience.

Duncan and Wallach's work on museums as ceremonial architecture makes clear how exhibiting institutions operate to legitimate particular interests. In particular, Duncan describes how great cultural narratives -- such as citizenship -- are ritually performed. For example, she has explained how the carpeted labyrinthine exhibition halls of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, in inhibiting speech, provide for a private internalized experience of western subjectivity (Duncan, 1988). She has also described instances where museums have been deployed as objects of legitimation, giving examples of Imelda Marcos and the Shah of Iran who both established museums of modern art to display American and European art as a way of reassuring the First World they were safe for military

and economic investment (Duncan, 1990). Duncan's application of Turner's anthropological theories has had far reaching effects on the study of museums. What has been crucial to my research is that she has provided a rhetoric which expands beyond "meaning" alone to examine how museum spaces produce particular sensorial effects, moods, and transformative states. However, a limitation of Duncan's model of ideological enactment is that it tends to conceive of museums as totalities or "ideal types" which inherently precludes contradiction. Specifically, Duncan's museum typology tends to focus on the inscription and enactment of larger cultural narratives, rather than on how individuals use such ritual architectures for their own ends. Nevertheless, even given these limitations, Duncan and Wallach's research has provided an alternative to textual models for the museum with its recognition that museums do, in effect, produce cultural values as contingent to processes of embodiment. It is these aspects of their work that can be mobilized in the interest of delineating an experiential museal aesthetic. What is important and prescient in their writings from the late seventies through the mid-eighties was that they account for, and bring together, the mediating aspects of time, space and movement in a consideration of a museal aesthetic as a process involving the visitor. Specifically, it is the "transformative" passage of liminal experience which

encompasses the modalities of becoming and beholding. While a possible limitation of Duncan, Wallach and Turner (as with Innis and McLuhan), is the tendency to theorize a kind of "universal experience," these authors share with de Certeau, Deleuze and Guattari a crucial observation concerning the immanence of involvement. Considering museums, then, this pertains to architectonic enactments as producing apprehension. Thus, in the manner that writing becomes a way of thinking, one's inscription in museal space (in Spivak's sense of "role") produces an exhibition experience.

Duncan and Wallach's theory of performative museology engages both its temporalities and spaces. I want to suggest that it provides a dynamic which operates across the terms of Innis' binary of time-bias verses space-bias. Innis's thinking on the causal and shaping power of media in determining experience theorized that the materiality of a medium was either "space" or "time" biased, which effected respective forms of institutions and power. Given a theoretical climate where much debate has focussed on the codings of museum space (the concern with museal frontiers in working either inside or outside institutions, dissemination of publications and exhibitions, its political role, a site of cultural struggle, and so on), I aim to show how recuperating Innis in light of museal heterochronies provides some models for opening up the



effectivities of time. In other words, while museums may be analyzed as simultaneously "time-binding" and "space-binding" in Innisian terms, it is the temporality -- or time binding aspects -- of specific "communicative affects" that concerns me here.

The time-bias of museums is evident in their function as ritual artifacts. Such monumental structures which are durable and difficult to transport characterize a temporal bias according to Innis. Moreover museum rituals of viewing objects "fixed-in-time" have the effect of seemingly contracting time. For example, the experience of touching ancient objects carries a subjunctive affect of entering into and "beholding" the particular "states" and auratic qualities of antiquity. Innis' point that time-bound media tend to support hierarchical and oligarchical forms of organization and perpetuate contractionist forms of institutional power appropriately characterizes the esoteric tradition of the connoisseur, those priestly guardians of "timeless" tastes and values.

Yet simultaneously, within Innis' terms, museums would operate within a space-bias characterized by the political present. Innis argued that space-bound media were light and transportable which effected the contraction of distance. This in turn provided the means for expansionist institutional power typical of technical and secular organizations. In museums, the

circulatory functions characterized by motile elements of fax, phone and travelling exhibitions which are of fugitive duration exemplify the space-bias. Moreover, it can be argued that a present experience is necessary to enable affective investment to occur. To summarize then, while the time-bias effects a heterochronic frame for liminal experience, the space-bias pertains to the capacity of media to effect secular, technical and vernacular connections. Importantly, the configurations of both communicative biases articulate at any display site, each conferring a distinct dimension to an aesthetic experience. Considering the museum as ritual artifact, the time-bias effects its subjunctive ritual, while the space-bias pertains to human agency necessary to enact it. Thus, while museum architecture works to shape experience through its display rhetorics, any liminal experience requires the "will to participate," which in itself constitutes the more subtle framing device of intentionality itself. The beholder must accept to some degree the given axioms within the display discourse as "the willing suspension of disbelief" in order to comprehend the exhibition. Just as we form impressions of an exhibition, we perform its impression upon us.

### AFFECTING "MONTREAL MAGIC"

During a mid-eighties airplane flight to Florida, in the pages of Review, the in-flight magazine of now defunct Eastern Airlines, I came upon an article entitled "Montreal Magic." Its teaser subtitle proclaimed, "You don't have to be a sorcerer to appreciate the charms and enchantments of Canada's most bewitching city" (Gibb-Clark, 1986: 81). Illustrating the article was a photograph of a building's facade with the caption "The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the oldest such institution of its kind in Canada" (Ibid.). However, on closer examination, I found that it was actually a photograph of St. Joseph's Oratory, depicting pilgrims performing the devotion of ascending the steps on their knees. This mistake struck me as at once hilarious and apt. In its unintentional displacement of museum for church it reiterated a longstanding debate stemming from a 1971 article by Duncan Cameron titled "The Museum: Temple or the Forum?" which qualifies the museum in terms of its sacred and secular functions. Of course both the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and St. Joseph's Oratory structure exhibitions according to their governing discourses, those of religion and art respectively. Remarkably, the Review article's confusion of church with museum effectively collapsed their affective determinants in a way which unwittingly foregrounded their ceremonial function. Each monumental

structure contributes a distinct heterotopic allure to the display circuits of the city. Not only does the specificity of the display rhetorics of both St. Joseph's Oratory and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts describe a context of how "beliefs are embodied," but, the evolution of both institutions illuminate specific power claims arising out of the legacy of tensions between church and state in Quebec.

As I will argue here, the determinants of the affective "magic" of Montreal articulates to a commemorative relational role in each institution. While the liminal significance of their exhibition experiences will be the focus here, it is not my intention to construe their temporality in absolute terms. For, as I want to make clear, despite the fixity of their precincts, both sites occupy mutable positions within a continuity of political and ritualistic economies. In the context of struggles over Quebec's sovereignty as a distinctly francophone culture, these sites demonstrate several simultaneous hegemonic struggles within overlapping regimes of belief and memory. While circumscribed by differing discourses of art and religion, these sites ultimately comprise aspects of interconnected exhibitionary circuits within the urban fabric.

Just as both institutions instantiate particular aspects of power and representation, both function as heterochronic sites of shared public culture set apart from the everyday for

"contemplation and self renewal." I will discuss some continuities and discontinuities of these display contexts in terms of how their political agendas articulate to their ceremonial affect and produce distinct "ideal viewers." Notably both institutions were founded contingent to "great men" whether unscripted as a "beneficent" saint or wealthy "benefactor." While the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts was a pedestal for the bequests of its mercantile elite, the Oratory and its objects circumscribe the actual internment site of the body of Frère André. The construction of St. Joseph's Oratory commemorates the rise of a nearly illiterate rural priest from lowly doorkeeper to saint within the Catholic Church. Its ritual architecture works to sustain its founding logic over time. In contrast, The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts presents several shifts in purpose notable in its evolution from a showcase for collections of wealthy anglophones to one comprising a public culture of primarily francophone viewership. I aim to show in the following that both sites instantiate performative rituals coincident to cultural memory.

Review magazine's misidentification of the Oratory as The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts collapses the affective economies of Catholic Church, commerce, display culture and art. But what this captioning error concretely underscores is an architectonic rhetoric evident at both sites which posits an

"ideal viewer" in Duncan and Wallach's terms. My concern is with how these sites function as ritual architecture generally, but my focus is with the liminal coding of particular architectural elements, specifically the affective significance of stairways and entrances to the exhibition script. Characteristically, stairways indicate a passage from quotidian life to a transformative zone (where collections are displayed). As such they indicate entry into extra-ordinary experience. In a similar manner, doorways mark precise thresholds, the limits of "states" specific to their spaces. Each feature demonstrates a modality of initiatory practice incorporated in an exhibition experience: while St. Joseph's Oratory posits the devout beholder in relation to the "example" of a saint, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts "inscribes" an exemplary civic citizen within a ritual of arrival.

Given the centrality of feminist perspectives to this thesis, the focus on two sites centered on "great men" may seem to be a contradiction. I would like to assert here that it is the relational aspects of the analysis which characterize my approach as feminist rather than my concern for the actual objects themselves. Moreover, the lacunae of women at these sites forms the negative-space of my argument, for the eliding of actual women in the commemoration of "great men" reveals the "grounds" of the cultural politics governing these

institutions. It is precisely the "displacement" of women in "traditional" museums that establishes the terrain that I will investigate in later chapters. Traditional museums such as these make knowledge claims for patriarchal authority. Where the question of this, as with any, thesis is to "make a stand," what I find compelling is how female representations actually "stand-in" at these sites as personifications of ideals. What then becomes interesting is how it is that women are present, not as standing in place, but as metaphoric ghosts for something else.

The bas reliefs on the Montreal Museum's eastern facade present Minerva as the Roman goddess of the dawn, emblematic of wisdom and patroness of the arts, crafts, medicine and war. On the western wing the other plaque presents an art historical reference a copy of a Michelangelo's Dawn, an appropriation from the sarcophagus of Lorenzo de Medici in Florence. Both "dawns" function as a museal-muse to underscore the transitional moment "at the threshold" of light: the sun of day; the rays of western civilization; the illumination of art; the place between life and death.

In contrast, the monumentalization of the female at the Oratory works differently and less directly in the personage of the Virgin. It pertains to the narrative of Frère André's vocation at College Notre Dame, which translates as the "Our

Lady's College." In this way, the Virgin Mary -- the proper name of the college -- symbolically circumscribes it as its owner. Thus, symbolically at least, the Virgin possesses the heterotopic context of Frère André's miraculous cures.

#### EXEMPLARY BECOMINGS:

##### DISPLAY AT ST. JOSEPH'S ORATORY

The display rhetorics of St. Joseph's Oratory structure the evidence of miracles performed by a simple priest, Frère André (1845-1937). The Oratory not only entombs his body, but sustains his presence affectively contiguous to its relics, and to photographs and documents relating to the life and afterlife of a the Montreal priest. At the onset of his religious career bad health put Frère André's very future as a priest in doubt. It is likely Frère André would not have been accepted by the order had not another priest, Father Guy, interceded with the statement: "If the young man becomes unable to work ... he can at least pray. This man teaches mainly by his example" (Bernand et al., 1988). And it is also through "example" that the display rhetorics at the Oratory function to make people believe through the testimony of the healed, whose experiences carry the currency of credibility. The process of canonizing Frère André, begun in 1940, is still proceeding in stages as the Catholic Church undertakes a complex process of



accumulating miracles. In 1978 Frère André was declared "Venerable," by Pope Paul VI, and in 1982 Frère André was declared "Blessed" by Pope John Paul II, and today the Church continues to collect proof requisite to "official" sainthood.

For forty years Frère André was the doorkeeper at the College Notre Dame. Being the porter -- literally "at the threshold" -- was central to his everyday practice, and to his accessibility and evolution as a healer. Moreover, healings by Frère André were haptically based, undertaken by touching the person with a religious metal (a kind of charm often depicting a saint) or by rubbing oil on the afflicted body part. The effects of Frère André open-air services on the mountain were instantaneous and crutches, braces and canes left behind by the healed accumulated as proof of his powers. The first chapel, built in 1916, holds this evidence today. The spartan living quarters above the chapel, now a museum, were only recently glassed in. Previously, the display of its relics were accessible and frequently vandalized. Compared to this little church, the monumental extensions of the Oratory developing in stages over the past seventy years and enclosing increasingly more space, indicate another kind of power: that of the Catholic Church itself.

The discontinuity of the stairways at the Oratory effects an interrupted ascent. The exterior stairs, which proceed in

four tiers to the main portico of the Oratory, is the site of observances of the faithful. It is common to see kneeling pilgrims ascend on their knees. The entrance at the top is flanked by four granite corinthian columns. The view from the top of this flight of stairs looks north across the city of Montreal. The processional path is dispersed once inside the building into a complexity of stairways, escalators and elevators. The labyrinthine maze of the Oratory contains several museums, corridors of prayer candles, testimonial plaques, walls hung with crutches, chapels, and an Italian Renaissance Basilica begun in 1924. Outside is a restaurant and gift shop, and a garden with the processional stations of the cross. Each summer a passion play is performed (upon which Denys Arcand based the film Jesus of Montreal). The complexities of access is indicative of the Oratory's expansion in a series of discrete bursts. At the level between the chapel and basilica, nestled amongst the corridors, stairways and escalators are two museum displays which relate to the devotional life of Frère André.

Immediately above the main portico, The Museum of Brother André exhibits photographs depicting different stages of his life, his countenance in death during the elaborate funeral, and other documentation concerning the building of the oratory. Showcases include a scale model of the house of his birth, as

well several reconstructed rooms including "His Doorkeeper's Cell" at College Notre Dame, "His Office" where he held audiences, and "The Hospital Room" where he died. All include the original furniture patinated with use. While earlier versions of these exhibits evident in the guidebooks present wax-museum-like effigies of the diminutive priest, recent depopulated displays rely on the indexical qualities of the relics themselves. At the centre of this exhibition is a dimly lit reliquary which enshrines the actual heart of Frère Andre. The practice of embalming the body parts of royalty or saints is European in origin and hinges upon the belief that the bones of such personages are powerful conduits to the after life. Such relics are conventionally displayed to demonstrate respect for the heroes of an age (Horne, 1984:13). The images of the saint's corpse, the empty rooms and the severed heart, all confer a macabre, funereal affect to this museum which has the uncanny effect of drawing the beholder into the presence of Frère Andre's body.

On the next level of the Oratory is a permanently installed Exhibition on Saint Joseph to whom Frère André demonstrated great devotion. This is a wax museum of life-scale scenes which illustrate turning points in the life of Saint Joseph, patron to the working classes and protector of the church. A succession of ten, dusty dioramas fabricated in

1955 are more illustrative of an archaic display type than permitting of a timeless encounter with antiquity.

Above these museums is the actual Basilica, the seat of the Church. Juxtaposed to the modest Church, Frère André's mysterious powers seem rather brutally aggrandized in huge proportions of the oratory. Recent years have witnessed a more politically motivated Church agenda and lobbying effort aimed at lending credence to Frère André's status constituent to the "process of becoming-a-saint," galvanized in public petitions and testimonies of divine intervention, requisite proof of miracles "beyond science."

Stories of the Oratory's relics and museums, the rituals and the goings-on of the faithful mounting the 283 steps on bruised knees, or lining up to touch the well-worn feet of a statue of Christ, drew my fascination as a Protestant child. One event stands out in memory as interrupting the tranquility of the Oratory with rather peculiar inflections: the theft of Frère André's heart. During the late nineteen-sixties the heart was stolen and later, just as suddenly and anonymously, returned. The heart is, of course, symbolically significant to the ontology of the shrine as its affective centre of public sentiment. And its pilfering was the centre of a media blitz in the city. I remember wondering who had taken the heart and why, and with its sudden return, questioning its actual

authenticity. But given the uncertain provenance of the human heart that sits in the shrine today, the over-arching affect of the monumental building seemingly overrides any doubt concerning its spiritual centrality to the city. The oratory's display rituals continue to support the aspirations of "ideal viewers" as faithful aspirants in the process of "becoming-extraordinary" after the example of Frère Andre.

#### REARTICULATING "ARRIVAL"

##### AT THE MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

At St. Joseph's Oratory, then, the "ideal viewer" is a pilgrim whose aspirations are sustained through a kind of communion with relics and ex voto proof of Frère André's miraculous powers. In turn, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts inscribes its "ideal viewer" as the arrival of an "ideal citizen."

The establishment of The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in 1912 was significant to the civic identity of Montreal as a world center and marked the first building in the Dominion of Canada devoted exclusively to the fine arts. The evolution of its ritual script was founded as a universal survey type resembling those of other metropolitan centres. The museum's original architectural design by Edward and William Maxwell in 1912, and each of its major renovations, by Fred Lebensold in

1976, and Moshe Safdie 1992, correspond with significant political shifts in the cultural fabric of Montreal. Specifically, the transformation of the museum's architecture instantiates the shift of its "ideal viewer" from a secular ritual which monumentalizes its anglophone benefactors to one celebrating a nascent francophone Québécois art viewing culture.

Like the ascent to the oratory, the stairs of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts inscribe a processional function, yet with different affective underpinnings. Each of the three expansions of the museum since its opening have engendered corresponding shifts concerning the use of stairs. The white marble stairs of the original building designed by the Maxwell brothers led up from the street to a transcendent world of art behind large front doors. The doors were flanked by four columns of white Vermont marble, each carved in a single piece. The stairway continued inside the building in white Italian marble continuing the ascent to the main exhibition floor, where, in the early years, social events, concerts and dinners also took place. During the official opening of the museum, the bronze art nouveau balustrades were banded with flowers, and invited guests were seated "to see and be seen" at the top of the stairs where they could, in turn, watch the arrival of other guests. The opening culminated as the Duke of Connaught -

- "standing-in" for his mother Queen Victoria -- mounted the stairs to a dais at the top to proclaim the opening of the museum (Dorey:1974). This act of moving people from the street to a higher interior ground illustrates the means by which access to the museum was immanent to a liminal experience.

Duncan Cameron's conceptions of the museal delineate its complexity. Describing museums as undergoing an "identity crisis," he theorized that the crisis stemmed from rigid perceptions which construe museums as either "temples" or "forums." Of course, to construe museums as agents of their identity is to presume a potentially problematic anthropomorphism. My point here though concerns the usefulness of Cameron's claim that both museal tropes describe irreducible complementarities to aesthetic experience. He argues that on the one hand, the museum as "temple" describes its role in affirming particular beliefs and in protecting and conserving cultural artifacts within a timeless context. On the other hand, the museum as "forum" designates activities enabling confrontation, experimentation and debate, which, in turn initiate changes the museum can accommodate: new cultural forms, new forms of social relations and critique. <sup>11</sup>

Cameron's assertion that the temple and forum functions are mutually dependent was prescient and, I believe, all-to-frequently overlooked in later museological critique which has

tended to posit the "forum" model against the supposed conservatism of the "temple." As Cameron notes, without the "forum," the immobility of the "temple" certainly functions as an obstacle to change. Yet without the "temple," the innovations generated by a succession of "forums" remain without a frame of reference and thus without instantiation. Duncan's point is that it is precisely the conjunctions of temple and forum functions which enable "manifestations of change" specific to particular historical junctures (Ibid.: 23).

The "temple or forum" debate has been reiterated in museological discourse to this day. Such critique has tended to posit a move from the museum as temple to the museum as forum, advocating the replacement of the haphazard organization of collection to "new" systems of classification and accessibility as an ethical imperative of social change. Consider these titles: "The Museum: Storehouse or Powerhouse?" or "The Modern Museum: Temple or Showroom." Each favours a shift from an archaic, outmoded and inert function to a more exciting dynamic display form. This unidirectional logic overlooks the significance of museum rituals altogether. Cameron's distinction is noteworthy precisely because it can describe complementary conditions of museal experience. Following from Cameron, I will show how the ideal viewer in fact maintains



their individuality while merged in an aesthetic experience.

Beyond its static conservation, the "temple" function encompasses the apprehension experience as an affective vehicle. In this sense, the temple function overlaps with Carol Duncan's notion of ritual architecture as a mode of address.

For Cameron:

[T]he museum, sociologically, is much closer in function to the church than it is to the school. The museum provides opportunity for reaffirmation of the faith; it is a place for private and intimate experience, although it is shared with many others; it is, in concept, the temple of the muses where today's personal experience of life can be viewed in ... context (1971: 17).

Thus, the museum provides an experiential frame for cultural communion. The original building of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts was actually modelled after Greek temple architecture, positing a utopian past. Montreal historian Edgar-Andrew Collard writes of his experience of the museum during its early years:

A deep quietness, almost a stillness, reigned in its great rooms. Even footsteps and voices became hushed. The gallery was like a shrine in its marble serenity -- cool, spacious, subdued and reverential. It was a temple of Art (Collard, 1976).

This inscribed the viewer in a quiet contemplative experience. Yet, as Cameron admits, such reaffirmation can constitute a reactionary defence of old regimes. This is evident at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, for coincident with the

monumentalization of art are retrograde obligations to perpetuate the interests of patrons who had endowed the museum. For instance, while [Sir] William Van Horne, donated his collection to the museum, he also submitted detailed instructions and sketches prescribing its hanging in the choicest spots. Similarly, caretaking and later administration of the museum perpetuated the oligopoly of English benefactors. Until the nineteen-seventies, the trope of museum as "temple" in effect monumentalized a ruling elite. The legacy of these public personages was acted out within and upon the building itself. Their bequests perpetuated their memories through the scripting of museal rituals. Yet, this regime was not to last. Subsequent renovations of the museum effectively displaced what, in fact, could be remembered.

The first major renovation of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, just after Expo '67, coincided with the pressures of the Quiet Revolution in Quebec. Renovations undertaken during the time left the front of the building untouched, with the exception of adding street level entrances. Closing the museum's front doors in 1972 -- consequently precluding an ascendant ritualistic passage -- was of particular pertinence in signalling a shift away from cultural elitism by asserting a more proletarian "arrival" directly from the street. For the following twelve years access to the building was through the

revolving doors on Sherbrooke Street. While the museum's \$300,000 "face-lift" instantiated a change in attitude, the renovation had the unfortunate effect of decimating the classically inspired proportions of Maxwell's temple architecture. Echoing the turbulence of the October crisis, the building shuddered during renovation as dynamite blasting added levels to the rear of the building. The new galleries were characterized by chunky concrete surfaces, cubed recessed ceilings and department store display cases. When the museum re-opened, the public, critics and perhaps most significantly, the museum's patrons recoiled in horror at the Maxwell building's fate.

The same year, not coincidentally, marked the end of the museum as a wholly private, and dominantly English, institution. The board agreed to accept twelve of its twenty-seven members as appointees of the provincial government in order to accept operating grants. At this watershed, the museum incorporated francophone administration. This marked the arrival, as well, of a Québécois viewing public to the museum. The apprehension of art by francophones only several decades earlier had been largely circumscribed by the prohibitions of the Catholic Church, and limited to religious artifacts. Jacques Brault, as a board member in 1982, stated that the museum's difficulty in attracting support of new private

Québécois money was largely due to the fact that there was no prior tradition of support to cultural institutions (Disher, 1982). The transition from religious to secular art appreciation was neither immediate nor easy. The museum's archive includes a fashion spread from Clin d'oeil from March 1982 which indicates an attempt to normalize Québécois interest in the museum by depicting successful professionals as "ideal viewers." A Young couple addresses the reader from the museum's processional stairway, dressed in corporate chic, holding notes as they strike contrapposto positions for the camera.

The re-opening of the doors in 1984 marked the rearticulation of the politics of display evident with the "arrival" of public art in Quebec. It was in response to the pressure of a broader community that director Pierre Théberge announced the reopening of the doors stating that "people missed the sense of occasion that going through the main doors gave them" (Rowland, 1984). However, the "sense of occasion" now had different emphasis, one that reflected the new pride of the museum as a primarily francophone public institution.

Again in 1992, a rhetoric of "arrival" circumscribed the reopening of the museum. Moshe Safdie's Jean-Noël Desmarais extension -- which opened in November -- included the addition of two new entrances. A walk-through tunnel below Sherbrooke Street linked the old and new pavilions and contained galleries

of ancient Egyptian, Asian and African art, effecting a kind of birth canal through the "foundations" of western art. At ground level Safdie's entrance was intended to be "transparent and inviting, the activity within seeming almost an extension of the street" (Safdie, 1991: 9). It was designed to embrace a pluralistic viewing audience and contribute to a "building of the community" as it towered ambitiously upward, uninterrupted and unfettered to the limitless sky (Ibid.). Again, stairways comprised a key to the building's rhetorical enactment. Where Safdie intended the stairs to unify the multiple levels of the extension, their awkward proportions confounded critics and undermined any possibility of dignified procession. In a Montreal Gazette column titled "Museum Visitors Sore Over Ups and Downs," Paul Wells elaborated how the stairs were too small to take one at a time and yet too wide to skip over. People were forced to stare at their feet, to walk oddly and on occasion find that their knees hurt after just one flight. Interestingly, the architectonics of the stairs recall the knee pain suffered at St. Joseph's Oratory. The pain at the Oratory occurs due to prolonged, direct contact of kneeling on the stairs immanent to an act of faith. At the museum sore knees occur due to the disruption "normal" climbing, a disproportional relation between the scale of the stairs and the human body effects a kind of limping self-consciousness.

This slows down walking and therefore forces a shift in viewing habits by interrupting the will-to-move in a particular manner. In this way, a rhetoric of arrival as structured into the stairs inscribes the enactment of uncertainty. While this conclusion risks reduction, it can be argued that the destabilizing self-consciousness of the "ideal citizen" embodied on the stairs cannot be separated from the cultural anxiety of questions of citizenship itself given the tensions between Quebec's francophone majority and its English, Aboriginal and ethnic minorities.

The architectural rhetoric of the museum extensions examined above celebrate moments of arrival coincident with certain shifts in legitimation. These correspond with notions of an "ideal" viewer whose perambulations through the museum effect pedestrian rhetorics. Such pedestrian rhetorics, as de Certeau proposed, function to instantiate belief as people incorporate them.

#### CONTIGUOUS MUSINGS

My focus on the continuities and distinctions of reading display between an actual church and a museum is intended to explore how the temple is implicated in the forum, and vice versa. Now, I want to turn to look at another relationship involving a "whole" and its "part," that of the Montreal Museum

of Fine Arts and a particular art installation within it, Betty Goodwin's Triptych (1990-91), which I will argue functions as a site-specific intervention into the museum's ritual script. Moreover, I will suggest that the temporal implications of Triptych, tactically interrupt the "arrival" discourses of the museum's architectural scripts with a rhetoric which locates itself in the communicative conduits of "getting there."

Triptych is a large work comprising several elements -- a huge ear (that must measure nine feet), neon light, steel plates and plaques of text -- that is now permanently installed at the museum, and perhaps more importantly is in a situation which continually poses relational aspects to the museal. Goodwin's artwork presents yet another plane of performative embodiment, one which in its invocation of the audio-tactile both invokes and resituates the museal muse.

Initially unassuming in a rear atrium, Triptych occupies what is actually an enclosed alley. Here the museum both incorporates and maintains the lane behind the building in response to city building stipulations. This can be read as the museal precinct's preservation and purification of a city lane in continuity with the often funky network of back alleys reeking with garbage and host to pigeons and rats. Goodwin's piece at this site includes a constellation of elements. The most obvious is the ear, mounted on polished aluminum plates

flush with the wall lining the lane. The effect is that the ear's supporting wall extends, like the front entrance, the entire height of the building. The presentation of the ear in this way reads as "the museum's ear," at once merging with the building's smooth interior walls, yet its surface retaining the index of hand modelling. This confluence of elements anthropomorphizes the museum as the personage whose ear we see: the museum as both listener and witness. The ear faces two highly polished stainless steel plates angled to reflect out in two directions. At the centre of each plate is a bar of violet neon. The mirrored surfaces throw the ear's reflection across the courtyard as two images which evoke both linguistic bifurcation and of the sender-receiver model of communication. A third element to the installation are textual elements incised on bronze plaques and set into the floor. These sentences are presented to be read from contrary directions. The first states "How long does it take one voice to reach another?"<sup>12</sup> Here it is the temporality of hearing and the lags of history that are evoked in "how long." And two reflected images of the ear serve as obvious metaphors for the "two solitudes" of Quebec's colonialist populations. While potential antagonisms of this connotation can be explored, I will not do so here. Rather, my argument is more formalist in its concerns which centre on the communicative role of the museum given this



potential to hear. I would like to suggest that with Goodwin's work the museum itself assumes the role of muse, not as a seed metaphor for ideals of truth or beauty, but as simultaneously listener and digester of the crowds that flow through it. This piece must be performed in order to be understood. This entails shifts of levels, going up and down stairs. The site itself is a transitional space in a greater museum experience, one which provides links between sections of the building, ramps and corridors of passage. The atrium itself, in enclosing the alley, is continuous with a museal population which spills out into the networks of city streets of which the lane is a part.

Goodwin's other text, "Every question possesses a power that does not lie in the answer"<sup>13</sup> pertains more directly to the experience of apprehension. If one of the purposes of art is "to raise questions," then the power which "lies beyond" the answer occurs in the modality of asking, which I perceive as integral to the beholder's "will to connect." Goodwin's piece provocatively alludes to the museum's capacity to "witness its witnesses" as they circulate through its spaces. Here the muse rather than "standing-in" as a metaphoric example, functions metonymically as an extension of the museum itself. Where the muse-relation of Minerva and Dawn on the facade bas reliefs of the Benaiah Gibb Pavilion across Sherbrooke Street present

women as "bearing" the qualities of art, the muse-relation of Goodwin's ear works "in contiguity" with the architecture which, in turn, is continuous with the circuits of the transportation grid of alleys and streets.

The performative display enactments outlined above describe dimensions of apprehension which both limit and permit the experience of museal discourse. I have tried to show that museal temporality, as distinct from simply enshrining the past, performatively frames affect contingent to particular "states." I am writing in a context where museum critique tends to dismiss the museum's temple function because fixing enactment of a "timeless past," as Johannes Fabian (1983) has shown, can preclude agency because agency requires a "present." This is an important distinction indeed. What is at issue here, though, is not temporality in itself, but a question of temporal continuity. That is, the epistemological violence "of being represented" must be distinguished from actions inherent in "presenting oneself." The question of temporality reveals a Janus coin of museological (re)presentation. It is true that, on the one hand, the precincts of an ethnographic past function to restrict identity within fixed displays. One culture's closures on another raises serious questions concerning the issue of "being represented": whose voices are being heard?. Yet at the same time, the liminal temporalities of museological

enactments can have a contradictory empowering function. This can occur by a culture's self-presentation in continuity with its traditions. Or it can involve the enactments of cultures or subcultures which hold the potential for exploring alternate identities and thus expand the boundaries of a discrete self.

These aspects of museal temporality can thus be explored in terms of their positivity to apprehension and display. They not only provide for aesthetic experience as a relational practice within a set context, but also permit states-of-becoming other. I'm suggesting that an aesthetic experience simultaneously engenders face-to-face aspects of social interaction, a context for interactions, discussions, and events. This provides for processes of evaluation, literally processes of "making things matter" in the creation of new culture. The temporality of "the present" necessarily entails a different ontology of engagement. Beyond the reduction of the museal to "temple" -- emphasizing subjunctive experience of "timeless" structured values -- or "forum" -- enabling debate and processes of judgment in "the present" -- what interests me is how the two characterizations can be implicated in each other. For it is possible for museum rituals to simultaneously engage both "present" and "past" immanent to processes of enactment. Therefore, just as the visual and tactile aspects

of museums relate to spatial affect, the terminology of temple and forum can be deployed to describe temporal affect.

#### ACTIFYING THE MUSEAL

As I have argued, the domain of the aesthetic as an articulated plane of experience involving the constellatory dimensions of place, time, and the presence of beholders, objects and a framing discourse. Here I will further qualify the movements which activate it specific to a museum context. As media of communication, museums can be qualified according to the discursive fixity or mutability of formations which modify art's circulation. At one end of the continuum are hard or fixed discursive forms, such as monumental museal architecture which is immovable and durable. Likewise, structural and infrastructural changes take significant amounts of time. The flow of information through hierarchical bureaucracies is slow and has the effect of keeping "standards of credibility" relatively static. Usually predictable, such incalcitrant discourse maintains standards of convention: in deeming something of "museum quality," in the governing objectives of granting agencies, or in conventions of display. Moreover, such striated formations -- architecture, permanent decoration and systems of administration -- being the least immediate, require not only expertise but institutional elites.

As experience is channelled through discursive formations, it has systemic effects. Generally the crystallization of media parallels their legitimation with corresponding immutable effects.

In contrast, the more mutable aspects of the museal are quickly transmitted due to their fluidity and immediacy to experience. It is the smooth quality of associative knowledge and relationships, word of mouth communication, styles, attitudes and circulating trends that characterize the first waves of cultural shifts. While fluid discourse may contain important political content, it is generally considered the least credible due to its ineffable nature. Feminist scholarship's respect for such insubstantial discourse -- diaries, memoirs, letters, gossip, quotidian popular culture -- is a huge distance from permanent displays of universal survey museums which, dominated by their infrastructure, are restricted by long-term formations. Within this view, museal discourse emerges out of the tensions of a continuum between mutable and striated polarities. Conventionally, as information circulates through the art world, credibility mutates within a succession of ever-increasing embodiments of striation along a continuum geared to institutional "legitimation."

Usually utterances tend towards striation. Thus a conversation generates a concept which becomes an art work which generates an exhibition which gets a review which generates an article in a book which gets rearticulated in a travelling exhibition which in turn results in a more populist blockbuster which results in a collection which is donated as basis for a museum. This notion of continuum, of course, follows a linear trajectory from mutability to fixity in its characterization of how information is used and experienced. Yet, the activation of this continuum can work in an opposing direction as well. For example, an ancient object or archive can be brought to light and mobilized in a display which circulates as a postcard or pamphlet in a highly mutable form. However there are limitations to this continuum which considers art world discourse in terms of a linear, polarized model, even if in a motile sense. What if, in contrast to a model of polarity, art discourse were posited in terms of its circulation?

The consequent logic of a model of circulation is continuous with the oral tradition's capacities for interruption, speaking out and telling stories. Thus, art discourse is thought in terms of its capacity to intersect conceptual trajectories, junctures forged as tactical articulations of mutable and fixed communication forms. Art

criticism, for example, as a legitimating vehicle, becomes the means of catching and fixing fluid ideas as they circulate. Typically, the relatively quick production of magazines fuses credibility and immediacy in a production process which entails less infrastructure than the relatively longer process of book production. Art practice, as well, may be understood in temporal terms as timely interventions of tradition.

For example, the Guerrilla Girls, an anonymous collective of feminist art activists, took to task the rigid sexism of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. They sought to jar the seeming senility of this New York universal survey museum regarding its lack of exhibitions by women artists. Their intervention took the form of a poster campaign on the streets of Soho. The image depicted a reclining nude in full gorilla mask -- "aping" Manet's Olympia -- with the text, "Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?" The provocation of the poster mobilized a circulatory effect: beginning with fluid talk and subsequently reported in art critical articles and reviews. This generated public awareness which challenged the Met to recognize the politics inherent in "museum standards." This activism summoned the museum to accommodate cultural difference beyond the centrality of male-white-heterosexual-western preeminence in aesthetic evaluation and experience, opening the way for other visual cultures and notions of aesthetic

experience. The Guerrilla Girls' interrogation of the systemic exclusions of women ultimately raised epistemological issues concerning the gendered assumptions of museal quality and the prejudicial traditions which posit that only men can be great artists. The interventions into the pedestrian routes of Soho by the Guerrilla Girls worked to situationally mobilize mutable discursive systems. The poster provided hard evidence of systemic prejudice in traditional museums. The campaign functioned tactically, seizing the moment to insinuate itself in public space and public opinion expressly to unfix the bureaucracy of large metropolitan museums.

#### TOWARDS A DYNAMIC TEMPORALITY:

##### AN EXPERIMENT IN AESTHETIC RECOGNITION

Such performative interventions constitute enunciative acts in the aesthetic sphere. As Michel de Certeau points out, a speech act cannot be parted from its circumstances (1984: 20). Thus it can be argued that while official museal discourse operates according to a range of fixed formations, even the vigilante activities of the Guerrilla Girls are inseparable from this context. Such enunciations work in a necessarily contingent way and are addressed to particular audiences. It is the very temporality of performativity that confers activist significance.



In this chrono-affectual (as distinct from chronological) regard, the temporal agency of memory plays a significant role in mobilizing the interstices of the time-space. This suggests a view of memory in terms of a dynamic spatial practice, constantly made and remade out of spatial-temporal contingencies. Positing the relation of memory to context, de Certeau states, "memory is played by circumstances just as a piano is played by a musician" (1984: 87). Just as temporal specificity of memory can modify space (1984: 83-85), so, too, movement and memory are intimately tied.

Extending beyond the retrieval of details through imagined movement, I will examine further along in this thesis how movement through space may, in fact, play a significant role in producing memory as well. As de Certeau has shown, memory is unstable, unmoored and mobile. It derives intervention force from the capacity to be altered as it is recalled. Inscriptions of memory are invoked through encounters with new circumstances and remembered in the manner in which they were instantiated (1984:87). Given the elusiveness of memory concerning details, the totality of an event can never be perfectly reconstructed. For de Certeau, memory can effect a temporal interruption of space when it is deployed as an interventionary force (de Certeau, 1984: 84).

Both proprioception and memory come into play in an aesthetic experience. While one's cognizance of the contemporary art discourse provides "judgmental" criteria, it is simultaneously recognition -- the linkages to memory immanent to apprehension -- that illuminates an occasion.

The centrality of recognition to aesthetic pleasure has also been described by Theodore Adorno, e.g., in the satisfaction of being able to name a melody after hearing the first few notes. Following from these points on memory and aesthetic apprehension, I undertook an experiment concerning the role of recognition in viewing practice with the consent of my MFA graduate seminar. The aim was to examine the processes of engagement as distinct from end-product-judgments, those judgments which commonly reiterate our contacts with art exhibitions as interesting or not. The object of the exercise was two-fold: first, to self-reflexively situate our relational manner of apprehension. This involved noting our proprioception in the museum's various spaces, our awareness in apprehension, how we interact or not with others, and how the experience engaged the sensorium (visual, tactile, auditory, olfactory, taste), the sense of temporality and one's awareness of other viewers. Next, I asked the participants to describe what memories, moods, emotions, desires or feelings arose and how they articulated immanent to this aesthetic experience.

The subsequent class discussion was remarkable in that, given the immensity of the museum, most chose to investigate territories of the familiar. "Recognition," of course, can have multiple forms, and at times it was inextricably bound to an uncomfortable admission of one's relative privilege. A male student who had been raised by art professionals spoke of "learning to walk" in the vast expanses of a gallery, literally initiating his proprioceptive abilities within "the white cube" itself. As an adult, his habit was to quickly run-through the maze of galleries before settling into a more relaxed viewing of actual works. His particular "recognition" demonstrated an insider's perspective in several respects. One habit was to read accession numbers to discern if the museum had been prescient or "suckered" in its purchase price. Another was his pleasure in viewing art works "wrapped in plastic," a preference which had originated in customarily viewing Picasso paintings stored in this way.

A female student from Ontario found a vitrine filled with silver and was surprised to recognize that she had similar pieces, because of a family legacy, which she used on an everyday basis. Her discomfort in recognizing this class specificity was honestly admitted, as was her conflicted relation to the privileged museum space. She described her

habit of often speaking loudly in galleries as a way of interrupting the sanctimonious protocol.

A male student who had worked as a museum guard himself declared that it was his practice to examine works very closely. He made a game for himself in baiting the museum guards, stepping close to paintings, then moving back once he noticed them begin to approach to instruct him on museum protocol he already knew very well. The moves of this kind of aesthetic game mobilized a level of "being recognized." This same student remarked that Esquire Magazine had listed museums as one of the "top ten places to meet women," and admitted that he had begun a long-term romantic relationship while working in a museum.

A female Japanese student raised in Germany spoke first of her unfamiliarity with the conventions of Canadian art museums, and how Canadians would probably feel equally uncomfortable within the protocol of a Buddhist temple in Japan. She, too, gravitated to a familiar image from the time she lived in Germany: Flemish still lifes. For her, they were interesting because she had worked at a luxury hotel where images of similar paintings were reproduced by hand for each room.<sup>14</sup>

I left the group opting to wander through the museum alone. The affect of this museum's spaces has connected to my

grandparent's generation in several ways, metaphorically and actually. My great Aunt Kay had died the previous week, still lucid at ninety-eight. She was the last of the old ones who had brought me up. As I entered the quiet netherworld of The Gallery of Ancient Art, which connects the original Museum building and its most recent extension, my thoughts were drawn to her.

The Gallery of Ancient Art has always fascinated me, that time beyond western logic, and prior to biblical hegemony. It has been installed at several sites within the museum. I found it here in these dimly lit rooms comprising the threshold between the universal survey museum on the north side and its modern art extension to the south. This mysterious space is actually an elaborate corridor which joins the two buildings below Sherbrooke Street. The only sounds are those of rustling clothes on transiting bodies who speak in hushed tones, if at all. It feels funereal somehow, a channel of passage evoking the recently absent which linger close to their bodies.

My favourite exhibit is a vitrine of Egyptian objects. It contains small sculpted objects whose surfaces seem worn: a "cat," a bronze votive offering to Bastet from the Saite Period (665-525 BC); a sculpture of "Horus" the falcon god from the New Kingdom (1567-1085 BC); a funerary sculpture of a Hippotomus in wood also from the New Kingdom, an Ibis from the

Late period (1085-332 BC), and a statue of a servant or slave from the Middle Kingdom (3123-1788 BC), all gifts of a benefactor named Cleveland Morgan. Another grouping includes a predynastic Vase with Flamingos (4000-3100 BC), a gift from Mabel Molson in 1925; and a sculpted head of a woman, a funerary relic from the Old Kingdom (3100-2150 BC). These beautiful objects reflect the everyday life of their makers within the belief of an agrarian culture centred on the Nile, and on the flow of objects from wealthy Montreal families with names recognizable from department stores and breweries. I notice that Cleveland Morgan evidently gave some of these objects during the latter part of his life, with some to follow as "bequests" upon his death ten years later. A woman guard walks by. I become lost in the provenance of the objects, thinking of the slave's or servant's point-of-view. How would Morgan have identified with this statue of this Middle Kingdom slave? As servant or served? I become aware of a presence and breathing, probably asthmatic, beside me. He is manoeuvring his jeans and sweatshirt clad, stocky body too close for me to be comfortable. He breaks the succour of my reverie on the doubling of death, as funerary objects of prehistory become bequests of modernity. I disengage my gaze, step back and wait for him to leave. Again I face the vitrine, balance my weight, refocus my gaze in the dusk-like light of this netherworld

between buildings. I listen again to the rustling clothing on those walking through and the silence in between. It is still in comparison to the video voice-overs distantly audible in the contemporary art space.

This is the basement, the building's subconscious, its id of loss and need to monumentalize. This is the place of secrets and I have one to share. One which, while involving my family, predates my memory. For my great Aunt Kay used to live upstairs when Safdie's pavilion was the New Sherbrooke apartment building. The shell of the facade, preserved in this new wing (after a conservationist press campaign, to Safdie's consternation perhaps), was originally built by my great-grandfather. Using the legacy of his grocer ancestors, he took up an architectural project transposing the beaux arts influences he liked best to house his and other young, Montreal families. At the time, the building was noteworthy for its communal kitchen in this basement, with dumbwaiters to hoist meals to the apartments upstairs. Until the mid-fifties my two maiden aunts, Kay and Betty, lived on the top floor. And after that my father maintained a small flat at 36B where he entertained his mistresses.

It was here in the prehistoric galleries that I remembered being told that my mother had gone into labour with me during a dinner party being given by my aunts upstairs.

Given my own beginnings at this site, I began to contemplate the distance between the trajectories of Aunt Kay's life and my own. During her life which spanned from the 1890s to the 1990s, she witnessed many shifts in fortune, overseeing the births of great-nieces and nephews such as myself whose fate it was to witness wealth but never have it, to observe its entitlements only to unlearn its privileges.

My recognition was that, for me the "muse" of this museum was not an objectification of philosophical principles, but rather the musings of Aunt Kay, and the other old ladies of my family, who shared with me their perspectives drawn from a nearly century long experience of the passages of objects, beliefs and other legacies. I recognized these bonds as a relational museum muse spanning through time to the present, always connecting in a way that was immanent and grounded as opposed to transcendent. This muse earns her age rather than symbolizing it. She is the "chrone," daughter of time. Through their custodianship of stories about the past, my Aunt Kay, Grandmothers, Mother and Aunts provided elements of these memories. I have chosen to tell my story here because it illustrates how my memory played upon the museum space the day of the MFA experiment. Moreover, it reveals the overlapping of public and private memory in an aesthetic experience.



I have tried to illustrate how processes of recognition can destabilize static "states of being" generated by the spatial display discourses through a performative aesthetic, a transformative spiral of beholding that, unlike formalized ritual, never returns to the same place. The event of remembering interrupts the codes of display, while at the same time rupturing a primarily specular economy with the affect characterizing a haptic (and primarily oral) experience. Thus, in contradiction to the stereotype of museums as repositories of memory, tied and fixed to objects, the spaces of a perambulatory rhetoric are mediated by the surfacing of memory, which in turn, mediate museal space against its preferred scripting. For de Certeau, the telling of tales functions as, in fact, "living museums" which comprise repertoires of tactics (1984:23). Rather than submerging oneself within the expository past tense of exhibition scripts, the triggering of personal memory within an apprehension experience interrupts a proper museal space, providing, for an instant, openings for the reclaiming of self.

Moreover, as de Certeau convincingly argues, memory develops along with relationships and atrophies in autonomous proper spheres. In exhibition scripts, then, public "memory" may be proffered for transparent consumption of "states." Yet the private invocations of remembering in an apprehension

experience are both mutable and relational in nature. Because remembering occurs in flux, it can work against the grain of institutional strategies, interrupting and displacing them at intersections with the personal.

De Certeau, in sympathy with Innis and McLuhan, asserts the potential of oral tradition within a project of recovery. He writes, "the Grail of orality authorizes today, as the Muses did in earlier ages, a quest for lost and ghostly voices in our 'scriptural societies'" (1984:131). Yet, unlike McLuhan and Innis, he qualifies this notion of "orality" against the fiction which totalizes a singular "voice" of a singular "culture." De Certeau's work impresses upon me the possibility of reconceptualizing the figure of the muse in relational terms, operating with the contiguity characterizing Goodwin's museal ear rather than symbolically as a goddess standing-in for an ideal. Thus a "fund" of personal memories can effect an "act" of remembering which, in turn, produces an aesthetic judgment. Here states of experience and designations of value hold a productive tension. Where the muse-ideal is to remain established in a particular "state," the contiguity of "remembering" is a process-of-becoming which is both generative and transformative. The activation of mnemonic processes dynamizes the temporality of museums, opening up productive and creative processes beyond their status as inert monuments.

In this chapter, I have explored the problem of mediation in museums contingent to an experiential aesthetic. I distinguished the bias -- or effects -- of museums from how they are actually used in order to look at instances of aesthetic enactment as a plane which brings these distinctions into relationship. Thus the aesthetic can be understood as a plane of articulation through performative enactment linking realms of experience, memory, identification, beholding and/or becoming.

Where the aesthetic pertains to the morphology of the senses in apprehension, the haptic-proprioceptive sense was introduced as a way of expanding upon the conventions of visibility within which the aesthetic is usually inscribed. In particular, I elaborated upon the act of "beholding" in its contiguities to an ontology of touch in "telling objects." The work of Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan was reviewed in a project of recuperating aspects of the orality and temporality to haptic-proprioceptive perception in museum experiences. Extending from these investigations into the effects of media, the work of Michel de Certeau provided models for exploring memory as an affective vehicle through which orality insinuates itself in literate-visualist formations. The performativity of memory is central to an actified aesthetic. Museums, thus, can be understood as heterotopias, as an elsewhere within the here,

a space of transformative potential set apart from quotidian life.

Likewise, using Carol Duncan's work on ritual experience in museums, I endeavoured to show how liminality -- as a place of becoming -- functions in the relational terms of the aesthetic in its transformational aspects. As Duncan makes clear, museums inscribe an "ideal viewer" who enacts predetermined codings of experience. While I am indebted to Duncan's work on such civilizing rituals, I have departed from her work in showing that museums are also deployed by individuals for less determinant and more personal ends.

I reviewed two Montreal museums, St. Joseph's Oratory and The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, to elaborate on the sacred and secular affective determinants of these museums and their ritual enactment. I showed how both institutions inscribe "ideal viewers" in their display rhetorics, which, in turn, articulate to political and cultural agendas. Whereas exemplary becomings of Frère André sustain relics as proof of an extraordinary being, I argue that the "ideal citizen" inscribed in the display rhetorics of The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts has shifted with each renovation.

Throughout the chapter I have tried to clarify how recuperating the dynamic aspects of the time bias -- as situated experience -- expands the notion of a performative

aesthetic. I have given examples of performative interventions in museal space which in effect produce memory as contingent to an aesthetic experience. The exercise undertaken with students showed the role that recognition can play as private reverie insinuates itself in a pre-scripted display rhetoric. It is in this dynamic overlay of the personal and the cultural that the aesthetic can be located in its relational form

What is important here is how memory, being constituent to a proprioceptive aesthetic, presents a model for the decolonization of space. The next chapter explores more closely certain aspects of mnemonic intensity and how they relate to aesthetic experiences of the museal.

## Notes for Chapter 2

1. I am taking the liberty of extending Spivak's distinction from her intended predication of the subject to account for museal space. Borrowing Spivak's distinction then, the museum's mediation of labour to commodity inscribes a "materialist" value, while the museal's predication of the subject within totalized consciousness of "truth," "beauty," or "goodness," would inscribe an "idealist" value.

2. Deleuze and Guattari distinguish the "haptic" from the "tactile." For them the former does not polarize the eye and ear as the latter does, and thus invites exploration concerning how the eye may fulfil a nonoptical function (1987: 492).

3. I am using the word "architectonics" to refer to the framing of space, and so to foreground the spatial aspects of museums which include temporary exhibition spaces as well as permanent architectures.

4. My interest in the haptic is less concerned with a particular school of thinking than arising out of an ongoing conceptual/aesthetic debate. I have drawn from the media theory of Marshall McLuhan, the acoustic theory of R. Murray Schafer, the postcolonial film studies of Trinh T. Minh-ha, and the anthropology of the senses articulated by David Howes.

5. Of course there are instances where museum displays work against such tactile prohibitions. For example, the National Gallery in London recently produced a Microsoft Art Gallery, a CD-ROM which contains a hypertext catalogue of its entire collection. While it is profoundly literate-visualist in its taxonomy and by the fact that it is comprised as "read-only-memory," it has the capacity to operate through a touch screen. So in effect -- as one reviewer put it, it demands that inter-actors "please touch the paintings" (Scharratt, 1994: 3).

6. While a visualist bias is evident in the production of museal reproductions, the disseminated museal discourse assumes a more haptic aspect in actual use. I will explore the activation of the haptic in more depth in Chapter 3.

7. "Technological nationalism" is a concept elucidated by Maurice Charland and comprises an aspect of a more complex commentary on the work of Innis and McLuhan (1986).

8. Ian Parker's reminiscences of Innis describe the significance of collage to his writing practice: cutting and pasting elements from diverse sources in unwieldy sized manuscripts (Parker, 1994).

9. This subheading appropriates the title of Carol Duncan's book, Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums, New York and London: Routledge, 1995.

10. The term "ritual architecture" in framing experience is similar in circumscription function to the "touristic semiotics" of Dean MacCannell who describes the semiotic framing of sites outside the everyday (see The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class, New York: Schocken Books, 1976.) I prefer the term "ritual" because of its heterotopic potential to account for sites of difference within a local culture.

11. Cameron's article coincides with the shift in museums' roles during the sixties as they sponsored radical and experimental forms of art such as happenings and performance where the outcomes were "unknown" prior to the event itself. Moreover, these new cultural forms had an implicit social dimension and critique. Cameron refers to Mavor Moore's presentation at the Canadian Conference for the Arts in September 1970 which advocated that the establishment finance the revolution. In evidence here is the climate which produced artist-run centres and stipulated an arms-length management structure.

12. From Carolyn Forché, The Country Between Us, Harper and Row, 1981.

13. From Elie Wiesel, Night, MacGibbon and Kee, 1960.

14. Thanks to the students in my seminar, "Contemporary Issues in Art Criticism," at Concordia University's MFA Programme who participated in this experiment in 1993 and 1994.

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## Chapter 3

### MUSEUMS AND THE POETICS OF MEMORY

Whereas the previous chapter focussed on rituals of a proprioceptive aesthetic occurring within the museum, this chapter will consider the museum as a ritual artifact in itself. That is, I will focus on how museums have been used and represented as a way of expanding upon the mediating spaces of museum metaphors. In examining the relationship between movement and museums, the role of memory is crucial. Certainly expectation and anticipation dictate what one sees. As Susan Buck-Morss writes (after Walter Benjamin), "perception becomes experience only when it connects with sense memories of the past" (1993: 131). Chapter 3 continues my investigation into how movement articulates to memory as a constituent of a proprioceptive aesthetic. I will examine the distinctions between private memory and public memory in order to explore how the museal is invested in instances of popular memory. In other words, I aim to show that what occurs in museums neither merely expresses the thematic codings of display context, nor functions solely in terms of personal recognitions. Rather, the aesthetic experience manifests in situationally specific ways as the performative mediation of museum space.

In particular, I will consider the articulations of such a motile museal aesthetic to the poetics of memory. By "poetics" here I mean the creation, or making of memory as integral to a museum experience. Where apprehension of public memory in a museum involves moving through a scripted experience, at the same time the beholder's movement activates a kind of metaphoric slippage, producing a signification effect which is productive, poetic and creative (Gallop, 1988: 96).<sup>1</sup>

In what follows, my aim is to examine more closely how museums -- as symbolic artifacts themselves -- have been deployed metaphorically. In particular, I will focus on how the figure of "the museum" itself has been represented or used for particular effects. As I will show henceforth, the slippage of museal metaphors involves a continuous tension between mnemonic recall and poetic generation.

Another aspect of metaphoric mutability involves the significance of scale in museal representations. Following from the work of Susan Stewart, I will trace the significance of distortions of scale in museal representations. Sites of investigation will include "miniature museums" as manifested in popular games, and "gigantic museums" as evident in literary narratives. Concurrent with this exploration will be an analysis of the signification effect pertaining to private and public memory as they articulate to these conceptions of the

museal. This lays the ground for a later exploration of "popular memory" as a mediating zone of both generic and collective remembering. Thus popular memory describes particular constellations of private and public mnemonic formations.

This conception of popular memory suggests that museums and galleries figure as sites where particular "kinds of experiences" happen. I'm interested in how museum representations are charged in particular ways, and how the movement of people within a gallery space can both activate and produce its significance. Yet, short of actually stalking people in museums, it is almost impossible to observe how meaning, sensibility or mood is conferred on museum space as it is performed. So, I have turned to scenes from popular films to examine specific recognitions and identifications of active (if fictive) beholders. These scenes, I will argue, depict tropes of experiences that recur in museum space. I hope to show how various types of activities (staged in gallery spaces) suggest metaphors of the museal which extend beyond traditional museum discourses. Moreover, these not only subvert conventions of traditional connoisseurship, but suggest other tropes of aesthetic experience.

## THE ART OF MEMORY

Models of memory have relied on notions of presence: from the indexical -- as impressions stamped in wax -- to the performative -- as hunting down birds in an aviary, or rummaging in a house for lost objects.<sup>2</sup> The relationship between memory and movement was well established in antiquity. As Frances Yates (1966) has shown, the "art of memory" in Greek and Roman rhetorical traditions developed as an oratorial technique. It was found that recall was enhanced when a person imagined their speech as contiguous to a process of movement which intersected with a series of loci or places. A common exercise was to imagine oneself walking in a building. Each element of the speech was associated with an architectural feature, furnishing or event.

Because memory was found to improve as visual impressions increase in intensity, mnemonic loci were characteristically further charged by exaggerating their beautiful or hideous, comic or obscene aspects (Yates, 1966: 1-26). By blending the ontological and epistemological aspects of memory in a process which involved both mind and body, orators could perform long speeches without written notes. Through the mnemonic scripting of movement, relationship and intensity, an orator could recall details of a speech as immanent to a series of circumstantial encounters.

Traditional public museums function like physical manifestations of the art of memory, that is, as sites where particular knowledges are crystallized in the form of an exhibition script. These scripts are, in turn, realized-as-memory as they are enacted. In this way, official public memory is coded for consumption in museums integral to a process where perception becomes experience.

Yet, as cultural studies has shown, the determining aspects of such formalized ideological rituals are continually contested. Beholders negotiate museum spaces using their senses in acts of individual remembering in processes of making connections outside the determinations of any exhibition script. As this space of experience assumes the plane of thought and knowledge, it generates a more structured organization. Public and private memory must be understood as continually translating into each other. It is important to remember that it is the actual physicality of museums with all their material, institutional limitations which provides precincts which bracket art from the quotidian. Such boundaries bring together art, as constituent of discourse (ideas focussing on art), and a performative experience. Both closures and openings are necessary in order to permit the liminal spaces of metaphor and becoming. For, just as museums must be understood in terms of their movement towards



crystallization, they must also be understood simultaneously in terms of their apertures of liminality as spaces of possibility. In this way they provide a tangible counterpoint to the discourses and spaces of traditional philosophical aesthetics. Both museums and aesthetics require that judgments of inclusion and quality be continually re-negotiated in terms of a situationally specific, yet potentially transformative creative process.

#### STRIATED MUSEUM SPACE AND INSCRIPTIONS OF PUBLIC MEMORY

The spaces of metaphoric slippage constituting zones of mnemonic enactment tend simultaneously to order and sensation. This can be elaborated according to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's notion of "striated" and "smooth" space. Where striated space tends towards organization and closure, smooth space tends toward sensation and process. Where museums function like physical manifestations of the art of memory, the scripted crystallization of knowledge in exhibition, they function as striated space.<sup>3</sup> The striation of public museums is evident in their functions to "organize" ideology in the arrangement of material objects in fixed contexts, and in the formalization of communication systems.<sup>4</sup> For example, archival storage and retrieval function or institute public memory and

history. Museal striation frames spaces and script experience according to preexisting agendas. Deleuze and Guattari claim that smooth process is predisposed to striation. For example, for an art critic the free action of walking through an exhibition, while liberating at the time, may result in a more formal piece of art criticism. This illustrates a manner of proprioceptive experience striating in an aesthetic judgment.

In turn, exhibition discourse fixes structures which afford the protection of artworks and the enshrinement of apprehension. The role of striation in selection and criticism consists in closures of meaning whether in the selection and framing of objects or words.

Striation precludes interruption of its stillness. In examining the documentation of installations at Optica gallery in Montreal, Reesa Greenberg notes that the photographs typically exclude viewers in favour of a "pure" space which displays the delimitation and arrangement of the exhibits (Greenberg, 1988). Thus striation is evidenced in rendering the gallery motionless and stable, with a tomblike immobility. And when the viewer is called to striation's order, obedience is assumed. Traditional universal survey museums interpolate an "ideal viewer" through the mode of address of didactic panels and labels, and especially by example in the figure of the volunteer gallery lecture-guide or docent.<sup>5</sup> The museum

volunteer typically portrays the top of the social hierarchy, a patrician woman in voice, manner and knowledge of art, someone congruent to a class of wealthy museum patrons.

These aspects of demeanour and attitude have been foregrounded, and simultaneously, brilliantly deconstructed in the performance art "museum tours" of Andrea Fraser, whose dizzy, aristocratic volunteer-guide progressively "loses her grip" as her id comes to the fore of her "interpretation" of the exhibit. During the tour, she confuses her own desires with the objects she describes. Her hilariously ironic portrayal dissolves the presumed social order and the assumed mastery of the lecturer. Thus Fraser challenges striated museum etiquette as she opens it up to stream-of-consciousness associations more typical of smooth space.

While striation tends to closure in arrangements and examples of public memory, it is probably most powerful in formalized rituals which implicate the visual and haptic through the proprioceptive sense. Thus, public memory is probably nowhere better embodied than in the canned experiences of the "acoustiguide" tour -- which I will explore in more detail in what follows -- where the voices of celebrities or museum directors in effect substitute for the mnemonic content of one's internal dialogue. Here the combination of sound and movement through space invoke the haptic contingencies to

memory: sound, proprioception and relationship. They play a significant role in reproducing memory by scripting and intensifying the sensory basis of an aesthetic experience.

Operating on the minds of spectators as they view an exhibition and on their bodies as they themselves are viewed, the striated codings of museums, in effect, produce public memory. Such administration and containment -- in other words crystallization -- of experience is internalized through the protocol of the gallery space: speaking in hushed tones, not touching works of art, assuming contemplative postures, minding the guards who police the apprehension process and through the attitudinal commitments of the volunteer docent. As beholders move through the museum, coded experiences work like enzymes providing official memories which "digest" visitors into exemplary citizens. Likewise, striated scripting of conventional attitudes in apprehension are deployed by museal programming departments to affect beholders in particular ways. In scripting ambience, exhibition rhetorics derive from a centralized point of view. Similarly, museal technologies of control tend toward centralization and thus striation. Surveillance of visitors maintains behavioural consistency through observation by guards and cameras, in effect extending the long distance vision of the administration, which is ultimately monitored by the director and the board of trustees.

Such striating technologies organize public memory contingent to the particular focus of an overall museal script which enforce what is to be remembered. It is in this sense that public memory comprises an "official" version, which orients remembering to a priori meanings which are fixed and disseminated through the museal apparatus.

### SMOOTH MUSEUM SPACE AND PROCESSES OF BECOMING

There are no clear boundaries between organized museum space and its experiential free zone. Trajectories of movement and points of intensity overlay and criss-cross each other, their tension maintained because the tendencies of smooth and striated space are to opposing directions.

Where striated space is dimensional formed by perceived things, smooth space is directional and filled with events (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 479). Smooth space privileges the haptic-proprioceptive functions. Perception incorporates mobile bearings oriented to intensities, forces, sonorous and tactile qualities (479). For Deleuze and Guattari, smooth space is not delimited but rather immanent to processes of becoming. Smooth space suggests the close vision of a haptic-proprioceptive aesthetic which does not reduce space to its

striated aspects: foreground, background, perspective, vanishing point, outline, form or center (494).

The smooth space of the museal characterizes "inhabited" space: that is, the moving trajectory of the viewing subject and the vector of embodiment through space. Such a smooth modality merges stops and motility in apprehension. The experience of space is one of affects and symptomatic intensities. Where museum administrators conceive of the museum in dimensional terms as striated points of interest, the directional quality of smooth space is constituted in local operations which can involve changes in direction. In the same way that Deleuze and Guattari describe Henry Miller's "smooth" stroll through the "striated" streets of Paris or Brooklyn, the museumgoer while inscribed within the museal order, moves at varying paces, stops, accelerates, or changes spatial orientation as variations within a continuous process (1987: 482).<sup>6</sup>

The intermediary dimensions and the temporal shifts traced in the circuits of museal apprehension, are not simply and inexorably coded, but shot through with personal significance, and open for use in personal ways. Recalling Michel de Certeau's pedestrian rhetorics, smooth space suggests the activation of the museum by a beholder who moves step by step, tracing a continuous script through space coded precisely

for making connections: with works of art, with other spectators, with discursive traditions, with personal and public histories. Contained but not necessarily determined, wandering through a museum may be considered to be an enactment of smooth space par excellence. Despite its striated aspects, a museal experience is produced as a smooth negotiation of space, as an event where recognition -- triggered by museal temporal and spatial affect -- bears the power of interruption and rearticulation. Smooth museal space, then, implies that of aesthetic becoming.

#### EXHIBITIONARY VOICES:

##### THE CANNED MEMORIES OF THE AUDIO-TOUR

The striation of public memory as a construction of particular cultural meanings and interests is most powerfully exemplified by the acoustiguide tours offered by museums. I will explore in more detail how the technology of the acoustiguide invokes the haptic/proprioceptive sense in several ways which produces an always-already museum poetics.

The Acoustiguide, now used all over the world, was invented by Valentine Burton, an Academy Award-winning actor and composer. Museums have responded enthusiastically to audioguides because they make economic sense, generating funds at low cost. An audio tour can be produced, including a

narration, for about twenty-five thousand dollars. The audio tour plugs the viewer into a script often read by a well known celebrity, museum director or curator. The voice of the museum becomes that of such populist authorities as museum director Philippe de Montebello of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (on Mexican art), television news anchor Walter Cronkite (on history paintings), New York City mayor Edward Koch (on the history and architecture of the Metropolitan Museum), or actors Steve Martin (on Animals at the Met) and Meryl Streep (on Monet at the Baltimore Museum of Art and an exhibition of Russian art at the Smithsonian). In other instances, artists themselves provide narration for their retrospectives such as Roy Lichtenstein at the Guggenheim Museum (Tully, 1991: 35).

There are currently three types of audio tour based on three kinds of recording technologies. In the original version of the cassette tour, viewers wore a portable walkman and earphones, but usually without the rewind feature. Another technological form, the "wand," triggers prerecorded sound as its antenna picks up a signal near the exhibit. And finally, the recently introduced "Inform," incorporates random memory access in the manner of a compact disk. This tour gives the viewer the option to select commentary on particular artworks by punching code numbers displayed contiguous to the labels.



Each of the above audio devices inflect visitor choreographies in "the manner of a Disneyesque Gesamtkunstwerk" (Paul Taylor, in Greenberg, 1987: 107), yet in distinctly different ways. Sometimes "mood enhancers" in the form of music, classical and from film scores, is employed to lend effect. As distinct from the docent's poise of connoisseurship and rarefied distance, audio tours directly implicate the viewer's body. The voice substitutes for the viewer's internal dialogue, one's space for reflection. There can be no doubt that this technology is profoundly overdetermining in an aesthetic experience. What I want to ascertain here, is how acoustoguide tours direct the museumgoer's attention through the audio and proprioceptive sense within an overall exhibition context. Beyond enabling museums to fulfil their educational obligations, or to keep crowds moving during crowded exhibitions, they function -- through the recorded voice -- to articulate the viewer's consciousness to objects. What is at stake here, especially with the cassette and wand tours, is that the voice forges the connection of both transition between objects and of transforming their meaning for the viewer. As Chris Tellis, head of the San Francisco-based company Antenna - Acoustiguide's main competitor -- states:

[The voice] directs your attention and provides immediate educational material. There's no secondary shift in focus, no video screen or wall

label on the side. If you're looking at the real thing and you're hearing about it, there's a magic moment that allows you to remember the fact better. The machine is simply the vehicle (Tully, 1991: 35).

I would like to suggest that the "magic" of this moment has to do precisely with the dynamics of memory, whether its construction, activation or displacement. By bringing into play visual, auditory and proprioceptive faculties within a process of moving through the gallery, a haptic sensorial experience is mobilized in the manner of the "art of memory." Each object of directed attention comprises an aspect of the aesthetic experience. Thus the scripting of the haptic/audio sense -- through feeling oneself in relationship to an object while hearing about it -- can function in the creation of official public memory.

Reesa Greenberg has called into question how the cassette and wand technologies affect the viewing experience. She quite accurately notes that not only is the audio cassette tour most easily implemented in exhibitions requiring only an audio cassette player, but it is more controlling. With no rewind function, one has no choice but to move forward along with the recorded cassette which reinforces a passive, if directional, beholding. In contrast, the wand enables freer movement and the possibility to return to particular exhibits. It is more difficult to implement because it requires a complex technical

infrastructure, trip wires and architectural hardware (Greenberg, 1987: 106). Yet, to enable the suspension of disbelief, the museumgoer must permit their interpolation into the discourse. One can imagine the ridiculousness of moving quickly through an exhibition, truncating earnest commentary in mid-sentence, or returning to an art work only to trip a commentary one has already heard giving the audio tour a kind of robotic insincerity.

A more recent version of audio tour, "Inform," enables the free movement of the wand yet is more potentially interactive. Inform resembles a cellular telephone and enables the user to construct a more "personalized experience" by opting to call up information on particular works of interest. By entering a number on the keypad -- customarily placed next to artworks on the wall -- museum visitors hear a recorded commentary. It gives the option to choose both the script of the exhibition and its duration (Chun, 1995: 41).

While Greenberg makes insightful claims concerning the controlling aspects of audio tours, my concern here is more focussed on her point that this occurs through the intimacy created by the voice's presence. As Greenberg states "it is the voice that determines the success of the tape" (1987: 108):

Like the telephone, the Acoustiguide creates a dyad, a one-to-one physical relationship approximating that of mother and child. But who is who in this duo oscillates

for, at times, the listener is the mother with child at the hip; at others, the child, held and holding, listening to a mother's tales (Ibid.).

The intimacy of "being whispered to" inverts the viewer-museum relation evoked by Betty Goodwin's installation at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts which I described in Chapter 2. For while Goodwin's "ear" proposes the museum itself as a listening muse, the intimacies of the audio tour position the museum as a muse which speaks in the voices of celebrity rather than mythology.

Where my earlier argument on the haptic's proximity to the interiority of hearing was described in its potential to disturb the disinterested distance of Kantian aesthetic engagement, the haptic is not necessarily emancipatory. For the intimacies of acoustiguide technology can be mobilized also in the interest of working against agency in aesthetic process.

Nevertheless, audio technology can provide useful counterpoint to an exhibition in the form of scholarly reference to archaeological and historical material. The use of direct address rather than a contrived script usually carries fewer pretensions. Artists' narrations of their own exhibitions provides another level of aesthetic connection, like a personal interview, a primary -- if unidirectional -- source not available elsewhere (Tully, 1991: 35).

Perhaps most interesting is when audio tours work in counterpoint, rather than to underscore, an exhibition. This has been explored at historical sites where soundscapes and oral histories are triggered to create ambience in particular spaces. For example, the audio tour at the island prison of Alcatraz (produced by the United States Parks Service) comprises the stories inmates and guards told in the first person, and incorporated sound effects such as tin cups rattling against bars, the steps of heavily booted guards (Ibid.). This has the effect of animating ghostly affect and collapsing historical time.

With increasingly sophisticated technology providing "magic moments" -- where time, space and movement overlap to create the memory of a fact -- the trick is to make viewers believe what they are experiencing. Audio tours are powerful precisely because they combine visuality with the aural and proprioceptive senses. The beholders' interior acoustic space is occupied by suggestions, stories and a larger narrative scripting which substitute for the interruptions of memory.

Audioguides work rhetorically primarily through producing identification with voices and contexts as they are brought together in a process of movement. Such activation of the space fills in gaps between active agent and circumstances, in effect producing specific memories. Such identification -- the

voice as modality of assertion -- governs the subject's stake in what the exhibition offers. It is powerful precisely because it is enacted as if it were true. The recognitions of memory -- in their embodied aspects at least -- resemble Michel de Certeau's notion of belief as active, transitive and embodied. "Belief" for him is defined "not as the object of believing (a dogma, program etc.), but as the subject's investment in a proposition, the act of saying and considering it true" (1984: 178).

The audioguide provides supposed answers to questions which the exhibition may raise. Not only does the audio tour preclude viewers from talking with each other, but the voice of the script "stands in" for the viewer's own inner dialogue with the exhibition, their own thought processes. Belief flows through the audioguide via sound, directing a haptic-proprioceptive experience as if it were the beholders own.<sup>7</sup> During exhibition apprehension then, the allure of the celebrity affords a kind of identificatory conversion, the privilege and fantasy of having someone like Meryl Streep not only at your side, but in your head, seemingly engaging your most intimate identifications. The fact that she is an actor reading a script is subsumed by this illusion. The exhibition becomes not only about the artifacts but a product of the relational intimacy of this voice. For the duration of the

experience her company resonates through the interior body, as the exteriorized haptic sense simultaneously negotiates the actual museal space. The interplay of the interior and exterior haptic operates in the manner of the art of memory. It articulates a process of movement to particular objects in space conferred with particular qualities, yet the memories themselves are "canned."

#### ANDREA FRASER'S MUSEUM TOURS

Andrea Fraser's docent performances, as mentioned previously, employ the "official voices" of the museum with ironic shifts which function both as political intervention and institutional critique. Fraser gave "tours" during the Damaged Goods show at the New Museum in New York, and later at the Philadelphia Museum of Fine Art. The speech position of the docent operates at the nexus of issues of gender, class and ethnicity. As the museum embodies the "public good," the docent -- as an unpaid volunteer -- impersonates the philanthropy of a particular class, whether she inhabits it in actuality or not. Fraser's seamless voice assumes an enraptured visitor as she informs the tour members about art. These events have worked as cogent investigations of how a official speaking "position," that of the docent, can be demystified. The docent, as paradigmatic ideal viewer, sustains an "aesthetic disposition"

after Bourdieu, her cultural capital of class and education. Fraser, with her hair in a bun, dresses up in tweed, pearls, nylons and pumps, affecting an attitude of connoisseurship. The docent invests both her body and her time. She is at once the defender of the aesthetic and a product of a more cosmetic aesthetician: waxed, coiffed and manicured. Like her talks, she is a constellation of superlatives, the best, most interesting, most beautiful of her culture. But more than the simple mimesis of highbrow culture, the performance affords a point of contact with the viewer which activates the nexus of the perceiver-perceived relation. In the performance, the docent named "Jane" begins to demonstrate id-like "desires" as her tour progressively confuses her libidinal inclinations with museal mandates for beauty, history and education. The performance interrogates tour rituals which produce their public. Thus the performative element -- that of transformative becoming is set in relation to the affective of the exhibitionary apparatus.

Fraser's docent performances provide the grounds for her audio tour, her artistic contribution to the 1993 Biennial at the Whitney Museum.<sup>8</sup> Fraser interviewed museum personnel involved with the Biennial. These sound bites -- often "out takes" -- were then edited out of sequence into an abstracted soundscape collage. Thus, Fraser reversed the "control" that



curators usually have in considered installations or edited texts, by foregrounding moments in their interviews where they lose their concentration, repeat something they hope will be edited out, where they space out and ponder, where they give up in frustration. Their appeals to her to be fair are indirectly stated, evident in the professionally inflected intimacy, warmth and controlled humour. There is a kind of rhetorical familiarity which raises the possibility that they are attempting to cajole, con or even seduce the artist on the one hand, or which appear pompous or too eager, on the other. Thus coping strategies, given a situational insecurity, are revealed. While they evidently are answering queries by the artist, the questions are inaudible.

The tour begins with a series of decontextualized "Welcomes!" to the Whitney Museum of American Art by several voices, and then proceeds through the exhibition. Phatic exclamations, characteristic to pedestrian rhetorics in museums such as "That's great" or "Very effective" "Fabulous" "That's brilliant" punctuate the speakers. In contrast to the voices who seem quite uncomfortable and out of control is Fraser's clipped, authoritative voice, the consummate phallic woman.

While she may resemble the patrician Philippe de Montebello, the director of the Metropolitan Museum of Fine Art, it is her mastery of the viewer's movements and the

interviewee's responses rather than her experience of the artworks that is revealed. Arch imperatives instruct the viewer "Please direct your attention to...", "Please proceed to the next gallery," "You should now be in a room with a window," "Please proceed to the central area of the third floor, turn left, turn left again." Fraser mimics the beeps using her own voice rather than electronic sound. Other sequences include instructions: when to turn the tape on and off, when to go from one gallery to another, yet the works are neither addressed directly nor made specific. Rather it is the curators' responses which are the focus, those usually invisible behind-the-scenes discussions which go into creating a show. The exhibition organizers betray their will to authority: "That's what I'll hope you'll think...", "I want them to be..." (repeated three times with no object). The speech of the personnel seems decontextualized, referents are eliminated. What remains are idiomatic phrases, buzzwords, and knee-jerk policy rhetoric. What is also brutally interesting is that Fraser teases out those uncomfortable moments where speakers pause midway through a relational connective in order to complete a concept or idea.<sup>9</sup>

There are two forms of reflexivity compellingly evident in this piece. Most obviously in a political sense, Fraser makes audible the persona and dialogue operating behind the

scenes of the museum, thus providing access to the ethos and communication manner of the Whitney Museum's staff. There is also a formal reflexivity to the tape. The voices are treated with a phase shifter, and a track of a techno-burbling sound directs attention to the technology of recording.

The effect of the audio tour is to disrupt the Whitney Museum's exhibition authority. Fraser achieves this through rendering clusters of speech for each site in the exhibition non-specific, and through not only revealing voices usually hidden, but in highlighting their lapses of mastery. Thus another kind of interior voice is revealed as distinct from one which substitutes for one's inner dialogue in acoustiguides conventionally: the usually inaudible voice of the curatorial paradigm itself. In this sense, Fraser's audio tour provides a remarkable instance of an acoustical counter-text to the exhibition, as distinct from acoustiguide's immanent sub-text.

#### COLLECTIVELY PERSONAL:

#### GENRES OF POPULAR MEMORY

Now I want to focus more directly on how striated museum space can give rise to smooth experience, specifically how the institutional limits of memory provides for the overlay of tactically personal remembrance. As I outlined previously, even given the codings of official memory in museums, the

experiences of beholders are never completely determined. For regardless of the aims of public museums to edify and inform, people negotiate museums according to their own pleasures and purposes.

In contrast to the crystallized codes carried in the arrangements of material culture in museums, individual acts of remembering contingent to a museum visit are both provisional and unstable. Not only is personal memory continually modified temporally in terms of a present point-of-view, but an act of remembering is inflected spatially by the circumstances in which it occurs. The active memory of living individuals is hooked to their movements: altered as it is recalled. Memory can be but selective and partial and is therefore dynamic and constantly remade situationally.

In the context of official scriptings of museological truths, an act of remembering can provide a moment of recognition which works against-the-grain, interrupting and displacing official histories with aspects of personal experience. Thus, the triggering of personal memory can disturb the intended meaning of an exhibition or work of art, providing -- in an instant-- openings for the reclaiming of self. It is in this way that acts of remembering in museum can be both interventional and transformative.

While I have just described personal memory as working relationally, it is not my intention to limit acts of remembering to discrete individuals. Rather, I want to focus on how human beings participate in collective memories in museums beyond those offered by the museum's script. The domains of public and private memory I have just identified, flow into each other in the intermediary zones of what I will describe as popular memory. Popular memory, in a sense, is collectively personal, the nexus of the moods and possibilities of museal space. As Lynn Spigel and Henry Jenkins have argued, popular memory -- rather than being specific or fixed -- involves the "abstractions of lived experience into something more generic or prototypical" (1991: 135). Popular memory, therefore, characterises the play of constructive experience within the realm of the institutional script. The focus here is not the identity of individuals, but rather on how human agents activate the museal. Popular memory, like the art of memory, is a process of recollection that functions by associative intensity. This notion of popular memory, I contend, provides a springboard for expanding into an analysis of how museums are intersected by collective recognitions which provide for zones of experience with a more tenuous relationship to traditional art. The time-space of the popular describes the relational aspects of beholding, as intertextual

and associative processes which expand beyond works of art, other spectators, discursive traditions, and personal and public histories (132).

#### ENACTING METAPHORS OF SCALE

Just as movement engages the associative aspects of memory in proprioceptive aesthetic experience, likewise, it is the slippage of the sign that produces meaning in signification. Like memory, signification functions as a play in difference and instability, and is ultimately irreducible. It is precisely the slippage of the sign which gives the space, interval or room to manoeuvre. Stuart Hall's theory of articulation takes up the sign "in terms of difference," as conjunctural points which articulate personal experience to broader cultural narratives in the constitution of identity.

I would like to extend Hall's concept of articulation to consider how the conjunctures of beholding, the space and practices produced in the zone of connection between museumgoers and museum spaces, are galvanized through movement and engage with memory and recognition. It is the slippages and distortions occurring in the constellatory zones between museums, movement and memory which fascinate me and which I want to explore in what follows. Ultimately, reading the aspects of such a relational aesthetic affords a way to

theorize the affective intensities of its syntagmatic practices and spatial dynamics. Immanent to the connections between objects, viewers and museums are the stresses, releases and movements of energies and intensities of which memory is only a part. But, while memory is my focus here, other affective vehicles can also engage this space: desire, nostalgia, aspiration, belonging, or longing in itself.

Susan Stewart, in On Longing: Narrative of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection, focusses on longing, not in a libidinal sense, but in terms of a devotion to objects. She explores the crisis of the sign as "the gap between material signifier and abstract signified, which Derrida and others have termed the myth of presence of Western metaphysics" (1984: 17). This, she argue, makes all language a deviation from "standards" or "quality" which is in fact potentially productive (Ibid.) Stewart locates her concern at the "structures of desire" between language and experience, and by extension between narratives and systems of things. She introduces a category of relation as a particular will-to-connect in the form of "longing." For her, longing, understood as nostalgia, denies the crisis between signifier and signified by deferring experience to points where narratives begin and end. Stewart's studies of the exaggerations contingent to nostalgia mine the ideological significance of "distortion"

itself. In particular, she elucidates how the sense of perspective is modified by techniques of description. She argues that narrative gestures determine particular points of view, and demonstrates how description is generated within relations which implicitly invent and distance what it describes.

Stewart's book intriguingly pivots around an alternating relationship: while she is concerned with describing how narratives are generated by objects, she also describes how objects are generated by narratives. In terms of "how narratives are generated by objects," she situates two generic conventions which can describe what happens in the gaps of metaphor characterizing "the miniature" on the one hand and "the gigantic" on the other. For Stewart, a "genre" is a "set of textual expectations emergent in time and determined by (or divergent from) tradition" (6). Her work examines the specific generic conventions of miniature and gigantic and takes the scale of the human body as a touchstone. While the miniature is manipulable and capable of being known all-at-once, the gigantic disallows such a transcendent view. The gigantic can only be understood in terms of its partiality, the elements of which are connected immanent to movement. Stewart points out that while the miniature presumes an "interiority" and is known



within the domestic sphere, the gigantic presumes an "outside" which relates to public culture and natural spectacle.

The miniature renders artifacts of public culture manipulable within a domestic context. For example, a small figure of the Statue of Liberty may be situated on the mantle as a souvenir of a vacation. In this way, the ownership of miniatures achieves a kind of spatial closure on objects as they are possessed and located within the home. Miniatures enable a seemingly transcendent point of view on the external world, and thereby affirm bourgeois culture's fascination with the safety of the "picturesque" (Stewart, 1984: 37-103). Moreover, ownership permits an everyday familiarity and haptic knowing as the small artifact is manipulated or held in various ways.

In terms of movement then, where the miniature itself is "moved" as a tiny, but discrete, totality, the gigantic is only knowable by "moving through" it.

#### MANIPULABLE CULTURE: MINIATURE MUSEUMS

Miniature museums, whether as toys, games or educational aids, not only articulate museal representations and collective experiences, but also enable the practice of particular kinds of moves which activate and circulate museal agency. Here, I want to explore how miniature museums render constructions of

"public memory" manipulable within personal and domestic space. The following describes specific instances where museums are rendered in small reproductions which are "used" for entertainment and instruction. What is important is that their miniaturization of the museal enables a sense of play where the relational aspects of particular moves can be explored. As Michel de Certeau has pointed out, games (as themselves miniaturizations) can provide for moves proper to the practice of space. Moreover, they enable the practice of particular speech acts relational to a situation. The miniaturization of museums thus tames the terror of their gigantic spaces by rendering them as manipulable totalities.

Between 1948 and 1950 the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York held the copyright on a series entitled The Metropolitan Museum of Art: Miniatures with the subtitle "Your Own Museum of Art in Miniature." Here the museum was miniaturized, preeminently "contained" and distributed in monthly "albums" for domestic viewing and personal ownership (Stewart, 1984: 65-66). It enabled perusal of the museum's collections in a situation without anxiety, with no threat of interruption by other viewers, no hassles of transportation and no fear of getting lost in the mammoth museum. In collecting the full set, one could achieve a kind of perfection, the fulfilment of owning a complete set of miniature artworks. The

museum in miniature inhabits an "inside" within the "here," which marks a personal culture within the larger art market. The forward to Volume 1 states its mandate as both the "duty and desire" to provide people access to the museal treasure house "to learn about history, about good taste, about the creative spirit of past and present -- to absorb those things that form their true cultural heritage" (Metropolitan Museum, 1948: n.p.).

Yet this purpose belies a more public narrative than the intimacy of licking two-inch reproductions and carefully placing them where the captions indicate. Given to underage children, the whole project could, and surely was, confounded and confused. In form, the album resembled a stamp album, especially given the sticky backed paper and serrated edges of the colour reproductions. The captions situate the miniature works of art, as stamps, within the governing art historical taxonomy. Yet there is no reference to connect them with the actual museal context. Rather, the collection provides for vicarious ownership of the world's greatest art works. As with a stamp album, the collector is empowered -- through a metaphoric expansion that ownership provides -- with the distance, taste or knowledge that the reproductions represent. Thus they provide examples of Andre Malraux's "museum without

walls" which consists in the circulation of photographic reproductions of works of art.

While the "Metropolitan Museum in Miniature" provides a two-dimensional stamp-album, the J. Paul Getty Museum produced a three-dimensional museum miniature to promote the opening of its new museum in 1997. Designed as a children's parlour game (for ages 6-12), it is entitled "Make Your Own Museum." A review in the New York Times describes it as follows:

Make Your Own Museum is an elaborate boxed kit, with a \$29.95 price tag, that included all that's needed to create a museum. There are three fold-out gallery walls, with details like Corinthian columns and pedimented doors, and flooring choices that resemble the most elaborate marble and inlaid wood. The kit also has punch-out furniture, including a Boulle cabinet and an Italian daybed, and objects like a fourteenth-century vase, a Roman bust and an African mask. There are also miniatures of traditional paintings by artists like Van Dyck, Cezanne, van Gogh and Renoir (New York Times, June 3, 1994: C 22).

This miniature enables children to play at curating a museum's contents and to "control" the museum owned by the foundation, one of the world's richest families.

Another museum miniature is Parker Brothers' three-dimensional game of "Clue: The Great Museum Caper." Here the traditional Clue characters, including the elderly anthropologist Colonel Mustard, the secretive Miss Scarlet, et al., participate in an "Art Theft Mystery" set in the private museum of a "Mr. Boddy." The private collection of this

"British millionaire" include tiny reproductions of Rembrandt, Mondrian, Van Gogh, Degas, and Millet, which are strategically "placed" by players in the mansion at the beginning of each game. The role of "thief" rotates. The object of the game is to steal the most paintings during one's turn as the thief. This must be achieved without being caught by the other characters who attempt to find and apprehend the thief before he or she escapes through a door or window. Interestingly, the game works on a haptic as well as visual level. Significantly, the thief is invisible. His or her presence is only known when paintings disappear from the board. As the thief, one's moves are secret, and may at times circumvent the video cameras, motion detectors and security center by disconnecting various power sources. As one of the searching characters, not being able to see the thief "move" actually invokes deductive and intuitive blind guesses.

As Michel de Certeau has shown, both games and divination indicate kinds of rationality proper to the practice of spaces. He points out that where discourse (langue) can be recorded, transported and examined in different places with the same effect, a speech act (parole) is inseparable from its context of utterance (1984: 20). Thus, the rules of games comprise a formalization of tactics which are necessarily circumstantial. De Certeau's point elucidates the situational significance of

the moves of the miniature museum games mentioned above. In the more formal Clue, the players articulate their moves with respect to the circumstances as the game proceeds. Thievery in museums is necessarily tactical in nature. Moreover the character outlines in the instruction booklet portray the characters as duplicitous. Miss Scarlet's "mysterious" past or Mrs. Peacock's "unethical" art world dealings may account for less than scrupulous behaviour. As the game is learned by players, a repertoire of schemes and actions accrues. In this way the experience of various moves striate as patterns of action held in memory. Likewise, those playing more abstractly in the Getty museum work within a formal printed framework, but have the opportunity to expand it to fit their imaginations and life experiences. In both games, the activity of the participants involves the liminality of the play time where moves are relational to a constellation of possibilities. In this miniature world the stakes of actions may be high, but everyone ultimately escapes unharmed to a more quotidian afterlife.

#### RELATIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS:

##### MOVING THROUGH THE GIGANTIC MUSEUM

In contradistinction to the miniature as "contained," Stewart presents the generic convention of the gigantic as

"container" (1984: 71). Rather than the complete view the miniature affords, the point of view of the gigantic is necessarily partial. Because it expressly disallows a transcendent point of view, the gigantic can only be negotiated through movement or its observable traces (70-71). For Stewart, the gigantic typifies a generic convention which describes exteriority as opposed to the domestic, and the realm of the public as distinct from the miniature's private realm. She elaborates the gigantic as encompassing the "sublime" which blends danger and beauty in a surrender of control (75).

Museums certainly tend towards the gigantic proportionally, as for instance the Metropolitan Museum's lobby which dwarfs its visitors.<sup>10</sup> Of course, museums are framed by narrative -- discourses of nationality, ethnology, natural history, art, or science -- which also inscribe their objects. My concern, however, is with the metaphoric slippage constituent to processes of moving through museums, processes which entail a relational aesthetic. In moving through the museum, beholders are situated in the associative logics of collective memory.

In taking up the notion of the "gigantic," I will focus on what has been perhaps not been as commonly studied; that is, how museums themselves function as metaphors or are represented in cultural narratives which extend beyond their walls. So

rather than concentrating on how museums determine the objects within them, I will focus on how museums function as particular metaphors within different cultural narratives. I aim to show how metaphors of the gigantic characteristically conjoin processes and affect which, I contend, shed light on the dynamic aspects of haptic, proprioception, and mnemonic transformation occurring in relationship to museal spaces. Moreover, the three narratives I will discuss each describe instances where museal striation -- its fixed exhibition narratives -- intersects and gives way to the smooth space of the protagonist's story, revealing the experience of an individual from a first person point of view.

In the following narratives, the museum is a metaphoric container within which the events of the story unfold. Distinct from the miniature museum-as-artifact mastered and contained through ownership, these narratives describe events of individual agency in relation to a gigantic museum, knowable only through motile contingency.

I will discuss three literary works which weave the museal into the narrative in distinct ways: Margaret Atwood's novel, Life Before Man, and two short stories, Vladimir Nabokov's "The Visit to The Museum," and John Updike's "Museums and Women."<sup>11</sup> Each author inflects the museum as a metaphor for a particular cultural process, a space imbued with meanings



as individuals produce them, whether a space of fantasy, a metaphor of the public state, or as repositories of desire and sites of seduction. I wish to focus on the significance of these museal tropes. What is significant is not the museum's role in transforming objects, but rather how museums themselves function as metaphors within larger formalized and constructed narratives. In situating museums thus within larger literary storylines, each hints at a particular genre of the museum as trope. The metaphORIZATION of the museum by these writers effectively reanimates striated museum spaces through practices which pry open the museum's secrets, its power, and inanimate cult of death. These literary examples of smooth museum space enacted by individuals will provide the basis for a later elaboration of museal genres as more collectively inflected.

#### LIFE BEFORE: ANCESTOR WORSHIP AT THE MUSEUM

Margaret Atwood's novel Life Before Man (1979) is set in the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto. Atwood's view of the museum as a repository of knowledge -- what she refers to as a "Man Made Stone Brain" -- effects a nineteenth-century museum typology (Atwood interview, Cannizzo, 1982: 29).

The museum is a microcosm, and that's how I used it in my book. And of course it's the overwhelming obsessive desire of every museum curator to have one of everything, so that what you ought to end up with presumably if you had the perfect museum would be

the perfect world, except complete in every detail and still living from beginning to end. That is, you really would be able to go back into the past complete in every detail. Since we cannot do that, we collect shards, we collect leftovers, we collect fragments of what is left, and try then to piece together something that has ceased to exist and make it come alive again (27).

The Redpath Museum in Montreal, Peale's Museum in Philadelphia, The Niagara Fall's Museum, and within popular display, The Ripley's "Believe It or Not!" collection" are all predicated on the collection as a metonymic extension of knowledge a complete series with one of everything. Yet, the narrative rests on Atwood's knowledge that museums are often used in ways which have nothing to do with the intent of their curators or trustees. She claims that people go to museums to get material for their fantasy lives (26). Atwood explores the museum as a site for ancestor worship and reconciliation.

Life Before Man portrays a "timorous" paleontologist named Lesje, her struggles with the boredom of a routine museum job: cataloguing, answering letters, building models and compiling educational programming. As a counterpart to the dullness of her work, Lesje imagines the rhetoric of her educational kits having a literal reality.

"Try to imagine," says the brochure she wrote, a guide for parents and teachers, "what it would be like if suddenly the dinosaurs came to life." She'd like to; she'd like to sit here for an hour and do nothing else. She'd close her eyes and one after another the fossils would lift their ponderous feet,

moving along the grove of resurrected trees, flesh coalescing like ice or mist around them. They's dance stumpily down the stairs of the Museum and out the front door. Eight-foot horsetails would sprout in Queen's Park, the sun would turn orange. She'd throw in some giant dragonflies, some white and yellow flowers, a lake. She'd move among the foliage, at home, an expedition of one (1979: 310).

Likewise, Lesje's contemplations within the museal context take literally the re-animation of the extinct contents of the museum. In making the fossilized animals come to life, striation (ultimately death) gives way to smooth space of imaginative becoming. Lesje fantasy life leads her to "daydream in prehistory" (Atwood, 1979: 18-19). Lesje's imaginative Jurassic Park fantasies form an essential counterpart to her museum work, providing the intensity she requires, and ultimately extending beyond the work day. She stays late and prowls the corridors. Additionally, Lesje's interpretive and research skills as a specialist provide a background for her study of human behaviour, including her own relationships which intersect across personal and professional spheres. The couplings that occur between characters invoke the family and raise questions of heredity.

In a way that seemingly articulates the archiving of relics and spinning of stories, Atwood posits the museum as a site for practices of "ancestor worship." To Atwood, museum collecting is

an extended form of ancestor worship insofar as every individual is a haunted house, which every individual is -- haunted by the ghosts of their parents and their grandparents, and whatever they can imagine of what they came from before that. Every culture is also a haunted house. We are always looking over our shoulders to see where we've come from (Atwood interview, Cannizzo, 1982: 27).

In this respect, Lesje's mixed ethnicity complicates her identity as distinct from more aborescent, hierarchical, centralized, models of family genealogy. She reflects on how her cultural hybridity resembles that of an Indian woman dressed in a sari and white lab coat coding her as a recent immigrant professional, accompanied by her two daughters dressed in kilts which register the assimilation of the next generation into WASP Toronto. How does such mixed ethnicity fit the ancestor worship of museums, especially in the context of a nineteenth-century museum type which is predicated on the "integrity" of its series?

In contrast with more conventional genealogies, Lesje's rituals of ancestor worship in the museum proceed from the problematics of her cultural hybridity -- from her own "will to connect" her grandmothers who wouldn't speak to each other. Her memories of the museum takes the form of short-term rhizomic experience, proceeding from herself as a motile mediating point.

The museum as site of "ancestor worship" is evoked as Lesje recalls how encounters in the museum connect significantly to her matriarchal family history. It was her Jewish grandmother who had first taken her to the quiet mysteries of the museum, a custom they kept in lieu of synagogue on Saturdays. Lesje's relationship with her grandmother had a history specific to the museum context where they would wander hand-in-hand (even after she was too old to do so) as Lesje read the labels to her. The museum substituted for the sacred in the minds of both. When Grandmother Etlin died, Lesje's mourning took the form of wishing to place her in a vitrine, like the displays of Egyptian mummies, with a label describing her life (Atwood, 1979: 95-96). In a dimension of cultural hybridity distinct from ethnicity alone, Lesje's grief finds resolution in a fantasy which unites her family and her occupational culture, in imagining how her expertise with managing dead specimens might extend to displaying a loved one.

Later in the novel, a museum experience is foregrounded as a site of reconciliation, not through speech but through a commonality of movement. Given the antagonism between Lesje's two grandmothers and their proclamation to never speak to the other, she imagines herself at age ten going to the museum with both of them, one holding her left hand, one her right. In this way, movement through the public space provides a resolution

impossible through verbalization. While Lesje cannot imagine them speaking to each other, she can visualize them walking with her in the museum (Atwood, 1979: 269-70). In this way, as a private feud is moved into public space, the mammoth museum - which can only be experienced through movement -- provides for a transformative immanence in-process. This tableau of ancestor worship, imagined by Lesje within a realm of possibility, provides Lesje the comfort of a healing mythology.

#### MUSEAL AS AN AFFECTIVE VEHICLE OF DISLOCATION

Vladimir Nabokov's story, "The Visit to the Museum," ([1939] 1977) foregrounds different metaphors of becoming within the museal. While the in-process aspects of moving through a "gigantic" space is evoked, its affective morphology figures differently. As distinct from Atwood's attention to the museal functionality of family, fantasy and resolution, Nabokov focuses on the stakes, gamble, and risk of one prolonged museum visit. The museum becomes the stage for the enactment of an exhibition continuum by a Russian aristocrat as a metaphor for processes of state dislocation and revolution.

Nabokov's moral tale centres on the narrator as he negotiates a museal maze. Here the museum, functioning as a trope of public memory, reflects the radical changes of the

Russian state while the beholder is within it, unaware of what is actually happening (over a prolonged period) outside its walls. The story evokes "ancestor worship" as a museum trope, but rather than a conciliatory space, the museum is rendered dangerous and discontinuous.

The story begins as the protagonist is asked to locate a painting of a friend's grandfather, a portrait by "Leroy" in the local museum in Montisert, France. The narrator, reticent about this request, ponders excuses, only to find this very museum to be the sole source of shelter during a rainstorm. Once inside, he meets the curator and beholds a nineteenth-century museum type, the main hall containing exhibitions of coins, stuffed owls, minerals and, to the narrator's surprise, the portrait by Leroy. The reader has access to his inner dialogue which gives cues to the class of the protagonist, through his commentary on the lowliness of the curator, "a banal pensioner" (110) and through the taste judgments in his descriptions such as the "vile conventionality" in the painting of what is evidently a nobleman situated between two "abominable" landscapes (111).

The narrator relates that the custodian avoids answering direct questions by continually changing the subject and by calling attention to various exhibits. This interestingly parodies attempts by museums to enforce their version of the

exhibition script. The protagonist, wishing to make good use of his time, inquires about purchasing the painting. The custodian replies that "The treasures of the museum are the pride of the city...and pride is not for sale" (112). In the state regime, the rights of private property are not ascendant. The narrator attempts to go above the custodian by contacting the director, Mr. Godard, who denies that the portrait by Leroy even exists, as it is uncatalogued. Our narrator stakes a wager, offering to pay for the painting in advance and, if it were not there, to pay anyway.

Yet, upon his return, they encounter a shift in the class of museumgoers from civilized to those who display lewd and drunken behaviour as they laugh and point their fingers. One youth admires the pipes of a radiator pretending it is an exhibit. (Which confounds a proper viewing ethic in a way similar to Andrea Fraser). Finding the portrait, the director claims that the decision to sell it must be made by an as-yet unelected mayor, effectively deferring the narrator's inquiry into bureaucratic oblivion.

At this point freakish expansions of scale in the narrative reflect the protagonist's increasing discomfort. Lost in the museum, the wager veers out of control, and in this way invokes the gigantic in its aspect of sublime threat. The protagonist ascends a staircase to find a crowd of elderly



people with umbrellas examining a "gigantic mock-up of the universe" (116). Abandoned by the director, the narrator proceeds through increasingly enormous halls which contain what is evidently the sounds of the New Russian State: steam machinery, whistles, clattering dishes, ringing hammers, typewriters. Finding himself entirely alone in an Empire-style parlour, his terror is obvious. Clearly, the narrator is lost in the museal maze and each attempt to retrace his steps leads to yet ever-more vast enclosed spaces. Finally he stumbles out of a door into a street scene illuminated by streetlights under falling snow. Noticing a shop sign, he quickly concurs from the reformed orthography that he is in post-Soviet Russia. This shift which places him (an aristocrat) in a post-revolutionary political context renders him an escapee whose class is a liability to his life. Realizing his danger, he begins to destroy any evidence he carries upon his body, tearing up papers, money, clothes, linen and hiding his shoes so he is left absurdly naked in the winter snowscape. He does not elaborate on his arrest and eventual extradition, but asserts his refusal to again submit to such unpleasant inconveniences in the future.

The museal metaphors foregrounded in this story center on the museum as microcosm of state transformation. Moreover, the struggles describe the tensions between private and public

ownership -- the desire to possess and its deferment within a communist museum. Beginning as a site at which to locate a painting of a friend's ancestor, the museum becomes a confusing maze as the basis for class commentary. Here the museum as a trope for class is portrayed, not as a site of pride in its antiquities, but by the confident judgments and aristocratic airs of the narrator himself. His arrogance of class gives way to alarm once he realizes that the museal context has metamorphosed into a state apparatus where he is not in control. The museum's containment gives way to a kind of amusement park ride through the increasingly limitless and vast new public culture of post-revolutionary Russia. This mnemonic enactment of the museal effects in the protagonist the recognitions and processes of dislocation as the public collectivity clashes with, and overrides, classist individualism.

#### MUSEUMS AND WOMEN: TERMS OF RELATION

In John Updike's story, "Museums and Women" (1967), the museum is not only a site of seduction, but a metaphor for a patriarchal perspective which seeks to contain and regulate "women." Inverting the tradition of the muses, women symbolizing abstract ideals, Updike uses metaphors of the museal to describe "women" in sexually explicit terms. Such

invocation of the museal elevates sex from the realm of nature to culture. Updike uses the high culture cache of the museum to make "public" what is evidently the intimacies of his sexual history. Where mastering the female nude has long been a test of male artistic virility in painting and sculpture (Nead, 1995), it appears that Updike intends to extend this tradition through the mastery of writing.

In a way, Updike strategically represents the body of the artistic nude as itself gigantic, subsuming the museum itself. I must state here that I have no interest in supporting or perpetuating such testimonies of male creativity through a process which aggrandizes yet insistently dominates the female. Yet, beyond the reduction of women to museums, Updike introduces some tropes of the museal which are intriguing precisely because they qualify the modality of connecting his relationships both with women (sexually) and with museums (in terms of aesthetic engagement). The modes he describes, moreover, invoke the haptic sense.

Significantly, the story begins with a reference to the alliterative resonance of the words "museum" and "women."

Set together, the two words are seen to be mutually transparent; the E's, the M's blend -- the M's framing and squaring the structure lend resonance and a curious formal weight to the M central in the creature, which it dominates like a dark core winged with flitting syllables. Both words hum. Both suggest radiance, antiquity, mystery, and duty (3).

The reference is clear: the "M" is labial in nature, just as its "dark core" is vaginal. I am conflicted about this passage. I am uncomfortable about the male perspective given this female corporeal display. But what may be recuperated are its invocation of the oral resonances of the haptic and the relational modalities he describes. Updike's terms of connection -- of "radiance," "antiquity," "mystery," and "duty" -- hold relevance for describing affectual dimensions of an aesthetic experience. So when redirected outside the field of sexual encounter as such, they remain potentially interesting museal tropes.

But first, I'll describe these tropes in Updike's terms. "Museums and Women" describes a series of significant relationships with women in the author's point of view contingent to particular museum contexts. His first trope, "radiance," describes the protagonist's recollection of his first museum visited with his mother. "Radiance" here describes the primary museum experience, an imprint upon which all subsequent visits -- or women -- are judged. Recalling Atwood and Nabakov, it is a provincial museum where the display includes the following artifacts:

A shredding kayak shared a room with a rack of Polynesian paddles. A mummy, its skull half-masked in gold, miniature Mexican villages, quilts, cases of Philadelphia silver, chests decorated with hearts, tulips and bleeding pelicans by Mennonite

folk artists -- and strange small statues. I think it was the smallness of these figures that carried them so penetratingly into my mind...In their smallness they were like secret thoughts of mine projected into dimension and permanence (3-4).

Yet, in Updike's story, this museum references a person, the narrator's mother. Just as its metonymic agenda "to have one of everything" enables the author access to fragments of the world, his mother provides familiarity with the female gender. As each object in a universal survey museum contracts the world, the author's mother is all women. Moreover, it is not simply the objects but their combination that holds significance. He characterizes her "mixture of knowledge and ignorance, openness and reserve" -- to the jumble of objects in the provincial museum. This rather harsh description of her inadequacies trivializes her efforts while evaluating her personal failure to achieve the "radiance" she so selflessly "pointed him toward" (5-6). Updike's description of her inability to assume such luminosity takes for granted the limits of her gender. Perhaps an early marriage stole the radiance of her youth. Yet, without apology the narrator -- by the seeming entitlement of his sex -- provides a testimonial to his perspective of radiance: emanations of love, youth and museums, proclaiming his pairings with unabashed confidence.

Updike's second aspect of the museal, the "antiquity" of museums, is juxtaposed with a story of courtship as he meets

his wife-to-be as she stands at the top of museum stairs as "gatekeeper at the temple of learning." She is simultaneously liminal figure and vessel. As a fine arts major, she contains for him the "priceless and timeless things" of the museum. Delving into the museum's secrets parallels the loss of virginity:

What we seek in museums is the opposite of what we seek in churches -- the consoling sense of previous visitation. In museums, rather, we seek the untouched, the never-before-discovered; and it is in their final unsearchability that leads to hope, and return (12).

The equation of his marital relationship with "antiquity" evokes museal ancestor worship as described by Atwood. Here the male seeks the continuance of his name according to a patrilineal line. As private genealogy is perpetuated by the integrity of a family name, so the walls and taxonomies of museums give the genealogy of meanings concerning collections of artifacts.

Updike's third museal metaphor, their "mystery," conjoins with the description of a passionate affair which uncovers a more mature sexual exploration. In New York the narrator and his lover visit a heritage museum "between the evaporation and recondensation of desire" of a romantic tryst. In contrast to the "never-before-discovered," spaces once home to the fabulously rich, "room after room we entered and owned" (14).

The wealth of the owners depicts the cornucopia of love's pleasures.

Yet in the end, and perhaps surprising given his libidinal preoccupations, it is the moral order which preserves the integrity of the family and the perpetuation of an integral ancestral line that ultimately wins in his personal struggle between adventure and commitment. For it is "duty" which is the final museal space. While the preservation and archiving of works of art protects art, similarly his marriage must be protected. His marital obligations win over the affair as he says goodbye to his lover. Of course, this is after he has helped her get a menial job cataloguing the collection of the museum. He depicts her as actually "thanking" him for "getting her into the museum" which reads simultaneously as a sexual awakening (15-17). This projected gratitude of the abandoned lover who makes no demands, who does not incite guilt, is surely the perfect fantasy of the philandering narrator.

The conflation of women and museums in Updike's conclusion is as misogynistic as it is culturally relativist. For him, both women and museums are ultimately "nameless and continuous" (12) constitutive as they are of a libidinal history of this aging, privileged, male protagonist. The erotically depleted protagonist concludes by waxing poetically

on museum entrances, metaphors which for me exemplify a repressive essentialism:

[N]othing about museums is as splendid as their entrances -- the sudden vault, the shapely cornices, the motionless uniformed guard like a wittily disguised archangel, the broad stairs leading upward into heaven knows what mansions of expectantly hushed treasure. And it appeared to me that now I was condemned, in my search for the radiance that had faded behind me, to enter more and more museums, and to be a little less exalted by each new entrance, and a little more quickly disenchanted by the familiar contents beyond (17).

This vulvomorphic logic essentializes the female anatomy as located in a fixed space.<sup>12</sup> Females who are visited by mobile males who move from one vagina to the next, the names of these women (as the history and identity of the museums) are irrelevant. So the story ends as it has started as a meditation which metaphorizes museum architecture as the biology of the female.

While Updike's perpetuation of patriarchal views of women is reproachable, I recognize that tropes of radiance, antiquity, mystery and duty bring forward (perhaps unwittingly) the immanence of haptic affectivity in museums and therefore can be productively recuperated and redeployed to different ends. Once disarticulated from Updike's phallocentric essentialism, the tropes of radiance, antiquity, mystery and duty museums can be deployed in their creative and poetic



senses within a project which seeks to understand how museums are embodied, represented and activated by women.

The first trope, "radiance," can describe the initial museum encounter, or even its continual renewal in each moment of aesthetic connection. Radiance confers on a museal experience an aspect of epistemic illumination which galvanizes the haptic with objects and contexts. Likewise, "antiquity" can describe the uncovering of the unknown, the reanimation of space through experience, and the excitement of cultural as well as self-reflexive archaeology. In turn, "mystery," invokes the enigmas of perception, why it is that one's attention falls upon certain objects or responds to particular contexts. As a state in itself, mystery assumes the resonance of perhaps subconscious motives that draw us to museums. Likewise, the mysteries of museums hinge to the stories of their objects and how they ended up in the museum. It accounts for such processes as the intuitive hunch, the gathering of clues, and the digging for treasure. And, finally, "duty" is a trope for museal sustenance, its obligation to preserve its culture and to make sense of it in terms of the present. Duty refers to the tendency toward museal striation, not only its accountability regarding objects, but how experiences become conventionalized. But duty need not remain solely obligatory, but also enable a poetics of the museal to be established in

ritual practices which provide for insight both in observation and intervention. Thus deployed, in a relational rather than essential way, Updike's museum metaphors can serve a feminist museal poetics.

While each of the narratives noted above -- Atwood, Nabokov, and Updike -- is expressly concerned with temporality, each is nuanced differently. Updike's has the tone of an autobiographical reverie, esteeming and evaluating qualities of museums and women around a centered self. Nabokov presents his story as a moral tale, warning the viewer to remember to "beware of the consequences of doing favours for others." The events in Atwood's novel occur with a dissection of the workings of museal fantasies within the immediacy of a narrative present that resembles the mnemonics of journal writing. Each of the above narratives proffers a take, a representation of "private memory" constituted within the museum context. So while the audio tour can be understood in its contingencies to the official "public memory" that museum personnel seek to inculcate across their various audiences, the narratives I have described give supposed access to a "private memory" within a museal context. I would like to turn now to look more closely at the space of "popular memory" which occurs as articulations between the two.

## ASSOCIATIVE LOGICS OF POPULAR MEMORY

Lynn Spigel and Henry Jenkins suggest, after Ulrich Neisser, that much of what people believe they remember about their pasts are actually an abstracted matrix of intertextual life experience, which in turn generates a more generic "composite image." They have ascertained that popular memory -- contingent to the recollection of mass cultural forms -- tends to be "prototypical and constructive" rather than "specific and fixed." And that rather than remembering particular aspects of mass culture, people recall their encounters in terms of a related sequence of experiences (1991: 135). Significantly, this research indicates that popular memory overlays a situationally specific context pertaining to the consumption of a cultural text itself.

Spigel and Jenkin's research on individual's memories of Batman, the television show, established that interviewees found it difficult to remember the narrative elements of a particular episode. Instead, their findings showed that memories of Batman were hooked to particular circumstances such as the place where the TV was watched, the related events in the daily schedule (such as watching the show during supper time), and contingent social (sibling relations) and cultural relations involving how sixties culture was integrated in everyday life.

Spigel and Jenkin's research underscores the intertextual aspect of popular memory and its attendant "associative logic" by which particular cultural texts extend beyond their discrete frames and are given significance through the links they forge with the time-space events of everyday life. They conclude:

Popular memory, then, is the place where private and public pasts meet. At this crossroads we find a mix of personal and collective fantasies that transform the products of mass culture into the tools of everyday life (1991: 144).

Thus popular memory can be understood as a locus where autobiographical and historical memory intersect. As Foucault noted, there is an emancipatory aspect to popular memory to sustain memories apart from dominant constructions yet, at the same time, it is inseparable from them.

The "mix" entailed in Spigel and Jenkin's notion of popular memory, and as I am conceptualizing it here, functions by intensity and holds the capacity to connect as a constituent of free action (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 17). It flows fluidly through the collective and personal stories that weave new meanings in relation to syntagmatic arrangements and a situated beholder. Popular memory can be understood as a rhizomic metaphoric structure which comprises an articulation of plateaus. Each plateau, after Gregory Bateson, denotes "a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation towards a culmination point

or external end" (22). In contrast to aborescent models of memory -- which conceptualize genealogical relations between points and positions -- rhizomic or popular memory is decentered, nomadic and instantaneous. Just as one reads using long-term memory and concept, one writes using short-term memory and ideas. Short-term memory includes "forgetting as a process." It involves a process of "merging" with the "nervous, temporal, and collective rhizome" of thought within a culture (16). Thus, in its collective aspects, Deleuze and Guattari's notion of short-term memory is similar to popular memory as I am defining it here.

The concept of popular memory I have outlined refers to rhizomic engagement and everyday use of museum spaces as distinct from art's discourses which require long-term, aborescent, hierarchical, models of memory. The associative logics of popular memory work according to the intensities of short-term memory. In this way, continuities can be sketched between the conditions of possibility of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of rhizomic memory and Spigel and Jenkin's "intertextuality" in memory. For if the dynamics of intertextual processes are activated sufficiently, they effect the "intensity" of a plateau.

## INTENSIFYING THE MUSEAL:

### AESTHETIC TROPES IN POPULAR FILM

Popular memories of museums are intertextual and expansive in much the same way as gigantic metaphors of the museum. Yet while the gigantic involves movement through space, popular memory entails navigation that is time-based. In contrast with the intimate relation afforded with characters in the novels discussed above, film involves a more distanced, third-person view. There is a continuity between the gigantic and the huge screens of cinematic architecture which reveal the seemingly personal in a public space. But what concerns me here are the ways that particular tropes of the museal appear in popular media, not as the figure of the narrative as such, but as the affectivities within which particular trajectories of movement are performed.

I will suggest that the affectivities of museums portrayed in popular films are evocative of particular genres of the museum in popular memory. I will present several models/modes that show how the affectivities of museums and galleries inflect time, space and movement within particular generic series or tropes. These show the interconnection of the actors' movements in the context of the gallery, indicating particular "uses" of the space by various kinds of attention, apprehension, activities and gestures that take place in

relation to the art. Moreover, I will examine the significance of these in situ processes to relationships of beholding characterizing particular display cultures. My analysis treats inquiry into museal stereotypes as potentially a way to go beyond them. This brings into focus not one, but several versions of museum affect in inextricable relation to beholding practices. In a reversal of the control that museal choreographies confer upon cultural objects and subjects, enactments of the museal depicted in film scenes reshape orthodox conventions by extending them into the popular imaginary (where potential use is distinct from actual use). The result is often a humorous view of aesthetic conventions "out of control," with the museum rendered a space of outrageous liminality beyond the scope of real art institutions.

Given the project of this chapter to look at museums and popular memory, I will analyze representations effecting "plateaus of intensity" evident in museum scenes from popular movies. These "proceed from the middle" of the film, usually centred on "coming and going" within the diegesis rather than starting or finishing the film narrative. It is how the entry into a realm of intensity -- that characterizing a haptic "self-vibrating region" -- is introduced (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 21). These plateaus of intensity, I will argue here,

function as tropes or genres of popular memory which articulate aspects of private and public experience. Popular memory, like the art of memory, recollects as contingent to the intensity of a sequence. This notion of popular memory provides a springboard for moving into an analysis of how museums -- as monuments to memory -- are interrupted by individual agents with their own recognitions. The time-space of the popular describes the relational aspects of beholding, as intertextual and associative processes which incorporate works of art, other spectators, discursive traditions, and personal and public histories.

I want to mobilize these confluences of the popular to look at particular genres of experiences negotiated in museums. That is, distinct from discourses of art history, connoisseurship, or citizenship, museums pose the possibility of other kinds of practices. Specifically, these clips of museum scenes indicate how "structures of feeling" of particular social formations are taken up and lived. In other words, my focus here is that museums are sites where many kinds of experiences happen: activities involving, vandalism, theft, tourism, ancestor worship, seduction, epiphany, plays of social class and encounters with "others" and "otherness."<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the films discussed below centre on a play of



elements which can either foreground or challenge these tropes in interesting ways.

Scenes in museums dramatize encounters with the "world of fine arts." Characters enact a proprioceptive aesthetic as they move through, interact with, and are coded by the museal context, whether they enact it against the grain or not. Moreover, these filmic events represent particular types of apprehension, consumption, beholding or disclaiming. Importantly, museum scenes can reveal how conventions concerning the fine arts are conceived by the film's producers and assumed audience. The distortion evident in these films are noteworthy -- and central to my argument here -- because they indicate how particular conceptions of art are assumed by individual or collective agents. Therefore, my discussion does not necessarily describe how museal space is actually used, but rather how it could be used. Moreover, I am aware that reading the museum through film exaggerates the biases of both media. Portrayals of activities in museums, functioning as they do outside of the art world, may appear to misrepresent what conventionally happens in museums. Yet it is precisely the seeming outrageousness of these representations which interest me because these distortions are so ideologically rich.

The scenes I will describe are excerpted from their contexts as plateaus of intensity and affect. That is, what is

central to my analysis, normally provides background for the film's diegesis. These moving sequences can be read as enactments which bring into play both smooth and striated museum space in particular kinds of encounters with the "world of fine arts."

The analysis of the films is paired according to three tropes of museum experience: as plays of class, sexuality and transformation. The first two, Batman and L.A. Story, subvert the class pretensions of viewer connoisseurship through transgressive acts. The second pair, Vertigo and Dressed to Kill, depict the museum as site of libidinal affect, where museum space is coded for pleasures which extend beyond it. And scenes drawn from last two films, 9 1/2 Weeks and Life Classes, describe "transformative moments" which take place at gallery vernissages, parties which mark the opening of an exhibition.

#### THE MUSEUM AS A TROPE OF CLASS

As this scene from Batman (Tim Burton, 1989) begins, gallery viewers and personnel have been rendered unconscious by gas that "the Joker" has introduced into the air ducts of the Gotham City Museum. The atmosphere of the museum has become literally "anaesthetic," eliminating their ability to sense altogether and provides the set-up for acts of transgression.

The "Joker" (Jack Nicholson), poised just inside the museum entrance, proclaims "Gentlemen! Let's broaden our minds!" as he and his entourage enter the museum. The Joker is dressed in a beret and wears a lily in his lapel, suggestive of Oscar Wilde's eccentric dandyism. This codes him as artist-bohemian while the others in his carnivaleque procession sport the black leather and sunglasses of a street gang. The "museum" here is quite obviously a film set. There is too much brick and only small square alcoves for the art. The ritual of entry and ascent up the museum's interior stairway is accompanied by rap music by Prince blasting out of a boom box carried by one of the Joker's accomplices. They proceed through the space, mimicking poses of connoisseurship before attacking paintings by Vermeer, Rembrandt, Degas, and Gainsborough<sup>14</sup> with paint and knives, or knocking sculptures off their pedestals and painting Greek busts with garish colours. There is an aping of artistic conventions -- the gestures of painting and viewing -- in processes of vandalism and destruction. At the same time, there is a dimension of self-styled artistic intervention on the part of the Joker whose tag-like signature, "Joker was here," painted onto one canvas, appropriates the artwork in much the same way that graffiti territorialises the streets.

This scene describes an act of aesthetic terrorism, a deliberately "uncivilizing ritual" desecrating the museum as a

liminal realm of extra-ordinary culture. Just as these actions are counterposed to the historical roots of museums as sites of aristocratic pursuits, so, too, the Joker defines himself against the pretensions of connoisseurship exhibited by Batman's alter-ego, Bruce Wayne, his collections, fancy receptions and princely ethos. Yet even the Joker has his aesthetic criteria. For after ascending the stairs to the liminal realm of art, he ultimately blocks one of his gang's attempts to slash a work by Francis Bacon with a machete perhaps because the macabre in Bacon's work resembles his own sense of the grotesque. Joker's museal transgressions can be situated within avant-garde movements, such as the futurists, who sought to destroy the museum. Rendering the public viewership literally senseless enables him to territorialize the museum for his own ends. Yet, while challenging class assumptions, he ultimately reenacts their privilege.

Where the museum scene from Batman depicts its characters in crimes against property, that in L.A. Story (Mick Jackson, 1991) challenges the propriety of museal apprehension. In this museum scene, Harris K. Telemacher (Steve Martin) -- a "wacky" TV weatherman -- roller skates through the Los Angeles County Museum. The establishing shot of the museum is overlaid with an intertitle, "Place: L.A. County Museum, Sunday, March 25th," which is typed and cued to music invoking sixties cop shows.

There is no depiction of a ritual ascent to a liminal art world, but rather a cut to an interior view of the gallery. The setting for the scene provides a look at the punctum of a museum at mid-day. Guards yawn, a woman studies an "old master" European canvas. Here the audience is depicted as incidental and already preoccupied, as distinct from being literally unconscious in Batman. Likewise, in contrast to Batman's extreme camera angles, in L.A. Story we view museum space at eye level, as another viewer who happens to overhear and witness Harris' roller skating caper.

Like the Joker, Harris' performative intervention works against class conventions in museums for a particular effect. Accompanied by a female friend, the two masquerade as "normal visitors" as they "case the joint." Once the tired guards are out of view, he throws a switch on his shoes, which transform, like James Bond spy gear, into roller skates. To a brassy victorious soundtrack, Harris begins his skate through the museum. His proprioceptive romp through the gallery spaces usurps the role of art, a tactical performance which steals the show. Yet, interestingly, only the filmic viewer and the art itself appear to notice. The other viewers are absorbed in their concentrated communion with objects and register no response. Harris skates through a series of rooms performing frug-like dance moves and ending his performance with a

skater's tuck, one leg completely bent, the other straight in front of him. This finale is noteworthy because it appropriates aspects of skating which is both a populist and suburban form of performance. On another level, the manner of viewing on wheels alludes to the preeminence of car culture in Los Angeles.

What is fascinating about this museum scene is how the works of art -- actually assuming the role of audience -- react to Harris' movement through the museum. Munch's The Scream recoils in horror, while van Gogh's Sunflowers (a bad reproduction made with fabric petals) flutters in the skater's wake. Sculptures turn their heads, seemingly in surprise, to follow the event.

Like the figure of the Joker, Harris K. Telemacher sets himself in relation to the history of connoisseurship. Significantly, in this respect, a key signifier of connoisseurship in both Batman and L.A. Story is coded in the execution of a balletic arabesque by the male lead. Where Nicholson-as-Joker apes what appears to be a Degas sculpture of a dancer before he knocks it from its pedestal, Martin-as-Telemacher executes an arabesque as part of his continuous, moving trajectory through the museum.<sup>15</sup>

While the Joker ultimately retains the perspective of a connoisseur, Harris K. Telemacher seeks to assume the artistic

role. In the tradition of Marcel Duchamp, his practice suggests a kind of anti-art, a covert blending of art and life. Where the bodily comportment of the other viewers is depicted as contained -- evident in clasped hands -- to privilege the eyes which look elsewhere, Harris releases his body into the exhibition space in an unconventional enactment of it. This rebellious act, it could be argued, follows in the Romantic tradition of unrecognized genius. The transgression of class-specific propriety in the gallery space, however, does not place Martin's character outside of the art world. Rather, the scene ends with a question of aesthetic judgment as Harris and his friend descend the stairs laughing riotously. Harris says, "I call it performance art, but my friend Ariel calls it wasting time. History will decide." Rather than emphasizing the ritual passage into the liminal world of art, this scene emphasizes the significance of the return to the real world. This transition "down the museum stairs" constitutes a liminal transition back to the no less wacky world of everyday Los Angeles life.

## THE MUSEUM AS TROPE OF LIBIDINAL AFFECT

The second pairing concerns the museal as a site of seduction. Vertigo (Alfred Hitchcock: 1958) presents a narrative too complex to adequately explain here. What concerns me is the coding of one scene that takes place in a museum. Private detective John Ferguson, nicknamed "Scottie" (James Stewart), is commissioned by an old friend to follow his wife Madelaine Esther (Kim Novak). In the scene in question, Scottie finds Madelaine seated in a large museum gallery in the "Palace of the Legion of Honour." We see him from behind watching her, framed by huge columns, a skylight and highly polished floors. Conspicuously displayed are the museum protocols of hushed voices, echoing foot steps and a willing guard who earnestly provides a catalogue and answers to Scottie's questions. He enters the space and Madelaine does not seem to notice as she sits transfixed by a portrait of "Carlotta Valdez," her great-grandmother who died in 1857. Her attitude evokes the question of possession in museums in a sense other than ownership, in the sense of the past haunting and overwhelming the present. The tension is augmented when Scottie learns that Madelaine is twenty-six and that Carlotta was the same age when she committed suicide. Madelaine's ancestor-worship is depicted as occurring in the public sphere, rather than in continuity with family wealth.



The scene depicts the museum as paradigmatic temple, and Madelaine as a mysterious muse to Scottie. Her mysterious devotions at the museum fascinate him as do her visits to an old hotel on Eddie Street, once Carlotta's home, where she comes to sit two to three times a week. This scene depicts a moment of becoming which begins Scottie's obsession. The intense soundtrack of plucked strings indicates a mood of suspense which augments the tensions of looking and being looked at. Madelaine sits on a upholstered bench, her back straight in a grey wool suit. Her hair is wound into a bun. A slow zoom to this vaginal-like curl in her hair is paired with another which targets an identical hair style in the portrait. We see a bouquet of flowers in the portrait, and an identical bouquet on the bench beside Madelaine. Then we see a close-up of a necklace, which will serve as important proof later in the narrative. We see many details from Scottie's perspective which provide a kind of art historical iconography of images which connote female sexuality. Thus Scottie's choice to focus on sexually loaded images reveals a scopophilia which marks the first stage of a more elaborate seduction.

Scottie believes that Madelaine is possessed by the painting, but as the film unfolds it becomes clear that he is possessed by this particular image of her -- a muse representing his ideal -- in this scene. This is complicated

as the issue of Madelaine's actual identity and "class" is gradually revealed. She is actually Julie Bart, an actress who has been hired to play the part of a patrician devotee. In fact, she has nasty habits and a harsh accent. The narrative takes a Pygmalian twist as Scottie later tries to recreate Julie as Madelaine, the woman he fell in love with in the museum.

The museum scene in Dressed to Kill (Brian De Palma: 1981) depicts the unfolding of a pick-up. At more than ten continuous minutes, it is one of the longest museum scenes I have come across. Kate Miller (Angie Dickinson) escapes her unsatisfactory marriage by dressing up and going to the museum for the afternoon. We see her ascending the external stairway of what is evidently the Metropolitan Museum of Fine Art in New York. She is dressed "to be killed" completely in white, like a sacrificial figure standing out against the grey masonry. We see her pass a statue of Diana with her emblematic bow and arrow, Roman goddess of the hunt and the underworld. This underscores the subplot of the scene as a play between the roles of hunter and hunted.

The ambience in the contemporary art gallery where we next see Kate accents the museum as a place for seduction. Kate watches young lovers with wandering hands, and a man using the clichéd line "Hi! You come here often?" on a woman studying a

painting. Kate seems amused. Her short-term memory evidently includes "forgetting as a process." She struggles against memory lapse, even initially, while writing a list of things to do including reminders to herself to pick up a turkey for Thanksgiving dinner. She studies a portrait of a lone, reflective woman by Alex Katz while intermittently continuing to write, observe and reflect. She appears to be waiting.

Suddenly a man in dark clothes sits down beside her. The moment of sexual quickening is cued by a soundtrack which indicates that the seduction has begun and swells over the echoes, muffles and footsteps of the museal space. While she turns to look at him, he appears aloof. Finally they look at each other. Then their eyes disengage. He puts his pencil between his lips. Kate nervously displays her wedding diamond. He gets up abruptly. Kate is evidently flustered. She stands, pivoting on her spike heels, to follow him, and distractedly drops her glove. Her initial departure from the bench is framed by a Philip Pearlstein painting of a female nude. Juxtaposing the pubic hair at the level of Kate's face intensifies the psychoanalytical significance of the glove and the act of losing it.

Kate moves through the museum, passing works by Jasper Johns, Morris Louis and Jennifer Bartlett, in a choreography which -- despite the film's underlying misogyny -- unfolds as

spectacular footage of movement through museum space. The camera assumes her perspective as she negotiates through the museal-maze, blurring and focussing according to the motility of sight. Here proprioception is very much evident and effects a highly charged intensity. The smooth space of the museal is clearly observable in the events as it is in her enactment of "differentials of speed, delays, accelerations, changes in orientation, continuous variation" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 482). Kate is evidently lost in the museum, here portrayed as a labyrinth of conflicted desires. Her emotional states and moments of recognition are foregrounded as she moves at various paces, pursuing the man and being pursued by him.

The coding of other visitors in the gallery -- in a range of postures of engagement -- provides a rich source for mining some of the ways that aesthetic experience is conventionalized. We see viewers in acts of apprehension, shifting their weight between feet, stepping back to get a different view, scratching their ears or walking through the gallery spaces with the kind of awareness which indicates that the proprioceptive sense is engaged.

The sexual encounter eventually culminates outside the museum, and the theme of stalking eventually results in Kate's murder at the hands of her psychotic therapist. The violence is especially disturbing because concerns a woman actualizing

her sexual desires and then being punished for it. Where the seduction scene in Dressed to Kill centres on movement, that of Vertigo sustains a stillness. While Kate pursues her male quarry immanent to a trajectory of tumultuous moving affect, Madelaine is inert and rigid as a sculpted muse.

While this is, of course, not true of all museum seductions, it is interesting that neither woman survives the libidinal affect of the scene. Where Kate is murdered and becomes the "object" of a who-done-it investigation, Madelaine's perfection as the still muse is displaced by her actual identity as Julie Bart whom Scottie cannot accept as she is.

#### THE MUSEUM AS A TROPE OF EPIPHANY

The third, and last, pairing of films depict "transformative moments" which take place at vernissages. In this sense, the gallery "opening," quite literally, indicates how an art context can provide for the transformative engagement of individuals. The opening as epiphany alludes to the art world as a place of possibility and becoming. Scenes of openings show the collectivity of the art scene, the ambience of celebrity, glamour, hype, mixed affections and business.

9 1/2 Weeks (Adrian Lyne: 1987) centres on a gallery assistant named Elizabeth (Kim Basinger) whose job -- like many in the arts -- substitutes poor pay for cultural capital. The scene begins with an establishing shot showing the "Prince Street Gallery" in what is evidently Soho. Its white cube interior is visible, and directly accessible, from the street. Inside, the party atmosphere is loud and upbeat. The context provides a take on "art world types": artists, punks, transvestites, jetsetters, rock stars, writers, caterers, the press as well as art administrators.

The soundtrack combines the milling crowd, laughter, a bass line, synthesizer and drums in a thick, atmospheric heart beat. The lines of the characters are yelled over the din. In evidence are the pleasures of consumption. Wine is being passed amongst guests as a huge salmon is being cut and served by a chef. Throughout the film fish imagery is emblematic of Elizabeth's sexuality in relationship with a wealthy yuppie named John (Mickey Rourke). The scene depicting their initial meeting in Chinatown, shows a live fish flapping out of control before it is wrapped for sale. At the vernissage, Elizabeth reflects on the abuse in her relationship as the fish is not only dead, but being cut unceremoniously into pieces and handed out for consumption.

Elizabeth's epiphanal moment is her recognition that her nine-and-a-half week tryst with John has involved a sick play of domination and humiliation. John had encouraged her total dependence on him. He had also twisted her wholesome emotions, for example, by setting up anger provoking situations with her, and then redirecting this emotional energy to intensify sex.

Elizabeth paces amongst the crowded gallery with her hand on her throat, as if she is having trouble breathing. She appears dazed and disengaged and does not look or speak to anyone. Amid the opening, geared for reviews and sales, everyone appears oblivious to Elizabeth's anguish except the sage-like artist "Maxwell Farnsworth." Farnsworth is the center of the hype, yet his quiet, unassuming reclusiveness is misunderstood by the art professionals. The gallery director complains, urging a distraught Elizabeth to do something about him, "He just stands there!" Among all the people at the opening only Farnsworth, evidently just as alienated, seems concerned about her state.

Elizabeth, pushed by her boss to work beyond her emotional capacity at that moment, retreats outside the gallery and the party, taking refuge under the stairs, a gallery insider's position. The potential for others to, in effect, ascend over her seemingly augments her humiliation.

The vernissage scene from Life Classes (Bill McGillivray: 1987) takes place in the Anna Leonowens Gallery of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD). The vernissage marks a coming of age in the life of Mary Cameron (Jacinta Cormier), once an amateur paint-by-numbers artist who leaves Cape Breton pregnant by the local bootlegger Earl (Leon Dubinsky). She moves to Halifax to have her daughter. While working at the local Woolco she makes friends with a NSCAD student who tells her that she can make more money as an artist's model. She begins modelling for art classes at NSCAD, picking up drawing techniques which she practices at night in her room. When Earl comes to visit, Mary uses his guilt about abandoning her and the baby to get him to model for her. The artwork displayed at the vernissage consists of male nudes of Earl, larger than life-size, which fill the gallery.

The scene begins with Mary admiring her work, as she slowly traces a path around the precinct of the gallery space. Her landlady and art college friend offer support as the opening gets underway. We observe, from Mary's perspective, people entering the gallery, and the party begins. Mary greets people. People smoke, drink beer and, perhaps this is the greatest fiction of all, actually have extended discussions about the art on the wall.



The event marks her transition from artist's model to artist herself and thus from object to agent in the art world. And on another level, the turning point involves shifts in other people's responses to her. The scene depicts several key encounters where other's perceptions of her change on the spot. A manpower counsellor, Mrs. Sitwell, who had patronized her for painting by numbers during a job interview, finally recognizes Mary as an artist of consequence and becomes interested in purchasing a work. Earl and his friend Andy arrive, and Earl is crestfallen to see his nude self on the walls for all to see. But as Earl warms up to the space, not to mention the free beer, he is evidently pleased with her work, however "downright unnatural" he believes his portrayal to be. So the opening is a celebration of Mary as an artist, whose drawings of a male nude perhaps ironically reverse the patriarchal logic traditional artist-model relationship. Her process of transformation is celebrated by those who have supported her through more difficult times and inverts the disrespect of others with proof of her worth.

To conclude, these film scenes depict the enactments of prototypical kinds of museum experiences. Where Batman and L.A. Story dramatize specific reactions and transgressions of connoisseurship and class, Vertigo and Dressed to Kill portray gallery spaces as site for the unfolding of seductions. And

finally, 9 1/2 Weeks and Life Classes show how galleries, as synecdoches of art world, provide spaces of becoming for the transformation of individuals. The museum scenes described here not only reveal how connoisseurship has been conventionalized in particular ways, but suggests other models of aesthetic experience. Within a range of possible sensorially and relationally based aesthetic experiences, I chose to elucidate tropes which showed how aesthetic judgments pertaining to class can be simultaneously inhabited and transgressed, how the seepage of relational intensities entailed in aesthetic experience can manifest libidinally, and finally, how museal enactments effect "turning points" -- liminal realizations -- contingent to the world of fine art. Each of the scenes I discussed displays aesthetic experience as immanent to its performative, connective and transformational aspects, and thus are integral to a haptic-proprioceptive aesthetic.

In each instance, the role of recognition occurring through these enactments has important distinctions. I described traditional museums as physical counterparts to the imaginary architectural enactments of the art of memory. Thus public memory, coded into the crystallized formations of traditional museums, is realized as it is performed. In turn, private memory has the capacity to interrupt the determining

effects of such civilizing rituals. A tertiary mnemonic, popular memory, was posited as a plane which articulates the a priori knowledges of public memory and more personal proclivities. Within popular memory, then, museums are not only "used" by individuals, but museal affect can become a "recognizable" setting for the collectively personal.

In this chapter I have shown how the articulations of movement, memory and the museal activate the connective aspects of aesthetic experience. In this dynamic aesthetic space, the uses and recognitions of museums were examined in terms of how the metaphoric slippage of the museal as both an artifact, itself contained and used, and as container of enacted processes. The locus of exaggeration to mnemonic enactment in space has, thus, been central to my analysis.

In the following chapter, I will look more closely at ritual enactments which are more temporally specific in their negotiation of public and private memory: the practices of collectors.

### Notes for Chapter 3

1. Jane Gallop states: "In metaphor the bar that forever divides signifier from signified is crossed, which produces, in Lacan's words, a 'signification effect which is the poetry of creation'" (1988: 96).

2. While my project is not to make claims for memory in itself, it is interesting to me that while neuro-psychology can identify that brain functions and neurotransmitters play a role in memory, the question of how memory is organized and retrieved cannot be located on corporeal physiology, even today. The workings of memory undoubtedly constitute part of the brain's function, yet even with the major advances toward understanding the nervous system neuroscientists cannot locate memory in its physiology. To this day, explanations of memory are necessarily based on analogy. Early descriptions of the working of memory derive from Plato who presented two models: one of memory as "a wax block" and another where memory was conceptualized as "an aviary." With the "wax" model impressions are stamped into memory in the manner of a sealing ring, and are remembered or are forgotten in relation to this incised index. The "aviary" metaphor, on the other hand provides for more complexity regarding the function of memory. In this model, knowledge is "hunted down" for use in the same manner as a hunter's quarry. Here, memory is conceptualized of in spatial terms where particular experiences are stored at specific locations. Moreover, in contrast to the wax model, it distinguishes between the storage and retrieval aspects of memory.

During the nineteenth century, William James also used a spatial analogy to describe memory, comparing the act of remembering to the way we "rummage our house for a lost object." In addition, he introduced a distinction between primary and secondary memory. Primary memory describes how experiences linger in awareness for a few days before disappearing. It does not need to be retrieved. Secondary memory, relates to a repository where acquired knowledge is remembered permanently. It requires retrieval. James' work on memory was marginalized during behaviourism's fifty year dominance of experimental psychology, but recent models of memory resemble James in terms of their spatial conceptions and in the similar distinctions between short-term store (STS) and long-term store (LTS). Short term store refers, like James's primary memory to a particular "span of awareness" or memory span, one which can be interrupted by distractions. The memory

then either is stored as a "memory trace" to long-term store or is forgotten (Parkin, 1987: 3-4).

3. Perceptually, striation tends towards a "centered" perspective. While this inherently privileges the distanced vision of apprehension and surveillance, trans-corporeal haptic involvement can be similarly deployed by the exhibitionary complex to piggy back power bias on aesthetic experience.

4. As Michael McGee and Martha Martin point out, the term "public" is a construct, a rhetorical term which constitutes the public as "spoken-for" by particular agents. In functioning as an abstract, singular term grounded in assumptions of "public interest," it is used to legitimate the actions of particular individuals or groups (1983: 51). It is in this sense that "public memory" is created by museums according to the particular motives of museum curators and display designers in relation to the agendas of museum administrators and funding agencies. While such official agents of power and knowledge may claim to "represent" the public, they may -- more often than not -- in effect "create" it.

5. Duncan and Wallach identify the "ideal viewer" in terms of the "Universal Survey Museum" which they characterize as follows:

Such museums present a broad range of art history. They are the indispensable ornaments of any great city, and even smaller cities with claims to civic and cultural importance must have their versions of a universal survey museum. When people use the term art museum, it is this type of museum they usually have in mind. The universal survey museum is not only the first in importance, it is also the first museum type to emerge historically, and from the beginning it was identified with the idea of the public art museum (1980: 452).

According to this definition, the Louvre in Paris, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts characterize universal survey museums which address an "ideal viewer" as "ideal citizen." I have argued in the previous chapter that in addition to identifying the nation or state as an "abstract entity in theory belonging to the people" (454), public art museums function to create official public memories. See for example my argument concerning the

shifts in notions of an "ideal viewer" according to a series of renovations at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in Chapter 2.

6. This is especially evident in the seduction scene from the film Dressed to Kill (which I will describe henceforth) where intensities symptomatic of confused desire are portrayed immanent to a process of moving through the museum.

7. De Certeau characterizes "belief" as fluid and liquid-like flowing in and out of concepts and objects. At some times heavily invested in certain structures, at others leaving only empty forms behind. For him, belief is transportable, and can be transferred from certain objects and ends to others. He describes the Church's practices of harnessing the force of belief in conversions of various types, and of how belief, little by little, became polluted like water once the motivating energy runs out (1984: 178).

8. This is listed in the 1993 Biennial Exhibition catalogue as: Andrea Fraser, untitled, 1992-93. Audio guide, cassette players with headphones, dimensions variable. American Fine Arts, Co., New York.

9. I find it problematic that Fraser's audio tour seems to preclude a place for "critical not knowingness" in Trinh's sense. Fraser seems to misplace her target by choosing to focus on detecting the weaknesses of museum personnel. As opposed to what is ultimately an ad hominem critique, I understand the objective of criticism to be in performing a cultural reading in context, and thus involve accounting for creative process as well as justification.

10. The view of the gigantic, generated through movement in this sense, relates to the affectual remaking of nationalist memory. The gigantic works of abstract expressionism during the nineteen-sixties contributed to the construction of a narrative of public culture, buttressed by the rise of American art criticism, notably the proclamations of Clement Greenberg. American museums collected these huge paintings marking the arrival of a distinctly American painting school, a distinctively "public" art culture which perhaps more ominously functioned as a cultural parallel to the escalation of the arm's race of the cold war.

11. I am indebted to Jeanne Cannizzo's radio series "Old Images and New Metaphors: The Museum in the Modern World" for bringing these authors to my attention.

12. Luce Irigaray's notion of vulvomorphic logic is not based on fixed anatomy in itself, but describes female sexuality in terms of processes defined by contiguity (see Gallop, 1980: 95).

13. While "others" describes identity differences involving gender, ethnicity, class, sexual preference and age, "otherness," as I am using it here, describes a realm outside conventional epistemology: ways of knowing what, for example, can include encounters with the paranormal as depicted in the museum scene in Ghostbusters II.

14. It is interesting that this choice of paintings correlates almost exactly to those forming the play pieces of the game Clue: The Great Museum Caper.

15. These acts of transgression are also doubly ironic given the fact that both Jack Nicholson and Steve Martin are well known art collectors.

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## Chapter 4

### A PERFORMATIVE AESTHETICS OF COLLECTING

After having considered museums as sites where particular kinds of experiences happen, I will now look more closely at the performativity of collecting as an aesthetic practice. Specifically, I will examine women's collections as articulations of affective and proprietary investments. In this way, my subject moves from considering practices constitutive to a spatially bounded aesthetic experience, to contemplate individual's identification with collected artifacts in terms of the temporal specificities of an aesthetic-ethos. What concerns me is how rhetorics of arrangement function in terms of collectors' practices of self-formation. My focus here is on aesthetic practices which play a role in transforming the subject. This occurs in what Tony Bennett, after Michel Foucault, has described as "the gap between the self as it is and the ideal of personality posited by the aesthetic discourse that opens up a region in the subject -- however it may be conceived -- as a potential for self-management" (Bennett, 1990: 188). If the collection is the material counterpoint of the identity of its owner, it can be read correspondingly as an articulation of personal and

cultural meanings. Thus, collections are simultaneously devices for the smooth spaces of becoming, as they are subject to those inevitable striations of critical judgment and tendencies towards institutionalization.

I will refer to collections of Ydessa Hendeles, Madonna Ciccone and Isabella Stewart Gardner as practiced arrangements through which these collectors have performed aspects of their aesthetic identity. Thus, the aesthetic-ethos is forged in the affective intensities between self and artifact, where the place of connection is simultaneously a space of creation. The collection yokes the invisible aspirations of the collector as a will-to-manifest to the concrete and material form and content of the collection itself. The collection can, thus, be neither wholly a personal philosophy nor consist solely of the objects within it. It is comprised of experiences, of investments, that cannot be reduced to semantics and explanation. Collecting then, circumscribes an extra-corporeal body -- a "being outside" oneself -- which parallels the life of the collector. Objects in a collection function as practical memory, recollected as points within the constellatory epistemology of the collection.

While the aesthetics of collecting necessarily involves conventions of market and cultural value, what I am interested in pursuing here is how collecting informs a relational

aesthetic between a person and their objects. It is precisely by looking at what happens in the affectively charged spaces between a collector and their objects that a performative aesthetic of collecting can be elaborated.

Some of the contingencies of collecting and ownership have been elucidated by James Clifford. Clifford characterizes Western collecting practices as being linked to possessive individualism. In the sense that collecting contributes to identity, identity assumes the function of wealth of objects, of knowledge, of experience and of memories. Clifford points out that collecting is not innocent, but inextricably tied to economic, political and legal systems governing private property. Collecting, then, in a practical and material way, plays a role in the construction and externalization of an "ideal self." Where a collection presupposes a story or Bakhtinian chronotope -- a fictive temporal or spatial configuration -- it simultaneously becomes the means of constructing identity (Clifford, 1988: 215-251).

But, as Stuart Hall has pointed out, cultural identity is not closed or essential. Rather, it is formed at provisional closures at the intersection of the personal and cultural. Thus, in the case at hand, the construction of identity can be seen as existing on a plane of articulation which links individual experience with discursive structures

involving collecting within the art world. Both collections and identity are products of struggles and convergences of personal and social history, control, gender, taste, education, pleasure and/or economics. Both emerge out of the affective charge given to the connections between collectors and artifacts; collectors and beholders. It is those tensions between a collection's classification and accumulation, display and secrecy that provide for its singular "interest" amongst a collecting class (Stewart, 1984: 163).

The collection, then, frames the lived link with objects of art which demonstrate the choices of the owner relative to specific domains of knowledge. On another level, the articulation of persona and artifact occurs on a plane upon which intensities of feeling are played out in a material form. In this sense, the collection functions as a kind of portrait of the collector inscribed in the proxemic charges of arrangement, object and self. The relation between artifact and collector alternates between centripetal and centrifugal forces, being drawn to the self as constituent a symbolic hunt or capture procuring ownership, and extending out from the self through practices of display and publicity.

Where traditional aesthetics would posit a fixed value upon particular collections, such conceptions of totality mask the more relational aspects of collections. So what I will

develop here are the kinds of links and modalities of relation of collecting and collectors.<sup>1</sup> My argument must be distinguished from those stemming from a psychoanalytic discourse which considers collecting to be a behaviour linked to the anal phase and its associations with ownership and money, because it is not the product as such -- faecal or otherwise -- which is at issue here. Rather, I am compelled by the more immanent catalytic forces concerning the incorporation, digestion and assimilation of objects which sustain the vitality of a collecting identity. So rather than charting values of collecting, I will focus on the contingencies of collecting in terms of what Susan Stewart has called "the flux of social and property relations" (Stewart, 1984: 117).

As they are activated, collections not only extend the presence of the collector through space but assume the form of ritual artifacts themselves, the temporality of which function in terms of both practical memory and personal monument.

#### COLLECTING AND THE DYNAMICS OF PRACTICAL MEMORY

Walter Benjamin writes that, "[c]ollecting is a form of practical memory and among the profane manifestations of 'proximity' the most convincing one" (1989: 71-72). The

proxemics of collecting are enacted as a "lived relation" between collector and artifact. As the originating context of an object is displaced by the collector's conceptualizations upon being incorporated within a collection, remembering these objects hooks the collector into recalling who they have been and who they have become (Lowenthal in Spigel and Jenkins, 1991: 137). Likewise acquisitions and gifts mark "memorable" junctures where new memories are produced. Later in this chapter I will explore how Ciccone, Hendeles and Gardner rhetorically deploy this contingency of memory and identity through the collection.

A private collection functions as the juncture of two distinctions involving memory outlined by Susan Stewart: the "souvenir" and the "collection." Here the aesthetics operate in the tensions between the "point" of the souvenir which is "to remember," and the "point" of the collection which is "to forget." Stewart describes how souvenirs and collections generate particular meanings of objects by narrative. The "souvenir" (from the French "to remember") works as a touchstone for personal stories. The souvenir functions as a sample of an experience, an object subordinated to its subject. Here the object provides the site of "testimonial" actual material "proof" of an experience. In turn the collection, functioning as-an-ideological-whole, incorporates

an object within a new narrative which necessarily involves destroying its originating context. Procuring an object as a souvenir differs from building a collection. Stewart notes that the souvenir is "earned" within a ritualistic or touristic experience; the object destined for a collection is "captured," lassoed by the narrative precincts of the collection.

The "point" of amassing objects, which for Stewart has to do with mnemonic motivation, to forget or to remember, is telling when considered with respect to Barthes' notion of "punctum." For Barthes (1981) the punctum of memory "pricks the awareness" and is revealed after the event of apprehension as a haunting aspect of the image. The punctum is a site of strictly personal meaning as distinct from the studium, which forms the image according to particular conventions. In turn, while the studium describes the cultural codes, the punctum describes the affect of an object on its perceiver. In his consideration of the photographic image, Barthes describes the punctum as an aspect of detail, only part of the image, which draws the perceiver, which often involves their memory. "The punctum, then, is a kind of subtle beyond -- as if the image launched desire beyond what it permits us to see" (1981: 59).

The articulation of experience to discourse effecting exhibitions of the self also pertain to an individual sense of



"style," a word etymologically derived from "stilus," a pointed instrument used for writing, which later designated one's "manner of writing" and finally one's presentatio. Style as a signifying practice occurs at the level of the sign and is cut through with class, and one might add ethnicity, sexuality, gender and so on (Hebdige, '79). Style is the vehicle of one's attitude, just as it is the point where one makes an impression. Likewise, moving from the point of the stylus and its effects to the act of writing, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak employs the word "inscription" or "writing oneself" as distinct from the more static term "roles" often used in analysis of cultural representation (1990: 116). Thus, the distinction can be made between the role of the collector, practices governed by striation, to the self-inscription of the collector as immanent to a process of becoming.

I want to mobilize Stewart's insightful generic conventions in light of the above -- as punctum, as style, as self-inscription -- to the contingencies of identity and memory in collecting. But first, a review of the dynamics of Stewart's terminology is necessary because it describes "how" memory is generated in the flux between object and self. Whereas the "souvenir" participates in the immanence of personal stories, the "collection" participates within larger

cultural narratives. In turn, the space of the souvenir and the collection correlate with differing mnemonic contexts. Stewart holds that the souvenir involves making public events private. Thus souvenir objects -- engaged with domestically and privately -- function as reminders of liminal experiences: e.g., objects that memorialize the visit to a world's fair, or the destination of a trip.

Yet, such relics need not be linked directly to personal experience. For instance, there is a growing interest in celebrity memorabilia at large auction houses such as Sotheby's. The Jean-Paul Gaultier corset worn by Madonna during her performance of the song "Express Yourself" in Barcelona, Spain brought \$18,150, which was "a record for Madonna regalia and any corset" (Reif, 1994: H32). In Las Vegas during June 1994, Elvis Presley's 1973 American Express credit card was sold for an "unexpected" price of \$41,400, seven times the expected value of auctioneers Butterfield & Butterfield (Ibid.). These memorabilia function as relics which carry the aura -- the corporeal index -- of having been touched or worn by a celebrity. Once in the private realm, they imbue their new owner with traces of the glamour that graced its star. Through the power of ownership the object is subordinated to its new owner as a kind of enchanted accessory to their own constructed self. Conversely, souvenirs have the

capacity to also make the private public. It is in the centrifugal aspects -- moving objects out into the world -- that the collector that be communicated through their collection.

In contrast to the souvenir, the collection functions to express private concerns in the public realm through the articulation of artifacts to specific discourses, including that of "art." The collection, in its representations and evaluations, effects a syntax of culture. The meaning of a collection is achieved through the activation and closures of display rhetorics which constitute the object within an arrangement. Yet, the syntactical activation of a collection characterizes a motile space. The collection can circulate, be exhibited in differing arrangements, have new display contexts constructed for it, and so on.

Temporally, the souvenir is tied to the lifespan of the collector. Poignantly, however, once-cherished memories attributed to a souvenir are ultimately destined to be forgotten. Hence the fleamarket or rummage sale represents a kind of purgatory. The metaphor Stewart uses to describe the nostalgia of the souvenir is the "unmarked grave" because with the absence of a marker there can be no corresponding regeneration of memory after death (1984: 151). Without the personage to relay the significance of particular memorabilia,

their contextualizing significance is lost. The nostalgia of the souvenir mobilizes an affect which is oriented towards events of the past. The souvenir gives a sense of perspective that collapses past and present experience in a magical object which encompasses both. In turn, while the mnemonic potential of the souvenir requires stories to contextualize it, when a souvenir and its stories are passed on within a family it becomes an heirloom (137).

In contrast to the intimate remembrances of the souvenir, the collection structures identity. In Stewart's terms, the collection redefines context according to a totality, whether the collection of a particular individual, of a certain artist, artistic school or according to a particular theme. The governing logic of a collection endures precisely because of the narratives which support it. At times entire collections have been bought outright by larger collections, to be assimilated into and circulated under a new identity. This occurred, for example, when the controversial Lavalin Collection was purchased and integrated into the permanent collection of Montreal's Musée d'art contemporain.

The recently opened Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh combines both a collection and souvenirs. Not only does it feature Dia Art Foundation's collection of Warhol's works, but also displays the relics of his life and practice. Perhaps

most interesting are the vitrines in each room which reveal the production process involved in making the works, such as the actual disassembled Life magazine from which the "Jackie" series was composed. The vitrine enshrines cut-out photographs arranged on a piece of board, directions to those who would shoot it with a graphic camera, make a silkscreen and eventually print it. Warhol's work was essentially done in the act of selecting and arranging images, not the actual production of them. The archives include a series titled Time Capsules, souvenirs of Warhol's daily life. Each of over 600 sealed boxes functions as a form of practical memory, containing correspondences, taped conversations, photographs, date books and other ephemera documenting Warhol's diverse activities from the 1950s through the 1980s (catalogue for the Andy Warhol Museum, 1994). Warhol made no distinction between his private and public selves; both collapsed integrally to his deadpan persona. Likewise, the museum's pertinence lies in how it extends Warhol's lack of distinction, especially in foregrounding aspects of his creative process.

#### DISPLAY RHETORICS

Stewart's generic conventions describe modalities of affective connection -- through longing and nostalgia -- which characterize the emotional linkages, mnemonic and otherwise,

between objects and individuals. Her investigation of the mnemonics of collecting provides a useful model for inquiring into the mutabilities of aesthetic experience. Likewise, Stephen Bann locates his museal poetics within a similarly dynamic point, the unstable space of interchange between two metaphors of visual display and apprehension. In Bann's words:

The "poetics" of the modern museum...lies in the alternation of...two strategies...passages and rooms devoted to the metonymic sequence of schools and centuries are interrupted by "reconstructed" rooms, offering the synecdochic treat of a salon transported from the Isle Saint-Louis, or a dining room from a departed Jacobean manor-house. Perhaps the automatic way in which the ordinary museum-goer shifts between these two modes implies a modern replacement for the synecdochic and the metonymic museums: the ironic museum, in which we oscillate between the different varieties of imaginative projection that are required (1984: 91).

Thus metonymic and synecdochic display rhetorics, in interrupting each other, rupture discrete representational epistemes in museums. After describing how these museal metaphors function, I will argue that this space of slippage constitutes a poetics, in Gallop's sense of self-creation, through providing openings for processes of becoming.

Bann distinguishes the museal tropes of metonymy and synecdoche from metaphor. He holds that metaphor is a figure of speech based on similarity, where something like the thing meant can be substituted for the thing itself. In contrast,

both metonymy and synecdoche are based on contiguity, where some attribute, cause or effect can be substituted for the thing itself. Bann goes on to specify metonymy as "reductive" and synecdoche as "integrative."

In Bann's terms, metonymic display is typified in "sequence of school" types of exhibitions which conceive of artworks as samples of a mechanistic historical system. In the same way that a "crown" stands metonymically for "king," a work by Jana Sterbak may stand in for "contemporary Canadian art." There is a fetishistic aspect to metonymy as conceived of by Bann where the art object -- as cultural other to the system which seeks to inscribe it -- is reduced within a classification scheme. Thus the attributes of the work, as produced within a particular decade for example, stand for the era of all its contemporaries. It is in the metonymic sense, as well, that the collector's name carries the collection. Thus the identity of the collector expanded through amassing objects in relation to self, encompasses them. In this way, the names of famous collectors serve contiguously to the works they own: Madonna's Picasso, Ydesssa's Holzer, or Isabella's Rembrandt. Recurrently, in the history of collecting, a representative portrait or piece evolves as emblematic of the collection. These works, in a sense standing in for the countenance of the collector, can have very interesting

implications as I will discuss in my analysis of Peggy Guggenheim.

Where the collection, then, evokes an "outside" pertaining to the collector's political and financial clout, it simultaneously testifies to a more personal journey in the continuity of artifacts to events, encounters and accidents in the lived experience of its owner. Each work in a collection, is in a sense a souvenir for the collector. Hence the poetics of collecting consist in the weaving of a narrative or representative frame into the the life process of the collector. Thus the collection becomes a vehicle to produce "remembering women," in Meaghan Morris' sense (1988).

In contrast to the reductive aspects of the metonymic, synecdochic display tropes have to do with display practices which are "integrative and organic." (Bann, 1984: 85). Bann typifies period rooms as typically synecdochic, where the placement of objects attempts to reconstitute a prototype of a particular time. Thus the viewer can experience the ambience of effectively "being there" as an historical epoque is seemingly reconstituted. The re-constructive potential of synecdoche can function in other ways as well. In Bann's terms, "fifty canvases" of a collection names fifty parts (canvases as distinct from paintings) which are understood to be the whole: "fifty works of art." Synecdoche, also works in



reverse, where naming a whole is understood as the part. For example, the Montreal Museum of Fine Art's "ear" (the whole) can describe Betty Goodwin's installation (a part). Whether the whole or part is represented in synecdochic rhetoric, the object named becomes the basis for an "integrative construction" of other possibilities (Bann, 1984: 85).

It is such creative conceptual construction (as opposed to deconstructive) practice which is at issue in this thesis. The sense of accumulation transmutes to display affect, each of syntagmatic relationship. Moreover, each object in a collection is in a sense a relic of experience, a stop on the trajectory inextricably bound up with memories concerning an encounter and an acquisition. And, most importantly here, the synecdoche describes the force of contiguity which carries the presence of the collector as it is evoked in the visual display of a collection through the collector's affections, affiliations, choices, care, and commitment. As a collection is enacted, the "gap" between collector and object, frozen in the script's syntagmatic ambiance, is animated in ways which compel "the consciousness of the observer to enter into the consciousness of the collector" (Stewart, 1994: 204). This occurs immanent to proprioception which performs the order of an exhibition, conferring dimensionality and intensity to felt space in dislocated time. Thus, the collector's experience

can be reconstituted, overplayed and created by another individual. What I wish to examine, finally, is how the collector chooses to represent him/herself, which is synecdochically evoked in the display of their collecting.

### SEX, DEATH AND THE BODY OF THE COLLECTOR

Collecting engages the space between collectors and objects dynamically, a poetics generated out of alternating centrifugal and centripetal impulses between artifacts and the body of the collector. That is, collecting simultaneously expands into space as displays are formulated and circulated, while at the same time involves drawing objects to the self. Through acquisition, a collector can achieve notoriety, which, as it expands, in turn creates opportunities for further collecting. The centripetal dynamic -- the gathering of meaningful objects to a collector -- can relate to the desire to achieve a kind of totality as the objects constellate to constitute an "ideal self" in Clifford's sense. Yet the totality attempted in collecting can result in but a provisional closure, achieved through the completion of the syntagmatic relations of the whole or by the death of the aspiring owner.<sup>2</sup> Given the latter, completion is but momentary. Collections intensify in significance after the death of the owner, because they can provide a counter-

identity. Yet as the supporting context becomes subject to forces of change, they are recuperated within the social body where objects are rearticulated to different forms, contexts and agents.

Both "patrimony," a "legacy," and "matrimony," a "marriage," describe how property relations impinge on the body of a collector. Both define life experience where the status of the collector shifts qualitatively. "Patrimony," deriving from pater or father, refers to an inheritance. Within patriarchal culture, an inheritance usually entailed a worldly vocation or its fruits, after death. At this juncture, discrete ownership shifts to others. Through a "will" one can decree what part of one's life one wishes to perpetuate in the life of another. Curiously, where pater designates property at the time of death, matrimony, deriving from mater or mother, refers to the "state of marriage." "Matrimony" marks a similar shift in property relations involving self to other, but in contrast to a patrimony, occurs during the life of the collector; it marks a shift, in both female and male, into a state of "relationship." Where contemporary marriage may no longer mark a vocation in itself -- the traditional "housewife" of patriarchal culture -- the wedding is a watershed where one's legal and social commitments shift according to law. So while patrimony

pertains to the value of a collection or legacy, matrimony can account for a collector's commitments in its relational terms until the point of closure, "until death do us part."

The relational aspects of collecting have been elaborated at length in the museological literature. For example, Kenneth Hudson points out how private collections have historically been libidinally linked to the body of the owner. Not only were the great European art collectors -- Catherine the Great and Napoleon -- known as amourists, but access to private collections paralleled that of the nare, requiring responses of gratitude and admiration (1975: 6). Likewise, Peggy Guggenheim maintained close, and reputedly amorous, ties with artists whose works she purchased. In addition to her centrifugal conquests by which she amassed her artifacts, is the opposing centrifugal move of the self outward. In this sense collecting functions as a means to communicate, as a vehicle for moving the power of self out into the world to be read in particular ways through their practices. Guggenheim had herself photographed while posing coyly next to Mario Marini's Angel of the Citadel, a statue depicting a man with an erection riding a horse. Clearly the owner of this "phallus" -- in effect a form of abstract power that can never really be owned -- Guggenheim posed in a Fortuny dress in a posture exuding confidence, pleasure and humour.<sup>3</sup>

In this image, the Guggenheim figure exemplifies what Naomi Schor has termed "female fetishism" which inverts the power-relations of (male)collector-(female) collectible, as the prostitute-collectable and collector-client change places (1994: 257), yet still remains within a post-structuralist problematic. Within this paradigm of collecting, the libido is externalized as the collection is constructed. The projection of desire onto objects functioning as-a-whole is a form of fetishism, a way of denying loss or absence by finding a symbolic (and, in post-structuralist discourse, phallic) substitute. Fetishism coincides with the beginning of speech, the child's favourite blanket or toy.<sup>4</sup> For the collector, such fetishism announces the entry into a material symbolic realm. Where spoken language is a shared discourse, collecting functions as a kind of metacommunication in its attempts to achieve a complete system of objects which enable the specific manoeuvre of the self. This photograph of Guggenheim, while it sustains the centrality of the male "phallus," defies the requisite privileging of the masculine. Rather than being "othered" as feminine, Guggenheim claims this power through ownership. Likewise, her use of "Mrs." -- as she preferred to be called -- with her maiden name implies a kind of marriage of-the-self, a kind of culmination which required no one else.

## TELLING OBJECTS

The body of the collector is evoked in the display rhetorics of the collection in particular ways. Access to cabinets of curiosities during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries traditionally connoted a ritual of intimacy. A visit to these early European collections typically involved a tour hosted by the collector-owner. Stephen Bann's examination of a form of display which anticipated the evolution cabinet of curiosities during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, hypothesizes that their epistemic matrix incorporated theological display practices that preceded them. He argues that the "curiosity" arises in the collision of two world views: theology and science and their attendant attitudes of devotion (religious) and reason (intellectual) respectively. Curiosity thus both impels and constitutes an affective investment in the object (Bann, 1993).

The proto-curio display rituals that Bann describes involves the showing of pilgrimage relics at British cathedrals before the reign of Henry VIII. At Canterbury Cathedral, the process was supervised by the archbishop himself, and entailed leading people to a sequence of objects, beginning with a golden chest. Bann describes how the priest would point out each jewel, describe its particular power of light and name the donors (the gifts of kings). To participate

in this display practice was to undergo a stage managed performance requiring both displayer and beholder. This experience was inextricable from the rhetorical use of the church as a sacred building and as a refuge from political power of the monarch.

This "telling" of objects was perpetuated in the private sphere as cabinets of curiosities developed to house objects collected during foreign travels of royalty and nobility: 'flora, fauna and souvenirs. The investment was in both the authentic and inauthentic as long as it would amuse, fascinate, create wonder and delight as they were shown (Ames, 1992: 50). In turn, they functioned to demonstrate the status of their owner as a person of status, knowledge and power.

Amongst the range of cabinets during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth in Switzerland and France were personal collections known as memento hominem which, as a "memento of the man," registered a life. (Of course, one could use memento femineum were the collector female). Each object was placed in the cabinet for a reason, even if the objects themselves were quite unremarkable, thus indicating a decisive moment or relationship in the personal history of the person arranging it. Such cabinets of souvenirs celebrating particular events from a life must be distinguished from the better known memento mori, "memento of the dead," central to

later Victorian bereavement culture which were constituted of particular objects contiguous to the body of the deceased loved one. While both display forms extend the presence of a person through objects which link to a person, the memento hominen links a life process through a syntagmatic array of objects each anchoring an aspect of an autobiography. Thus its significance lies in its constellatory epistemology rather than through any particular relic (Kurzweil, 1992). The weaving and meshing of stories, in turn, reconstituted aspects of the life. While the objects themselves might appear banal to an uninitiated viewer, their significance was conveyed through an intimate exhibition event where the collector would "tell" each object as he or she displayed it. Thus a smooth space of storytelling, like the craft of crochet, can elaborate in any direction from the point of reference of the object. As each artifact was handled and told -- or beheld -- in this manner, a particular aspect of the life was evoked enabling their visitor's entry into the collector's place of memory. This form of display culture incorporated the faculty of touch as a privilege of ownership in intimate access.

In this way, the telling of these cabinets and beholding of the objects linked to a person's life connects the viewer through the smooth quality of close-range vision and



tactile/haptic space. This aspect of collection display must be distinguished from didactic display which provide for distanced vision and optical dominance, where objects are governed by the prohibition of touch. The telling of objects, rather, involves a reflexive process between collector, object and beholder which functions in an activation of mnemonic processes. In turn, the event of apprehension is provisionally tactical, specific to its moment and requiring a personal enactment of display codes.

#### CURATING THE SELF

You see, that's why I work like a dog and I worked like a dog all my life. I am not interested in the academic status of what I am doing because my problem is my own transformation ... This transformation of one's self by one's own knowledge is, I think, something rather close to the aesthetic experience. Why should a painter work if he is not transformed by his own painting? (Foucault, 1988: 15).

The writings of Michel Foucault have been mined by cultural critics to elucidate aspects of the art world and its display systems, notably how culture has produced different kinds of subjects. Foucault's work has provided a theoretical substructure for investigations of the dividing and classification procedures in museums and how these pertain to practices governing art works, their modalities of representation and apprehension. For example, the writings of

Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, among others, examine museum epistemologies -- what counts as "knowledge" in museums -- and how museums construct their subjects (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992: 3).

While such investigations have formed salient grounds for museum critique, their methodology is generally deconstructive. I would like to turn instead to Foucault's later work which is concerned with processes of self-formation. This work focussed on processes of the subject that, rather than being determined, for example, by disciplinary architecture, were considered in terms of the person's potential as an agent. Both Tony Bennett and Ian Hunter have provided elucidating readings of Foucault's "technologies of the self" as a way of conceiving of aesthetics not in terms of theories of philosophical aesthetics (i.e., as judgment) but in terms of self-fashioning (Bennett, 1990: 167-182; Hunter, 1992: 347-372). While Bennett's concern is the constitution of the self through literary education, Hunter's involves rethinking the aesthetic as an ethic, which involves distinguishing between aesthetic doctrine and the means by which individuals form themselves in relation to such doctrine. Thus, the aesthetic in Foucault's terms involves those "contingencies that make us what we are" (Hunter, 1992: 349).

My aim here is to show, after Foucault, how the practices of such contingencies inform collecting in relation to identity formation. At the basis of collecting is the curatorial practice of the collector. The affective investment characterizing "curatorship" may be traced to its etymological root curare, "to care for," for it is in the aspect of caring-for that links the collector with their objects in the sense of stewardship, protection and framing. There is another aspect of "caring for" which has to do with the role of the collection in the self formation of the collector herself. In what follows I will try to show how the curatorial practices of women collectors indicate curating -- caring-for -- with distinctly different affective emphasis. In the latter sense, curatorship constitutes an enunciative practice: a performative rhetoric of caring for, of pleasure, power and will, one which I believe constitutes what Foucault termed "care of the self."

Foucault isolated techniques through which a person initiated active self-formation. While the site of his research was the history of sexuality, Foucault's references to "care of the self" extended to a range of practices involving acts of remembering, contemplation and practical experience.<sup>5</sup> Foucault draws from arcane techniques of Greco-Roman philosophy in the first and second centuries AD and from

the practices of Christian spiritual disciplines during the fourth and fifth centuries AD.

Foucault makes the distinction that while the first moral principle of Western philosophy is "know yourself," gnothi sauton, the pre-Delphic principle is rather "take care of yourself," or epimelesthai sautou, a precept governing practices of social conduct and "the art of life" (1988: 19). Foucault underscores that "care of the self" does not imply a kind of theological telos of the "soul-as-substance" but rather entails a "care of the activity" (1988: 25). Therefore "care of the self" or "techniques of the self" can describe processes entailed with self-inquiry and self-production as distinct from its product.

Foucault's interest in such a hermeneutics of the self was inspired, oddly enough, by Christopher Lasch's populist The Culture of Narcissism which describes a modern "turning within." Foucault notes how contemporary practices parallel those of the Roman Empire. Significant to the kind of performative aesthetic I want to develop here, is that Foucault's notion of "techniques of the self" refuses the closure of a narcissistic attitude and rather focusses on the activities by which human subjects constitute themselves. In other words, in addition to an "attitude" of personality -- however provisionally crystallized -- the particularities of a

mode of cognition (aesthetic or otherwise) comprise techniques and practices inherent in the "care of the self." This describes practices which people either alone or with others work through their bodies, soul, thoughts, conduct and way of being in order to transform themselves (1988: 4-18). It can refer to many kinds of activities, from spiritual techniques of "turning within" as a kind of meditation and the attendant self-knowledge of mystic traditions, through more mundane contemplations of experience, and practical techniques used in everyday life, such as devices for assisting memory of what one has done and what one has to do. Foucault uses a quote from 127d the first dialogue of Plato, of the Alcibiades to underscore its necessary performativity. The "care of the self" or epimelesthai sautou "expresses something much more serious than the simple fact of paying attention. It involves various things: taking pains with one's holdings and one's health. It is always a real activity and not just an attitude" (1988: 24-5).

One could call this activity "cultivated awareness." While Foucault focussed on the role of reading and writing in the constitution of self as subject, I will posit collecting as such self-inscription. Thus, I will consider how collections are sites for investigating how specific individuals may develop knowledge about themselves. In this

way, Foucault's "techniques of the self" enables this examination of collecting as a techne -- a kind of practical rationality governed by a conscious goal. My investigation here must be distinguished from approaches which describe a diachronic "history of collecting." Rather, a techne involves immanent and synchronous relations to the collection's particular "truth."

Within Foucault's terms, as I understand them, collections function as kinds of "truth games" which incorporate the productive power of ownership through transforming and manipulating objects. In turn, the collection itself provides a mode of relating with the external world. Thus activating the collection enables the collector to recognize him/herself as a "collector." For Foucault, questions governing how someone conducts themselves in order to transform themselves is at the center of an ethics of the self. In his view, practices of ownership, meaning, and power all submit to the relations entailed in self-formation. As Foucault notes:

[A]rt has become something which is related only to objects and not to individuals, or to life. That art is something which is specialized or which is done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object, but not our life? (1984: 350)

Central to Foucault's conception of art is his definition of "ethics" as the kind of relationship one opts to have with oneself which affects how one constitutes oneself as a moral subject of one's own actions. In other words, ethics, as distinct from the fixed teleology of moral law, is a set of practices which impinge on the relationship one has to oneself. Where the objects of a personal collection can stand in for oneself, the curatorial practices of collectors may be fruitfully mined in terms of a Foucauldian "ethics" or "aesthetics of existence." Foucault describes that morality invokes the question "Why?" The morality of collecting may, for example, involve such interrogations as: Why collect this? What is the ultimate goal I am to reach with this collection? What is the purpose of my struggles to collect? Thus the morality of collecting is oriented towards a telos of power and knowledge.

In contrast, ethics asks the question "How?" In turn, it relates to such questions as: How does one act in order to constitute oneself as a collector? How do her relationships with art objects, art practices and artists describe a cultural politics? Ethics, then, is defined in the relational aspects governing curatorship, "caring for" not only in a practical sense of protecting the artifact, but also in terms of one's affective investment, in terms of what matters and

how one cares. This is exemplified in choosing the terms of a collection's display or developing a particular style in which to present it and herself. Ethics, defined thus, can illuminate the "aesthetics of existence" of collectors. For Foucault, the "aesthetics of existence" is an extension of the techniques or care of the self:

From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art (1984: 351).

In the case at hand, collectors transfer the kind of relationship they have with themselves to the active creativity of the collection. In the manner that they create their lives, they give style to their collections through practice and work. Moreover, the aesthetic-ethos of collecting must be distinguished from the self-absorbed collapse inherent in narcissism. Rather, "care of the self" is characterized by distinct forms of self-inquiry, and caring-for constituted in an "aesthetics of existence" as a hermeneutics of the self.

Foucault describes ethics -- the relationship to oneself -- as having four aspects. The first aesthetic-ethos concerns what Foucault terms the "ethical substance" which he deems socially specific and pertaining to the aspects of behaviour aligned to conventions of moral conduct. Foucault here underscores the distinction between the teleology of moral



laws and ethical practices. Hence the ethical substance must be understood as those affective forces which mobilize articulations of social and individual convention. Foucault goes on to describe that for the Christians it is "desire," for Kant it is "intentions," for "us" it is "feelings" (1984: 353). Thus, concerning collections then, the form constituting the "ethical substance" is the aesthetic experience itself (Hunter, 1992). This gives the ground for arguing that distinct from the power/knowledge relations which govern why people collect, the ethical substance concerns how people collect, and describes the particular awarenesses that govern collecting's affective investments, or one's feeling for the collection. The artifacts become devices, not the ethical substance as such, which are deployed to enable an aesthetic experience. It is the aesthetic experience contingent to the collection which provides the means for self-interrogation and awareness. Thus "care" can account for both how the choices are made in procuring a collection, as well as the manner of its later custodianship and display.

The "ethical substance" may be qualified both in terms of "how one cares for" the collection according to its affective investments -- of passion, respect, memory, commitment -- as manifested in the collection, and the concern governing the collection after it is amassed. It is this second sense, in

"caring for" as concern that interests me because it suggests rhetorics entailed in the syntagmatic arranging and contextualizing of objects, how they are mobilized for particular effects. For it is in "how the collection is displayed" that an array of objects, in working as a vehicle for the collector's investment, mirrors the terms of a collector's "aesthetics of existence."

Foucault's second ethical aspect concerns the way people "are invited or incited" to recognize their moral obligations as a "mode of subjection." This can account for how the collector comes to define their own aesthetic commitments in relation to art world (or possibly other) conventions. In developing an attitude that relates to the world of art, it pertains to the question: "whom and what ends are served by the collector?" Thus, the ethical substance indicates the relation of engagement -- whether interest, responsibility, curiosity -- within a larger culture. The moral obligation could be represented by such figures as the teacher, critic or docent whose roles involve relaying cultural values. On another level, through participation in the art market, the collector inserts him/herself in a chain of effects which enable the collection, in turn to serve.

Ultimately the amassing of a collection constituent to a life process, however, must be renounced at the point of

death. For it here that the affective links which bind a collection to the body of the collector terminate. The last will and testament of the collector then is a practical key to the commitments of the collector in terms of who is served as ownership of a collection changes hands, most frequently into the hands of relatives or a public institution. The mode of subjection in caring for the collection also accounts for how aesthetic choices are imposed, in giving the collection a beautiful form, for example. As an aspect of relationship to oneself, the mode of subjection accounts for reflexive "linkages" between a collection and such discourses as politics, fame, memory or beauty at a particular moment (Foucault, 1984: 354). Moreover, it can account for relational modalities between collector and collected; the pivot between a subjection (respect, even devotion) of the collector to her objects, which at the same time functions as the collector uses objects to represent herself. While the collector submits to recognizing the object's worth, the collector simultaneously mobilizes their cultural capital at the service of her will and pleasure.

Moreover, the mode of subjection can be discerned in how the collector constitutes a kind of "ethos" in the aristotelian sense. This concerns the countenance of the collector, as they code their appearance, including self-

adornment, clothing, speaking style, and other aspects of communication and identification. If a woman wants people to accept her as a collector, she must appear as one. Collecting commonly includes displays of personal wealth, fortune, power, love, and beauty. The attitudinal ethos, or performative aesthetic, proper to collecting of course varies in relationship to the cultural politics of particular temporal and geographical contexts. Yet I can venture to say that collectors define themselves to some degree by their professional affiliations -- which reflect a range of moral obligations -- involving how they decide which works to purchase, the role of their personal relationships with artists, and through the kinds of assertions they make with the collection such as making something visible that may not otherwise be evident.

The fact that a collector can simultaneously exercise social responsibility and at the same time gain fame as a glamorous ambassador of culture evokes Foucault's third aesthetic-ethic, which concerns the means one can change oneself in order to become an ethical subject. This involves how one works on (or through) the "ethical substance" (1984: 354-5). Thought in terms of collecting, the collector's participation in the art world (as a domain of truth) has reflexive effects, enabling them to work from the recognition

of themselves as a subject amongst other collectors, and in relation to their collection itself. The ethical substance can be examined in terms of how their aesthetic attitude may be transformed through developing their collecting practice. For example, the collector's intuitive and intellectual processes in beholding and selecting works may be profoundly transformed and sharpened through the disciplines they establish for themselves. Particular modalities of selecting works -- involving intuition for example -- may be refined. The focus on discipline here contrasts with the pleasures governing traditional philosophical conceptions of aesthetic experience. The rigor of their involvement comprise a kind of asceticism, a *techne* of the body entailing a sacrifice of comfort. This is detectable in different registers, in the processes of the collectors I will discuss: Ydessa Hendele's stark interiors reduced to the basics, Madonna Ciccone's habitual apprehension of artworks during gruelling 4:00 a.m. Workouts and Isabella Stewart Gardner's living without food and heat in the effort to save her finances for her collection.

Caring for the collection is itself a form of curatorship. The practices of collecting -- as negotiations of art conventions and personal proclivities -- can be mined to understand the concerns immanent to the choices of work,

their arrangement, context and temporal display span. Through these engagements, the collector-curator learns in public, modifying later projects in light of public and personal response. At the same time, larger cultural discourses impinge on the art world with a cross-generational effects of contemporary social theory: psychoanalytic, poststructuralist, sociological, cultural studies, feminist, postcolonial and so on. In other instances, collections may work from a perspective grounded in personal experience. Or, characteristically, a display is an effect of an articulation of the two. Thus, the ethical substance of concern or "caring for" implicit in "curatorship" reflexively adjusts the collector's affective investment through the process of engagement.

Foucault's fourth aesthetic-ethic, in contrast to techniques involving negotiation, is more teleologically weighted as an aspect of relating to oneself. It concerns the identificatory referent inherent in behaving in a moral way, or, in Foucault's words "the kind of being" one aspires to be. This must be distinguished from "transcendent" identification outside the self, for here concepts of "self-mastery" obtain within the subject's sustained aspiration to act as particular "kind of being" (1984 354-356). Thus the collection becomes an opportunity for women to achieve a kind of personal

culmination. It has to do with the telos of aspiration in itself. This can occur during the collector's activity on the collection, or in their reciprocal relations with it. In the first instance, the aspiration of the collector may involve the completion of the collection as itself a kind of telos, a kind of totality of objects. But the aspiration inherent in collecting can also have to do with the desire to be a particular "kind of being." The models of the "kind of being" may be evident in particular ontological influences pervasive at the time of collecting or may stem from thoughts and concepts in the mind of the collector herself. The women's collections which I will describe forthwith, indicate differing telos of collecting as "kinds of beings" contingent to a social context. Of course mastery of the self in this sense does not, in itself, guarantee the sovereignty of the subject. Rather, it describes practices and techniques by which these collectors assume agency as self-defining beings either within the hegemonic codes of the art world, or by challenging such conventions by operating outside of them.

#### MADONNA CICCONE

If women are to accede to a different sort of social organization, they need a religion, a language and either a currency of their own or a non-market economy. These conditions go hand in hand (Irigary, 1986: 9).

While memorabilia of "Madonna's" performances are sold at auction for record prices, simultaneously, if more quietly, Madonna Louise Ciccone has risen in prominence as a collector of paintings by Frida Kahlo, Tamara de Lempicka, Salvador Dali, Fernand Leger, and Diego Rivera as well as a range of works by photographers. In contrast to her public persona, Ciccone's art collection is actually quite conservative in the sense that it favours works that fit into a domestic context rather than installation works which demand a gallery context. Yet at the same time, as I will argue here, this collection provides a context through its use, one which reorganizes sacred and activist aspects of religious affect, sexual politics and market value which inform Ciccone's practice.

Ciccone's aesthetic self-formation deploys her collection to represent herself -- usually in conversation with a journalist -- as a vehicle for the "real" Madonna. What is remarkable to me, is that again and again, feature stories portray Ciccone's revelations concerning the collection with a journalist as witness within a process of moving through one of her domestic spaces. In the manner of a memento femineum, a kind of cabinet to assuage our curiosity, she "tells" each artifact as a way of revealing an aspect of herself. Arguably the collection provides a ground for considering Ciccone's



aesthetic process as a zone incorporating a range of affective investments from political ambition to philosophical love. A promotional piece for the New York Times promoting the compact disc Bedtime Stories, for example, evokes simultaneously the conventionally opposing states of conflict and grace.

On the upper floor of Madonna's New York apartment is a hallway she jokingly calls the "boxing hall of fame." Its walls hold framed black-and-white photographs of fighters: Joe Louis, Sugar Ray Robinson and more than one Muhammed Ali. Madonna proudly points out that the largest Ali photo is autographed; it reads "Madonna -- We are the Greatest!"... Is it the skill, the strength, a sense of fellow arena performers? She turns and fixes her visitor with a level gaze, "I love the brutality," she says" ... Later she will show her Picasso and her video clip for her new single, "Secret," from "Bedtime Stories." (Pareles, 1994: H1, 38).

Thus the ruthlessness of conflict, the synecdochal mastery entailed by the Picasso, and the more tender intimacies of Bedtime Stories are successively exposed.

In another piece, in an issue of Architectural Digest, Ciccone's New York apartment is featured soon after its redecoration by brother Christopher Ciccone. This article focusses on Ciccone's interest in power. Ciccone compellingly exemplifies the synecdochal function of the collection, which through ownership's contiguity, qualifies an aesthetic ethos of power. Ciccone states: "I get strength from my art -- all the paintings I own are powerful." (Gimelson, 1991: 198-209).

Beyond the figure of the entertainer, Ciccone is the actual CEO of each of the companies in her corporate empire: Boy-toy for music; Siren for films; and Slutco for videos (Sessum, 1990: 148). Moreover, if power constitutes the ethical substance of the aesthetic in this sense, her mode of subjection, the practices by which she transforms herself quite revealingly point to a disciplined asceticism. She is extraordinarily self-disciplined, regulating her days into precise time periods of phone calls and business, physical exercise, and creative time. According to Ciccone, "I can summon my creativity" (quoted in Sessum, 1990: 148).

It's a great feeling to be powerful. I've been striving for it all my life. I think that's just the quest of every human being: power. There's a constant struggle for power in a relationship too -- no matter what. Even if you achieve it for a while, somebody else gets it for a while. That's just the way it goes. I don't know any other way. I'm not interested in anyone I can't compete with. There's got to be that fight (Sessum, 1990: 148).

Again, the question of the "fight" both professionally and interpersonally characterizes relation in terms of struggle. Throughout her career, Ciccone has appropriated the myths and iconography of the Catholic church for political ends. While raised a Catholic, she openly provokes the Church's policies on gender and sexuality.

Ciccone claims space in the church -- as a Catholic named Madonna -- in order to subvert it. She challenges women's

exclusion from agency in the church in her performances by tapping the tradition of female mystics -- ecstasies such as St. Theresa of Avila -- who describe their passion for Christ in erotic terms. In other performances, she appropriates the role of woman martyr, invoking the stereotype of woman victims whose transgressive sexuality demanded death, only to enact a resurrection which refuses such closure. At the same time, she openly criticizes the Catholic Church's position on AIDS as someone who can speak for her religion: "I think it's disgusting. I think it's hypocritical. And it's unloving. It's not what God and Christianity are all about" (Ciccone, in Sessum, 1990: 148).

While the ethical substance constituting Ciccone's power-love aesthetic functions in an activist relation to her public persona, it is interesting that her art collection is frequently used as a device to reveal her "inner self." I would like to argue that, in addition, her art collection exhibits Ciccone's "terms" for caring for herself. While she certainly uses her collection as a display of personal power, a emblem of her agency, at the same time, one could draw the implication that she mobilizes it literally to "care for herself" as a kind of doorkeeper -- a psychosocial feedback mechanism -- to verify the currency of potential relationships.

In caring for herself, as well as other selves, Ciccone's aesthetic practices have played a role in confronting regressive social attitudes concerning gender and sexuality, in ways which if they have not shifted moral standards at least have the issues in the public's face. Ciccone's success in self-promotion has given her power and the resultant capability to give, to create, in a social context. In addition she has functioned in the role of benefactor by donating works of art to public art institutions such as the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and in donating time and funds in support of the AIDS crisis. Yet given Ciccone's public service, she refuses a position of intractable "honour" given most benefactors. Rather, she risks being labelled a hypocrite in choosing to honestly admit that despite the fact that her Like a Prayer compact disk included a safe sex message, she has not always practiced safe sex herself. But, the question that arises for me at least, is the relationship between the telling and the truth. "Madonna's" confession resembles exomologesis, an early Christian form of disclosure for discovering the truth about the self integral to a ritual of penitence. In this way, the person publicly showed their sins in order to efface them (Foucault, 1988: 39-43). Foucault notes that, in the eighteenth-century, social science used

this technique without renunciation to constitute "the new self" as produced for example by "the talking cure."

Again, in 1990, an article in Vanity Fair undertakes to reveal the "real Madonna" by looking at her art collection. Ciccone gives the author a tour of her Los Angeles house, describing the provenance of works which reads like a camp version of Jackie Onassis' tour of the White house. Where Onassis was enthusiastic, if formal, her descriptions of the provenance of each object were concerned with providing a context for a genuine American public culture. In contrast, Ciccone's banter reveals key exchanges and moments of her personal affiliations. Again, the practice of exomologesis operates as a kind of disclosure where the journalist stands-in for public authority (Foucault, 1988: 44).<sup>6</sup> Greg Bordowitz holds that the power of testimony is distinct from that of confession:

Through testimony one bears witness to one's own experiences to one's self. Through confession one relinquishes responsibility for bearing witness to and for one's self with the hope that some force greater than one's self will bear away the responsibilities for one's actions (1994: 25-26).

Bordowitz describes how testimony is linked to survivor-culture now powerful in the self-help movement. It is secular, posed to one who listens. It is integral to processes of recovery, of coming out, of establishing

sovereignty over oneself. The telling is an activity that must continue. In contrast, he argues, confession puts the teller into the role of sinner where the telling is posed to one who has the power to forgive. It is integral to religious surrender where the self is subjugated to a sovereign force external to the confessor. Finally confession, as distinct from testimony, implies an end.

Yet the irony evident in Madonna's "speech act" begs the question of the interview itself. Is Madonna being truthful? If so, within which truth game? That of art? That of celebrityhood? Is she dawning an identity for the interview, essentially play-acting herself? Or is she distinguishing herself against the more traditional Hollywood celebrityhood style and seemingly ignoring the link between art and life, private and public self? (Pribram, 1993: 204-5). In this respect, Warren Beatty's pointed comment during the film Truth or Dare is telling: "Without the camera, she doesn't exist."

Throughout the Vanity Fair interview, every point on the tour informs the reader of the social affiliations involving the collection. The provenance and display of each artifact reveals clues to Ciccone's private choices and relations. Key works in this article include a photograph by Ilse Bing, a thirty-first birthday gift from Warren Beatty. Her thirtieth year, while outwardly successful, was personally difficult.

She both separated from her husband Sean Penn, and advanced beyond her mother's life span. Journalist Kevin Sessum uses this image to suggest Beatty's take on Ciccone.

Outside her bathroom, hung on the wall above a Nadelman sculpture, is the photograph given to her on her thirty-first birthday by her Uber-beau, Warren Beatty. It is a picture by Ilse Bing of a group of women in diaphanous gowns caught performing a la Matisse's The Dance. She points to the woman whose head is thrown further back than the others, her hands not exactly clasped in the thrall of collaboration. The woman obviously wants the attention all to herself, and Bing has captured that blissful desire perfectly. Madonna tilts her head at the same angle and breezes past the photograph. "Warren says she reminds him of me. I don't know why" (Sessum, 1990: 142).

Another work is a David Salle drawing given to Madonna and Sean Penn as an anniversary present by Salle and Karole Armitage. It depicts a spread female nude above a personal inscription "which includes the word 'love'" (Sessum, 1990: 142). It is hung in the bathroom facing the toilet. Madonna, always pushing the bad girl edge tells the author, "When I sit on the toilet...I like gazing at that" (Ibid.).

In the bedroom hangs a painting by Tamara de Lempicka, and beside Ciccone's "bed" is a simple framed snapshot of her mother as a sixteen-year-old girl. Evidently Ciccone's bed is a space of retreat and solace, where her mother's presence is a source of support, but it is simultaneously a site of sexual fantasies about Madonna herself.

Likewise, there is a tendency to depict Ciccone's countenance in carefully recorded detail. For example Jon Pareles describes her attire:

She is wearing tight, flared black pants and a sheer, low-cut, black Ann Demeulemeester shirt over a black brassiere; the shirt is knotted at the midriff, showing off the famous navel, now pierced with a gold ring that holds a diamond horseshoe -- "for luck," Madonna says. A half-dozen gold chains and a crucifix hang around her neck; she has a small gold ring in her nose. Her hair is a flashy yellow with dark roots; her eyebrows are blond, her red fingernails slightly chipped (1994, H1, H38).

Thus the collection is an opportunity to display the body of the collector. But perhaps more revealing than the ethos of her attire, are the display rhetorics in evidence.

As Janis Bergman-Carton has argued, the work emblematic of the collection is a painting by Kahlo entitled My Birth, which is positioned at the entrance foyer. The image depicts an adult Kahlo as a baby during a difficult birth, her strained features are evident on the head emerging out of the birth canal above blood stained sheets. The image depicts suffering, blood, the intensities of transition into life and possible simultaneous death of the mother. Bergman-Carton writes:

Madonna has chosen precisely this powerful image of female self-reliance and rebirth to greet visitors to her home. There, viewers are invited to respond as Kahlo and Madonna strike poses of power not at all like a victim (1993: 37).



This work provides a compelling synecdoche for Ciccone's awareness of, as well as an emblem for, the collection as a whole. Both Kahlo and Madonna manipulate Christian iconography and mass media signs in ways which demonstrate marginalized bi-sexuality, as well as "women's capacity for self-reinvention" (Ibid.). Moreover, considered in the life of Ciccone, it is the succession of confessional points that is most intriguing in this article. If Madonna's disclosures are authentic, she uses Kahlo's work as a kind of Rorschach test, a rite of passage to would-be intimates. She puts it quite bluntly, "If somebody doesn't like this painting...then I know they can't be my friend" (Sessum, 1990: 147). This is a particularly interesting use of a collection, functioning in the manner of a gatekeeper which monitors "who will pass" through a performative testing of aesthetic response. In this sense, My Birth protects the secrets in the manner of the riddle of the sphinx, where only the few can answer the riddle can have particular knowledge revealed to them. Moreover, this spread female figure, in contradistinction to Peggy Guggenheim's "possession of the phallus," pits the female form at the entrance to private space, and, it is assumed, the private self.

If this figure functions as a muse, it is not in the manner of a woman standing-in as an ideal, but a woman

labouring in self-transformation. Thus the work emblemizes the potentiality of both Kahlo and Ciccone to give birth to themselves, to be simultaneously mother and daughter. In this sense, the collection is mobilized through the reciprocities of friendship as a locus of mutual recognition. This reveals questions of taste, of conviction, about being able to deal with the difficult stuff of sorrow, of pain, of explicitness of birth, death, and sex connections. This poses an aesthetic experience in terms of its relational intensities. More specifically, it has to do with the necessary vigilance celebrities must observe before releasing their protective muscle of a "private self" where potential friends must first demonstrate a suitable countermove. And this is especially true given the disillusioning projections celebrities are subject to. In contrast to sustained, abstract power, Ciccone mobilizes Kahlo's work as an index for people's awareness, inclinations and strength as the basis for commitment.

Ciccone's practice must be situated as working across the art world, but not primarily within it. Rather than aligning herself in relation to conventional artistic attitudes she works the transformation of her own chameleon image as an artistic medium. Much has been explored in this regard, and it is not my intent to continue such an investigation here. Rather, my intent has been to examine how her collection

supports her display of herself. If Madonna works to avoid closure as Susan McClarey has suggested (1993: 117), what can be said of her collection? Does the telling of objects continue as a form of testimony? Or do such disclosures, functioning as confessions, imply an end? I'm inclined to believe that both are evident in Ciccone's collection as it is deployed. This form of display is inherently performative, always in process of becoming something else. Just as there is no stable countenance of Madonna, the Kahlo is emblematic of a poetics of self-creation which perhaps does not maintain the protective muscle evident in her public persona.

Ciccone's collection defies a syntagmatic totality, and in some ways could be characterized as "inventory" rather than "arrangement." Given the prominent role of her brother -- who designs her interiors as well as her stage sets -- the installation of the collection perhaps owes more to discourses governing interior design than to those of fine art. Nevertheless, Ciccone's aesthetics of the self is evident not so much in the fixed arrangement of artifacts as it is in her use of the collection in "telling herself."

## YDESSA HENDELES

Museums demand movement and remembrance (Stewart, 1993).

Whereas Madonna Ciccone is portrayed in movement through her collection, Toronto collector Ydessa Hendeles' image has remained relatively stable over the past fifteen years. She appears most frequently in striking poses, dressed in black, her long hair framing heavily made-up eyes. For example, Hendeles' portrait on a 1993 cover of Canadian Art is a telling countenance of an "upscale, industrial, 'working' aesthetic" (Greenberg, 1994: 30). Just as the white gallery space correlates with the ideology of art as the archetypical "white cube," wearing black characterizing the ethos of artistic attire. The bearing of Hendeles' spaces and attire are undoubtedly world class. She is still, leaning against the perfectly finished white wall of her gallery space.

Juxtaposed is the headline: "Ydessa Hendeles: a Toronto Collector's Journey into Contemporary Art" (Rhodes, 1993).

She is wearing something of exquisite black fabric with transparent embroidered sleeves. Each arm is weighted with heavy, silver bracelets of bold design. Her fingers and thumbs are similarly adorned, the long manicured nails indicate that this is not a person who slaves over a keyboard or does manual work. The finger cradles her chin, augmenting her mouth and

drawing attention to her voice and its proclamations. The signature ethos is a ring on her right index finger upon which is a silver "tower" of two to three inches, a phallus as architectural metaphor. She addresses the camera directly, the gaze steady. She stands inside her exquisitely refurbished building which enables not only a vantage point, but in continuity with its history of manufacturing, in effect, "makes" Hendeles a place of agency within art world power structures. The building and collection are her reason to travel widely, to attend exhibitions, to purchase art and to determine how her collection is displayed.

Hendeles' collection has evolved dynamically in a seriously conceptualized succession of exhibitions mounted in her Toronto space. She was listed by ARTnews as one of the "fifty most important people" in the international art world, and the only Canadian mentioned (Rhodes, 1993: 43). Hendeles' ethical substance -- the feelings that drive her aesthetics of collecting -- involve commitments to personal self-inquiry, civic responsibility, and function indirectly to monumentalize the lost histories of the Holocaust. Moreover, Hendeles' collecting and display practice can be characterized as a politics of affiliation which is significant in several ways: in order to assert herself as the leading Canadian collector in the international art market; in her peer relationships

with a generation of artists whose work she adopts; and in her processes of research and revelation entailed in consciously forged relationships between works of art, their contexts of display and the succession of exhibitions in time.

Hendeles' capacity as a player -- like Peggy Guggenheim and Isabella Stewart Gardner before her -- is due to her spectacular wealth granted to her as heir to her late father, Jacob Hendeles, a Toronto real-estate developer. Initially encouraged by her father to purchase works of art during European travels, Hendeles' passion for collecting surpassed its functionality as a potential investment, eventually establishing itself in terms of a personal relationship with the art. While the abundance of resources available to her has permitted a range of activity in the international art world unusual in the Canadian scene, it is even more unusual given the accumulation of wealth was achieved in virtually one generation.

Hendeles was born in a displaced person camp in Germany to parents who survived Auschwitz and immigrated to Canada when she was two years old. As she puts it, she is part of a generation who does not have grandparents. In her words, "I have a personal sense of absent roots and truncated history... I want to contribute to and retain a history from the vantage point of being there" (Hendeles, in Théberge, 1989: 30).

Given her experience and awareness of the fragility of life after the Holocaust, Hendeles has chosen to affirm life as one "passionately committed" to art. In this sense, the affective investment characterizing her aesthetic ethos is to forge connections not in the past, but laterally in the present through her relationship with art works, with the artists and her curatorial consciousness and display contexts.

This relationship with an exhibition space is thus significantly different from the aborescent nature of remembrance as "ancestor worship" stressed in Atwood's Life Before Man. Rather, Hendeles focusses on involving herself in synecdochal history as a "process of becoming" within an immanent present, or, as constituent to, in the words of Pierre Théberge, "building a museum as a life process" (1989: 29).

Moreover, her exhibition agenda differs from those of public exhibiting institutions. While the Ydessa Hendeles Art Foundation opens its exhibitions for public view, Hendeles' expressed first commitment is to the art and not to "the" public. This departs from the obligation of public institutions which, rhetorically at least, must place the public first and function within educational mandates. Hendeles' process of engaging with the collection is psychologically nuanced. She proclaims that the power of art

is as a sublimating force significant to a humanistic project, which, in bringing unconscious forces to light, fosters a project of civilization (Hendeles, in Théberge, 1989: 30). Such a project, while ostensibly operating in the aesthetic realm, supports awareness concerning issues involving the "right to existence" and "the security of an identity" (Ibid.). Hendeles professes that there are "many truths" and that it is not the responsibility of any artist to present a single all-inclusive truth.

But perhaps the consistency of Hendeles' collection is in its commitment to underscore the capacity to remember. The works included are nuanced with a kind of time-biased monumentality, haptic oral communicative modes or even funereal qualities. Jenny Holzer's marble benches incised with texts recall tombstones, Christian Boltanski's installations read like shrines to the anonymously dead, or eerily powerful amassment of clothes resembling the piles of possessions of Holocaust victims. Guilio Paolini's conceptualist fragile dead-white plaster casts, James Coleman's compelling staging in installation, Gary Hill's repositioning of the viewer as viewed, Bill Viola's meditations on transitions of birth and death, and Diane Arbus's freak photographs have a commonality in their inquiry into awareness in the perception process, invoking consciousness of looking and being looked



at, and the workings of monuments, memory and remembering. There is also a forensic dimension, the kind of personal, cultural and social diagnostic inquiry into the pathological content of the work. To enact the space at the Ydessa Hendeles Art Foundation, is to pace the edge of death, to touch the legacy of the death camps through a formative affect which challenges conventions of closure.

Before establishing the Ydessa Hendeles Art Foundation, Hendeles ran a gallery in Toronto, in the tradition of the Isaacs Gallery and as an alternative to the Carmen Lamanna Gallery. The Ydessa Gallery opened on trendy Queen Street next to the popular Rivoli Restaurant in 1980. She represented a new generation of Canadian artists including Liz Magor, Jeff Wall, Sheilagh Alexander and others, in a gender balance that indicated a significantly higher proportion of women than other private galleries of the time. Several of these artists represented Canada at large international exhibitions such as Documenta. Yet, the gallery failed to be viable because the Canadian art market lacked sufficient collectors to make the gallery self-financing. The sole buyers were museum curators with small budgets. Hendeles typified her gallery as "a bad relationship that needed to end" (Théberge, 1989: 29).

Hendeles dissolved the gallery in 1988 after locating and purchasing an industrial building at 778 King Street where she

would resurrect her practice as a collector backed by an art foundation. The model of an art foundation enabled her to run a privately funded contemporary art museum as a non-profit foundation. Because her role as a collector was to purchase and display works of art, the art foundation eliminated the headaches of business relationship with artists, especially in a no-win market, and enabled her to focus her energies more productively. Hendeles has ultimate control in a display venue as owner, as she maintains the last word as curator, art buyer, and foundation director. Thus the foundation is operated according to her express vision and concerns.

The consequent elimination of the for-profit agenda of a commercial operation enabled her to establish a "museum of her own" -- to assert her personal capacities and participate as an internationally renowned collector. Unlike the reciprocal currency of celebrity-collecting, where each side plays a role in augmenting the other, Hendeles' power existed precisely in her capacity to invest on a practical level. She must spend a specified sum of money each year as a tax shelter. Yet beyond the finances, within an economy of fame, the collection is her vehicle of becoming an art world celebrity herself.

Hendeles collaborated with architect Peter Smith, who designed Toronto's Power Plant Gallery, to remodel the exhibition space. Renovations respected the original

industrial function of the building, and its original sign "Uniforms Registered" was left on the facade. Inside, the space was stripped and streamlined, floors were taken down to the original concrete, the ceilings were raised one meter, and skylights were added.

Display at the Ydessa Hendeles Art Foundation achieves an unparalleled quality of detail and consideration. In her words: "I don't want to have a disparate group of objects presented in a trophy hunting way" (Duncan, 1990: E-5).

Richard Rhodes has elaborated upon the performative aspects of each exhibition. For each show, the interior is painstakingly rebuilt to accommodate its specific requirements. As he perceives, the aesthetic here operates in its relational capacity: "What is at stake is the intellectual connective tissue joining work to work, exhibition to exhibition" (1993: 43). Moreover, the exhibitions are not designed as commentaries which explain the works in relation to long-term public memory, but rather function primarily on an experiential level: as concentrated staged sites for interacting with works of art. In this way, they foreground the affective aspects of short term memory, giving the charge that will hang in awareness for several days while merging with the experience of the beholder before forming a concept

stored in the longer term. In short, the exhibitions create "remembering beholders."

Hendeles characterizes her perceptions of Canadian culture as the fascination of a European outsider (Théberge, 1989: 29). Yet at the same time, she refuses to be restricted by a nationalistic commitment of only showing Canadian artists. In choosing to reside and base her collection in Toronto, she endeavours to provide a climate which benefits Canadian art through its rhizomic connections with other outstanding international collections including Dia in New York; the Saatchi Museum in London; and the Canadian Center for Architecture in Montreal.

While she did not need to enter the public realm, she acknowledges the influence of her Jewish family culture's sense of social responsibility which instilled the desire to give something back to Toronto. Her patronage affords a means of opening Toronto's insularity enabling a relationship with the rest of the art world (Théberge, 1989: 30). In Hendeles' words:

I don't think there are tremendous differences between cultures in what is felt, but there are tremendous differences in how each culture deals with feelings -- how expressive it is, and what is acceptable to express and what is not (quoted in Théberge, 1989: 30).

In this sense, the foundation, she claims, can function as a catalyst for an exchange of ideas within a public zone (Ibid.). Hendeles' professed intention is to create a space which offers an aesthetic experience of the highest standard (Ibid.).

Hendeles' dynamic relationship with her collecting as a life process denies the fixity of the collection as a fixed self-portrait. Yet she remains a kind of curiosity herself in the Canadian art scene. While her installation logic expressly denies a fixed interpretative rhetoric and remains distinct from collectors' narratives as illustrative of a life in which the works are inserted, it is very intellectually conscious. Her display logics and rhetorics are as carefully instantiated as her choice of each installation.

Typically, Hendeles' initial viewing process is intuitive. She moves through the space "as fast as possible" which enables her to maintain an instinctive take on the work without over-rationalizing (Hendeles in Théberge, 1989: 32). Thus, she uses a proprioceptive aesthetic to activate a recognition process. When something catches her interest, she trusts this response, although it may take some time for her to understand why. This process recalls the art of memory in terms of its space activation, but here it entails the formation of memory, rather than its recall. In Hendeles'

words: "I don't think of [the art] as an acquisition as much as I see it as the beginning of a relationship, an exploration that I will enjoy" (Hendeles in Théberge, 1989: 32).

In a very significant sense, Hendeles is "creating her life as a work of art" in Michel Foucault's sense of an aesthetics of existence. The aesthetic ethos of her curating activates a caring for art as she cares for herself. Each external gesture involving her collection parallels an inner process of revelation and self-inquiry. In this sense, Hendeles' project recalls Foucault's descriptions of stoic ethics where the aim of a personal aesthetic choice of a small elite was "to live a beautiful life." The Greeks of antiquity elaborated techne of the self which centred on the problem of personal choice, where exercising a perfect mastery over the self constituted an aesthetics of existence (Foucault, 1984: 348). Choice is something that can take place only in the present, not the future or past. Only in the present can personal agency break the hold of aborescent hierarchy, to expand outward as conscious rhizomic linkages. Like the austerities of the hellenic Greek practices of the self, Hendeles' spartan spaces discipline expressly to intensify beauty.

## ON THE LIFE AND AFTER-LIFE OF COLLECTING

The realm of the personal collection, for both Madonna Ciccone and Ydessa Hendeles, affords these women opportunities for extending the self as integral to a life process. Both Ciccone and Hendeles engage lawyers who would as a matter of course manage the legal aspects of a collection as part of their estates. Where we can assume that their wishes concerning their art collections are stated in the terms of their wills, for them to be explicit at this point would invite a range of harangues and ghoulish opportunism. The collection, while functioning synecdochally to the collector's body and presence during their lives, has a materiality that survives the physical body. The form that the collection assumes at the juncture of the collector's death is uncertain unless stipulated very precisely in the last will and testament.

Perhaps the most interesting example of a collector's will is that of Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840-1924) who took great pains to preserve the syntagmatic context of her personal museum. Gardner challenged social convention during her long life, both in her bohemian countenance and art collection. But more compelling to my argument here is how she sought to extend her agency beyond her death through her will. While her memory died with her, her presence is still evident in the affective arrangement of her collection.

### ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER'S MUSEUM

The object is that through which we mourn for ourselves, in the sense that, in so far as we truly possess it, the object stands in for our own death, symbolically transcended (Baudrillard, 1994: 17).

The signature portrait of Isabella Stewart Gardner by John Singer Sargent (1888) can be found in the "Gothic Room" of the Gardner Museum. Posed before what appears to be a tapestry replete with paisley floral motifs, Gardner's countenance confers power simultaneously sacred and secular, at once a regal crown and a saint's aura. Gardner is dressed in bohemian black, wearing two strands of pearls around her waist and a simple ruby necklace, both gifts of her husband. She was not deemed a conventional beauty of her time, but, her biographers claim, she compensated for this by implementing a self-confident individualistic style which earned both admiration and outrage by her Boston acquaintances. The portrait abuts a corner and covers a large tapestry behind it. In front of it is a large elaborately carved chest, four candelabra, and five vases of fresh lilies which her will decrees should be replenished daily from the greenhouse on the museum's grounds. The church-like feeling of the room is reflected in its furnishings: a Gothic madonna, Angels holding candles, a bust, a book on a stand. Her choice to place her



signature portrait here, notwithstanding its Christian overlays, additionally sanctifies the museum's monumental function as a memorial to its founder. Gardner's collection did achieve a totality at her death, a totality that was inscribed not only in the inventory of objects, but in their placement in space. The fact that she enforced the maintenance of these arrangements foregrounds compelling implications concerning the after life of a collection.

Isabella Stewart Gardner's wealth came from inheritances from her father and husband. Unable to have children after the death of her first child, she began to collect art during her travels, gaining a reputation in the Boston press as a "millionaire Bohemienne" (McCarthy, 1991: 161). Gardner was both a willful and shrewd buyer procuring European masters and cultivating her aesthetic sense in association with Harvard scholar and aesthete Bernard Berenson. Even though Berenson's high commissions ranged on the exploitative, Gardner succeeded in amassing her collection just before the market became inflated by the rush of wealthy Americans to buy European masters.<sup>7</sup> This historical moment at the turn of the century in America was marked by an increased interest in foreign cultures stemming from the World's Fair exhibitions, and with the rise of public patronage in America. Wealthy collectors, in a veritable "orgy of acquisition," stripped Europe of many

works of art. These artifacts were deployed as trophies which rendered cultivation, nobility and privilege to a rising class of nouveau riche industrialists in North America (McCarthy, 1991: 153-155).<sup>8</sup>

Gardner, affectionately known as "Mrs. Jack," tended to bend social conventions to her advantage rather than actually transgressing them (Higgonet, 1989: 69). Rather than typifying the "Gibson Girl" of the time -- the figure of the highly educated and independent women who defied male approval -- Gardner's self-taught connoisseurship took the form of provoking the norms of the upper class she inhabited. She passionately dedicated herself to art and music, unconventional dress and behaviour, in ways which signalled female individualism (McCarthy, 1991: 159). In so doing, she provided a model of an aesthetic practice possible beyond conventional restraints for women indulging in male practices. Her motto: c'est mon plaisir which translates as both "such is my pleasure," or "such is my will" contrasted starkly with the protocol of female self-sacrifice within the domestic sphere which typified the time (McCarthy, 1991: 161). Instead, Gardner maintained a lively public life, dressing in the best Parisian style, attending cultural events in attitudes intended to turn heads.

Gardner's taste in collecting was generally conservative. Although she collected some work by women -- one of her first acquisitions was Dawn Newport by Sarah W. Whitman, a suitably liminal theme for her transitional role as a figure exemplifying the advent of female individualism -- she predominately collected the art of men. In addition, men predominated in her friendships, notably Berenson whose advice shaped her acquisitions, and also including writers Henry Adams, Henry and William James, Oliver Wendell Homes, painters James McNeil Whistler and John Singer Sargent, and several male proteges including portrait painter Anders Zorn. Likewise, she patronized young male Harvard students. Thus her affiliations with the privileged male sex on intellectual matters enabled her to attain a different level of experience by, in effect, departing from customary femininity. Her trail-blazing associations in the male sphere were shocking to her contemporaries. While she defied Victorian conventions, her process was restricted to tactical actions which were not intended to transform the status of women on a collective level. Her instantiation of "pleasure" and "will" as per her motto -- her affective and financial investments in other words -- in effect displaced traditions of self-sacrifice from the site of the family to her collection. Her achievement was

the outcome of devoting all her resources to a single purpose: to create her museum in her own terms.

While obliged to respect Jack Gardner's constraining influence on her collecting during his life, upon his death, Gardner was free to construct her museum in the style of a Venetian palace which she named Fenway Court. Although she hired Willard T. Sears as architect and the sons of famous park designer Frederick Law Olmstead to landscape it, no aspect of Fenway Court was instituted without her involvement. She supervised the placement of masonry, supports and arches, showing workmen techniques and firing them if she found them not working up to her standards. Many were flabbergasted to see this woman in her sixties climb high scaffolding to demonstrate her technique of faux marbling achieved with a sponge. In this way, she conceived and supervised each detail of interior finishing. The result was a proto-postmodern amalgamation of Mexican tiles, medieval glass, old masters, kitsch collectibles, antique furnishings, and personal memorabilia within an eccentric domestic whole.

Fenway Court opened New Year's day of 1899. Gardner staged each detail. She greeted each guest at the top of the staircase dressed entirely in black with a strand of pearls and two large diamond pins securing her hair. The event tested the endurance of some, involving a full musical performance

before the galleries were opened. While present for the concert, Gardner retired to her apartment upstairs as visitors began to mingle amongst the collection. In this sense, once the liminal greeting was done in person, the collection stood in as an extension of herself.

Isabella Stewart Gardner's concept for the museum conceived of each object as part of an integrative totality. Moreover the functionality of the rooms and staff members was a constituent part. In this sense the Gardner Museum synecdochally presences the collector through its objects and arrangements, contexts and roles. Thus the syntagmatic terms of Gardner's conceptualization must be distinguished from those of conventional fine arts museums which function metonymically -- where objects are thought of as basically interchangeable constituents within curatorial narratives.

As her fortune began to dwindle, Gardner's purchases declined and her domestic spending became excessively prudent. On one occasion she entertained at Fenway Court in the dead of winter with no heat or fire. Friends worried that she was not eating enough food and that her worn clothes began to evidence "an unreasonable fear of poverty" (McCarthy, 1991:167).

Her friend Henry James, writing in 1907 describes her state:

I saw Mrs. Gardner ... in town and was divided between finding her battered, depleted, disfigured and finding how fond one is of her, always, for the

perfect terms one is on with her, an admirable ease, temper and facilite a vivre. She struck me as what she literally was and now is -- a little ancient, rusty "caretaker" or doorkeeper taking a holiday on money carefully saved up" (Tharp, 1965: 272).

In light of James' portrayal of Gardner as "rusty caretaker," I would like to consider her curatorial practice as it is instantiated in her conviction to protect the arrangement she had worked so long to achieve. And as "doorkeeper" she occupies a liminal space as a transitional figure in American private museums. At a time when conventions dictated that a woman's role was to guard the sanctity of domestic privacy, she opened her home for public exhibition. Moreover, the collection was conceived as a permanent installation which included in its design some of the world's great artworks in arrangements which integrated conceptually with domestic furnishings, personal souvenirs and potted plants.

In more recent years, the trustees of the Gardner Museum have attempted to make changes which include transforming the forth floor "director's apartment" into office space. But some museum critics fear that reducing the "use" of these museal spaces to ones resembling other institutions will have the effect of dissipating the everyday domestic practices which in effect make this museum such an interesting example of its kind (Higgonet, 1989).

Gardner's death marked a portentous transition of the collection. Eleven years before she died, Gardner wrote explicit "Directions for my Funeral." She requested the same purple, rather than black, pall used for her husband so "her spirit could fly unimpeded." She specified that violets (heather if violets were not in season) and white roses in a cross the entire length and width of the coffin. Candles were lit at head and feet. At the foot of the coffin was a mirrored door over which hung a black crucifix. For the entire time before the funeral, two nuns from the Order of St. Anne and of St. Margaret remained in supplication by the body. Gardner's detailed instructions even specified the manner of bearing her body: "Carry my coffin high -- on the shoulders of the bearers...they will have to be told exactly how to do it" (Tharp, 1965: 323). Accordingly, Gardner arranged the spectacle of her funeral with the same characteristic attention with which she built her museum. In this way, Gardner's body was absorbed into the plane of display. As the provisional closures of Gardner's collection became absolute upon her death, this juncture marked a simultaneous shift in the aesthetic ethos of her collection which -- while it may have linked to her pleasures -- was perpetuated more certainly through the terms of her will.

Susan Stewart has noted that in order to awaken the dead the antiquarian must first kill them (1984: 143). Gardner's will -- in stipulating that the function and arrangement of rooms remain untouched -- effected what she evidently intended to be an absolute closure. And the legal protection of property did protect her collection and its context from the violent dismemberment of a domestic space that can follow a death as personal effects are divided.

Fenway Court became a public museum after Gardner's death. The rhetorics of arrangement, central to Gardner's concept, were preserved, clearly stipulated in the terms of her will which decreed that not even a vase or candlestick could be moved:

If at any time the Trustees ... shall place for exhibition in the Museum established under this will any pictures or works of art other than such as I ... own or have contracted for at my death, or if they shall at any time change the general disposition or arrangement of any articles which shall have been placed in the first, second or third stories of said Museum at my death, except in the kitchen and adjoining bedrooms on the first floor, then I give the said land, Museum, pictures, statuary, works of art and bric-a-brac, furniture, books and papers and the said trust fund, to the President and Fellows of Harvard College in trust to sell ... and to procure the dissolution of the ... Museum (Tharp, 1965: 313-14 ).

Moreover, the will specified that the functions of the museum's spaces be preserved as well. Gardner stipulated that the director of the museum must live "on the top floor and



attic" of Fenway Court in rooms arranged as they pleased (Ibid.: 314).

Seventy years later, Gardner's "curatorial strategy" (Higgonet, 1989: 69) for viewing the works "as if she had just stepped out for a minute," have given way to more practical concerns regarding "the care" of the collection pertaining to its conservation. The condition of the museum is frail, especially given its annual attendance of 165,000 visitors. Some of the works hang on window shutters in direct sunlight. With no air conditioning, climatic control is impossible. There are no guard ropes to keep prying fingers off the works. The Trustees have worked towards installing air conditioning, double glazing the skylights and installing "museum quality" lighting. Liners have been installed to shield tapestries from condensation on the exterior stone walls. Yet these moves of a private museum toward the standards of a public institution bring attendant changes in its very functionality.

Most significantly here, the Trustees have made plans to remodel the director's live-in apartment on the forth floor into administrative and conversation areas. This would certainly change the context of Gardner's overall museal concept, and if it were to be instituted, would give sufficient reason to dissolve the Museum under the terms of her will. As Anne Higgonet rightly asserts, while there are

legal and financial aspects to this shift, it is perhaps the ideological aspects that are most significant because they pit contemporary assumptions that "all museums need to expand and commercialize to survive" against Gardner's visionary private museum. Higgonnet interrogates the urgency of the trustee's claims toward modernizing the museum, asking for what and for whom is this necessary. Instead, she argues that what is at issue is maintaining the museum's functionality as a home, in her words, that Gardner's "designation of museum directorate as live-in was the ultimate extension of Gardner's feminine ideology" (Higgonnet, 1989: 69). In this sense, the museum director-curator in a very real sense lives the synthesis of art and everyday life. Higgonnet goes on to argue that the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, precisely because it is conceived according to an overall concept which "seamlessly weaves" collected objects and domestic interior -- offers distinct attitudes towards an aesthetic experience; is a testimonial to nineteenth-century feminine conceptions of art, however eccentric. And further, that it is precisely Gardner's curatorial strategy in a museum which blurred the distinctions between public and private museums should be preserved (65). The aesthetic ethos of Gardner's museum is thus sustained as an arrangement, enabling entry to a stage of personalized affect.

## GHOSTS AT THE GARDNER

Inevitably, a work is always a form of tangible closure. But closures need not close off; they can be doors opening onto other closures and functioning as ongoing passages to an elsewhere (-within here). Like a throw of the dice, each opening is also a closing, for each work generates its own laws and limits, each has its specific condition and deals with a specific context (Trinh, 1991: 15).

Isabella Stewart Gardner's weaving together of dimensions of personal experience and the construction of her museum at Fenway Court achieved a seemingly closed articulation of individual memory in a cultural monument.

On the 18th of March 1990, five paintings by Degas, an antique vase, a gilt Napoleon eagle, and six paintings by Rembrandt, Flinck, Manet and Vermeer were stolen from the Gardner Museum. The theft of the paintings became a focus of a series of works by French artist Sophie Calle, entitled Last Seen which functioned as an artistic intervention pivoting on the afterimage of the theft at the museum. Calle's piece focusses on processes of remembrance consequent to the gaps and shifts that occur in the intervals between cultural memory and individual memory. Rather than attempting to reconstruct a totality, Calle pushes the resonances of memory, in unstable contingencies to create opening and movement.<sup>9</sup>

This museum intervention by Calle extends an earlier series entitled Ghosts (1989-1991), from the French word fantome which, in addition to describing an apparition, is the term used for the labels which are used to explain to museum visitors where a painting not presently on view is, either having been lent or in restoration (Calle, 1994: 43).<sup>10</sup> Significantly, Michael Baxandall notes, "the space between object and label is highly active," a dynamic zone between object and its insertion within a series (1991: 38).

Calle, who in this instance examines the traces of presence in the space between label and artifact, often works out of a situation where she observes an absence has occurred.<sup>11</sup> She is interested in displaying "what she does not have," and so chose to install memories of the works in the places where the artifacts once hung. In describing her fantome installation at the Museum of Modern Art in New York she stated:

What prompted me here is that I was in front of that empty spot with two nails in the wall. And that's all. I just saw that hole in the wall and two nails, and the little piece of paper that was supposed to tell you what was there...It's just the emptiness that gave me the idea. Or the shape. Sometimes when a painting is removed there is a shape that stays there (quoted in Storr, 1992: 49).

Using a similar conceptual logic at the Gardner Museum, Calle interviewed members of the staff, guards, curators,

restorers, asking them to describe from memory the absent works. These were fabricated into text pieces which are reverse-printed to form an outline of the missing object in the block of text. The textual compilations were juxtaposed with large ectachrome prints depicting the empty spaces where the works once hung. No attempt has been made to mask or explain the loss of these work because Gardner's will stipulates that nothing in the museum can be changed. Thus Calle documents the "evidence of absence," in the ghost-like shapes of now absent artworks whose presence is recorded as distinct silhouettes on the faded velvet or brocade fabric panels and curtains. Each "ghost" testifies to time passing regardless of the stillness of unmoving objects. Sometimes the photos include ambient details adjacent to the ghostly index: inexpensive collectibles, details of other paintings or pieces of furniture. Beside these photographic images set in simple black frames, are the textual compilations, typeset in silhouette shapes resembling the lost artifact. The texts combine the voices of those who had a daily relationship with the stolen masterpieces. Last Seen (Vermeer, The Concert) 1991, reads as follows:

I'll always remember this painting because I couldn't see it. It was displayed behind a chair, covered with glass but next to the window so that the glare caught the glass \* I remember there was a painting there but I couldn't describe what was in

it. I remember it had a gold frame, very thick, carved ornate \* In the foreground there was a dark shape, I believe it was a piano with a large textile, an oriental rug, and an instrument like a cello, partly tucked under the rug. In the middleground were the three figures. One was a girl playing a harpsichord and she wore this yellow bodice with puffed sleeves and a white skirt. Then there was a man playing the flute, with his back to you, sitting in a chair, wearing a red coat, I think. On the right the woman singing was in blue. She looked pregnant and held her hand just above her swollen belly. There were two paintings hanging in the background. One of them was a wild, dark, savage picture of a forest. The other, just above the head of the singer, was The Procureess by Van Baburen. It's a picture of an older woman, who is sort of a pimp selling this younger woman with a lot of cleavage to a distinguished business man who is looking very salaciously at her, and its such a rude counterpoint to this very pristine, demure scene of the concert. You had this dark shadowy corner that was somewhat ominous, then this lovely afternoon concert, and then this very lusty, bawdy picture within this very sedate and sensitive one \* It's a peaceful thing. I used to look at it every morning before work \* I used to come here at night, late at night and just go up there and stand \* There was a woman standing at the harpsichord. She is so lost in her world of ideas that she's not even present. The other one who is holding this ethereal scrap of paper is exquisitely homely. And turning his back to us, sits the mysterious individual, this long-haired gentleman whom we will never know. He plays a guitar like object and it's almost sort of phallic, especially since this pregnant woman is standing there \* It seemed like a very innocent painting although the scholars would say that it had a lot of sexual energy in it. But, I just heard the piano and the woman's voice \* The colours that were the most dramatic were the black and white in the tiled floor but the brightest point was this yellow in the girl's dress. Just sheer yellow paint \* The black and white of the floor just jumped at you, but it's the red back of the chair that would catch my attention, this rectangle of red light, in the center of the picture, like a bull's eye \* And, of

course, there's the lighting. It was just about as good as you can get. The light that came from the left and right was just stunning \* I thought it was very flat. The colours were muted. You couldn't see the faces of the characters and I was unsure of what was really going on. I don't know if it's because Vermeer was a bad painter or because he intended it to be that way \* There was a tremendous sense of intelligence and order in that work. Like a scientific grid, I saw it more as a series of planes. You could almost slice it. The forms were very rounded and yet the organization was very flat \* I can remember its depth. It's Vermeer. You know, Vermeer is Vermeer and it was a Vermeer \* The beautiful thing about this Vermeer is that you have silence in a concert. You are looking at such stillness and yet, you know that they're making music \* I could hear them singing but it seemed very private, quiet and pure. You felt like an intruder and you wouldn't want them to know you were watching \* I didn't like it much, not my style (Last Seen...(Vermeer, The Concert) 1991, photo: 169.50 x 129 cm; text: 86 x 78 cm; installed at the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire, 1993; see Calle, 1994: 60). (asterisks frame each speaker)

Calle's Ghost series suggests a haunted museum. This work portrays Gardner's collection as it circulates -- in the manner of a disembodied afterlife -- outside her museum in other exhibition venues. Peggy Phelan, referring to Calle's ghost works, notes that the artist's "descriptions and memories of the paintings constitute their continuing "presence," despite the absence of the paintings themselves (1993: 146). Calle's piece teases out the viewer's relationship with the art object in a way which gives a voice to the audience's multiplicity as distinct from the

conventions of framing deployed by art professionals. Thus Calle works in the space of popular memory precisely in the associative logics of individual mnemonic processes. She is interested precisely at "the point at which awareness of others is reciprocated, then becomes self-recognition" (Storr, 1992: 28). Calle's compilation of memory, when displayed in-place-of the absent artwork, foregrounds the very instability of memory. The descriptions involve discrepancies which are characteristically personal and often contradictory, and reveal in art's own domain -- the museum -- that "official cultural memory" produced by experts has been deflected by more subjective points of view on art. Phelan has argued that Calle's Ghost series underscores the relationship between museum visitor and art object as necessarily performative. She writes:

Calle asks where seeing and memory forget the object itself and enter the subject's own set of personal meanings and associations. Further her work suggests that the forgetting (or stealing) of the object is a fundamental energy of its descriptive recovering (1993: 147).

Indeed, Calle's recollections, "re-collect" quite literally in that they provide evidence of other personal narratives in which the art object has played a part. The memories, "standing-in" for the works, confront notions of the aesthetic as an official criteria, style or theory of art in



terms of the object's contingency within processes of proprioceptive beholding. So that, rather than functioning in the terms of an extra-aesthetic which presumes the legitimacy of aesthetic criteria, Calle's ghost works instead galvanize visitors' memory-in-space requiring her informants to recall within an immanent process accessing their feelings as well as their sense of the space and works. The paintings are accessed in terms of personal insight. In this sense, the forensic aspect of the works combine movement and memory to activate the mysterious interval between cultural memory and individual memory, museums and everyday life. My sense is that Calle's work aptly compliments Gardner's concept of aesthetic-ethos. As Gardner's synecdochal staging of the space gives the feeling that she has just stepped outside of the room for a minute, Calle's "ghosts," haunt the more invisible register of memory, working with the subtle bodies of objects as they do. The rhetorical arrangements of both women work with a currency of the souvenir -- as object or afterimage -- which disrupt the necessity for a live collector (with Gardner) or actual object (with Calle) respectively.

Significantly, at Fenway Court, an emblem incorporating Gardner's motto, c'est mon plaisir, is paired with a phoenix, a symbol of immortality given its mythical capacity for resurrection from ashes after death. The transformation of

Gardner's collection through Calle's Ghosts evokes an afterlife to the collection which "soars high" like Gardner's soul in spaces beyond the museum.

To conclude, I have described how three women collectors deploy their collections as technologies of the self, each with a differing emphasis. Madonna Ciccone's was described in how she relies on her collection during press interviews to "reveal" aspects of herself. She, thus, "tells" her objects as she discloses aspects of her personal life. Moreover, in continuity with the history of collecting she extends her corporate empire by amassing works of art that feel powerful to her. At the same time, aspects of the collection represent a kind of aesthetic test where she requires a particular response before she allows someone to pass into the liminal intimacies of friendship.

For Ydessa Hendeles the collection parallels a life process, one that instantiates a passionate involvement with affirming the positivity of art while at the same time memorializing -- in a subtle affect that permeates her selected works -- aspects of the Holocaust. The extension of herself through her acquisitions asserts her being in the ontological sense, especially given that she is a descendent of a generation that the Nazi's attempted to wipe out of existence. Her affective investment, in the art works

themselves and in immaculately crafted and conceived installations has mobilized care into curatorship of remarkable insight.

Finally, Isabella Stewart Gardner's manifestation of her collection in fixed syntagmatic relations has provided a curatorial logic that exemplifies a blending of public and private lives and artifacts. Gardner's custodianship operated with a self-sacrifice characteristic of women's traditional roles at the turn of the century. One could argue that she transferred her selflessness from caring for a family to art and artists. The terms of her will assured the continuity of the affect of her museum until the present day. This has had the remarkable effect of fixing a museum space in time and enabling entry into a nineteenth-century museum type complete in every eccentric detail. In a context of debate concerning the Gardner Museum's possible future renovations and a major theft in 1990, artist Sophie Calle's intervention posed the question of memory in context, not only involving the relational aspects of the artworks themselves, but incorporating mnemonic research into what is remembered by staff and visitors. The continuity of the Gardner collection's syntagmatic affect puts into question the relational ties between the body of Gardner herself and her objects. For the affect of her presence is in evidence only

as long as the proxemic relationships of the artifacts and the use of the rooms are respected. It is this "presencing" of affect that sustains the afterlife of Gardner's affective investment.

The collecting practices that I described posit a aesthetic in terms of temporality, especially in terms of its mnemonic and performative aspects. While Ciccone recalls the personal affiliations related to her works while talking to the press, Hendeles struggles against forgetting on a cultural level. In turn, the legacy of Gardner provides a space for entering into a relationship with the memory of the collector herself. In addition to a form of "practical memory," collecting can be activated as "practiced memory" immanent to the contexts created between the collector and their objects.

Thus, as epistemological devices, collections function as sites where knowledge is produced and rationally defined. But, as I hope I have made clear, they can extend the limits of rationality through individual sensual and intuitive engagement. Thus, collections can be understood as negotiations of the affective intensities articulating the personal to the public realm. The relations of owned objects provide a counter, extra-corporeal body which collectors can act upon and within for particular effects.

## Notes for Chapter 4

1. Much has been written on the contingencies of collecting and fetishism, which is differently nuanced in its anthropological, psychoanalytic and marxist discourses. For Marx fetishism described the propensity of human beings to think of their productions as "independent," as "endowed with life" in ways which masked their process of production. The fetish describes a closed value which people assume in relation to things, and so named, becomes the means for reconstituting those processes of production involving the object in terms of how it is invested (Marx, 1906: 203). In its anthropological sense fetish means a "charm," the religious power of objects, what makes them "magically" active, objects as the residence of spirits (Pearce, 1992: 82). It is in this sense that the collection empowers its owner through a kind of submission to the object which holds the power to define him or her (84). Psychoanalytically, the fetish, after Freud, can mean desire displaced to a particular body-part or an object separated from the body (such as a shoe) which becomes the means for sexual gratification.

2. The link between the body of the collector and the collection was important to early American collectors who founded the first museums. In several instances the museum serves as a mausoleum for the collector, their body becoming part of the gallery's affect, a sustained presence and testimony to the provenance of the objects above. The Trumbull Gallery, the first American university art museum at Yale College, New Haven, 1831-32, was designed and constructed by Colonel John Trumbull (1756-1843) to house a collection of his own paintings, portraits and miniatures. At his request the remains of himself and his wife were buried in a crypt beneath the building. Yet even his efforts to monumentalize himself through the erection of the museum were doomed. The building was demolished in 1901 (Searing, 1982: 23-24).

3. Jean Baudrillard's primarily psychoanalytic reading of collecting focusses on the the links between the collection, phallogentric narcissism and fetishism. He notes: "When all is said and done, one never lends out one's phallus" (Baudrillard, 1994: 18). While one's collection may be accessible or lent, the phallus functions as an abstract power, and the belief in one's power is never given away. In fact, Marini's sculpture eventually became emblematic of Guggenheim's collection and appeared on the covers of two catalogues published by the Guggenheim Foundation.

4. The developmental stage at which fetishism occurs in children marks the entry of the individual into language -- the point at which symbolic communication begins. The beginning of speech coincides with "loss" experienced at the oedipal complex as the preconscious sense of union with the mother dissolves. In the struggle to overcome his or her separation, the child attempts (re)connection through speech.

5. Foucault's "care of the self" considers the Stoic technique of aeskesis, which rather than disclosure, meant a remembering. This operated between the polarities of melete, meditation or imaginary experience that trains thought; and gymnasia, practical experience in a real situation involving ascetic practices (Foucault, 1988: 34-37).

6. Foucault notes that the early Christian technology of self disclosure examologesis was believed to rub out the sin by revealing the sinner, thus effecting Christian humility (1988: 41-43).

7. Gardner's first major purchase in 1888 included Vermeer's The Concert, Titan's Rape of Europa, a Rembrandt self-portrait, Botticelli's The Tragedy of Lucretia, and works by Rubens, and Velazquez.

8. This included J. Pierpont Morgan, Henry Clay, Andrey Carnegie and Charles Land Frier in the USA and Donald Smith (later Lord Strathcona) in Canada who all participated in the creation of public museums from private collections.

9. Sheena Wagstaff describes meeting French artist Sophie Calle at the Gardner Museum before the theft. Wagstaff writes:

Like an in-house guide whose keen familiarity with a collection has a slightly proprietorial air towards its treasures, Sophie deftly swung past Holbein, Durer, Rembrandt, to arrive triumphantly at The Concert by Vermeer. Propped casually on an easel, the painting shows a young female pianist entertaining a mysterious audience (1990: 6).

Wagstaff goes on to describe the work of Calle and finishes with the note: "Since the article went to press, the works described above in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum have been stolen from the collection by two thieves disguised as

policemen. They left no trace" (10). In all, thirteen works were stolen from the Gardner Museum.

10. The exhibition of Ghosts at the Museum of Modern Art in New York during 1991 occupied the spaces of five paintings by Magritte, Modigliani, De Chirico, Hopper and Seurat which were out on temporary loan. Calle asked curators, guards, and other museum employees to describe and draw images of these works. Calle then installed photo-silkscreened compositions incorporating the remembered works in text and image, sometimes with an enlarged sketch with the frame providing a shadow-like ground for the textual memories (Calle, 1994: 28).

11. Sophie Calle's art practice examines the relations between watcher and watched. She has been described as an "anthropologist of intimacy." Her research is often undertaken in the manner of detective work, introducing herself into unknown situations. In 1979 she returned to Paris, and finding herself having forgotten much of the city, she began following people through the streets making notes and taking photographs of them. In a later piece she documented a succession of people who had agreed to sleep in her bed. She photographed them on the hour and asked them about their dreams. In 1980, at the Clocktower in Manhattan and at Fashion Moda in the Bronx, Calle waited in the gallery's doorway and "picked up" people asking them to take her to their favorite place. She documented them in the place and made notes of their explanations. In Suite Vennitienne (1980-81) she disguised herself in a blonde wig and followed a man she hardly knew to Venice, documenting his activities there. She has worked voluntarily as a chambermaid, and arranged artifacts of people on their unmade beds in hotel rooms. Finding an address book by chance, she tracked down names from the book and interviewed them about its owner publishing her findings in the Paris daily Liberation during August-September 1984. The book's owner, out of the country during the time, was furious to find out she had done this. In La Filature The Shadow (1981) she reversed the voyeuristic aspect of her work, hiring a private detective to follow her for a day. In The Blind (1986) her interrogations turn towards conventional aesthetic judgment. She interviewed twenty-three sightless people, asking them what they found beautiful and made photographs to illustrate their answers. Here her work insists that beauty has dimensions beyond the visual alone (press kit, Sophie Calle: A Survey, Boston: The Institute of Contemporary Art, 1990).

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## Chapter 5

### FEMINIST AESTHETIC ENGAGEMENTS

In the last chapter, I drew upon three womens' collecting practices in order to understand how the aesthetic may be freed from simply illustrating moral principles contingent to collecting as a kind of truth, to consider how the aesthetic -- as a category of connection -- articulates practices and processes immanent to an ethics of self. Thus, I explored how processes of engagement with a collection can describe the productive desire of collecting as becoming. This investigation was considered in light of Lynda Nead's claim that feminist art practice, (and I would add collecting), is not about solutions, but about engagement (1995).

This chapter considers art practices distinct from collecting which can help to illustrate a dynamic, haptically nuanced aesthetic by condensing and consolidating particular realms of museal affect. The lacunae of well known art practices which concentrate on the museum is deliberate and conscious on my part. I have omitted elaborating at length upon the practices of Louise Lawler and Fred Wilson, for example, because their work aims to interrogate the museum in a primarily discursive, and ultimately deconstructive manner.

Louise Lawler has unmasked the discursive functions of the art market. Her work reveals the power structures of art institutions either through photographic works or by using rhetorical opportunities, the speech positions within the art system, such as gallery announcements, business cards, or even artists' names, as the basis of conceptual works.<sup>1</sup> Her work functions both to interrupt and comment upon museal conventions and their governing ideologies. Because Lawler's work is primarily deconstructive, centred on interrogations value as it is, it is limited because the primacy of the discursive cannot account for either agency or experience. What remains interesting are Lawler's choices and the manner of her interventions, but ultimately the works themselves reiterate what they criticize. In other words, because they are centred on questions of meaning, they cannot move beyond the nexus of aesthetic "judgment," even if elaborating its contexts. While I am indebted to Lawler's legacy in informing my work, it cannot help me in elaborating a dynamic aesthetic which is productive in its effectivity.

Likewise Fred Wilson's brilliant exhibition, Mining the Museum, deconstructs museological convention by shifting the "traditional" display of period pieces. The display functions as an intervention into the permanent collection of The Maryland Historical Society, reorganizing well-worn syntagmatic

relationships to assert what has been hidden, specifically, the presence of slavery. Wilson juxtaposes artifacts of slavery with those of gentility of the same historical period. For example in one display, titled Metalwork 1793-1880, Period silverware -- a silver teapot, jug, goblets and mugs -- is paired with slave shackles made in Baltimore of the same period (Wilson, 1994). The importance of this work lies in its intervention into museal hierarchies and taxonomies, inserting another "truth" into the rhetorics which aim to convince that slavery was invisible. Wilson interrupts the discourse, revealing the proof and thus revising the telling of histories and objects through the display series. Yet, at the same time such an intervention relies on museum discursive and rhetorical conventions in order to function as a persuasive counter-text to assumptions that are certainly racist. While Wilson's act of intervention exemplifies the museal as a space of possibility, the work, as an entity, provides for judgment nevertheless: for a revised, and more equitable versioning of history as black history is re-inscribed into the series.

The work of both Lawler and Wilson have had powerful ramifications for museological convention and representation. Both are important acts of evaluating the persistence of museal power, its rhetorics of arrangement, and systems of containment and meaning. Yet, while the intervention itself is

performative, the interrogations centred on museal ideology are fundamentally textual and provide -- in themselves at least -- for no alternatives to discursive regimes of power. While Lawler and Wilson have contributed significantly to revisioning the museal, their interrogations are centred on questions of discursive framing. What is eclipsed in such approaches is positivity of museal affectivity and the aesthetic experience itself. Ultimately, there must be practices which extend beyond the realm of rendering the museum an object for exercises of deconstruction. And, this is what I hope to illustrate through the following artistic practices.

Below, I will explore work by artists which focus on aesthetic experience as a space of mediation itself, or in other words, art which accounts for a range of engagements that may be understood as museum rituals. I am interested in instances where a dynamic aesthetic is elaborated through and by the artist, where practices of becoming form the locus of the work. And in turn, I will relate the liminal experiences of the museal articulated through such work.

While the experiences described here constitute important epistemological sources, they must be distinguished from tendencies to think in terms of transcendent essentializing of such totalities as class, race, gender, ethnicity, nationality or sexuality. Rather, what I am attempting to do is to focus

on connections, on extending and expanding upon the experiential processes grounded in particular works. In other words, while my concern with process (in particular creative process) and experience (as an epistemological source) may appear at first to reconstitute a kind of humanism, the coherence of these terms functioning as provisional articulations are neither essentialistic, nor rely on notions of social totality. Moreover, such experiential process is situationally linked to politically charged sites and regimes of meaning.

To consider the dynamics of aesthetic engagement is to place the emphasis on "change as a constant" in creative process. In this sense, I am shifting the terms of the "in-between" described by Bhabha, Trinh and others. For where considering the "in-between" assumes the dominance of the discursive structures which bracket it, I want to posit that discursive structures -- in this case art objects -- articulate within a web of motile connections. This effects a shift in focus. Rather than working within "the frame" as such, a more pervasive "in-process" dynamic encompasses in flux the fixity of art's discourse. This space opens beyond the preoccupation with fixing, framing and ordering, to account for the extradiscursive forces of affect. I want to look at works of art as interventions, as themselves complex connections which



constellate multiple elements of inquiry. The project here is to focus on "the transitions themselves as a space where," as Marty Allor once revealed, "everything happens."

I will examine several works exemplary of specific standpoints of feminist engagement. Each work functions relative to a constellatory epistemology which brings into play the contingencies of display, institutional apparatuses, and apprehension experience. I am interested, in particular, in how these contemporary feminist exhibition rhetorics both describe aspects of a proprioceptive-haptic aesthetic and invoke the museal in particular ways. While I will show how aspects of the museal are deployed by artists to provoke readings which depart from traditional museum conventions, my concern is not simply the alternative meanings produced. Rather, it lies in locating ways that museum practices are appropriated by artists to mobilize aesthetic experience contingent to particular affectual intensities.

Feminist exhibition and production strategies have endeavoured to redefine notions of aesthetic experience since the early seventies as women artists began to carve out a home for feminist art within the patriarchal structures of the art world: LACE in Los Angeles; Powerhouse (now La Central) in Montreal; the Women's Cultural Building in Toronto; Women in Focus in Vancouver; and the National Museum for Women's Art in

Washington. Albeit with differing emphasis, these organizations instituted feminist agency and presence in the art world.

While women's institutions are of course important in establishing alternate feminist conventions, my concern here is not to provide a history of women's spaces as such. While women's galleries provided crucial institutional precincts, safe places for women's art, more recent feminist work has 'ended to be more situational and tactical operating outside proper spaces. While my intent here is not to solve the problem of a home for women's art, I acknowledge that the engagements I will describe constitute an aesthetics of feminist art practice that early feminist galleries both nurtured and made possible.

#### CONTEXTS OF DISCOVERY

Each of the artists I discuss appropriate aspects of conventional museal display rhetoric to personal ends. I like the word "rhetoric" to describe exhibition formations because it operates spatially as well as textually, and implicates not only discursive but affective processes of identification. Thus the formal "framing practices" of institutions provide a lexicon for artists' museums, which may or may not articulate to institutional mandates. Forms of intervention into the

exhibitionary complex vary. In the first instance are site-specific installations staged outside a traditional museum space which, as small museums themselves, play a role in establishing alternative display prototypes: In turn, are installations situated inside larger institutional exhibitions which function in a mise-en-abyme -- a museum within a museum -- relation to the host institution. These relations, in effect, construe the "museum" itself as both object and as metaphor. Whether functioning in a metonymic (installed as irritants to the grand narratives of the exhibitionary complex) or synecdochal (constituting a spatial/temporal whole "museum" distinct from the host museum) ways, artists' museums tend to challenge the exhibitionary complex because the agency of artists, in assuming the role of the museum itself, is unmediated.

Each of these museal forms sustains a particular context of discovery, a kind of museum-laboratory which must be distinguished from the normative museum aesthetic. Their presence sustains a critical counterpoint to androcentric assumptions where women stand-in as muses for moral truths (as I argued in Chapter 2). Each demonstrates a key shift. Rather than declaring absolute principles, all involve processes of engagement which refigure the epistemological basis of these truths. While the museums I will describe may

serve as alternative models of framing (the choices, evaluations and judgments), I am more interested in what they do, those dynamics between movement trajectories, constellatory rhetorics, and transformative processes which work the relational as they are activated.

Each intervention may be understood in terms of what Nancy Hartstock has termed a "feminist standpoint." What is crucial to her argument is that "interest" forms the relation not only in terms of the governing power relations but in terms of its experienced relation, that is, "being interested." In other words, interest constitutes the affective investment. "A standpoint" in Hartstock's words, "is not simply an interested position (a teleological effect interpreted as bias) but is interested in the sense of being engaged" (1987: 159. Emphasis mine). For Hartstock, the context of discovery -- women's material reality -- in undertaking research is as important as the context of justification (183). Of course the smooth spaces of discovery as creative process tend, eventually, towards striation because contexts of justification are established in artistic tradition or in the actual establishment of women's art institutions.

I will describe these works in terms of their discursive operators to elucidate how their construction in space, exhibition arrangement, visual display set the context for the

terms of the aesthetic experience produced through their enactment. In turn, each museum, as an artwork itself, circulates and affords different readings in relation to specific contexts. In this sense, the monolithic museum as mythical muse provides a reference point by which artists' museums define themselves. Each artists' museum provides a different range of possible aesthetic engagement, just as its criteria of selection and legitimation are unique.

#### MUSEUM INSTALLATIONS:

IRENE WHITTOME AND BARBARA LOUNDER

The "museums" constructed by Irene Whittome and Barbara Lounder describe particular standpoints, as assemblages which grow out of specific "interests," through actions of containment and making visible. The museum oeuvres of both women posit the artist as "gathering subject" or collector, with a particular history, memory and constructing intentionality. The museums of both have emerged locally and been made available to that community: Whittome in Montreal, Lounder in Halifax. As "epistemological devices," to use a term drawn from Hartstock, these museums construct particular knowledges contingent to particular formations and relations of an artistic self to her practices. There are continuities and discontinuities between Whittome and Lounder's practice. Both

treat the museum as "ritual artifact," providing a museum mise-en-abyme within the exhibitionary complex. Both involve the arrangement of physical elements to provide a performable articulation of an artistic intention. In each, the poetics and politics of a relational aesthetic is weighted with different emphasis according to ownership, remembrance and use.

Whittome's series of "personal museums" trace the coming-to-consciousness to express a mytho-poetic collecting "self" who traverses the boundaries of personal and public space. The engagement is indexical, a record of "traces" of practices of collection, finding, assemblage, fabrication and arrangement. The affective dimensions of her installations tend towards the museum as monument, and require of viewers a performative ritual.

Louder's museums, in contrast, are politically motivated as they inquire into self-community relations through intermediary objects. The affective engagement in Louder's museum projects is reconstitutive: whether by a literalist recollection of her first museum experience, in Eskimo Museum, or through scavenging and arranging into order the detritus of Halifax's sewage in the flotsam washed up on the beach outside her home in Untitled: West Lawrencetown. Louder's practices of re-fabrication, finding and arranging

ask the viewer to acknowledge politics of display and displacement.

#### IRENE WHITTOME

Irene Whittome has produced thirteen "personal museums" since The White Museum dating from 1975. These works function as the extension of a practice of collecting -- objets trouvées both precious and not. Whittome's museum meditations have re-inflected procuring, transforming and display practices within a formalist vocabulary which, I will argue, significantly inflects the haptic.

The White Museum, which began this inquiry, is actually a series of eight installations, from two to fourteen elements, which were installed at different sites from 1970-1981. The series consists of long pieces of wood painted white, wrapped with linen, cord, jute twine, cotton, wool, moulded paper. These are each placed in their own white, plexi-faced box and presented vertically. These vitrines enclose objects which evoke vertical Q-tips or wrapped phallic objects. The bandaged white objects are strikingly distinct from more conventional stretched white supports of modernism. The play of the complexly layered and swaddled components with the highly finished boxes sustains the tensions of process and closure, smooth and striated references. In Whittome's words, "the

relationship between the grid and nomadic state is a constant polarity in my work, a polarity between movement and going back to a fixed state, the grid, the square" (1987: 48).

Moreover, the referents of the work are ritualistic, including funerary references inspired by actual museum objects: a lead Roman sarcophagus from the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, or totem poles from the British Columbia Museum of Anthropology. The liminality afforded by museums has been a central preoccupation of Whittome's museum series. Jacqueline Fry described Whittome's engagement with the museum as that of contemplation, precisely in its "temple" aspect for which it has been suspect (1980: 11). As elaborated in Chapter 2, the "temple" function -- characterizing the Ionisian time-bias -- is inseparable from its hierarchies and automatically calls to mind the issue of class bias. It is true that museums have tended to "sacralize" both the objects and interests of the privileged classes. Yet, the temple function also concerns the activation of the museum as a space for contemplation and face to face interactions. While the temple function of the museum constitutes ideological enactments, at the same time it is operative in experiences within the realm of the personal and the popular. To dismiss this liminal function of museums is to exile its contemplative aspects which are not necessarily classist as such. The temple aspect of museums governs



significant modalities of "being interested" as well as engagements which include processes of becoming.

Whittome poaches from the museum as she does from her memory to evoke the affective archaeologies of both. Perhaps more than the referents mentioned, The White Museum recalls the thanatos/eros of the museal, paradigmatic in the figure of the Egyptian mummy which, as relic which collapses time, embodies both preservation and mystery. Yet, in The White Museum the objects cannot be touched. The secrets of each are sustained, remaining enclosed in the glass vitrines. The arrangements inflect this relation with different emphasis in each version of the series. For example, in one, all the elements are installed vertically, while others display two sets of objects, one vertical row, the other on the floor seemingly having dislodged from their protective coffins.

The White Museum also deals with issues of self-validation, a function conventionally left to critics. Brian O'Doherty describes the ideology of art galleries as "the white cube," where everything placed in it is read as "art" (1986). Whittome's museum actually inverts O'Doherty's essay, for her concern is not with the space itself, but on the constellatory dynamics of arrangement as index. For in her museum the objects are evidence of processes. Their framing, wrapping, display, confronts the beholder vertically, on the scale of the human

body. Whittome states: "Working with the box has been a process of unfolding myself...I associated it with things like breathing" (1987: 46). For Whittome breathing "out" was to let go of oppressive conventionality, the "shoulds" of the art world. Alternately, to breathe "in" was to free oneself from the internalized repression of women during the seventies through practices which claim knowledge and space (Ibid.).

In 1992 Whittome took up "white's" ideological opposite in Emanation: Le Musée Noir which was displayed at the Musée d'art contemporain. Here she presented an arrangement of "black" elements drawn from several series of her work including paintings, sculptures and found elements as an installation piece within a larger exhibition. According to Whittome, the black museum refers to the museal's more repressive aspects, the museum as metaphor for a transformative process which destroys meaning, such as when fire produces black charcoal. Objects were embedded in black wax, a material which overdetermines them in the way that metonymic narratives affect objects. Hence emanation reflects on the enforced change and rereading of objects. The question of "emanation" forms a paradox, for what kind of illumination is possible given the absence of light within black? The emanation here is not only visual, but haptic, generated in the affective power and relational aspects of objects in proprioceptive space.

Both The White Museum and Emanation: Le Musée Noir, were constituted as "museums" within the gallery space. These function differently than Whittome's site-specific museums Le Musée des Traces (1989) and Curio (1994). Moreover, the interstice between the black museum and Le Musée des traces marks a significant shift from "not touching" to "touching" in Whittome's museums. While in the former two, museum prohibitions against touching were operative, the latter museums -- as discrete entities -- enable a more tactile, and hence haptic engagement.

From the Le Musée des traces on Whittome's installations encourage tactile interaction as well as compel beholders to spend a significant amount of time in the space. Le Musée des traces, was initially installed in a former auto-shop on the corner of Marianne and Clark Streets in Montreal. (Later it was installed at the Art Gallery of Ontario). The space was carefully renovated and defined in minimal pallet of neutrals and red before the objects were placed in situ on an array of customized shelves, tables and supports. The conversion of the space to a museum was a meditation on connecting objects, fragments of industrial objects and various collectibles, within a realm of personal syntagmatic affect. The objects included a large tortoise (which has become emblematic of the artist herself), a row of ceramic pottery, natural history

specimens, antique vitrines, movie cameras, framed photographs, a piece from The White Museum (standing upright minus its framing box), and wooden architectural fragments. The objects were low key. What animated the space was the particular emphasis on processes of arrangement.

With Le Musée des Traces Whittome enacts what she describes as the "shadow" of art's presentation: the often invisible, but necessary substructure of museum, gallery, dealer, curator. She assumed the role of finding the objects, renting the space and arranging for a gallery attendant as integral to the piece itself. This creates the space to move beyond the restrictions of institutional conventions, providing spaces which are perhaps more ambiguous in their closures of meaning. There are no labels, no lecture-tours. The space contains the objects as mnemonic reference points of these extensions of the artist's self.

In a very real sense, Whittome is a collector who deploys her collection in the creation of art. Her processes of "finding" are central to her art production, a centripetal drawing-in, a materialist counterpoint to a breath. She preserves the mystery of her sources and is reluctant to reveal where she actually discovers her objects (but admits that some of her finds have been located in Montreal antique stores) (Whittome: 1995). In the tradition of the surrealists she shops

for finds, "hunting and gathering" within a process of personal becoming which characterizes "productive desire." The potential of desire is not actually libidinal in the sense Liz Grosz describes. That is, here it is not operative between bodies as such, but between the collector's body and the object of her focus. It is in this sense that collecting produces what I would deem particularly aesthetic intensifications with the power to "shake up, rearrange, reorganize the body's forms and sensations, and make the subject and body as such dissolve into something else, something other than what they are habitually" (Grosz, 1995: 11). Here aesthetic connection assumes the form of possessing and translating of objects within significant arrangements. Whittome's collection practice, likewise mediates the haptic and the visual. The translation from the haptic to the visual is especially important here. Whittome explains: "the skin will see something. It's a tactile thing. The feeling that this is something I have to have" (1995). As the skin longs for the object, the hands engage with it in a palpable experience of productive desire that both makes and does.

What is important here is the affect, both visual and haptic, generated in the spaces between objects. Where no labels are used, it is the arrangement which itself holds the suggestion of the work. While she owns each object in itself,

she has created a new object as the constellation of the installation itself.

What implications do Whittome's museums hold in terms of ownership? Assuming the role of the dealer, Whittome procures not only the work, but its provisionally rented space. Thus ownership here pertains to the procurement and protection of the installation as a whole, a time-based event which supports the necessary interior work of arranging a personal archive, cultivated and amassed in parallel to lived time. In Whittome's words, the artist "tells the story through presentation" (1995). Such telling of objects constellate as touchstones of experience. As in storytelling, the principle of repetition is crucial to Whittome's work. Not only are objects presented in multiples and thus repeated in space, but elements are reused, becoming familiar choruses, repeated over time. The alternation of temporal and spatial elements provides a rhythm to the work and supplies models of ritual which create memory (Fry, 1980: 42). Whittome's Curio (1994) at "Espace 502" has its referent in the "cabinet of curiosities" and shifts the artist's engagement to questions concerning personal agency in personal museums. Whittome claims that she intended Curio to be a commentary on curatorship (1994). I contend that it works to underscore, in addition, a particular form of interest, a standpoint of "being curious" on the part of the artist-

curator. This curiosity describes both the object and the state which impels the connections between subjects and objects. The object is transformed into a "curiosity" just as the collector herself is transformed (or extended) through "being curious."

According to Whittome, Curio was synthesized in one day once all the elements had been collected. The constituents of Curio include a large preserved tortoise, an immense antique Latin dictionary and an assortment of ostrich eggs arranged and enclosed in an old-fashioned wood-framed vitrine. This cabinet is situated in the center of the gallery. The space itself is rectangular and bare with a simple painted floor. Only its proximity to other spaces, and its previous history as the Gallerie Chantal Boulanger, actually informs it. For Whittome, the "space chosen is as important as what it contains" (1994). The installation occupied a space in Montreal's Belgo Building, originally established as artists' spaces before housing several commercial art galleries including the galleries of René Blouin, Samuel Lallouz and Brenda Wallace.

Another aspect of Curio concerns the artist's curiosity in how it is viewed. The gallery attendant was hired to answer questions, to invite gallery visitors to view the portfolio component, and note how beholders engaged with the piece. While what is in effect unidirectional surveillance may be construed

as disturbing in terms of its power relations and permissions, its delegation to an art student, incorporated the aleatory elements of their understandings and judgments. In this way, Curio activates and integrates the role of the attendant. A log of questions asked about the piece was maintained throughout the installation. During our interview Whittome related that those most frequently asked centred on the objects themselves: "How many eggs are there in the vitrine?" "Are the eggs varnished?" "Where were they bought?" "Where did they originate?" Others referred to the artists' oeuvre as a whole: "Why is the turtle a recurring image for the artist?" "What is the relationship between the portfolio and the sculpture?" Still others focussed on practical considerations: "Why does one have to wear gloves to view the portfolio?" (1995).

Whittome expressed her surprise that visitors rarely actually encircled the vitrine. Most viewed the arrangement of tortoise, dictionary and eggs from the front and then walked out. She had anticipated a more exploratory apprehension (Ibid.). In addition to the ostensible studium of the curio cabinet -- its vitrine and objects -- the artist had intended that the punctum of the gallery space -- its walls and lighting -- to be equally important in the apprehension event. While the curio objects are rendered untouchable, the installation



was intended to effect haptic apprehension constituent to the discursive operators of the gallery space itself.

On a conceptual level, the objects within the curio cabinet -- animal, dictionary and egg -- are evocative of the relations between instinct, language and potential life. It is possible to read the juxtaposition of objects as involving a translation process in terms of a transmutation of meaning from a lexicon of words (the dictionary) drawn through a personal totem (the tortoise) to describe an intuitive and tactile self. The arrangement of objects within the context of a personal archive suggests a sensual conductivity of the instinctual self which translates knowledge through the body. Rather than a reductive allegory of the artist's life, the significance of Curio is posed in a relational contiguity of object-artist-viewer-space. Not only are these relations more complex than any collapse of artist to object, but they require the activation of context by the viewer.

This is encouraged by the attendant who invites people to view the portfolio, an additional component to the Curio installation. Viewing entails handling its contents, three matted photographs, carefully wearing white gloves. One depicts the artist with eggs placed between her thighs, one records two eggs in relation, and in another the artist holds an egg in her hands. Eggs, like the tortoise, are recurring tropes in

Whittome's work of the past twenty-five years. The relationships here reveal the intersecting surfaces of the archival and personal, of skins. At the boundary of surfaces, the intensity of the in-between, at once fragile and protected in its contiguity.

So while the haptic exists in Curio, it exists most pointedly as an element of prophylaxis regarding the work, yet provides for tactile awareness of other beholders. As the objects rest enshrined in a vitrine, the viewer puts on the white gloves -- still warm and moist from the previous viewer - - to touch the portfolio's photographs.

#### BARBARA LOUNDER

While Barbara Lounder's museum installations share with Whittome's the deployment of a personal archive, Lounder's are nuanced differently to link objects to specific communities. Her presentations involve the telling of objects which have disappeared from the culture that produced them. Likewise her practice mines the spaces of collective memory. As epistemological devices, Lounder's museums are explorations within an art practice that articulates her experience as witness within particular local contexts. There is a movement evident in the progression of Lounder's museum works, a

trajectory which centres on questions of identity and position of the artistic agent.

Louder's works function on the plane of ethnographic display texts, but, I will argue, in a sense distinct from the prevailing narratives of ethnographic museums. In both of the museum installations below, the salvage paradigm is de-stratified through the artist's productive engagements with communities and constructive assemblages of objects. These museums work simultaneously to invoke the discourses of art and artifact, art history and anthropology. These works occur in a context where contemporary art practice acknowledges the epistemological violence done to aboriginal communities in the name of cultural preservation, and amidst debates over the rightful ownership and repatriation of objects.

The territory of ethnographic display is a potentially dangerous form of aesthetic practice. As Hal Foster argues, the artist as ethnographer risks a kind of "ideological patronage" resting on some basic assumptions. First, artistic transformation does not necessarily effect political transformation. Second, art practice can no longer assume to operate "outside" culture or assume an alternate or subversive role. And finally, the artistic role can neither be assumed to be socially/culturally other nor necessarily have access to transformative alterity. Foster warns that the "projection of

politics as other and outside detracts from politics of here and now" (1994: 14).

Foster's argument refutes the binary of insiders and outsiders and asserts that where there is no essential position, and simultaneously, where the two poles are already polluted by exchange, no pure outside exists. In this sense Louder's ethnographic display projects are significant for rather than establishing correlations or states, they operate in the flows and circulations of objects becoming something else. Following from Foster's point, they in effect extend ethnographic investigation by assuming an immanent rather than transcendent relationship to the culture interrogated. As ethnographer then, Louder takes culture as her object, she carries out fieldwork in the everyday, she maintains a self-critical, reflexive relation to community and to institutions. As I will argue here, Louder's practice results in assemblages that constellate on a plane continuous with the communities involved. Although she is an artist undertaking ethnographic research, she does not assume an "outside" to her museums. Instead, the politics of her displays are continuous with her lived experience, not other and external. She has been a long-term resident in the communities in the two museum projects described here, as distinct from instances where artists are

flown in to undertake "site specific" installations predicated on limited access and social engagement.

Louder's installation, Eskimo Museum, reconstitutes a museum from the artists' childhood in Canada's North, putting into tension issues of personal memory and the representation of others. In another museum installation, Untitled (West Lawrencetown), refuse from a beach evidences the lives of Halifax inhabitants (of which she is a part) and is therefore an ethnography of collective life of one's community. So, while both Whittome and Louder focus on activating and making connections between artist, objects and communities, Whittome investigates the becomings of artist and objects in relation to the art system, while Louder focusses on the links of artistic and historical narrative to reconstituted or recovered objects and social locale.

Louder inquires into the "will to narrative" of the gathering subject (Louder, 1995). In Louder's own words: "I cannot choose for [this] collection without imagining a story, and without also doubting the allegory of discovery, and my own acts of finding, choosing and saving" (1990). Louder's engagement represents a self-reflexive social and political activism growing out of her "own obsessive nature" and desire for knowledge (Louder, 1994).

Louder's museums involve processes of the self -- as practices of collection and display -- which dissolve solid distinctions between art and artifact on the one hand, and institution and community on the other, while opting instead to explore their circulatory movements. In turn she locates the art in the artifact, and the artifact in the art; communities in her "institution" of the museal, as well as her community in the institution.

Traditionally, art history and anthropological museums involved hierarchies of "who" gets represented "where." Typically, privileged selves engage in contemplative rites of high art, where non-Western others are displayed in anthropological, ethnographic and natural science museums. Louder intends her "museums" to function in this sense as a demarcated zone within a larger art exhibition which, in the artist's words, "declares itself to be a museum in a really self-conscious way" (1994). In Carol Duncan's sense Louder collapses the distinction between art and artifact by treating her museum installations as relics of culture within a museum (or gallery) as "ritual artifact" itself (Duncan, 1995: 13).

Louder not only appreciates, but uses traditional museum conventions, what she terms the "stilted" staging of museum objects. She prefers the formal coding of museums over more recent attempts at user-friendly models which she suspects are

dubious in their interactive pretensions. She works with the metonymic series, extracting artifacts from their everyday utility, and self-consciously displaying and "creating a story" around them, a construct which is central to the notion of the museum (Lounder, 1995). Lounder's work, posited at the "bridge" between cultural assumptions and her own proclivities, raises questions about truth and the immutability of texts. Her museums describe affective investments which intervene, as both art and artifact, into larger cultural processes.

Lounder's Eskimo Museum involves a fabrication of artifacts, a practice that she shares with artists Panya Clark and Liz Magor who have both constructed "ethnographic" objects.<sup>2</sup> Lounder fabricated Eskimo Museum out of the links between her personal story and larger cultural narratives. It functions to recollect on two levels: on the level of reconstituting objects and as an examination of remembering.

Eskimo Museum consists of several sets of glass shelves. Upon them are arranged an assemblage of "reproduced" elements: small earthenware sculptures, photographs, cards with text. The clay sculptures -- while initially recalling Inuit art --- are fashioned by Lounder after Inuit models and depict animals, hunters, mothers and children. Rather than suspend the disbelief that they were fashioned from photographs by imagining their rear sides, Lounder leaves the back of the

sculptures flat, so they resemble cut out photographs with only frontal dimension. They carry the index of her hand, the hand to clay, reconstructing her memory of the actual contents of the "Eskimo" museum. Photographs she worked from are positioned on the shelves. Cards with text inscribe fragments of Inuit incantations, statements by government officials, dealers, curators and artists. The poetic strains against the certain as Inuit culture is combined with elements of southern culture. For example such judgments as "Ironically, while preserved as texts, these cultures have dissipated and disappeared as lived realities" with the incantation "Words cause movement, words bring calm, words tell the truth and words tell lies, amaja-ja-ja!" (Lounder, 1990b).

Eskimo Museum includes iconographic images and reproduced printed matter, such as advertisements and invitations from Inuit art galleries. One photograph depicts the exterior of the actual "Eskimo Museum" from Churchill, in northern Manitoba where Lounder lived as a child on a military base: the site of her first museum experience. The museum, founded by the Oblate Diocese, a religious organization, is a complicated site politically. The missionary presence in the North which sought to colonize through religion is continuous with the epistemological violence of ethnographic museums. This original museum was built by white Christians to contain Inuit



"curiosities," another example of whites speaking about Inuit culture rather than with it. The original museum participated in an othering of northern aboriginals through encouraging representations that lead indigenous cultures to believe that their culture existed only in the past.

Yet Louder's Eskimo Museum must be distinguished from the actual Churchill Eskimo Museum. Neither does it reconstruct the conditions of possibility of the original museum, nor are its objects authentic. Rather it is reconstituted from memory involving processes of remembering, which in themselves, function as a kind of homeopathic mimicry of cultural symptoms intended by the artist to function as an act of solidarity with the northern Inuit. As Barbara Fischer notes, Eskimo Museum "does not contain Inuit culture so much as it shows the apparatuses that produce the identity of the objects in its care" (1990: 11).

If Eskimo Museum invokes an ethnic totality, it is an inauthentic one, composed through recombining representations of Inuit culture. If museums enshrine esteemed cultural values, authoritative truths and the status of individuals in that community, as Carol Duncan (1995) notes, then Eskimo Museum in name reveals its obsolescence, for the word "eskimo," from the Montagnais language of northern Quebec -- implying contempt

"those who eat raw meat" -- was abandoned after protests by the Inuit (Fischer, 1990: 10).

Louder willingly admits that the piece was contentiously met by some of its viewers, particularly one First Nations artist with whom she corresponded who did not understand that her use of the title, Eskimo Museum, was ironic. Louder recognizes that irony is seldomly culturally transferable. This connection underscored the fact that irony is as culturally specific as humour is. Moreover, she acknowledges that this artist's problem with the piece was understandable given the current political context concerning issues of authority. Yet, just as she did not presume to subsume Inuit identity within a colonialist agenda, so too, she chose to maintain a space to listen carefully to this artist's point of view. As Ruth Phillips states, "We have to accept...that scholars and aboriginal people (and artists too) won't always agree on the readings of objects, that different forms of authority will be recognized, and different facts privileged" (1995: 9). Louder concedes that some things are not meant to be reconciled. Her correspondence with the aboriginal artist then constituted a "productive struggle" integral to artistic production which compelled her to more clearly position the contentious issue of agency in future projects.

While the display rhetoric of Eskimo Museum resembles that of an ethnographic display -- a seeming accumulation of objects organized according to their cursory/surface characteristics -- it is not Louder's intent to reinscribe "the salvage paradigm," that is, to presume Inuit culture as weaker than her own. Rather Louder recognizes the inherent ethnocentricism of such a perspective which refuses to recognize the ability of cultures to change and grow in response to new situations.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, as with ethnographic writing, the problem with Louder's subject position vis-a-vis Eskimo Museum is that her position was not expressly declared. In reinstating museal taxonomies and "stilted" conventions, she placed in public space for view a complex articulation of social, sexual, racial and ethnic elements. While this is certainly a feminist work in terms of its performative engagement with the historical meaning of a site -- a revisionist examination of the forces constellated at the site of the original museum which remain in tension even today -- the ritual of her own labour and remembering are obscured in this process. The beholder of this work is positioned to make connections themselves which are not already given, contingent to the purview of shelves which hold their arrangements in place. Perhaps this results in an overly relativist display to the point of its self-undoing. So many

readings are possible, including those which undermine the relational commitments upon which ground the piece.

Yet, at the same time, what I believe to be the central concerns of this museum work -- including its problems -- point to a model for the kinds of exhibition that may take place after repatriation takes place, where reproductions accompany photographs of original works, where the role of who is speaking, why, and to whom becomes the locus of inquiry. This aspect of Eskimo Museum is already operative. In 1994, Michael Bell of the Carleton Art Gallery in Ottawa, approached Louder about exhibiting Eskimo Museum in relation to the gallery's Inuit collections. The gallery had recently come into a large collection of carvings and Bell expressed his interest in mobilizing Louder's installation to expand the readings of this collection (Louder, 1994). In this sense, Louder's "ownership" of Eskimo Museum is not discrete to fixed boundaries, but rather holds the capability to circulate and be read in relation to other collections. What is important about this piece is not its closure of being "right" (or "wrong") on an issue, but its positivity of engagement in terms of the artist's willingness to learn in public and the processes that become available through the piece's circulation.

I would like to move from Eskimo Museum to a more recent relational standpoint by Louder which more explicitly states

her position. In Untitled (West Lawrencetown), Lounder explores the linkages of artistic practice, new parenthood, the ocean and a community. The installation consists of fragments of urban and marine debris washed ashore.<sup>4</sup> Artifacts were collected as Lounder walked back and forth on the beach near her home. This daily practice of collecting was all she could manage after the birth of her daughter. At times she would encounter marine biologists from the Bedford Institute of Oceanography engaged in research into the current and tidal patterns and recording how objects moved in the shore-sea relation. Likewise, Lounder's research takes the beach as an uncertain boundary that blurs during storms (Lounder, 1990a). The shoreline distinguishing water from land is never absolute. Indeed questions of the high water mark, even in inland lakes, remain uncertain even to a surveyor's judgment call. Likewise, the tides undulate like breath, but rather than moving inside and outside the self, the beach becomes the site where objects are left by the sea. The shoreline becomes the space of discovery, the unstable frontier between water and land, and mutable referent for a poetics and materiality of collecting. An artist's statement by Lounder reads:

The shore is a contour marking the meeting of the body of water and the body of land. During storms, the contour blurs and moves, the salt marsh is flooded, and land and ocean floor exchange places. The rocky beach then offers up the fragmented debris

of our own lives, material evidence of crisis and decline (1990a).

The unflattering detritus in this installation exemplifies excremental culture par excellence -- yet it also incorporates the mythologies of the sea as symbolizing both death and fertility. The assemblage includes tampon tubes, shotgun shells, bic lighters, shoes, gloves, rubber doll heads, rusted metal, decomposing rubber. The residue of menstruation on tampon tubes -- which usually disappear "after use" are arranged parallel in an array of colours, shapes, sizes and states of decomposition. In turn, shotgun shells, the remnants of hunting, bring closure to wildlife. Duck decoys fool instinctual drives, luring ducks to their death. Rubber doll's heads -- dirty and dismembered -- evidence the shadow of childhood. Single shoes allude to drunken stupors, midnight trysts or, darker still, to abduction and murder on the edge of Halifax Harbour.

These objects are exhibited on glass shelves in a presentational mode reminiscent of Eskimo Museum. These seemingly disparate elements are juxtaposed with photojournalist images drawn from the Halifax daily paper. The photographs depict parents and children at moments of traumatic separation due to war or violence. Louder has chosen to show the parents' responses to their children being in dangerous

situations, for example, one photograph shows a woman in Beirut holding up her child and beginning to run. These images freeze the edge of potential death. For Louder such images paralleled her feeling when finding a single shoe, she began to speculate about how it came to be there. Did the child drown? Was she abducted? The images were selected on the basis of their puncti, because they recalled her own maternal feelings and fears for her daughter. The images were separated from their captions, but both aspects of the image -- image and news fact -- contribute to the arrangement.

In its focus on indexical aspects, Untitled (West Lawrencetown) carries the feminist legacy of Mary Kelly's Post- Partum Document which documented her child's diapers as a record of psycho-cultural development. Yet, Untitled (West Lawrencetown), rather than focussing on a singular infant, indexically documents the waste of a Halifax from the perspective of a small community a half-hour drive away. The project focusses on mining and displaying this material as a self-reflexive act of studying the community of which one is a part.

For Louder the rhythms and ways of the sea form the subcurrent of her engagement with finding objects. Yet at the same time, this poesis is politically implicated. As elements collected and arranged, what was supposed to disappear was made

to re-appear. Untitled (West Lawrencetown) functions additionally as a commentary on the lack of competent waste disposal. And in an unusual move, Louder intervenes in the flow of garbage to include the art gallery as its temporary custodian. Once the installation was complete, ecologically decomposable objects were returned to the beach where they would return eventually to the sea.

Exhibited in a gallery context, framed as fine art by the white cube which contextualized it, these artifacts were neither wholly about the geography of the sea, its mapping, nor about the legacy of the objects, even if their decomposition is an affective key to the work. But more importantly, Untitled (West Lawrencetown) reflects on the currents mingling marine and metropolitan detritus on the ocean surface which eventually bring them to the beach "in between," just as art circulates through the gallery as itself a liminal space.

Finally, another work, Ephemeris, shown at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery, takes the ocean between Nova Scotia and England as the space "in-between" to reflect on movements of people within a genealogical project. This work recalls Paul Gilroy's conception of the "Black Atlantic" as site for analysis of cultural and political systems outside conceptions of nationalist cultures. Gilroy's concern is with the Black diaspora, plantation slavery, and the consequent creolization



and syncretism of cultures and consequent remaking of ethnicities and political cultures. Lounder's project is to investigate the ocean as a mediating term in itself. That is, the ocean not only connects, but the ways of connecting have specific effects. The sea's proclivity to instability during crossings and the navigational knowledges -- taking one's bearings -- involve celestial navigation, an actual constellatory epistemology which has to do with knowing where one is. Ephemeris reflects on the relationship of old and new world histories and the marine flux of the immigration routes of Lounder's ancestors between two continents.

The forensic dimensions of Lounder's works recall a kind of reconstitucional detective work. Likewise the "stories" told by objects often link the critical literatures of museology and mystery novels for, as Donald Preziosi explains, both show that things are not always as they may seem to be at first, and that life, experience and the world need to be pieced together (literally re-remembered) in order to become coherent (1995: 15). Lounder's art of telling objects does not resolve, but rather expands the basis of engagement, as explorations of standpoints linking plural knowledges.

## JANA STERBAK'S PAIN AESTHETIC

As discussed above, Whittome and Lounder's museum projects articulate provisionally fixed syntagmatic arrangements of space, object taxonomies and artist-audience relationships as particular standpoints. Neither artist presumes their museum installations to be totalities in themselves, but rather both operate as complexities of selection and display within the greater exhibitionary complex. Both interrogate the museal as setting for practices of apprehension, as a site of a performative aesthetic in its own right as distinct from conceiving museums as simply the framer of an artifact's significance.

The collapse of the museum and its objects into a ritual artifact in these latter works is continuous with the oeuvre of Jana Sterbak. But Sterbak's installations determine the nature of a particular passage rituals which, in qualifying the nature of their aesthetic engagement, centre more insistently on the affectivities and intensities of the museal. In this sense, Sterbak posits a liminally charged museum for a distinct affect, which I will describe as a pain aesthetic. I am interested in how pain constitutes the relational contingencies governing the processes of becoming of several recent installations by this artist. In particular, I will discuss a particular work by Sterbak, her 1987 drawing,

House of Pain: a Relationship, which I will argue functions as a museum prototype for an aesthetic affectivity of pain, as distinct from pleasure. In what follows, I will try to show that this drawing portrays the immanence of a spectatorial event. The pain aesthetic proposes an intensification of tactility. Not only does House of Pain invoke the specificities of haptic knowing contingent to bodily awareness of space, but -- and this defies reductionism to polarized thinking -- the haptic is strongly implicated in the visual. And, finally, in yet another sense, the dominance of sensation evokes the "sensational" in its affinities to the display practices of popular for-profit museums and specifically the "chamber of horrors."

Ostensibly, House of Pain metaphorically alludes to particular emotionally charged incidents of a torturous romantic relationship. This "site of seduction," if a sadistic one, invokes the relational trope of the museal I described in the third chapter in relation to the films Dressed to Kill and Vertigo. Yet, the relationship in question here functions in a different relational register. Where in these films the connective affect of the museum is acted out in relationships between "viewers," in Sterbak's works the affective locus exists in the contingencies of beholder to a sensorially coded continuum.

House of Pain is a relatively minor work, a small drawing, in the context of Sterbak's larger, better known pieces. Sterbak's installations code space sensationally, employing logical transpositions, psychological intensities, and sociopathological tauntings. Often seemingly benign everyday possessions such as clothes and furniture are rendered potentially dangerous to the beholder. Much of Sterbak's oeuvre positions the properties of materials as analogic to particular "states of being" (Nemiroff, 1991: 17). These works are dramatically staged, spotlighted in dark spaces, and entail an apprehension process of discovery and threat that recalls the fun-houses of amusement parks.

The ontological dimension to Sterbak's exhibits, set up to confront the viewer, resembles more specifically the affect of a chamber of horrors. Yet, at the same time, the work is strongly engaged within the contemporary art discourse. Thus, in extending the visual to embrace the haptic, the beholder's embodiment is implicated in the modality of perception. In this sense visitors to the House of Pain are neither "spectators" nor "viewers" in the sense of a visually dominated experience, but "beholders" because tactility is so insistently implicated. In the sense that pain characterizes the liminal state of the subject's passage, the aesthetic experience is qualified by pain as distinct from pleasure.

Conceptually, Sterbak's use of perspective assumes the role of an art medium as this work pivots between the awarenesses of two points of view. On the one hand, the drawing illustrates a transitional ritual using the form of an architectural drawing and its the technique of isometric projection to indicate volumetric space. It results, I believe, in an "objective" visualist map of a more "immanent" tactile embodiment. It depicts a scene of a person about to enter a succession of rooms, recalling scientific representations of rats in mazes. The rendering of the house scripts a path around its periphery. The captions labelling the rooms announce sinister threats to the human body, and actually cite stories in The National Enquirer and other supermarket tabloids: "krazy glue shower," "glass shard swimming pool," "amplified echo chamber," "hot coal corridor," "distorting mirror labyrinth," "crawl-thru cage," and finally "reception room: after completion guest becomes host." The "krazy glue shower," for example, reflects the story of a cuckolded woman who bonded her unfaithful husband's genitals with crazy glue (Sterbak, 1991). The tabloid references re-cast not only the ghastly content of each act, but playfully reinforce "the sensational" as a means into the work.

In the centre of the house is a dark courtyard which appears empty to the drawing's observer, inaccessible to its

visitor: a place of closure to both. It sustains an ominous "presence," an unknowable counterpoint to the sequence of corridors which draw their subject through an array of disorienting and life-threatening encounters.

The drawing may be read either in terms of the relationship between gallery viewer and drawing or in terms of identification with the person about to enter the maze. The former perspective presents the privileged omniscient bird's eye view integral to the lofty modernist detachment conventionalized in traditional exhibition conventions. Here vision is dominant as a way of reading and knowing, in providing a map where the potential activities of the participant can be examined from a safe distance. Or, according to the latter reading, the drawing can be read in a relationship of identification with the plight of the entrant. This involvement entails a level of projection, where participation occurs through subjunctive, "as if," terms of possibility. Here the viewer opens him/herself to the potential affect generated through the metaphoric rooms. In this sense, entry through the front door would result in a shocking two-foot drop. The threshold point into the experience involves a drop rather than the ritualistic ascent typifying traditional museum entrances. Rather than moving upward to a

transcendent realm, House of Pain begins with abasement, pain as a "downer."

Disoriented from the start, a series of processional "pain stations" follow, assaulting the viewer in succession. The crazy glue shower leaves the body sticky before a dive into the glass shard pool. With skin torn and filled with glass, the next transit involves amplified echo chamber which exaggerates any cry of pain. Next, the hot coal corridor -- recalling fire-walking ceremonies -- demands concentration of mind over matter in order to exit. The mirror-lined labyrinth confuses direction, and a crawl through a cage enforces a humiliating subjugated position.<sup>5</sup> And finally, a sign posted in the reception room reading "After completion guest becomes host," hints that the immanence of this process may relate to cycles of sexual and emotional abuse.

While the implications of abuse patterns are compelling and important, forcing their specificity to this work would result in a particularly literalist closure. Rather, what I wish to look at is how the second, more immanently inflected reading of House of Pain calls into question the affective operation of its perceptual modes. By this I mean that this work functions as a prototype of enactment, a moving relation to contextual pain producers. And in this sense provides for an

sensory engagement where pain -- rather than pleasure -- governs the aesthetic experience.

Pain is conventionally situated at one polarity of the touch sensorium which opposes pleasure, the conventional aesthetic qualifier. Of course, it is true that masochism involves pain as pleasure. While such sensorial collapse and translation have interesting implications, they are beyond the scope of my discussion here. My concern, rather, is that beyond its sadistic implications, House of Pain insinuates the capacity of pain to intensify and focus awareness. Pain, in this sense, is an sensual indicator which, in no uncertain terms, conveys the limits of the body, and "wicks up" the mental and emotional faculties. The affectual pain relation becomes more complex in House of Pain because proprioception is simultaneously indicated in the movement through the space. This both charges each room with a particular genre of suffering. It could be argued that the implication of touch in this way gives depth and intensity to the visual information. In the same manner, the proprioceptive sense pertains to the "presence" of the dark courtyard, as the sense of threat that, in effect, moves through the skin, affecting the volumetric sensors which scan both inside and outside the body in relation to objects of threat and thoughts of fear.



Many of Sterbak's works incorporate the hazards of touch, frequently where touch is qualified as pain. Seduction Couch (1987) is a perforated steel couch which, spotlighted in a darkened space, throws eerie shadows. A buzzing register is traceable to the space between a globe placed at its edge, where blue forks of an electric charge visibly play. Recalling the seductive site of reclining "odalisques" the temptation is to touch, but to do so here would involve a painful jolt (Andreae, 1987-88: 40). While the object is beautiful, its shock promises to fracture such coherent pleasure. Another work, I want you to feel the way that I do (1985) incorporates a heating coil spiralling around an empty dress made of latticed wire. The coil is devised to heat up and glow when a viewer arrives, and cool when they move away. Behind the object is a text which addresses the beholder through the proprioceptive sense:

I want you to feel the way I do: there's barbed wire wrapped all around my head and my skin grates on my flesh from the inside. How can you be so comfortable only 5" to the left of me? I don't want to hear myself think, feel myself move. It's not that I want to be numb, I want to slip under your skin: I will listen for the sound you hear, feed on your thoughts, wear your clothes. Now I have your attitude I'm not comfortable anymore. Making them yours you relieved me of my opinions, habits, impulses. I should be grateful but instead...You're beginning to irritate me: I am not going to live with myself inside your body, and I would rather practice being new on someone else (Sterbak, 1989: 69).

This modality of address can be read metaphorically both as the art object's seduction of the spectator and as the destabilizing of visions's discrete subject-object relation once touch (as actual and textually described discomfort) is introduced into the perceptual experience. The coil, when hot, presents a very real danger to the viewer, to touch would be to burn. The potential of pain awakens the sensitivity to spacial distance ("only 5" to the left of me"). The fire which burns away habits, opinions, the transitory states of the speaking body, is conveyed by the vehicle of touch which reaches under the clothes, to enter through the skin, into the very thoughts of the viewing body.

During Sterbak's retrospective exhibition, States of Being, at the National Gallery of Canada, the darkness which cloaked the transitions between these and other works enabled a privacy that recalled proto-religious ritual interaction. Other beholders could simultaneously participate, but were shrouded from view by darkness as distinct from spectacles of viewership typical of well-lit exhibition halls.

As an epistemological device, House of Pain complicates conventions of aesthetic appreciation by subjugating pleasure to pain, and collapsing private and public, benign and dangerous elements. As a "house," it connotes privacy, intimacy, peace and "protected daydreaming," what Gaston

Bachelard has described as a site of "topophilia -- the love of space (1964: 3-37). Yet, in contrast to such felicitous domestic space Sterbak renders a site where space becomes fearful or "topophobic." comfort gives way to a fun-house script which terrorizes a vulnerable body. In this way, a sensorially based aesthetic pleasure is denied in favour of a more certain awareness produced with pain. Specifically, the sensory fields of these works describe haptic aesthetic articulations which qualify the charge between contexts, objects and embodied viewers. In this regard, Sterbak's House of Pain is particularly potent because it suggests that space can touch the beholder.

House of Pain's severe, yet insistent, spatial impulses call into question the ways knowledge is produced out of an aesthetic encounter. Its ambience, either as a work encountered amongst others, or as a vehicle for identification, implicates movement and triggers non-visual modes of sensory perception. Pain is rendered a source of knowledge through a process which generates increasingly intense physical misery. As House of Pain is enacted, the haptic and visual senses combine to exaggerate awareness.

The predicament produced by coding space as pain may be traced to the second part of the title, "a relationship." What kinds of relations do its engagements describe? As I have

sketched above, it can reference the tension between scopic and haptic economies, while at the same time calling for a reflexive recognition of the beholder's self. Like the moves of a game of Clue, the moves must be appropriate to the codings of space. While House of Pain presents a space to be negotiated, it operates otherwise to the focus on closure entailed in the murder enigmas of Clue. Rather, Sterbak's work can be employed to draw implications concerning the enactment sequence itself as the dynamics of a sensory aesthetic. The knife lying on the table of the reception room may provide a key to pain's mysterious hauntings of this house which pivot between a sharp edge of discernment and a lethal punctum of abuse. Yet, the persistence of pain in Jana Sterbak's aesthetic may play a role in waking up an embodied reception and thus play a role in redefining a haptic aesthetic.

Sterbak's House of Pain recalls another form of display culture which is focussed in the sensational, that of the "chamber of horrors." At the Louis Tussaud's Waxworks museum in Niagara Falls owned by Ripley's "Believe It or Not!" international chain of for profit museums is a display which, like Sterbak, depicts augments the sensorial aspects of its objects through depicting pain.

The Ripley's "Believe It or Not!" museums, rooted in 1930s world's fairs, has since developed into perhaps the first

world-wide museum syndicate comprising both "owned" and "franchised" museums operating in Canada, the U.S., Australia, England, South Korea, and Mexico (Meyer, 1991). In 1991, the archivist from Ripley's "Believe It or Not!," approached Sterbak, and later her dealer Rene Blouin, to purchase the controversial Vanitas, the "meat dress," during its inaugural showing at Blouin's Montreal gallery. At the time Sterbak refused after some deliberation. Yet the fact that Ripley's envisioned Sterbak's work as appropriate for inclusion in their collections compels me to consider both in light of their sensational continuities and differences, especially when both have produced displays which center on affectivities of pain.

In the basement of Louis Tussaud's Waxworks exhibition -- whose presumed relation to the famous Madame Tussaud is fictive -- can be found an exhibition trope as frequently appropriated: a chamber of horrors. Here amongst the densely arranged presentations modeled on Madame Tussaud's London exhibits, are displays which depict various means of torture: cutting off of eyelids (the Reign of Terror) or putting lye in the eyes (labelled as a "Chinese" method). These exhibits, while certainly gruesome, additionally augment the haptic aspects of their pain in depicting tortures which involve processes of becoming blind. Yet, while they may resemble Sterbak's pain

spectacles, the manner in which Tussaud's torture displays implicate the beholder differs.

Sterbak's house posits a context of pain sites which, I contend, more directly implicate the viewer of the beholder because the pain sites hold the potential for embodiment. In contrast, Louis Tussaud's wax display represents a body as an object which in illustrating a manner of torture occupies the corporeal space. So while Sterbak's work posits stations of sensory interpolation (i.e., potentially "your" body receiving a painful jolt on the seduction couch), the Chamber of Horrors presents "a body" as an object of torture. Tussaud's presents its body as evidence (as always-already occupant of the pain station) and implicates the visitor at a more comfortable distance. Where House of Pain proposes an experience involving instruments of pain that recalls a chamber of horrors, its positioning of the viewer differs because the potential exists for the beholder to "try on" and hence enact the exhibition context. Nevertheless, the attempted purchase by Ripley's affirms the continuities of the sensational display practices despite their governing discourses of popular amusement or highbrow fine arts.

The following year, Ripley's approached Sterbak again during the States of Being exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada as the press debate over Vanitas was raging. The

controversy centred on whether public funds should have been dispensed to display a work fabricated of flank steak in a public gallery while people went hungry, and moreover, vociferous philistines argued whether such a material constituted art at all.

Ultimately, it is the terms of framing Vanitas within a "popular culture museum" that are at issue here. Characteristically, the display practices at Ripley's after purchase involve reproduction in multiples and consequent distribution to multiple display sites internationally. The fate of Vanitas if it were actually purchased would certainly entail its multiple casting in wax, dissemination, and installation. Each would be displayed with a descriptive label such as "This dress designed by Jana Sterbak of Montreal, was made of 40 lbs. of flank steak! 'Believe It or Not!'" Vanitas would then be inserted into a crowded context adjacent to such popular displays as a Mercedes Benz made of popsicle sticks or a painting produced with dryer lint. At issue is the requisite surrender of artistic control. Because control over the contextualization of the work would be effectively denied, it is doubtful if Sterbak would ever consent to its purchase by Ripley's. Yet, the idea of a Ripley acquisition did intrigue Sterbak enough to continue her negotiations over several years.

In the unlikely event that Ripley's agreed to a contract where Sterbak could determine the context of Vanitas within the Ripley's discourse, an artist's installation within the Ripley's museums could represent a kind of coup, one which opens a space for the practices of contemporary art to activate the dynamics of proprioceptive play of the fun-house.

But more to the point, House of Pain is prototypical of a haptically nuanced personal museum, a series of installations whose pain affect is contiguous with Sterbak's artistic oeuvre of the eighties. The connotations of potential embodiment, movements and encounters suggest the sensory dimensions of a museum-of-her-own underscored by a pain aesthetic.

LINDA MONTANO:

#### PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCES OF ATTENTION

While Jana Sterbak focusses on the intensifications of becoming framed by contexts of discomfort, shock, or pain itself, performance artist Linda Montano likewise focusses on haptic processes, not in terms of threat, but affectively renegotiates the museal as a space of transformative recovery. In turn, while Sterbak focusses on the potential of site to transform the consciousness of the beholder, Montano explores the shifts in awareness involving interpersonal relations,



whether in collaboration with other artists or with members of the audience.

Montano deploys exhibition contexts as sites of codified, ritual events. Her performances work across the frontiers of the museal. While she performs in formal gallery spaces, she has also created the Art/Life Institute in upstate New York, where she directs proto-religious collaborative residencies. Montano's art/life performances frame carefully prescribed daily regimes as art. These events centre on practices of attention, whether in terms of introspective self-awareness, or missions of interactive engagement with others.

Montano's predilection for ascetic practices can be traced to her strong Catholic upbringing. As a child she desired sainthood within the Catholic Church beyond anything else (Montano, 1984). After fourteen years of Catholic schooling, she spent two years in a convent (1960-62) of the Maryknoll nuns in training to be a missionary. She left the church for art school after anorexia nervosa reduced her to eighty-two pounds, instantiating the split of cloistered and earthly appetites on her body. Consequent to her art training during the seventies, a series of Dead Chicken, Live Angel performances attempted to exorcize herself of oppressive aspects of Catholicism. Wrapped in white gauze styled to resemble a nun's habit, Montano used the performative situation

as confessional, where the audience displaced church authority in a ritual designed to free her from regressive paternalistic hierarchies of religion. Yet simultaneously she maintained, and modified for her own ends, the practices of her spiritual formation, drawing on its capacities for self-inquiry and meditative reflection. Her explorations led her to study structured rituals of other traditions including training in yoga, karate and zen meditation (Raven, 1984: 101).

Within the traditions of performance art, the use of the body and consciousness constitute a medium which relies on an ontology of presence. Montano deploys space to frame practices of attention and becoming. Each performance establishes a precinct, whether through situational intentionality of the artistic speech act, by reframing institutional space, or by the creation of an alternative space. Each is activated in its capacity to provide a relational domain of aesthetic awareness only possible through doing and undergoing as distinct from simply watching particular acts. Thus, the performative situation is designed to augment awareness both internally and at points of contact between individuals. Through various explorations, Montano has, in effect, provided a model which renegotiates the artist-viewer relation in terms of a confidentiality bond, whether that of healer, sex therapist or spiritual guide.

Montano's work has explored the territories of merged and discrete selves. Whether the connection is physical, mental, sexual or spiritual, her concern is with the intensification of awareness at points of contact. Her early collaborative performances structured situations of prescribed duration. While the ostensible strategy was to frame everyday actions as "aesthetic" and thus attempt to resolve the breach between art and life, what is more interesting to me here is how Montano constitutes a relational aesthetic by focussing on the coherence and challenges of the connection itself. In 1972 Montano, while married to Mitchell Payne, declared their home was The Montano/Payne Victorian Museum and that everything that happened there was art (Raven, 1991: 101). In 1973 she was handcuffed for three days with Tom Marioni at the Museum of Conceptual Art in San Francisco, which Marioni had founded and where he lived at the time. Montano created Handcuffed as a performance of discipline within an art context to raise issues concerning relationship (she was married to Payne at the time) and selfhood. Montano eventually left Payne to live with composer Pauline Oliveros, and began to investigate performative alter egos as a way of destratifying conventions of gender and sexual preference. One collaboration with Oliveros entailed living in the desert for ten days in order to investigate the limits of the senses integral to issues of

control and faith. In 1983 she undertook One Year Performance with Tehching Hsieh. The two artists were tied together by an eight foot rope with the stipulation that they never touch for the duration of the performance. They lived in Hsieh's loft on Hudson Street in New York, and maintained their usual activities -- working back-to-back at desks, bike riding, teaching and doing odd jobs. The restrictive limits of the rope on their activities formed the relational affect of the piece, its frame as art. They found young mothers, pregnant women, people walking dogs, S/M practitioners and policemen especially responsive to the piece (Montano, 1984). Each of these works has in common the intensification of self-awareness at points of contact, which, I contend, functions to indicate the relational coherence and quality of the articulation itself.

In December of 1984 Montano began a seven-year performance, titled accordingly, Seven Years of Living Art. The performance framed a conceptual recipe of commitments to generate particular states and transformations: to wear one colour of clothes, to stay in space of the same colour for a minimum of three hours; to listen to one pitch for a minimum of seven hours; to speak in a particular accent (except to immediate family). As such, the performance comprises a becoming, a third and mediating term, a recipe through which

Montano enters into specified engagements (Grosz, 1994: 174).

In Montano's words:

It's my own recipe, [Seven Years of Living Art] uses other systems and collages them into a form and time frame that works. Even though I am still using some of their (church) techniques, I have somewhat, finally, left the institution (1985).

As Montano admitted, if these techniques had not comprised a performance it is unlikely she would have sustained them (Montano, 1984). These algorithmic disciplines are a highly individualistic interpretation of the ancient system of chakras drawn from Indian philosophy. Used a means for developing a constant state of attention, Montano's investigations are not naive "New Age" appropriations, but instead the result of a thirty-year commitment to blending meditative discipline with art practice. Rather than just another colonial appropriation, I contend that Montano uses yogic as well as other disciplines to formulate a practice of the self in Foucault's sense. Like the Stoic and Early Christian disciplines studied by Foucault, yoga -- the Sanskrit origin of the word "yoke," to link -- pertains to a provisional union through focussed awareness (Rawlinson, 1982: 247). As such yoga can be considered in terms of Foucault's technologies of the self, "which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of

being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, or immortality" (Foucault, 1988: 18).

Montano has incorporated meditative disciplines within her project in ways which suggest both and ethics and aesthetics of existence, but with certain distinctions. While Foucault sought to provide a model of transforming himself through his work in thinking and philosophizing, Montano seeks to transmute not only herself -- but the relational bond -- in her interpersonal engagements. Montano's idiosyncratic disciplines developed through bringing her attention to colours, sounds and through "being available" to people and energies. Yet these disciplines are framed by art's discourses, its institutions and history, especially the legacy of the surrealists who were deeply concerned with the transformative power of art (Festa, 1989).

What is at stake in Montano's techniques of the self involves not only skills but the feelings that accompany activities. This stems from Montano's perspective that while individuals may not have the power to decide on the conditions of their life, they do have the power to modify their "attitude" and modality of "attention." Thus, the chakras provide the basis for exploring affectual focus of the emotional and physical body. Interpretations vary according to source. Generally

seven chakras are located vertically along the spinal column from the coccyx to the top of the head. Yogic philosophy holds that each chakra functions as an energy transformer and is associated with a particular colour, organ, psychological quality.<sup>6</sup> Within this perspective, the subtle body housing the chakras is subject to will, as the directing of attentive focus.

Each year of the seven-year performance focusses on the transformative potential of a particular chakra. For example from December 1984-1985, the first year, Montano wore only red, sat in a red room for three hours a day, listened to a recording of B pitch for seven hours, did exercises which brought attention to the coccyx -- the location of the root chakra -- and explored issues of sexuality. Montano spoke with the French accent of alter-ego for the red year, Lamar Breton, a "French poet." Lamar is close to L'amour, "love," and Breton borrows from her surrealist "Father," Andre Breton (Festa, 1989: 23). According to Steven Kolpan, Montano's performance of her characters is comically bad, lacks self consciousness to the point of self-parody (1986: 19-20). Kolpan offers an interesting reading of the significance of Montano's cross-cultural juxtapositions:

If Montano can couple serious meditation with country and western music, the chakra system with a witless nun, religious visualization with bad

poetry, it is possible she has solved the mystery of how to live in the world: Laugh on the outside, learn on the inside (1986: 20).

Montano's alter-egos during Seven Years of Living Art were developed in previous performances. According to her intention, Montano mobilized these practices to "frame awareness" according to conceptual logic where a chosen task is undertaken for a particular duration, with the intent to merge art and life, and thus train the mind. The activity is witnessed by others who may elect to participate (Roth, 1984: 7). This cyclical structure incorporates aleatory elements into the production of knowledge in a manner similar to Italian "weak thought" which posits a framing, testing, and reframing of hypothesis to account for flux (Hebdige, 1988: 226). For example, after two and a half years of Seven Years of Living Art, Montano found it impossible to keep her vows, "committing art-sins" (in her opinion), which ultimately were reframed in terms of self-forgiveness.

In contrast to the extreme restriction enforced by the rope during the year-long collaboration with Tehching Hsieh, Seven Years of Living Art is a vigil emanating from corporeal awareness of the boundaries of self. On a biological/psychological level, it supported Montano's passage through menopause. As a meditative discipline, it involved localizations of awareness inside and outside her body, putting



into question the limits of embodiment and sensitizing proprioception. Artistically, it enabled her to combine a multiplicity of performance techniques: accents, costume, performative focus, and the exploration of alter-egos and "channelled" personalities likewise destabilized the fixed identity of the artist.<sup>7</sup> By pushing the limits of the discrete self in this way, Montano renegotiated herself in relation to individuals, groups and institutions.

Much of Seven Years of Living Art involved solitary practices on the part of the artist. Two key art institutions have supported the social dimensions of the piece. A component of the piece was Montano's founding of the Art/Life Institute in Kingston, New York. Each year, sixteen-day residencies -- advertized in New York art networks -- provided a ground for Montano to reach out through temporary alliances.

Another point of public access to the piece occurred at The New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York which made an extraordinary seven-year commitment to this performance in providing a room with a window facing Mercer Street for "Art/Life Counselling" by Montano. The room was painted according to the year, successively red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, and white. The counselling sessions were a means of entry into the piece. As persons entered the room, their relational engagement with Montano was visible to those waiting

outside, but inaudible. Montano characteristically initiated talk or began to do an art-life reading using palm reading and tarot cards. Using the marginal, and to some suspect, epistemology of fortune telling, Montano's objective was to formulate a visualization -- in effect producing and personalizing a conceptual art work -- that beholders could use on their own later. Like melete -- the Stoic practice of an imaginary experience which trains thought outlined by Foucault -- Montano posits a conceptual situation to work in relationship with a real one (Foucault, 1988: 36). The intimacy of this encounter recalls the confidentiality bond of medical practitioners, thus redefining the distanced relationship of artist to audience.

Continuing the legacy of Allan Kaprow's "happenings" and John Cage's aleatory compositions, there is an uncontrollable aspect to Montano's availability during art-life counselling that, at times, has put her at risk. During one reading a man held a hammer over her head and threatened to kill her. The relational aspect thus incorporates issues of boundary transgression and abuse, the liabilities inherent in choosing to be open to others.

Montano's blending of art and life finds its antecedent in Marcel Duchamp's early twentieth-century legitimization of objects, personae and chess playing as art. Following from

Duchamp, Montano's "post-menopausal" nude photograph in male drag depicts a reverse transvestism to Duchamp's auto-erotic self-portrait as Rose Selavy. Thus narcissistic autogeneration provides for the constitution of one's artistic self.

For Duchamp, the artistic role need not involve more than breathing itself:

I like living, breathing, better than working. I don't think that the work I've done can have any social importance whatsoever in the future. Therefore, if you wish, my art would be that of living: each second, each breath is a work which is inscribed nowhere, which is neither visual nor cerebral. It's a sort of constant euphoria (1987: 72).

Following from Duchamp's practice, Montano locates the studio as site of production in a model of the studio as breath, a dynamic sense of studio which involves the process of inhalations, exhalations and threshold between breaths as distinct from the materiality of an actual architectural space.

This piece has been about breaking down the division of art and life. There is no longing for studio. The studio is in every breath, and the breath becomes a studio that you carry with you. The breath is the horse or the bridge, the link, the place to clear the debris of past and future (Montano, 1991).

In this way, the breath as studio, becomes the means of bridging discrete and social selves. In turn, breathing techniques derived from yogic practice both circulate and focus prana or energy in terms of the chakra involved. In social

terms, the act of breathing, negotiates the inside and outside of the body, and the space between bodies. The breath also marks life's beginning and termination, and becomes evident as the limits of the body are reached: acts of physical endurance, extreme pleasure and pain. Thus the model of "breathing" introduces a third term in the "form versus content" dyad, one which affirms both circulation and movement.<sup>8</sup> Montano, in exploring the breath, locates her concern at the point of the interval, the link, the bridge, the boundary, in other words, the point of the articulation.<sup>9</sup>

Montano's embrace of the pragmatics and metaphor of breathing -- as practices of attention -- focuses her engagement with art making and offers a compelling model for not only dislodging tendencies to totality, but also for connecting incommensurate and discontinuous identities. In Montano's art practice, self-transformation becomes the mediating element in practices of formally "framing" the content of "everyday life." Identification becomes a vehicle for entering and exiting multiple affective fields. It becomes to inhabit personas as one tries on shoes.

Seven Years of Living Art combines depth involvement in collective exploration with evaluation and analysis. Its dimensions of self-inquiry keep this work from being merely an delusional enactment of multiple personality pathology. Taken

together, attention and devotion become a means of investment as well as its effect, reversing the terms of Montano's earlier deferential, passive role as Sister Rose Augustine to the point of conferring a campy "sainthood" for herself and the participants of the Art/Life residencies. Montano's self-conferred "sainthood" is a provocative metaphor for self-legitimation within the art world, transgressing the taboo against artists valorizing their own art, a function conventionally left to critics, curators and dealers.

In attempting to heal the breach between art and life, Montano does not collapse the distinctions between them. Locating the studio in the breath establishes a dynamic "studio" as the locus of change, movement and choice in artistic reinvention. Artistic intentionality -- as willed awareness -- generates an open-ended relational context and provides a vehicle for navigating across, and entering into different (even fictive) constructions of identity. Both melete from the Stoics, and dharana from Yoga, describe an imagined experience that trains thought. This is not imaginary in the sense of fantasy, but rather a conceptual discipline which has real transformative effects through its engagement.

To conclude, I have described the aesthetic practices of Montano, Sterbak, Louder and Whittome each as they entail proprioceptive rituals, whether at the point of apprehension or

of production. Louder's walks along the beach and Montano's practices of attention constitute a kind of ethical-aesthetic praxis integral to their art. In turn, their museum interventions push the boundaries of the museal, not so much in terms of what is knowable, but in how it is knowable. While Louder mobilizes the museal as "ritual artifact" itself, Montano's codified performances frame attention (for her) and presence (for beholders) over an extended period of time. Likewise, Whittome and Sterbak inscribe the museum in its indexical aspects which qualify perception in relationship to possible autobiographical referents in particular ways. While Whittome's personal museums articulate mytho-poetic recollections of self to a genealogy of enacting the museum form, Sterbak's provides a prototype of a "sensational" museum which hints at abuse issues through painful intensifications of context.

The artworks discussed are situational and tactical in nature, whether operating across various contexts as museal interventions, alternative museums, or museum prototypes. Each, "museum of her own," I have suggested, expands conventional conceptions of aesthetic experience by mobilizing affect contingent to haptic-proprioceptive intensities. Moreover, each artist -- in demonstrating an affective investment of "being engaged" -- describes the connective

aesthetic immanent to creative process. Thus, not only is such an aesthetic transformative in continuity with traditional museum rituals, but the museal is posed as a context for discovery: one activated in the present tense.

## Notes for Chapter 5

1. For example Lousie Lawler's Positioned Together, Tous les Deux, Ensemble (1985) photographs artworks by famous artists privately displayed in the homes of collectors, she has foregrounded the substructure of commercial galleries presenting, for example, Why Pictures Now (1981), a matchbook cover, as well as wall labels, stationary and invitations, moving them from exhibition support to the focus of display. She also reveals aspects of institutional determination of art. Three (1984) depicts images of works wrapped in plastic in museum storage, revealing what is hidden in art institutions. Lawler challenges notion of art's autonomy by revealing its determination by art's institutions.

2. Panya Clark exhibited "artifacts" expertly reconstituted from the pages of National Geographic in her installation entitled Research and Discovery (1988) exhibited as part of the exhibition Re-enactment: Between Self and Other, curated by Barbara Fischer, The Power Plant, Toronto, 1990. Liz Magor has mined her own participation in formations of nineteen-sixties counter-culture through framing hippie artifacts as art in a series including Chilcotin Belt (c.1969), Chilcotin Belt (c.1970), Chilcotin Beads (c.1970). She has also produced Gut Parka (1990) a version of those employed by Northern explorers as part of the exhibition, Meeting Place (with Robert Gober and Juan Munoz) organized by the Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, 1990.

3. Lounder participated in an exhibition titled The Salvage Paradigm, organized by Janice Guerney and presented at YYZ/Wynick/Tuck Gallery in 1990. This exhibition interrogated artists's responses to the salvage phenomenon and the role of the artist in framing culture.

4. Untitled (West Lawrencetown) was originally exhibited as part of an exhibition titled Refuse, with Lani Maestro, in Halifax, at the Art Gallery of Mount Saint Vincent University, from March 30 to April 29, 1990.

5. There is an interesting correlation between the spectatorial experience in Sterbak's House of Pain and those of some nineteenth-century tourist attractions. Consider the following example:



Tourists at Mammoth Cave squeezed through 'Fat Man's Misery,' crawled on hands and knees through "The Valley of Humility," crossed over the "Bottomless Pit," and passed along "Bunyan's Way" as they made a "Subterranean Pilgrimage" through the cave (Sears, 1989: 5).

6. Indian philosophy holds that the chakras (literally "wheels") are energy centres within the subtle body. The subtle body vitalizes and animates the physical body in the manner that a person drives a car. It is experienced in dream states and houses the feelings and thoughts. The subtle body's system of nadis are channels which contain and distribute prana. Where the nadis function to connect the chakras, the breath is the means of circulating between them.

7. The idea of channelling puns upon the body as "medium." The channelling of a "fictive" identity playfully deflates the self-seriousness of psychics who claim to be pure links to truth. In addition, it entails a double reversal of fiction that became the basis Montano's reconception of her personal and public voice by multiplying its possibilities.

8. Trinh T. Minh-ha uses the model of the "vital breaths of life" from Chinese philosophy to destabilize paradoxical reductionism. While the yin-yang principle (the vital breaths) governs the Full, it is the second order relation, the Full's alternation with the void, that allows for separation, transformation and unity. The Void, then, constitutes the third term, and with it, "a binary system becomes ternary": the Void affording the interval of change (Trinh, 1990:72).

9. In a similar way, Wendy Jacob's "breathing" wall during the 1993 Whitney Biennial mobilized the stasis of the actual gallery wall which appeared to expand and contract like a human diaphragm accompanied by sounds of rushing air. Where much of contemporary art has relied on the stability of the gallery space, Jacob's work proposes the easing of absolute institutional boundaries, opting not for a place inside or outside, but within the immanence of the moving frame itself.

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## CONCLUSION

The thesis was developed according to a trajectory which recuperates the aesthetic in its performative and connective modalities. My aim has been to rethink the category of the aesthetic and examine its epistemological and methodological aspects. I argued that while a perceptually defined aesthetic posits the immanence of a range of sensorially based "ways of knowing," as a category of connection the aesthetic can also function integrally to a conjunctural theoretical practice in the "production of knowledge." I have focussed on exploring representations and enactments of display culture as constituent to a proprioceptive morphology of the senses. Rather than an "act" of perception, I located processes of apprehension in complexities of space, time and movement which activate aesthetic experience and its significance.

My project has been to posit the aesthetic as simultaneously a complex product of discourse and as an experiential process entailing perception. That is, while the aesthetic may be the object of study, at the same time it defines the engagement of inquiry.

My approach has been to propose sites and modalities of aesthetic engagement in the dynamic enactment of spaces between beholders, collectors, artists and contexts of

display. Three fields of inquiry have been woven through the thesis: feminist aesthetic theory, art's history, criticism and production, and cultural studies. Firstly, I am indebted to early feminist work which asserted the primacy of experience. At the same time, I have argued against the essentialism of experience, instead focussing on what people make of their practices of perception. Stitched throughout the thesis are examinations of the intervals between selves and objects as immanent to processes of engagement and movement. I have reconfigured the problematic of experience in relation to practices of the self entailed in an aesthetic ethic. That is, the aesthetic experience of beholders, collectors and artists entails the cultivation of a disciplined awareness in Baumgarten's sense. Discipline, in this sense, contrasts with punishment, and defines terms of inspired action.

Secondly, regarding the field of art practice and criticism, a refigured aesthetic posits an alternative to deconstructivist models still in dominance. Of course, deconstruction itself can be argued to be form of engagement, but its projects must be distinguished from my own. While deconstruction has played an empowering role in terms of understanding the systems of knowledge, institutional structures and political apparatuses affecting the art world,

its own systems of analysis preclude accounting for agency and experience. Thus, as a perspective it ultimately obfuscates the actuality of creative process, reconstruction and endeavors which address the realms of the possible and as yet unknowable. The notion of aesthetic engagement as I have developed in the thesis sustains the specificity of difference, while simultaneously enabling provisional -- and creative -- unities, links and mergings.

Finally, in this respect, conjunctural theories from cultural studies have enabled me to identify and define the aesthetic as it mobilizes and connects display institutions and their performative enactments. Such incorporations necessarily involve the agency of beholders, collectors and artists. I have endeavoured to secure a realm of the possible contingent to experiences of "becoming other," not only through an identification external to one's self, but also through the transformation of one's self precisely by one's engagement.

The problematic of the thesis shifted in a series of stages from abstract theoretical explorations to more grounded analysis of museum sites, collecting and artistic practices. Chapter 1 located the aesthetic in relation to the conjunctural theories of cultural studies. I argued that in addition to its capacities for evaluation, the aesthetic also



accounts for the negotiation of experiential, sensorially based perception. I mined work in feminist aesthetics which refuses essentialist experience in order to elaborate a problematic for a conjunctural aesthetic theory which can account for the provisional unity of engagement while maintaining the specificity of a situated perspective. A literature review identified work in cultural studies and opened up questions concerning the use, experiential base, and creative potential of aesthetic perception. I demonstrated how aesthetic theory can elucidate and expand the modalities of the connection indicated in Hall's theory of "articulation" or Grossberg's plane of "affect." Moreover, I posed aesthetic engagement as itself an "affective vehicle" whereby apprehension, as a form of identificatory merging, preserves the individuality of the perceiving subject. My aims in Chapter 1 were to account for both the specificity of apprehension in its context and the question of agency in articulating the specificity of such contexts. Additionally, I posited that such a conjunctural aesthetic theory may serve reflexively in theoretical work precisely because it accounts for the realms of the experiential and possible, and thus may assist in expanding research beyond the logics of meaning alone.

Chapter 2 proceeded to ground notions of aesthetic

enactment in relation to the both "the museal" as concept and "the museum" as actual site. The museum was explored in its potential to mediate aesthetic experience through the choreographies of its architectural codes. I demonstrated how museums, functioning as technologies of communication, bias experience through engaging the sensorium in particular ways. I investigated how the haptic and proprioceptive senses are activated in processes of beholding immanent to the tangible intensities of affectively charged museum space. These dimensions of museum ambience were analyzed in how they structure experience as well as comprise a dynamic and ontological morphology of the senses.

Museums were explored in their heterochronic, heterotopic and liminal aspects with respect to the cultural circuits of the urban metropolis. This foregrounded the importance of performativity to the literal "incorporations" of ideology immanent to an aesthetic experience. Ritual enactments were considered contingent to the inscription of "ideal viewers" in the display rhetorics of two Montreal-based museum sites. I argued that while museums certainly produce specific experiences, this does not absolutely determine how museums are perceived. In particular, I described the capacity of memory to destabilize institutionally determined aesthetic experience in order to demonstrate how agency is preserved

even given the bias of museum continuums.

In Chapter 3 I considered more closely the relationships with -- and within -- the museal to elucidate both its hegemonic and emancipatory potential. My argument focussed on the pragmatics of memory contingent to a haptic aesthetic. I distinguished the ways that museums themselves figure as ritual artifacts and how their use and representation within popular culture constitutes a salient domain for analysis. Within the purview of proprioceptive aesthetic experience, I delineated the roles of public, private and popular memory as mnemonic territories which continually shift in dominance. A poetics of memory was introduced in its creative potential contingent to the performative mediations of museal space.

Another mediation of the museal I discussed pertained to the distortions of scale in museal representations. In this respect, I examined how movement can both activate and produce the significance, not only of the museum, but of museal representations. Whether the museal is contained (as a miniature museum game), or serves as a gigantic container (as depicted literary fictions), it is rendered as a metaphorically charged space knowable through the agency of the "moves" of the players or the protagonist's "movement through" the narrative. I argued that distortions themselves may be understood as comprising a modality of performativity

which, in turn, inflect intersections of private and public with particular emphasis.

Where official memory is crystallized in a museum script, and private memory holds the capacity to work against its rhetorics, popular memory was posited as a plane of the "collectively personal," a plane of associative and prototypical memory. The third chapter concluded with an examination of scenes of museums from popular films as instances of popular memory which suggest the museal as sites where particular "kinds of experiences" happen. These clips provided evidence of actual proprioceptive, if fictive, experience. I identified and analyzed three tropes of aesthetic experience -- plays of class, sex and epiphany -- which, in expanding upon conventions of connoisseurship, posit the positivity of the museal immanent to its enactment. Throughout the chapter, the distortions evident in enactments and representations of museum space provided ideologically rich sites for mining not only how aesthetic experience has been conventionalized, but also how different kinds of experiences may be deemed "aesthetic."

The examination of the collecting practices of women in Chapter 4 evidenced a more temporally nuanced dimension of aesthetic enactment. I drew from Michel Foucault's writings on the "aesthetics of existence" in order to elucidate the

relational aspects of collecting as articulations of the personal and the cultural. I examined the ways that Madonna Ciccone, Ydessa Hendeles and Isabella Stewart Gardner mobilize their collections as a kind of hermeneutics of the self. For Ciccone the collection anchors a performative tour which constructs an "authentic" self through an intimate interview which in turn is disseminated widely in glossy publications. For Hendeles the contemporary art collection and private foundation form the basis of her activities as a player in the world of art. For Gardner the museum was a presencing of herself, a memento femineum of her life through the permanent arrangement of her objects.

I suggested that collections, functioning synecdochically as a haptic presencing of the collector's body have effected a kind of "after-life" through the syntagmatic affect of the collection. Moreover, the activation of a collection was shown to play significant function in communication, in the "telling" of the collector herself as immanent to her practices of displaying their artifacts. As I argued, these personal collections function as epistemological devices in the production of self-knowledge for the collector.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I described how the aesthetic practices of four women artists negotiate a range of engagements with display culture. Each of the artists I

discussed -- Irene F. Whittome, Barbara Lounder, Jana Sterbak and Linda Montano -- has provided an example of a performative aesthetic engagement with the museal, its forms, experiences, histories, rituals and politics. I analyzed works by each of the artists as museal propositions which delineate aspects of a proprioceptive and performative aesthetic.

Not only do beholding, collecting and art-making function in terms of a kind of mnemonic praxis where each object instantiates a lived relation, but, as I also demonstrated, artifacts are deployed in various ways as devices which enable aesthetic experience. Thus, in the manner that the "ethical substance" activates an aesthetic ethos, beholders, collectors and artists work on and through their engagement with art objects and their context. It is these practices of relation in time, space and movement, as distinct from considerations of artifacts themselves, that define a performative aesthetics of display culture.