

BULLETIN OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

VOLUME V

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER, 1910

NUMBER 9



A CLASS

EXPERT GUIDANCE TO THE MUSEUM

AS the BULLETIN is constantly filled with illustrations and descriptions of new accessions, readers may easily reach the conclusion that the present chief activity of the Museum is mere acquisition. Important as is the acquisition of objects of art, it is only one of the educational functions of our Museum. Interpretation of these objects of art is another. Some visitors are qualified to be their own interpreters; most

visitors are not. Even those who are, suffer loss of time in finding what they most wish to see, or, perhaps, fail to find it altogether.

The rapid increase in our collections and the frequent rearrangement inherent to our healthy growth prevents any catalogue from being a perfect guide, even for a short time after publication. Our catalogues may be out of date before they have left the press. Even the old habitués of the Louvre or the Uffizi may now need help to discover what he once was sure to find in the Salon Carré or in the Tribuna.

Plate 2 A docent tour at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, c. 1910.
Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, September 1910.

A Brief History of the Art Museum Public

Andrew McClellan

Writing some two hundred and fifty years ago, at the dawn of the modern museum age, the painter Charles-Antoine Coypel objected to the use of the singular “public” to describe the crowds who flocked to the exhibitions of contemporary art in Paris held at the Louvre:

In the Salon where the paintings are displayed, the public changes twenty times a day.... This place can offer twenty publics of different tone and character in the course of single day: a simple public at certain times, a prejudiced public, a flighty public, an envious public, a public slavish to fashion.... A final accounting of these publics would lead to infinity.¹

Coypel recognized what we know so well today: there is no one public for art; the public for art is diverse and divided by interests and levels of knowledge, confidence and class, not to mention race, ethnicity, and gender. Yet this diversity stands in marked contrast to the fictive oneness of the public posited by mission statements issuing from museums themselves. Guided by ideals of public service and democratic access, museums tend to look past issues of difference towards an ultimate goal of art for all, of peoples joined together by a shared past and a common love for art.

The utopian optimism underpinning museum rhetoric should be taken seriously as an endorsement of a profound belief in the transcendent, life-enhancing potential of art, a belief that has grown in stature since its inception in the Romantic era and takes on added resonance in the wake of upheavals such as world wars, social protest, and, most recently, 9/11.

However, a closer look at mission statements reveals tensions within art museums that compromise their ability to fully extend themselves to the public, and any discussion of the museum's publics must reckon with the implications of these tensions. First, public access is always paired with a commitment to preserve objects for posterity, and if obliged to compete with each another owing to the fragility and uniqueness of the object, preservation will always win out. In a sense, then, museums serve a notional future public as much as real visitors in the present. Moreover, to the extent that curators are trained and hired to care for their collections (and the word "curator" comes from *curare*, to care), they are drawn away from public service. Care for the public is left largely to educators and volunteers who occupy a lower place in the museum hierarchy. Present in all public collections, these tendencies are especially pronounced in art museums where the objects collected are rare and valuable.

Second, despite declarations of public obligation, museums are often beholden to private interests and make little attempt to hide their descent from private collections. Indeed, art museums have long celebrated their emergence from the realm of princes by opening in royal palaces (or purpose-built imitations of them) and gratefully acknowledging gifts from private donors. Try as they might to evolve towards an ideal of full integration with the public sphere, continued dependence on private patronage for financial support and gifts of art, and the need to reward those gifts with wall plaques and special events, compels museums to live in the shadow of their aristocratic past. As one hand invites the public to partake of its treasures, the other hand courts collectors and sponsors with a deference fit for the great Mæcenās of old. For some the lingering aura of privilege is intimidating, but for just as many it is part of the allure. Like it or not, there can be no denying that without the support of private benefactors there would be no public art museums. It may be argued that the tension between public and private is a peculiarly American phenomenon absent in state-sponsored museums on the European model, but hierarchies necessarily exist there too and will only become more prominent as costs rise, government subsidies decline, and the American self-supporting model gains ground. My own experience working with underprivileged school children at a public museum in London some decades ago taught me that free admission and liberal programming still competes with an aura of exclusivity inscribed in the museum's walls. At the conclusion of their tour, I was expected to ask

the children to whom the paintings belonged. The “right” answer was, of course, to them, the public, but a more common and common-sensical response was “the Queen,” for who else could have built such a magnificent palace and own such heavily guarded treasures? To realize that the visit was not only their first to an art museum but in some cases their first to the West End of London is to glimpse the larger obstacles to the creation of a common heritage centered on our institutions of high culture. Nevertheless, the idealism also built into the fabric of our museums will ensure that they will not cease in their effort to reach all those children.

The Age of Enlightenment

The emergence of art as a collectible commodity coincided with the great age of Renaissance patronage and the creation of an aesthetic discourse that favored form, pictorial conceit, and authorship over function.² As princes and kings turned to art to affirm wealth and power, artists saw their own status rise and moved to define their craft as a liberal art worthy of comparison to poetry and philosophy. From the bosom of newly created art academies developed a theory and history of art that articulated criteria for the proper evaluation of painting and sculpture. Emulation of princely example caused art collecting and appreciation to spread into polite society and become the mark of the gentleman. While not all aristocrats and wealthy bourgeois actively collected art, familiarity with the antique and the Old Masters conferred social distinction and indicated fitness to rule.³ For his part, the painter Coypel had no doubt that he painted for the “enlightened and delicate public.”⁴ By the eighteenth century an international network of critics and dealers, artists and collectors formed the infrastructure of an elite art world bound together by social contacts and shared discourse. Admission to the art world required appropriate social standing but also a mastery of critical terms and history. André Félibien, Roger de Piles, and others wrote popular texts in which fictional characters modeled connoisseurial dialogue for would-be art lovers, who in turn brought those texts to life in private collections across Europe. Though access to such collections was limited to recognized *amateurs*, much art could still be seen in churches and public spaces, but no matter where the art was displayed the “public for art” effectively included only those who were capable of critically informed, aesthetically

disinterested judgment. Conversely those who responded to works of art with inappropriate emotion, who attended to the signified more than the sign, regardless of its setting were marked as ignorant.

Increases in wealth and education in the eighteenth century produced a concomitant expansion of the public for art, as reflected in the growth of the art market and the advent of public exhibitions and museums. Public sales and auctions became an early venue for an art hungry public, and dealers used new marketing strategies – shop windows, newspaper ads, and sales catalogues – to seduce the newly moneyed classes into the pleasures and social advantages of collecting.⁵ Engraving greatly extended the reach of high art and the collecting of drawings became fashionable, but ownership of painting and sculpture required deep pockets. Speaking on behalf of those without collections of their own, critics demanded greater public access to art, and from mid-century their calls were answered. Academies sponsored regular exhibitions of their members' work, the best known being the so-called *Salon* in Paris (from 1737) and the Royal Academy exhibitions in London (1768). On one level temporary exhibitions promoted artists' careers by introducing their work to potential patrons, but they also proved enormously popular with the public at large, attracting a diverse crowd that numbered in the thousands. Overnight the public for art expanded beyond established amateurs and the cozy confines of collector's cabinet and in the process became fragmented and difficult to define, as Coypel tells us. Self-styled critics stepped forward to guide this large and uncertain public. Private entrepreneurs seized on the public's enthusiasm and created commercial venues, such as Sir Ashton Lever's Museum in London (1773) or the Colisée in Paris (1776), offering potent mixtures of art, curiosities, and popular entertainment. Then as now, the blurring of boundaries between high and low culture jeopardized the integrity of the fine arts and provoked disdain from the establishment, though the general public seemed not to care greatly about such distinctions.

For our purposes the most significant innovation in eighteenth-century Europe was the gradual opening of royal and princely collections to an increasingly broad cross-section of the public. Just as commercial entrepreneurs capitalized on public hunger for entertainment, so governments recognized the propaganda value accruing from making dynastic art collections accessible. In the middle decades of the century, private and princely collections in Paris, Rome, Florence, London, Stockholm, Vienna, Dresden, Dusseldorf, Kassel, and elsewhere, opened to the public with

varying degrees of liberality.⁶ Accessible and well-ordered collections, indicative in themselves of a ruler's taste and enlightenment, seemed all the more so when offered to his people as a means of public instruction. Patronage of museums and related institutions for the public good replaced ceremonial pomp and grandiose monuments as the Age of Absolutism gave way to the Age of Enlightenment. Responsibility for the collections was entrusted to the same class of advisors and dealers that had helped form them, giving rise to the prototype of the modern museum curator. Once opened to the public, royal collections came to be seen as national patrimony, stewardship of which became a measure of good government. These fundamental transitions, part and parcel of the evolution towards modern nationalism, occurred at different rates in different countries, but the crucial moment was undoubtedly the French Revolution and the creation of the Louvre as the paradigmatic public art museum.

Founded in 1793 at the height of the Revolution, the Louvre was the embodiment of liberty, equality, and fraternity.⁷ The museum was housed in a royal palace turned palace of the people; its collection of paintings, sculptures, and drawings was the confiscated and nationalized property of Church, Crown, and exiled aristocrats. Admission was free to all and shared enjoyment of the nation's new found artistic heritage aimed to cement the bonds of equality and citizenship. But Revolutionary rhetoric notwithstanding, the stratified publics of the *ancien régime* could not so easily be made one. "The lowest classes of the community" did come to the Louvre in significant numbers, as foreign visitors were quick to note, but their physical appearance and inability to respond appropriately to the high art on view made them conspicuous.⁸ Even Republican journals told jokes at their expense, inaugurating a long tradition of satirizing the uninitiated, and revealing the true bourgeois underpinnings of the museum (and the Revolution itself).⁹ At odds with the symbolic role of the Louvre as embodiment of a regenerated, egalitarian society was its value as showcase of Republican culture. To counter the impression of an anarchic society governed by mob rule, summary justice, and contempt for tradition, the Louvre presented itself as the supreme manifestation of aesthetic ideals shared by all civilized Europeans. At least as important as the local public, therefore, were educated foreign tourists who would take away with them a lasting image of canonical masterpieces preserved and displayed according the highest standards. To ensure that they did, a number of days each week were set aside for their exclusive

enjoyment. Tourists flocked to the Louvre, as they have done ever since. However, the seasoned travelers among them understood that the museum had altered the way in which people engaged with works of art: the adventure of the Grand Tour and pleasures of private viewing had been displaced by something new and *public*. John Scott remarked that the combined glories of the new museum shone “with a lustre that obscures every thing but itself. In it are amassed the choicest treasures of art, that have been taken from their native and natural seats, to excite the wonder of the crowds instead of the sensibility of the few.”¹⁰ For others, such as the party traveling with John Dean Paul, future banker, knight, and author of *The ABC of Fox Hunting*, the Louvre was little more than a novel spectacle and rendezvous for the exchange of society gossip.¹¹ Balancing the needs of the poor and the elite, the art lover and tourist, democracy and diplomacy, remains a central challenge for art museums and the source of ongoing tension among its publics. It speaks volumes that on July 14, 1989, two hundredth anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, the Louvre was closed to the general public in order to host a special event for visiting dignitaries.

One further public conscientiously served by the Revolutionary Louvre was practicing artists, who, together with tourists, were given privileged access to the museum for the purpose of copying the Old Masters. The study and selective imitation of past art had been a cornerstone of artistic theory and training for two hundred years and this practice was institutionalized at the Louvre and other museums. Art schools were often associated with and built near art museums well into the twentieth century. But over the past century the decline of copying, the accelerated pace of avant-garde movements, and the reluctance of most museums to invest in contemporary art have together reduced the profile of living artists among the museum’s publics.

In the aftermath of Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo and the repatriation of his war booty, new museums and galleries modeled on the Louvre sprung up all over Europe. The combined political benefits of a public, state-sponsored art museum proved irresistible to the governments of the emerging democratic nation states of the nineteenth century. By the end of the century every capital and virtually every major city in Europe boasted a public art museum of its own. And in every case those museums featured an at times uneasy blend of democratic ideals and elite aesthetic values.

Victorian Ideals

With the gradual integration of museums into the cultural apparatus of the modern state, the question of the public became not so much who was admitted, for in time virtually all were welcome, but how museums could be called upon to shape the public in keeping with perceived political and social needs. In what ways could museum going benefit the public, and thus the nation as a whole? During the Victorian era and beyond, the museum public was commonly represented as an idealized projection of what liberal politicians and social critics hoped it would become. The rhetoric of aspiration informed official discourse and mission statements and tells us more about what a museum aimed to do for its visitors than what it actually did. Throughout the nineteenth century, utility and progress, instruction and innocent recreation, were the watchwords for all public institutions, including art museums. As Gustav Waagen, director of the Berlin Museum, put it in a testimonial to the British Parliament in 1853:

As [a] Gallery is erected at the Nation's expense, it must of course be rendered as generally useful as possible, every one being admitted capable of deriving from it enjoyment or instruction.¹²

For Waagen, everyone did not include those “whose dress is so dirty as to create a smell obnoxious to the other visitors” or babes in arms escorted by their wet nurses. In his opinion, both groups were too plentiful at London’s National Gallery, obliging him “more than once . . . to leave the building.” Waagen’s opinions carried great weight owing to his preeminent status as an art expert and his experience at the helm of the much admired Berlin museum, yet in London, rather than dismiss the indigent and the young, it was precisely for their benefit that new initiatives in museum policy were developed.¹³ The esteem of international connoisseurs continued to matter, but pressing social needs made the Victorian museum above all an engine of social and economic progress and national cohesion.

Museum policy in Victorian Britain was driven by the unprecedented challenges arising from the Industrial Revolution. An explosion of urban populations teetering on the edge of poverty, immorality, and anarchy prompted the need for new social controls and systematic education. The

desire to control and civilize the masses was all the more pressing as successive political reforms gave voting rights to larger segments of society. Together with state schools and libraries, it was hoped that museums would contribute to the moral and intellectual refinement of “all classes of the community” and the formation of “common principles of taste,” to quote from a Parliamentary report of 1853.¹⁴ For Matthew Arnold, writing in 1869, a common culture disseminated through educational institutions should take the place of organized religion as the necessary adhesive for the new society in the making.¹⁵ Like Arnold, John Ruskin spoke for many of his time when he advocated the role of museums in educating and controlling “the laboring multitude” by offering an “example of perfect order and perfect elegance... to the disorderly and rude populace.”¹⁶ Both men believed in the top-down imposition of what we would today call canonical values as the means of lifting all people up to a more enlightened level of existence. The embrace of “the raw and unkindled masses of humanity” in the “sweetness and light” of high culture, to quote Arnold, was a preferable solution to “the present difficulties” than the radical alternative put forward by Karl Marx. Socially conscious museums, supported by the state and the rich, would do their share to avoid anarchy and promote the gradual assimilation of the working classes into the bourgeoisie. The hero of Walter Besant’s novel *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* (1883) took the belief in the softening effect of culture to the point of caricature when he insisted that the arts could tame “the reddest of red hot heads”:

He shall learn to waltz... This will convert him from a fierce Republican to a merely enthusiastic Radical. Then he shall learn to sing in part: this will drop him down into advanced liberalism. And if you can persuade him to... engage in some Art, say painting, he will become, quite naturally, a mere conservative.¹⁷

London’s National Gallery went beyond the museums of Paris and Berlin by actively encouraging visits by the laboring classes. More than the symbolic benefits of citizenship, working class visitors would now enjoy escape from what Charles Kingsley called “the grim city-world of stone and iron, smoky chimneys, and roaring wheels”¹⁸ into the pure and uplifting realm of great art. Despite Waagen’s concerns that the smoky chimneys and noxious breath of the poor threatened the nation’s pictures, the gallery remained in central London within reach of the grim city-

world of stone and iron. A survey of area businesses discovered that the gallery was indeed a popular venue among neighboring tradesmen and workers. Visits were organized by the Working Men's Club and Institute, and the *Pall Mall Gazette* published a guide aimed at laborers that went through many editions from the 1880s.¹⁹

For those with firsthand experience of conditions in London's East End, however, Trafalgar Square was too remote to make a difference, and rather than oblige the poor to travel to the West End the founders of the Whitechapel Gallery, the Reverend Samuel Barnett and his wife, Henrietta, brought high art to the poor. Starting in the early 1880s, the Barnetts organized an annual exhibition of paintings borrowed from artists and collectors that aimed to stimulate moral sentiments, patriotism, and a feeling for beauty among the residents of the East End slums and settlements houses. As the Vicar of St. Jude's, Whitechapel, Barnett spoke with authority when he said that "pictures in the present day take the place of [biblical] parables."²⁰ By his reckoning 95 percent of the local population did not attend church; organized religion had lost its moral force where it was most needed.²¹ Open every day, including Sundays, for two to three weeks around Easter, the exhibitions proved enormously successful. In its first year, 1881, the exhibition drew 10,000 visitors; a decade later attendance had risen to 73,000. In 1898, the temporary exhibitions became the basis of a permanent gallery (the present Whitechapel Gallery) erected alongside the public library. For her part, Henrietta Barnett was an important advocate of philanthropy and among the first to suggest that women had a special role to play in outreach efforts in museums and galleries. "Why should the poor spend their hardly earned pence in taking the journey to see treasures the beauty of which they do not half understand, having never been educated to see and appreciate them?" she asked. If women devoted themselves to bringing "beauty home to the lives of the poor," through the loan of pictures or by taking "groups of her poor friends to see galleries or exhibitions," "they would find a field of work but yet little trodden, a wealth of flower-rewards only waiting to be plucked."²² Women would soon follow her example by becoming the mainstay of education departments and volunteer programs in twentieth-century museums.

Alongside these efforts to popularize high art, an equally powerful variation on the museum theme took shape in the form of the South Kensington Museum (later Victoria & Albert Museum), founded in the West End of London in 1857.²³ While public museums and libraries of all

sorts contributed to the moral and intellectual refinement of the people, the special needs of modern industry could be met with a new brand of museum devoted to applied arts and crafts. Where traditional art museums supported the training of painters and sculptors, the applied arts museum targeted the makers and consumers of new manufactured goods with a view to raising standards of domestic taste and stimulating the nation's economy. The museum was the brainchild of Henry Cole and built on the popular success and implicit challenges to native industry of the Great Exhibition of 1851, staged in the Crystal Palace in nearby Hyde Park. The exhibition's success suggested the great social and economic benefits that could follow from a permanent display along the same lines, while demonstrating as well that "the largest masses of people may recreate themselves, even in the neighbourhood of London, with propriety and freedom from moral harm."²⁴

To be of maximum utility to manufacturers, objects were arranged by type: metalwork, pottery, textiles, and so on. They were chosen from around the world based on criteria of good taste and design, rather than rarity, authenticity, or monetary value. Where originals could not be had, copies sufficed. Promotion of everyday aesthetics and the conscious rejection of the art connoisseur's priorities contributed to making the South Kensington Museum the most popular museum in Britain. Annual attendance rose from 456,000 in 1857 to over a million in 1870. The combination of free admission, evening hours, and a popular holiday could boost single day attendance above 20,000.

Though the main impetus for South Kensington was economic, Cole shared the view that museums would improve public mores by providing a wholesome recreational alternative to procreation and the pub. "Let the working man get his refreshment there in company with his wife and children" he told an audience in Liverpool in 1875; "don't leave him to find his recreation in bed first, and in the public house afterwards."²⁵ Cole took his message on the road following the success of South Kensington, for it was his hope that "every centre of 10,000 people will have its museum" and that thereby "the taste of England will revive [among] all classes of the people."²⁶ Just as medieval England once "had its churches far and wide," so the modern world would have its engines of social reform in the form of museums.²⁷ Surveying Britain in the late 1880s, Thomas Greenwood found that Cole's example had taken root. Greenwood's book, *Museums and Art Galleries* (1888), among the first texts devoted to the subject, documents the extraordinary spread of museum culture brought

about by the collaboration of civic effort and philanthropic largesse. New museums in cities across the industrial heartland, in Sheffield, Preston, Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham, gave particular cause for optimism. Like the men he found running those institutions, Greenwood was inspired by the ideas of Cole, Ruskin, and Arnold to believe that museums would foster in the public, including the working classes, or at least the “most intelligent” of them, a “craving” for knowledge, “a reverential sense of the extent of knowledge possessed by his fellow man,” “the duties and privileges of citizenship,” and a pride in the nation.²⁸ Though Greenwood believed the state should support museums, as it did schools, the police and the maintenance of public roads, he celebrated the generosity of local businessmen, describing gifts to, and of, museums as “twice blessed,”²⁹ blessing him that gives and the public that continues to receive long after the donor’s death.

As we might expect given the capitalist underpinnings and trickle-down aesthetics of the Victorian museum, the ideal public consisted of those most eager to help themselves. Virtually everyone who spoke on the subject agreed with Ruskin when he said that museums, while instructive for the multitude, must not be “encumbered by the idle, or disgraced by the disreputable.” He wrote to a correspondent in Leicester:

You must not make your Museum a refuge against the rain or ennui, nor let into perfectly well-furnished, and . . . palatial rooms, the utterly squalid and ill-bred portion of the people. There should indeed be refuges for the poor from rain and cold, and decent rooms accessible to indecent persons . . . but neither of these charities should be part of the function of a Civic Museum.³⁰

The setting for Ruskin’s own model museum at Walkley was carefully chosen. Located on the outskirts of Sheffield, “only two miles away from the black heart of the grimy kingdom of industry . . . the flames and smoke and sordid ugliness of Steelopolis,” as one journalist put it, it offered workers a refreshing and useful respite from daily toil.³¹ While many other industrial cities were well qualified for his experiment in cultural uplift, Ruskin chose south Yorkshire because he believed its people were possessed above others of the old English virtues of honesty and piety and thus especially likely to want to improve themselves.³² To discourage the idle, only those who were prepared to walk two miles uphill to reach the museum on their day off reaped its rewards.

Excluding the squalid and ill-bred was as much for the benefit of the aspiring laborer as for the comfort of the privileged, for, as Tony Bennett has argued, the Victorian museum was a “space of emulation” where watching others and being seen was as important as scrutinizing the art. To the extent that museums functioned as an instrument “for the self-display of bourgeois-democratic” values, they had to ensure an environment in which appropriate civil behavior was encouraged and its opposite forbidden.³³ For Arnold, the purpose of culture was “to do away with classes; to make all live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light,” which in effect entailed the eventual “embourgeoisement” of society.³⁴ To achieve societal progress, “all our fellow-men, in the East End of London and elsewhere, we must take along with us in the progress towards perfection”³⁵ and this could best be achieved by helping those who most wanted to help themselves. “The best man is he who most tries to perfect himself, and the happiest man is he who most feels that he is perfecting himself,” said Arnold.³⁶ It is essential to note that, for Arnold, the spread of culture would address not only the brute ignorance of the working classes but also the shallow materialism of the expanding middle classes. The problem was particularly acute in Protestant countries where industrial progress had been greatest and the “temptation to get quickly rich and to cut a figure in the world” had become a corrosive force. Material wealth was not an end in itself to be pursued for individual satisfaction but the means to lift all towards an “ideal of human perfection and happiness.”³⁷ The beauty of philanthropy was, and remains, that it allowed those who supported museums to prove that they themselves were not philistines even as they discharged their civic duty by lifting those around them towards the light.

The Victorian museum rode the tide of progress and optimism but problems were there for those who looked closely enough. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, if not sooner, many believed that the South Kensington model had failed to inspire better industrial design, much less alleviate the demeaning nature of mechanized labor. Few industries encouraged their designers to study at the museum, while its West End location deterred visits from the artisan class it was designed to serve; Thomas Greenwood observed that South Kensington was mostly patronized by the well-to-do residents of the borough.³⁸ Others faulted the logic of the South Kensington system by arguing that examples of past design could not inspire, and could even deaden future innovation; the painter Hubert von Herkomer declared “William Morris had done more in a few years to promote true decorative art than had been done by South

Kensington during the whole of its existence”³⁹ By century’s end the South Kensington Museum, renamed the Victoria & Albert Museum in 1899, focused increasingly on collecting fine objects and serving a curious, antiquarian public, as it has done ever since.

With respect to the art museum’s contribution to a society joined as one by a common culture, the challenge was, as Arnold recognized, making art a means of unification rather than “an engine of social and class distinction, separating its holder, like a badge or title, from other people who have not got it,” as it had been in the past.⁴⁰ Yet in a society still dominated by class, in which art and cultural knowledge continued to circulate as an elite commodity and museums depended on the rich for support, it was at best highly idealistic to expect art to cease to function as a badge of privilege. Indeed a society that encouraged self-improvement needed tangible criteria to measure effort, and museum-going and demonstrable assimilation of culture was clearly one. The goal of museum advocates was to produce a society in which a working-class family outing to a museum on a Sunday afternoon or perhaps of an evening became a natural activity. Here is how Henry Cole envisaged the benefits of evening hours at South Kensington:

The working man comes to this Museum from his one or two dimly lighted cheerless rooms, in his fustian jacket, with his shirt collars a little trimmed up, accompanied by his threes, and fours, and fives of little fustian jackets, a wife, in her best bonnet, and a baby, of course, under her shawl. The looks of surprise and pleasure of the whole party when they first observe the brilliant lighting inside the Museum show what a new, acceptable, and wholesome excitement this evening entertainment affords to all of them.⁴¹

Quite apart from the effort and expense entailed by such an expedition, the experience of pleasure would surely have been diminished by the painful sensation of being out of place and the prospect of returning home to those dimly lighted cheerless rooms. Though many nineteenth-century images of the museum public bodied forth Cole’s ideal (Fig. 1), an equal number satirized the inadequacy of the novice’s response, his faulty comprehension, and the meanness of his attire.⁴² The space of emulation was also a space of contempt and condescension; the hard won *politesse* of the bourgeoisie was not graciously forsaken in the interests of class harmony. Furthermore, the bourgeois ideal of elevated aesthetic contemplation, witnessed in Hazlitt’s famous account of the Angerstein collection

– “We are transported to another sphere...we breathe the empyrean air....The business of the world at large, and of its pleasures, appear like a vanity and an impertinence. What signify the hubbub, the shifting scenery, the folly, the idle fashions without, when compared to the solitude,...the unfading forms within”⁴³ – became difficult to achieve when the Angerstein pictures went to the National Gallery and the presence of laborers and wet nurses tainted the empyrean air with noxious fumes. On those days most popular with the broad public, the likes of Hazlitt and Waagen were inclined to stay at home. For utilitarians like Greenwood, “art should not be approached as something unusual...for the aristocratic few, and not for the many,”⁴⁴ but for the true art lover it was precisely what made art unusual, rarefied, and difficult to grasp that mattered.

As for the objects of Victorian philanthropy, the working poor, anecdotal evidence suggests that the material differences of class were not easily left behind at the museum’s threshold, obliterated by the bright lights and opulence of what was on display. Henrietta Barnett, eavesdropping at the Whitechapel in the hope of gleaning evidence of some good rubbing off on her East End flock, tired of people wondering how much the pictures were worth and at times overheard the voice of daily struggle:

Lesbia, by Mr. J. Bertrand, explained as “A Roman Girl musing over the loss of her pet bird,” was commented on by, “Sorrow for her bird, is it? I was thinking it was drink that was in her” – a grim indication of the opinion of the working classes of their “betters”; though another remark on the same picture, “Well, I hope she will never have a worse trouble,” showed a kindlier spirit and perhaps a sadder experience.⁴⁵

Following a visit to the same gallery in 1903, Jack London concluded that the poor “will have so much more to forget than if they had never known or yearned.”⁴⁶

Another impediment to popular instruction was the growing clutter of the Victorian museum. Swelling collections and increased attendance raised visitor fatigue and diminished the visibility of what were considered the most important objects on display. William Stanley Jevons, though a staunch advocate of public libraries, had his doubts about the utility of museums owing to the failure to make them comprehensible and appealing to the broad public. In particular he lamented the lack of attention paid to presentation and the visitor’s physical comfort. At

South Kensington, for example, “The general mental state produced by such vast displays is one of perplexity and vagueness, together with some impression of sore feet and aching heads.”⁴⁷ Jevons led a growing chorus of voices recommending simpler displays, clearer organization, and public education. Recognizing different publics with different needs, Jevons and others called for a distinction to be made between public galleries featuring highlights for general consumption and research collections containing everything else for the use of students and scholars. One Professor Herdman of Liverpool went so far to say that “It should always be remembered that public museums are intended for the use and instruction of the general public . . . and not the scientific man or the student.”⁴⁸ Not only should the public’s attention be focused on masterpieces, but the underlying system of classification should also be made visible. For Greenwood, “the usefulness of a museum does not depend entirely so much on the number or intrinsic value of its treasures as upon proper arrangement, classification, and naming of the various specimens in so clear a way that the uninitiated may grasp quickly the purpose and meaning of each particular specimen.”⁴⁹ This attitude was taken to an extreme in the 1890s by the Smithsonian’s George Brown Goode when he reduced the museum to “a collection of instructive labels each illustrated by a well-selected specimen.”⁵⁰

Beyond the instructional value of individual labels, however, the proper classification of public collections had the virtue of inculcating a respect for the principle of order within society itself. “The first function of a museum,” wrote Ruskin, “is to give an example of perfect order and perfect elegance . . . to the disorderly and rude populace.”⁵¹ The museum with its spatialized divisions and hierarchies constituted a mirror of the well-disciplined social sphere. Visual symmetry, concise presentation, and clear labels were all vital, but so was the demonstration of progress through the sequencing of objects and management of traffic flow. A stroll through the well-ordered museum illustrated human progress in all fields of endeavor and induced a new respect for institutions. Once more, Thomas Greenwood:

The working man or agricultural laborer who spends his holiday in a walk through any well-arranged museum cannot fail to come away with a deeply-rooted and reverential sense of the extent of knowledge possessed by his fellow-man. It is not the objects themselves that he sees there, and wonders at, that causes this impression, so much as the order and evident science he

cannot but recognize in the manner in which they are grouped and arranged.⁵²

The respective achievements of different nations could be measured, and manipulated to show a home field advantage. Fostering pride in local achievement has always been a function of museums and rationale for funding. Meanwhile, the very capacity to produce “art” distinguished the European races from those lower down on the evolutionary ladder whose cultural artifacts became the domain of anthropology and the natural history museum. Patriotic instruction motivated the spread of “period rooms” around the turn of the century following the success of similar national displays at World Fairs. Combining arts and crafts in an evocative setting (be it authentic, simulated or a combination of the two), period rooms captured regional characteristics threatened by the homogenizing pressure of modernization. More directly related to everyday life than paintings and sculpture, they proved popular with the public and were thought to stimulate appreciation for domestic consumer goods.⁵³ Justus Brinckmann, acknowledging the failure of the applied arts museum to improve industrial design, nevertheless insisted that period rooms and the combined display of art and furniture introduced to German art museums by Wilhelm von Bode would raise “the general taste of the nation” by appealing to “the non-professional classes of the people.”⁵⁴ Recognition of the patriotic potential of period rooms quickly spread across Europe to the United States where their popular appeal qualified them for the indoctrination of new immigrants. “Through sight they may come to know our land and to appreciate and respect its beauty, its history, and its principles,” wrote Alfred Mayer in 1903.⁵⁵ Twenty years later the new American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum in New York justified itself in the following terms:

Traditions are one of the integral assets of a nation. Much of America today has lost sight of its traditions . . . Many of our people are not cognizant of our traditions and the principles for which our fathers struggled and died. The tremendous changes in the character of our nation, and the influx of foreign ideas utterly at variance with those held by the men who gave us the Republic, threaten and, unless checked, may shake its foundations . . . The American Wing cannot fail to revive those memories, for here for the first time is a comprehensive, realistic setting for the traditions so dear to us and so invaluable for the Americanization of our many people, to whom much of our history is little known.⁵⁶

The Progressive Era: Museums for a New Century

The issues and challenges facing the Victorian art museum were transported to the United States where the light of progress and social reform burned bright and merged in the early twentieth century with the ideology of the Progressive era. Befitting a land of merchants and manufacturers, America's first museums in New York and Boston were modeled on South Kensington as a "resource whence artisanship and handicraft of all sorts may better and beautify our dwellings, our ornaments, our garments, our implements of daily life."⁵⁷

Boston's Museum of Fine Arts (1870) had as its motto "Art, Industry, Education" and was built, like South Kensington, in terracotta in a Ruskinian Gothic style next to the public library. By the end of the century, however, the museum had outgrown its location, the South Kensington philosophy was in retreat, and its wealthy patrons had begun to think the city deserved better than a utilitarian collection of plaster casts and applied arts. In the first decade of the twentieth century a new museum was built, this time in granite and in the Greek style, at some distance from the city center. Original works of art took the place of casts and applied arts and aesthetics replaced practical utility as the guiding philosophy. Museums "are not now asking how they may aid technical workers," wrote Benjamin Ives Gilman, the museum's long-time secretary and chief advocate of the new aesthetic philosophy: "The problem of the present is the democratization of museums: how they may help to give all men a share in the life of the imagination."⁵⁸ Recalling Matthew Arnold's endorsement of culture as the antidote to the soulless materialism of the modern age, all too prevalent in America, Gilman rejected any suggestion of utility and insisted that the proper business of the art museum was to "transplant us amid perfection" through the contemplation of superior examples of past art.⁵⁹ Where the South Kensington Museum had contributed to industry and progress, the value of original art for Gilman and fellow aesthetes lay in the emotional, compensatory power of timeless, transcendent beauty. At the opening of the Cleveland Museum in 1916, Charles Hutchinson, President of the Art Institute of Chicago, stated that "the principal function of an art museum is the cultivation and appreciation of beauty," a "vital factor in the...materialistic age in which we live."⁶⁰ A year later Mariana van Rensselaer recommended museums to "combat the ambitious materialism...the bread-earning routine and

money-grasping adventure” of contemporary life.⁶¹ Set apart from the social and economic pressures of contemporary society, the art museum was a respite from and antidote to the modern world. The idea was not new, as we have seen, but it acquired added urgency in the face of rapid modernization and world wars, and now its therapeutic benefits extended to both the working poor and the burgeoning middle classes (who were greatly in need of culture, according to Arnold).⁶² For wealthy collectors and museum patrons, the purchase and subsequent donation to museums of eternal and priceless art absolved the taint of materialism and conspicuous consumption, while simultaneously yielding the social distinction that came with art.⁶³ The extent to which this universal conception of art took hold in the twentieth century and became an article of faith among museum men may be measured in remarks made by the much respected curator and director Otto Wittmann in 1974:

In these precarious and unsettled times in which we all live, there is a great hunger for a sense of lasting significance. We live among objects designed to be bought, used and thrown away without ever acquiring any sense of identity or relationship to ourselves. The very nature of art and of the museums which preserve and present works of art reassures people of the continuity of human thought and of the importance of their place in the vast stream of significant developments over centuries of time. A Mayan figure in Manhattan, a T’ang figure in Toledo... can tell us much about humanity.... These silent witnesses of the past can bridge the gap of time and place if we will let them.... The universal truths of all art should be shared.⁶⁴

For Gilman as for Wittmann, the use value of museums lay in their ability to transport the viewer from the here and now to a higher, abstract plane of essential humanity, hence the validation of selected world art traditions in twentieth-century museums.

The challenge to Gilman and subsequent museum professionals was to make those silent witnesses speak and to ensure that they could be shared by all. In practical terms, that meant making works of art easily accessible to the eye through the manner of their presentation and then helping people to appreciate what they saw. It was taken for granted that only authentic works of the best quality had sufficient power to serve as messengers of universal truth and beauty. In sum, the primary goals of museology in the modern era amounted to the selection, display, and interpretation of art deemed worthy of preservation; and where contro-

versy has arisen, it inevitably concerns the criteria of selection, mode of display, and nature of interpretation. Each of these issues had been aired before – quality and authenticity had always been important to art lovers and the arrangement and interpretation of art much preoccupied the Victorians, as we have seen – but they were combined at the new museum in Boston after 1909 in a way that struck contemporaries as novel and even revolutionary.⁶⁵ While secondary objects were relegated to reserve collections designed for scholars and students, the most important works of art were displayed in spacious and well lighted public galleries where “nothing may attract the eye of the visitor from the objects therein displayed. In a word, installation has been carefully studied to help the visitor to see and enjoy each object for its own full value.”⁶⁶

Under Gilman’s leadership the first systematic education programs came into being. In 1916, for example, the “docent” service he had invented twenty years earlier employed some thirty trained guides and served 4,300 visitors (“of both sexes and all classes”)⁶⁷ without charge; during the year the museum accommodated 5,600 school children and their teachers, and a further 2,380 students who came on their own. Teacher training was offered, also free of charge, and museum staff visited every school in Boston and distributed some 25,000 reproductions for classroom use. During the summer 6,800 underprivileged children were bused to the museum from settlement houses, and a further 850 children attended story hour on Saturday afternoons (repeated on Sundays for Jewish children).⁶⁸ The effort to cultivate interest among the young was particularly forward looking. “If the children of Boston can learn to enjoy works of art as children,” wrote the Director, Arthur Fairbanks, “a more wide and real and intelligent enjoyment of art may be expected in another generation than exists today.”⁶⁹ Sunday opening hours at Boston and other museums, though controversial at first for religious reasons, greatly expanded the public. “The Sunday visitors especially represent the American public at its best,” wrote Gilman; “All sorts and conditions of men contribute their quota to the well-behaved, interested, almost reverent throng.”⁷⁰ From 1918 admission fees were abolished (the museum had been free hitherto only on certain days) to encourage adult visitors and attendance soon doubled. In 1924, Gilman’s last year at the museum, attendance rose above 400,000 and more than 9,000 people took advantage of docent tours. As at many other art museums in America in the early decades of the twentieth century, the educational services at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts equaled if not exceeded what is on offer today.

For all Gilman's good intentions and energetic initiatives, his dogmatic stance and high minded aesthetic philosophy made him an easy target for those who disagreed with him, especially those who clung to the utilitarian ideals passed down from the South Kensington Museum. For Gilman, art museums allowed people to see and even feel beauty, and interpretation, provided by lectures and handbooks, facilitated what he called "close companionship in beholding." The docent's task was not to offer a watered down art history but to direct the viewer's attention to "the vital elements in a work of art, . . . insuring that it is really perceived in detail, and taken in its entirety." Teaching everyone to become a "beholder of works of art" was not only possible but necessary because it was "left aside in our educational system."⁷¹ However, for John Cotton Dana, Gilman's contemporary and antagonist, institutions like Boston's Museum of Fine Arts were simply "gazing museums" serving the "culture fetishes" of the privileged classes.⁷² Following Thorstein Veblen, Dana saw the collecting of art and patronage of art museums as a prime example of "the conspicuous waste of the rich" and "another obvious method of distinguishing their life from that of the common people."⁷³ The air of wealth and hushed reverence combined with the "splendid isolation of a distant park" made art museums the antithesis of the useful, community-based institution Dana believed all museums should be. Where Gilman advocated isolation and silence as necessary conditions for contemplation and respite from which we emerge "strengthened for that from which it has brought relief," Dana insisted that museums must serve their constituents through active involvement in their everyday lives. Instead of importing European art and values, a museum must be grounded in its community and respond to its specific needs. Ideas more than objects, the present not the past, material progress not spiritual uplift must guide the modern American museum; the "undue reverence for oil paint" and "unique and costly objects" promoted by the art museum must give way to "the arts of living" and "the display of objects which have quite a direct bearing on . . . daily life."⁷⁴ The museum founded by Dana in Newark in 1909 on these principles became (and remains) a model of the community museum.

Though Gilman and Dana differed in fundamental respects and defended seemingly alternative museum ideals, they also shared much in common. Both men believed that museums were democratic and democratizing institutions with a moral responsibility to educate the broad public; though they disagreed on the content and purpose of museum education, they both vigorously supported school programs and docent

services, and their example was followed in museums across the country and abroad. While Dana mocked Gilman's contention that aesthetic instruction could produce ecstasy in the previously uninitiated or dispel the public's desire to understand an object's cultural significance, others criticized Dana for his refusal to grant the power of beauty and wonder embodied in great works of art.⁷⁵ Most art museums from the 1920s pursued a middle course between the two philosophies, blending appreciation and history in their educational programs.⁷⁶ Both shared a concern for visitor psychology and the ways in which the museum environment affected an individual's experience. Gilman's training in psychology inspired the first empirical study of museum-going and led him to implement changes in lighting and hanging, seating and signage in the interests of alleviating what he termed "museum fatigue." Dana was more concerned with developing an individual's skills for daily living in a given community, but both implicitly addressed the question of how museums could help the individual negotiate his or her way in a complex, shifting world.

Dana and Gilman's commitment to public access also led them to be suspicious of grandiose architecture and the growing scholarly inclinations of museum curators. For Dana, palatial museum architecture, because intentionally reminiscent of noble residences, could only intimidate ordinary visitors, and for Gilman the building and its decoration threatened to overwhelm the art on view. By the 1920s the museum profession had become decidedly anti-architectural. The Grecian temples of Boston, Philadelphia, and Cleveland, though only recently completed, seemed dangerously anachronistic to the generation of curators who came after Gilman and Dana. As Richard Bach, curator at the Metropolitan Museum in New York put it: "to make [the museum] palatial, pompous or grand is to build up a kind of psychological barrier to its greatest use."⁷⁷ New museums, such as the Fogg Art Museum (1927) and the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA, 1939), accommodating inside and out to both visitors and works of art, became the models for the modern age, and they remained so until Frank Lloyd Wright's iconoclastic Guggenheim Museum (1960) rekindled the symbolic potential of museum architecture.

The curatorial backlash against architecture was accompanied, however, by a growing scholarly introversion among curators that both Gilman and Dana feared would have negative implications for the museum public. The need to develop consistent standards of classification and display, and to discriminate between primary objects for public consumption and

secondary objects of interest to scholars, first recognized in the Victorian era, led to the formation of national and international museum associations and the emergence of a professional identity for museum curators.⁷⁸ In the case of art museums that identity took shape around the ideals of aesthetic judgment and connoisseurship, the ability to tell good from bad and authentic from fake. As we have seen, these criteria had long defined the true *amateur* of art, but they hardened into professional criteria secured by university degrees and verified by museum publications. The quality and originality of new acquisitions became, and arguably still remains, the ultimate measure of the curator; conversely, according to Thomas Munro, Director of the Cleveland Museum in the 1940s, “there is nothing more damaging to his prestige than buying a fake.”⁷⁹

Perhaps the most important figure in this process of professionalization was Paul Sachs, who founded the famous Museum Course at Harvard that ran from the 1920s through the 1950s and was responsible for training many of the most powerful museum men (and a few women) of modern times.⁸⁰ (Sachs was also involved in the creation of the Courtauld Institute of Art in London, which in effect performed a similar service for the museum world in Britain.) Among the skills Sachs thought necessary to run a successful museum were a solid (preferably Ivy League) education, genteel background, good social skills (particularly useful for raising money and negotiating with collectors and dealers), and bureaucratic competence; but the ideal curator must also possess sound connoisseurial judgment and scholarly potential. As he told the dignitaries assembled for the opening of MOMA in 1939, only by defending the highest standards of quality and scholarship could the museum move forward:

Let us be ever watchful to resist pressure to vulgarize and cheapen our work through the mistaken idea that in such fashion a broad public may be reached effectively. In the end a lowering of standards must lead to mediocrity and indeed to the disintegration of the splendid ideals that have inspired you and the founders. . . . The Museum of Modern Art has a duty to the great public. But in serving an elite it will reach . . . the great general public by means of work done to meet the most exacting standards of an elite.⁸¹

Needless to say, meeting the “most exacting standards of the elite” inevitably meant that it was the narrow cut of collectors, critics and fellow museum professionals, and not the general public who constituted the

curator's primary audience. Dana had warned that, "once enamored of rarity," curators were at apt to "become lost in their specialties and forget their museum . . . its purpose . . . [and] their public."⁸² And according to Theodore Low, a pupil of Sachs' who took an unusual turn (for a man) into education, that is precisely what happened. Writing in 1942, Low lamented the failure of American art museums to live up to the democratic promise of their founding charters and laid much of the blame on the seductive "charms of collecting and scholarship."⁸³ The mutual interest of benefactors and directors (drawn from the ranks of curators) in collection building on the European model had reduced education to a "moral quarantine" within the museum, "a necessary but isolated evil."⁸⁴ "As a result museum men have drifted further and further away from the public."⁸⁵ At the root of the problem, Low felt, was the narrow focus on connoisseurship in graduate art history programs; even in Sachs' Museum Course, "the approach to the public" had been ignored in favor of "the training of connoisseurs for curatorial work."⁸⁶ Three years later, the Director of the Metropolitan Museum, Francis Henry Taylor, followed suit by arguing that Americans, "of all the peoples of history, have had a better, more natural, and less prejudiced opportunity to make the museum mean something to the general public," and yet they had failed.

We have placed art . . . both literally and figuratively, on pedestals beyond the reach of the man in the street. . . . He may . . . visit the museum on occasion, but he certainly takes from it little or nothing of what it might potentially offer him. This is nobody's fault but our own. Instead of trying to interpret our collections, we have deliberately high-hatted him and called it scholarship There must be less emphasis upon attribution to a given hand and greater emphasis upon what an individual work of art can mean in relation to the time and place of its creation. . . . There must also be a more generous attitude on the part of the scholar toward the public.⁸⁷

What Taylor and Low were really speaking to is the proper balance between the goals of collecting and interpretation, an equilibrium difficult to establish owing to the imbalanced power structure within the museum: on one side, collectors and directors upholding elite standards inherited from Europe, and on the other, educators mindful of a broad public hungry for knowledge. Low meant it as a compliment when he said of Dana: "He was an American rather than a pseudo-European . . . and thought in broad terms of the American social scene."⁸⁸ Certainly both Taylor and Low were well aware that the 1930s, decade of the New Deal

and the WPA, witnessed an extraordinary expansion of educational activity in American museums, much of it dealing with issues of social relevance and cultural history. Indeed Low quoted prominent museum men such as Victor d'Amico, head of education at MOMA, who believed that "art is an expression of a culture and society" and that "To isolate a work of art from its background and set it up alone in a glass case is to deprive it of the fullness which gives the work significance and beauty."⁸⁹ That tendency to segregate art from life was described by Philip Youtz, Director of the Brooklyn Museum, as the gravest symptom of "museumitis," a disease that could only be cured by "a new kind of art education that shall stress the vital social connection of art." "Appreciation courses have failed," he said, because they neglected "the rich fabric" of a culture and made an "idol" of art.⁹⁰ Before going to Brooklyn, Youtz had run the 69th Street Branch of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, following the example of Dana's branch libraries (significantly Dana began his career in public libraries before moving to Newark). Like Dana, Youtz believed that museums had much to learn from department stores and commercial ventures in their effort to reach the community and he located his branch museum in a storefront opposite a supermarket and a five-and-dime. Objects attractively displayed in street level windows lured passersby and the museum remained open daily until 10 p.m. Whereas at most museums the collection was arranged "according to the tastes and interests of the staff and trustees" and the public encountered only the guards, at the branch museum the interests of "the public at large" were borne in mind and the "staff...maintained intimate contact with the public it serves." "It is high time that museums of all kinds became more definitely oriented toward the public," Youtz concluded. "The aloof policy inherited from old private collections must be abandoned and museums must accept the leadership in public education."⁹¹

Yet Low and Taylor surely knew full well that such efforts amounted to a rear guard action against the rising tide of aestheticism. Everywhere one turned, Newark and Brooklyn excepted, one found Gilman's "appreciative acquaintance" alive and well.⁹² Even museums commended by Low for their educational initiatives, such as the Toledo Museum, revealed a bias for Gilman in their dedication to the "public appreciation of art."⁹³ Under the leadership of Sachs' disciple Alfred Barr, MOMA established new curatorial ideals of quality acquisitions and shows, immaculate installations, and meticulous scholarship. Consistent with the clean, autonomous interiors of the museum, yet evidently at odds with the

philosophy of his education staff, the exhibitions organized by Barr in the 1930s and the exemplary catalogues he wrote to accompany them were steadfastly visual in nature: their aim was to encourage familiarity with the “formal” properties of modern art and the stylistic influences linking one artist and school to another. Meyer Schapiro criticized Barr for his neglect of the social and political contexts for modern art, but Barr was indifferent to such concerns and his example proved enormously influential for later museums.⁹⁴ The intensity of gaze facilitated by the neutral white cube provided the necessary conditions for proper (visual, non-political) consumption of serious painting, and only serious painting could hold up to scrutiny in such conditions.⁹⁵ The autonomy of the work of art found its reflection in the autonomy of the individual viewer left to aesthetic contemplation in a space free of diversion.

As the work of interpretation was left increasingly to education departments, often housed in basements and staffed by women, curators became increasingly concerned with refining conditions of display. An international conference of museum professionals held in Madrid in 1934 revealed an overwhelming consensus in favor of isolating works of art for purely visual consumption. Three years later at the Exposition Internationale in Paris an exhibition displaying the latest trends in museum design noted the movement towards viewing art as an “autonomous, individual [and] purely formal” phenomenon:

The modern sensibility, no longer seeking in a work of art an historical witness but an individual aesthetic phenomenon, has led museums to efface themselves behind the masterpieces they display. Walls stripped of decor are nothing more than an abstract background against which objects may be seen; those objects are well-spaced in order that the visitor may examine each one without distraction, all in keeping with the demands of the modern aesthetic.⁹⁶

Distractions included wall labels and even the voice of the well-meaning docent. Masterpieces spoke for themselves and any attempt to speak on their behalf could only compromise their integrity. Gilman himself had asked: “In a museum of fine arts, are the labels really more important than the exhibits; or are the exhibits more important than the labels?”⁹⁷ When the new Boston museum was under construction Gilman experimented with a gallery without labels: “The impression was that of ideal conditions, surely to be realized in the museum of the future.” Without labels the works of art “were able to create about themselves

a little world of their own, most conducive to their understanding.”⁹⁸ Arthur Melton, a Yale psychologist who studied museums in the 1930s, concluded that what labels there were were written as if “the typical visitor [was] not unlike those individuals who manage museums” and omitted “essential information which is assumed to be the knowledge of everyone.”⁹⁹ The left-leaning museum critic, T. R. Adam, bemoaned the “mystification in this belief in the power of great paintings to communicate abstract ideas of beauty to the uninformed spectator.”¹⁰⁰ But museum professionals were undaunted. In 1945, Kenneth Clark, Director of the National Gallery, London, insisted that with works of art, “the important thing is our direct response to them. We do not value pictures as documents. We do not want to know *about* them; we want to know *them*, and explanations may too often interfere with our direct responses.”¹⁰¹ And the still prevalent approach to labeling is clearly expressed in a publication of 1971 from the Cleveland Museum:

The Museum’s permanent galleries and special exhibitions are designed as quiet areas where the individual visitor can see and respond to the individual work of art. This personal encounter between the viewer and the object is the deep and particular satisfaction a museum offers. Explanatory gallery labels usually keep their text to a minimum to avoid intruding between the visitor and the work of art.¹⁰²

In spite (or because) of its popularity with the untutored public, period décor also fell out of favor with curators as another kind of noise that hindered direct appreciation of great art. Even docent work became a problem. Though gallery tours were in wide use by the 1930s, there was a sense in which active voices in a gallery had the unfortunate effect of drowning out the silent voice of the master. As a pioneer of the docent system, Gilman understood that most people needed instruction to help them appreciate what they saw, yet his support was tinged with regret as “the use of galleries for *vive voce* instruction may become a disturbance of the public peace for him who would give ear to the silent voices therein.”¹⁰³ Similarly, Walter Pach writing in 1948 vigorously defended the broad public use of museums but thought that the spread of education programs threatened “to overshadow [their] original purpose,” which was to collect and display masterpieces. “Today we must leave every person free to form his own convictions,” he concluded, “and the way to do that is

to concentrate on the collections themselves, allowing the masters and the schools to say their say, independent of interpretations by educators.”¹⁰⁴

Education departments were there to stay but Low’s description of their “moral quarantine” was scarcely an exaggeration. In the eyes of some directors and curators, the public itself became a nuisance to be tolerated but not indulged. Take the case of Sir Eric Maclagen, Director of the Victoria & Albert Museum in the 1930s. When asked if his museum had become “a mere museum for connoisseurs and collectors,” he agreed it was a fair description “but for the insertion of the word ‘mere.’”¹⁰⁵ A few years later he had this to say to a gathering of fellow museum professionals:

If we were to be entirely candid as to the view taken by museum officials with regard to the public I fear we should be bound to admit that there are occasions when we have felt that what is wanted might be described in the language of the cross-word puzzle, as a noun of three letters beginning with A and ending with S. We humour them when they suggest absurd reforms, we placate them with small material comforts, but we heave sighs of relief when they go away and leave us to our jobs.¹⁰⁶

And lest we dismiss such sentiments as an attempt at after-dinner humor from an aloof British aristocrat, we find much the same relief expressed by John Walker, Director of the National Gallery, Washington, no less, as he anticipated the departure of the day’s last visitors:

When the doors are closed a metamorphosis occurs, and the director or curator is transformed into a prince strolling alone through his own palace with an occasional bowing watchman accompanied by his dog the only obsequious courtier. The high vaulted ceilings, shadowy corridors, soaring columns, seemed to have been designed solely for his pleasure, and all the paintings and sculpture, those great achievements of human genius, to exist for no one else. Then, undisturbed by visitors, he experiences from time to time marvelous instants of rapt contemplation when spectator and work of art are in absolute communion. Can life offer any greater pleasure than these moments of complete absorption in beauty?¹⁰⁷

If characteristic images of the Victorian museum show healthy crowds seeking wholesome recreation, the twentieth-century curatorial ideal in the form of the “installation shot” rids the gallery of visitors altogether leaving only the disembodied eye to roam freely without distraction.¹⁰⁸

Given that social history had found a natural home in the art museums of the Soviet Union (where “art for art’s sake” and connoisseurship were proclaimed incompatible with Marxism) and was preferred in the USA by labor unions and populist educators, is it any wonder that it had so little purchase with western collectors and curators?¹⁰⁹ And what support it had was washed away in the wake of World War II and the rise of the Cold War, an era that sealed the ascendance of a universal conception of art in landmark exhibitions such as MOMA’s *Timeless Aspects of Modern Art* (1948–9) and *The Family of Man* (1955).¹¹⁰ In 1955 Richard Nixon, Vice President and leading McCarthyite, gave the keynote address at the American Association of Museums. Where art had been reduced to propaganda under Nazi and Communist regimes, in the west it became the embodiment of individual freedom, and this freedom extended to the public to enjoy a museum’s contents without interpretation, at least of a social nature. In art history graduate programs social art history experienced the same eclipse. At Harvard the famed Museum Course was taken over by Jakob Rosenberg who directed the program, and future curators, still further towards connoisseurship.

Though perhaps not intended, the triumph of silent contemplation in the museum had the effect of reversing the social activism of the 1920s and ’30s and with it the appeal of museums for the uninitiated. In Britain, an official report on the arts of 1946 found that museum attendance had dropped 25 percent in the previous twenty years and concluded: “the numbers might be very much greater if the directors and their staffs were as interested in attracting and educating the public at large as they are in the specialist needs of students and connoisseurs.”¹¹¹ One wonders if the same causes were behind a similar decline registered at the Metropolitan Museum over the same period, notwithstanding extensive educational programming. An intriguing survey carried out by Low at the Met in the early 1940s found that a clear majority of visitors, just under half, favored aesthetic appreciation in the way of gallery instruction; only five percent asked for “art and daily living.” Low doesn’t tell us how the survey was conducted or who was asked and it would be wrong to assume a direct correlation between survey response and socioeconomic status to the effect that only one in twenty visitors were working class. On the other hand, Low had no doubt that the Met’s visitors came disproportionately from the “upper circles” and he noted furthermore that educational services at all art museums tended to be monopolized by the “upper layer of cultured residents,” hampering the efforts of educators to expand

the public.¹¹² Low pleaded with his colleagues to look beyond visitor statistics at who comes to museums and what they derive from the experience, but his words fell on deaf ears for close to thirty years.

Postmodernism: The End of Innocence?

It is a mark of how completely social activism had disappeared from museum discourse that its return in the late 1960s, following widespread social unrest and financial crisis, seemed radical and without precedent. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that while many education programs carried on as they had for decades and directors and trustees continued to believe they were serving their institutions and communities, the world beyond the museum had changed dramatically and many museums, especially ones in urban settings, awoke to find themselves out of touch with social developments.

Recommendations for change came from an unlikely place. In the wake of race riots, anti-war demonstrations, student activism, and presidential reports concluding that America was two countries – privileged and poor, black and white – Thomas Hoving, the ultra-privileged but maverick director of the Metropolitan Museum, used an address to the American Association of Museums (AAM) in 1968 to urge his colleagues to “get ourselves involved and become far more relevant.”¹¹³ His talk was sprinkled with knowing references to the New Left and SDS, “happenings” and zonked out hippies, and he used the word “relevant” no fewer than seven times. “In order to survive, to be relevant,” he wrote, “we must continually re-examine what we are, continually ask ourselves how we can make ourselves indispensable and relevant.”¹¹⁴ In the case of the Met, he went back to the Charter of 1870 and determined that if it were re-written in modern times it would likely not include such liberal talk of embracing all sections of the community. We might argue with Hoving’s generous assessment of his predecessors, but his point was to hold his institution accountable to both the rhetoric of its charter and the social dynamics of his own day. To that end, he promised (and to some extent delivered) changes in education, outreach, staffing (from the trustees to the guards), and exhibition programming.¹¹⁵ For better or worse, Hoving is best remembered for his promotion of the “blockbuster” exhibition and his inaugural show, *Harlem on my Mind*, a bold attempt to bring pressing social issues and underrepresented constituencies crashing into

a mainstream art museum. Everything about the exhibition was miscalculated, from its reliance on documentary photography (not really an art) to its multi-media packaging and frank treatment of race relations in New York, but at bottom the biggest mistake was its desire to force an activist agenda on an unwilling institution.

A more successful experiment in “relevance” was the Anacostia Museum, created in 1967 in Washington, D.C. under the aegis of the Smithsonian Institution and still going strong. Harking back to the idea of the neighborhood branch museum, Anacostia opened in a depressed section of the city. Whereas *Harlem on my Mind* represented the white man’s conception of black history and experience, Anacostia was run by members of the local community, led by John Kinard, and focused on “social issues affecting its constituents and neighbors.”¹¹⁶ The museum was conceived by the Smithsonian’s director, S. Dillon Ripley, who in light of recent upheavals was tested by the problem of how to extend the museum’s benefits to “all our people, those . . . who most deserve to have the fun of seeing, of being in a museum.”¹¹⁷ Though Ripley was himself thoroughly at home in the corridors of high culture (he felt no “generation gap” separating him from the great masterpieces of the past, for example), he understood that owing to their continued dependence on the “dominant forces in the community, the civic boosters and the wealthy,” art museums had neglected various constituencies, including artists and art historians, but above all “the poor people, products of a self-perpetuating disease found in our cities.” He continued:

Such people were neither objects of pride to our civic boosters nor particular objects of concern to our aggressive middle class who had responded to the urge to better themselves. If the art museum had become a symbol only to the community leaders and those conditioned to the concept of getting ahead, who realized that art was a subject of elitist veneration and that culture should be subscribed to and taken in doses like vitamin pills, then of course it had failed.¹¹⁸

Hoving and Ripley’s initiatives were part of a broader trend of self-evaluation and response that preoccupied the museum field in the 1970s and ’80s and once again heightened tensions between the goals of collections care and public outreach found in mission statements. The annual meeting of the AAM in 1970, for example, though punctuated by protests against the Vietnam War and the persecution of the Black Panthers and other political activists, produced an uneasy standoff between the two. On

the one hand, it was recognized that as collections of objects museums “are not those organizations best suited to cope with the social and political concerns of the moment.” On the other hand, “neither are museums, surely, doing everything they might to bring to bear their own special resources on what now shakes the peace of mind of their visitors.”¹¹⁹ High among the demands made of the profession was the “democratization” of museums, all the more imperative given the federal subsidies they received. Nancy Hanks, Chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, concluded: “I do not think we can any longer spend time discussing the role of the museum as a repository of treasures versus its public role. It simply has to be both.”¹²⁰ Further conferences and reports tracked the gradual shift within museums towards public service.¹²¹ Added incentives to move in this direction came from government agencies and private corporations that offered museums, now plagued by rising costs, much needed financial assistance in exchange for increased accountability in the form of higher attendance and more public programming.

The social activism of the period also fuelled revisionist art history and the first wave of academic museum critique. Reviving observations made earlier by Meyer Schapiro, T. R. Adam and others, social art historians criticized museums for “mystifying” art and neglecting the original context and meanings of the objects they displayed. Art appreciation, connoisseurship and formalism became code words for elitism and lost ground in academia to various forms of semiotic and contextual analysis. Notions of genius, quality, tradition, and the canon were denounced as the constructs of a privileged, western ideology. Built on false premises, the argument ran, museums are inherently flawed and illegitimate institutions. Though in fact the “new” art history has left the canon largely unchanged (we still prefer Manet to motorcycles or William Morris), the terms of engagement with it are more theoretical and contextual than connoisseurial or object based, and as a result museums and academia have been pulled apart.¹²² One thing many academics and curators share, however, is a reluctance to deal with the untutored public.

Artists and academics from neighboring disciplines joined the fray. Museums as bastions of tradition had long been a target of avant-garde disdain, but from the 1960s they also became the *subject* of much contemporary art. Conceptual and postmodern artists, including Marcel Broodthaers, Hans Haacke, Louise Lawler, Andrea Fraser, and Fred Wilson, have used visual means to expose the ideological underpinnings

of the art museum, sometimes invading the museum itself to make their point. In the late 1960s the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu undertook an empirical study of art museum visitors and concluded that museums, by assuming knowledge and skills that could only be acquired outside the museum through upbringing and superior education, were the preserve of the privileged and thus served to reinforce class distinctions. Works of art speak for themselves only to those who come to the museum already possessed of the “aesthetic codes” to decipher their mysteries, he argued. Theodore Low and others had said much the same decades earlier but Bourdieu’s analysis struck a chord and became essential reading.¹²³ The anthropologist Margaret Mead joined the chorus of critique by recommending that museums invest in shops, restaurants, and other amenities in an effort to “welcome those people unaccustomed to the way of seeing and being of museums.”¹²⁴

Invest they did, to the point that shops, restaurants and other attractions now seem to vie with art for the visitor’s attention. Related to these developments was the spread of blockbuster exhibitions, which simultaneously increased attendance and revenues. Temporary exhibitions had long been recognized as a means of attracting new visitors, but in the 1970s, following the popular success of Hoving’s *other* blockbusters at the Met, *In the Presence of Kings*, *The Year 1200*, and *Before Cortes*, they became a way of life at most institutions.¹²⁵ At the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, for example, the need to impose admission charges to offset mounting operating costs resulted in significant declines in attendance, the solution to which was to program special exhibitions the public was willing to pay for. Visitors responded in record numbers, and the MFA, like many other museums, has grown dependent on such shows to keep revenues flowing. To house these special events and ancillary services, museums have embarked on extensive physical expansion. I. M. Pei’s West Wing at Boston, opened in 1981, houses special exhibition spaces, three restaurants, a cloakroom, bathrooms, an ATM, an ever-expanding shop, an information desk, and the education department and school reception area (with its own shop-on-wheels for school children). Where once architecture was criticized as a barrier to public use, now new buildings are hailed as democratic and an attraction in themselves. Pei’s Boston wing was described as a “temple of cultural democracy” and during the ’80s his high profile additions to the National Gallery in Washington (East Wing) and the Louvre in Paris (Pyramid) helped to re-define the art museum as a multi-purpose leisure destination.¹²⁶

There can be no doubt that the novel attractions have succeeded in attracting more people. As is well known, annual attendance at art museums continues to rise and outdraws professional sporting events. It would be safe to conclude that those who now come to art museums have never been happier. Nevertheless the new blockbuster culture has been criticized from both left and right, from within and outside the museum. Critics on the left have observed that audiences may have grown but their class profile has not changed. Forty years ago, as visitor numbers began to rise, Rudolph Morris doubted “that larger attendance also means a breakthrough to social classes formerly not affected by the existence of art museums.” He predicted that further increases were likely to be among “individuals of higher socio-economic status and better educational background.”¹²⁷ Precisely so, Alan Wallach has argued: gains in audience size at art museums are the product of a swelling population of educated and affluent “culture consumers” (to borrow the resonant title of Alvin Toffler’s 1964 book) whose appetite for art has been whetted by university art history courses and television specials by the likes of Kenneth Clark and Sister Wendy.¹²⁸ Increasing costs associated with blockbusters (transportation, insurance, publications, etc.) compelled museums to seek financial support from private corporations, which, in return for their investment, expected large audiences, and the more affluent the better. Larger crowds also meant more profit for museums (and area businesses) as popular shows boosted parking fees, retail sales of food and specialized merchandise, and package deals with hotels and airlines. Visitors became customers and populism descended into cynical marketing as museums and corporations both pursued exhibitions that would “sell”; hence the steady diet of Impressionism, mummies, and anything with “gold” in the title. In recent times, these strategies have been taken to their logical postmodern, late-capitalist conclusion by Thomas Krens, the entrepreneurial director of the Guggenheim museums.¹²⁹ Having built the enormously successful new museum in Bilbao and transformed the original Guggenheim into what some would describe as a virtual rental hall for the display of commercial products (most recently, motorcycles and Armani fashion), Krens has now done the unthinkable by taking high art to Las Vegas. In defense of his newest Guggenheim in the land of casinos, he has said “you go where the heathens are,” and his new partner in this enterprise, the director of the Hermitage Museum in Russia, added, turning Marxism on its head in the capital of decadent capitalism, “we work for the masses, and art belongs to the masses.”¹³⁰

Though clearly driven by short-term commercial ambition, these ventures have opened the doors of high culture to new art forms and, arguably, new publics. But at what cost? Krens's critics – and he would seem to have few friends in museums or academe, on the left or right – fear that he is taking the museum the way of commercial television, reducing high culture to the lowest common denominator under the guise of postmodern populism. Whatever sells to the largest number regardless of standards, who comes or what they experience. This has been the argument against mass culture for half a century, but lately it has triggered both a wistful nostalgia for a time when culture seemed to matter to those who cared and a vigorous call to arms. Adam Gopnik, in an article that used the Guggenheim past and present as his example, lamented the “death” of a serious audience in the face of an ephemeral, equalizing buzz culture.¹³¹ Larger attendance does not equal heightened interest, he argued, and those who used to attend serious exhibitions, loyal to the museum because it was theirs, have been lost, squeezed out in the postmodern shuffle. Even liberal minded academics tend to share this view though a fear of sounding elitist makes them reticent.

At the same time, refusing to concede defeat, museum professionals and art critics have rallied around and re-emphasized the centrality of traditional values – aesthetic contemplation, scholarship, collections care – to the art museum's mission. Those values never went away so much as underground in the face of recent activism. The 1984 report *Museums for a New Century* could at one and the same time say that the previous fifteen years had seen unparalleled movement in the direction of “democratization,” access, and involvement “in our nation's social and cultural life” and note the growing gap between education and curatorial departments and an ongoing tendency to keep audiences in the dark about choices that are made.¹³² In other words, while educators had furthered outreach efforts, it was still business as usual among curators; social and political forces had brought the former out of the “moral quarantine” Low had described but left curatorial practices largely unchanged. The two faces of the museum's mission served by parallel branches of the staff, separated from each other by a different ethos, training and different publics. Tensions between the two resurfaced in the early 1960s with the arrival of “mass society.” In an essay responding to recent trends, the Guggenheim's first director, James Johnson Sweeney, railed against the coming of education programs and visitor statistics “simply because museum trustees or perhaps even museum directors are ambitious to

embrace the broadest possible public and, in our democratic age, have not the courage to face the fact that the highest experiences of art are only for the elite who have ‘earned in order to possess.’”¹³³

Resistance continued through the 1970s even as museums adopted, or re-adopted, pro-active outreach efforts. Across the Potomac River from Anacostia, John Walker bemoaned the pursuit of “relevance” and hoped the future would return museums to “their original mission, which once was to assemble and exhibit masterpieces.”¹³⁴ He held fast to the notion, shared by many before and since, that art museums best serve the public by providing secluded spaces for aesthetic contemplation. With Hoving’s Met as well as Anacostia in mind, he declared: “I am indifferent to their function in community relations, in solving racial problems, in propaganda for any cause.”¹³⁵ Though in hosting the *Mona Lisa* at the National Gallery in 1963 he was responsible for one of the most popular exhibitions of all time, he was baffled by the crowds and continued to believe his primary responsibility was to his collection and the small minority who really understood it:

I was, and still am, an elitist, knowing full well that this is now an unfashionable attitude. It was my hope that through education, which I greatly promoted when I became a museum director myself, I might increase the minority I served; but I constantly preached an understanding and a respect for quality in works of art . . . The success or failure of a museum is not to be measured by attendance but by the beauty of its collections and the harmony of their display.¹³⁶

Elsewhere, a similar message was delivered, albeit in more moderate terms. Sherman Lee, influential director of the Cleveland Museum, was openly critical of Hoving’s *Harlem* exhibition and took issue with the idea of the museum as instrument of mass education or social action. “Merely by existing – preserving and exhibiting works of art,” he wrote in the early 1970s, “it is educational in the broadest and best sense, though it never utters a sound or prints a word.”¹³⁷ He supported education programs so long as they respected the silence and integrity of the visual experience of great art, and consequently also rejected the hoopla of blockbuster exhibitions, fund-raising cocktail parties, and audio tours, suggesting that such activities, if necessary at all, should be held at a separate site, like a branch museum.¹³⁸

Since the 1980s the banner of traditional values has been carried by Hoving’s successor at the Met, Philippe de Montebello, and more recently

by James Cuno, until recently Director of the Fogg (and now Director of the Courtauld Institute). Sharing Sweeney's fears about mass culture and alarmed by the extent to which they have been realized by Krens and others, they have argued that important functions that only museums can perform, notably scholarship, conservation, and an engagement with beauty, are being taken for granted and drowned out by the noise of shops and superficial exhibitions. "I know it sounds old-fashioned" Cuno wrote, "but I believe that an art museum's fundamental purpose is to collect, preserve, and exhibit works of art as a vital part of our nation's cultural patrimony."¹³⁹ Both Cuno and Montebello have stressed that such work is by definition "elitist," though no more so than the pursuit of scholarship in a university or excellence in schools and anything else we judge in terms of quality. The crime is to pretend that quality doesn't matter and to act as if audience size counts for more than what people experience.

The challenge to defenders of the status quo is to make good on the commitment to meaningful aesthetic experience. Encouraging visitors to *look* and *see* has long been recognized as the principal task of the mainstream art museum, but how to do that for the uninitiated without the aid of labels, acoustiguides, educational aids, and theme park attractions remains an open question.¹⁴⁰ Recent attempts to stimulate vision and dialogue between eye and objects through the rearrangement of the permanent collection at the Tate Galleries, MOMA, and elsewhere have been blasted by conservative critics as so much postmodern nonsense, as was a similar effort at the Orsay Museum in Paris in the 1980s to heighten public understanding through juxtaposition of progressive and academic nineteenth-century art.¹⁴¹ In those important spaces, maintained the critics, the art that really mattered could no longer be apprehended thanks to the excessive architecture and fashionable juxtaposition with lesser art.

Another option for traditionalists is to deny that the mainstream art museum can ever be for everyone. Despite his efforts to spread art appreciation, Gilman wondered long ago if it were possible "to make a museum of fine art in any vital sense a popular institution" and Cuno has echoed these doubts by suggesting that art museums are "of interest to only a relative few (perhaps 20 percent of our population)."¹⁴² Working in a wealthy private university museum afforded Cuno the luxury of such sentiments, no doubt, but is he wrong? His position begs the question of why it is we care if museums serve everyone, especially when we don't care or monitor who attends sporting events or other cultural events. The short

answer is that we continue to harbor utopian expectations about the role of art and museums in western societies. Because they are educational and good for us, however defined, they should be made available to all. The 1984 museum report makes this clear when it states that museums contribute to the “national crusade” of education, which is “a pillar of democracy” and key to “American optimism.”¹⁴³ At the same time, however, because we don’t fund museums or compel people to attend them as we do schools, they are left to attract visitors as best they can (with shops and shows, etc.), making them most accessible to those who are willing to pay the price of admission.

Back in the 1920s a collaborative effort between the Art Institute of Chicago and the city’s public schools gave R. L. Duffus great cause for hope:

The result is, or will be, that a bowing acquaintance with the A–B–C of the arts will cease to be a mark of caste or class. Any child in Chicago who really wishes to do so may take in art along with his grammar, arithmetic and geometry. The fact that his father works in the stockyards or that he himself has been brought up in the streets and encouraged to take not more than one bath a week is no real obstacle. There is at least a potential democracy.... Twenty years from now, perhaps, we shall be able to measure the tangible results attained by what is being done at this moment among the public school children of Chicago under the patronage and encouragement of the Art Institute.¹⁴⁴

Needless to say this and countless other long forgotten initiatives evaporated, leaving critics to observe that museums can’t provide acculturation on their own.¹⁴⁵ Museum educators do their best, but it is remarkable how many creative outreach projects must continue to rely on short-term financial support from private corporations.¹⁴⁶ We don’t count on private philanthropy to run our schools. Given the way we fund museums and arts education, it should come as no surprise that recent visitor studies have confirmed all over again that, despite decades of outreach, those who go to art museums are still the well educated who view the cost and experience as a worthwhile investment in a process of lifelong learning, for both themselves and their children.¹⁴⁷ In other words, museum going is above all a chosen leisure pursuit of the educated, affluent, upwardly mobile middle classes. The same study concludes that school involvement, such as it is, is much less effective for developing lasting interests than family encouragement. Every fifth grader in the Boston school system visits the Museum of Fine Arts, but a casual glance

at the fee-paying public on any given day strongly suggests those children are not returning as adults. This would tend to support Bourdieu's thesis that upbringing and milieu, what he calls "habitus," largely determine attitudes to culture. But if upbringing is so important, how can museums ever substitute for it?

If people can't be made to go to museums, they will go only out of (self-) interest. The visitor study cited above suggests that if museums want to attract presently under-represented constituencies, they will have to be "thoughtfully wooed by special marketing promotions, and served by programs and exhibitions that cater to its specific cultural and historical backgrounds and interests." Some museums have begun to do this through special exhibitions and programs, but unless deeper changes are made to the structure of the collections and staff it is naïve to think such visitors will ever become loyal patrons. When you get past the temporary exhibitions and education programs, mainstream art museums appear to have changed very little in recent decades. Despite calls in the 1970s for museums to become more diverse, boards of trustees and the people they hire to run their institutions are still overwhelmingly white, well off, and well educated. The poor and marginalized people interviewed by Robert Coles many years ago who knew instinctively that art museums were "for other people, not for us" would scarcely have any reason to think differently today.¹⁴⁸ Why should we expect the public to become more diverse when the museum itself does not? Is it not patronizing to assume that the disenfranchised should want elite culture, especially when so little is done to welcome theirs? A hundred years ago, the first director of the Toledo Art Museum, George Stevens, toured local factories at lunchtime touting the benefits of high culture, but such proselytizing would hardly be acceptable today.¹⁴⁹ In Great Britain museums have been asked to attract a certain percentage of ethnic minorities (British Museum, 11%; Tate Gallery, 6%, etc.) to qualify for funding.¹⁵⁰ Apart from the problems of defining and counting "ethnic minorities," what would it take to make museums attractive to those groups? Should existing collections and their curators be abandoned for new? Anything less and we are back to the assumption that "our" culture is good for "them," and surely we have gone beyond considering "a visit to a museum . . . to be the civilizing ritual it was in Victorian England," as one British politician recently put it.¹⁵¹

Those who argue for access would respond that knowledge of art is a form of cultural capital without which advancement in the world is barred. Vera Zolberg has said "anything short of complete democratization is the

maintenance of hegemony.”¹⁵² But is it clear in our postmodern age that hegemony of high culture translates into other spheres? Put otherwise, is it the case that a lack of cultural knowledge, or more specifically knowledge of high art, stands in the way of social, political, or material success? There is a clear correlation between higher education and a higher standard of living, but is knowledge of art a necessary part of that education? For many knowledge of sports would be more useful around the water cooler than an understanding of Rembrandt. It may be that museum trustees are rich and powerful but many rich and powerful people live happily ignorant of art. And for the poor and dispossessed there are surely more pressing concerns than access to canonical western art.

One positive development in recent years has been the emergence of new museums for different publics. As social activism and critical theory have discredited the aesthetic philosophy of the universal survey museum and the rhetorical oneness of the public for art, we now see that no one museum can please, or serve, all of the people all of the time. Nor can it serve everything we might want to call art. A hundred years ago mainstream art museums stood alone at the center of a community defining art and embracing all citizens; now those same museums struggle to represent everything we want to call art and patently serve some sectors of the public better than others. They are now joined by dozens of alternative museums and display spaces accommodating a range of artistic production and targeting previously under-served interests and publics. Where the Metropolitan Museum fails to serve the ethnically diverse communities of New York or the burgeoning interest in contemporary art, the Studio Museum of Harlem, the Museo del Barrio, the Jewish Museum, the Asia and Japan Societies, and a host of other small museums and commercial galleries may fill the gap. If the British Museum displays its Benin bronzes as art and fails to acknowledge the disputed circumstances of their acquisition, the Horniman Museum in south London provides an alternative perspective and moreover includes the opinions of Nigerians living in London. Where the Boston Museum of Fine Arts displays African masks as autonomous works of art, the Peabody Museum across the river in Cambridge provides a rich sociocultural context for the same class of objects. This is not to say that the Met or any other museum should stop trying to expand its appeal, but to suggest that institutional constraints within a given museum may circumscribe the way it displays and interprets its art and the publics to whom it will appeal. At the same time, the Met is clearly serving its current visitors very well, as is the Fogg whose primary public

(students, professionals) is more specialized than the Met's. Those museums may be in a position to resist the changes taking place in art museums around them and if they do all the better for those of us who know how to enjoy them. But blockbusters serve a purpose as well, and in any case they are here to stay for the foreseeable future. Temporary exhibitions in the postmodern era have expanded the possibilities of what may be shown in an art museum and, at least to some extent, the publics who attend. Though such exhibitions, and the shops and visitors that come with them, may offend traditional sensibilities it is worth pointing out that in most art museums, even those that have thoroughly espoused the blockbuster mentality, the galleries housing the permanent collection are as quiet and open to aesthetic contemplation as they ever were.

Increasingly different in themselves, museums serve different purposes for different people; and of course they also serve different purposes for the same people. It is the diversity and flexibility of art museums – their ability to give various publics a variety of experiences across a broad museological landscape – that will ensure their survival in the long run.

Notes

- 1 Quoted by Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 10.
- 2 See Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice 1500–1700*, trans. E. Wiles-Portier (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), especially the essay “Between the Visible and the Invisible.” Also Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).
- 3 See John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986) and Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England 1680–1768* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988).
- 4 Quoted by Philip Conisbee, *Painting in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1981), p. 46. Coypel was no doubt following the abbé Du Bos who earlier (1719) had expanded the public for art to include the bourgeoisie, but “only those who have attained enlightenment, either by reading, or by commerce with the world.” *Réflexions sur la poésie et sur la peinture*, vol. II, 4th edn. (Paris: P.J. Mariette, 1740), p. 279.
- 5 See Andrew McClellan, “Watteau’s Dealer: Gersaint and the Marketing of Art in Eighteenth-Century Paris,” *Art Bulletin* 78 (September 1996), pp. 439–53.
- 6 On early modern European museums, see Edouard Pommier, ed., *Les musées en Europe à la veille de l’ouverture du Louvre* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1995); also Germain

- Bazin, *The Museum Age*, trans. Jane van Nuis Cahill (New York: Universe Books, 1967).
- 7 See Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1999) and Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).
- 8 William Shepherd, *Paris in 1802 and 1814* (London: Longman, 1814), p. 52.
- 9 McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre*, pp. 8–12.
- 10 John Scott, *A Visit to Paris in 1814* (London: Longman, 1815), p. 57.
- 11 Sir John Deal Paul, *Journal d'un voyage à Paris au mois d'août 1802* (Paris: Picard, 1913).
- 12 Dr. G. F. Waagen, "Thoughts on the New Building to be Erected for the National Gallery of England," *Art Journal* V (May 1, 1853), p. 123. On the museum as utilitarian institution, see Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).
- 13 On Waagen and the Berlin museum, see Carmen Stonge, "Making Private Collections Public: Gustav Friedrich Waagen and the Royal Museum in Berlin," *Journal of the History of Collections* 10 (1998); and James Sheehan, *Museums and the German Art World* (Oxford University Press, 2000).
- 14 Quoted by Louise Purbick, "The South Kensington Museum: The Building of the House of Henry Cole," in Marcia Pointon, ed., *Art Apart: Art Institutions and Ideology Across England and North America* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 77.
- 15 Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, edited by Samuel Lipton (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994).
- 16 *The Works of John Ruskin*, edited by E. T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, 39 vols. (London: Geo. Allen), vol. 30 (1907), p. 53; vol. 34 (1908), p. 247. On Ruskin, see Catherine W. Morley, *John Ruskin: Late Work, 1870–1890. The Museum and Guild of St. George: An Educational Experiment* (New York: Garland, 1984).
- 17 Quoted by Frances Borzello, *Civilizing Caliban: The Misuse of Art, 1875–1980* (London and New York: Routledge, 1987), p. 109.
- 18 Quoted by Charlotte Klonk, "Charles Eastlake and the National Gallery of London," *Art Bulletin* LXXXII (June 2000), p. 331.
- 19 Borzello, *Civilizing Caliban*, pp. 42–4.
- 20 Quoted by Seth Koven, "The Whitechapel Picture Exhibition and the Politics of Seeing," in Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff, eds., *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 34.
- 21 Borzello, *Civilizing Caliban*, pp. 33, 51ff.
- 22 Henrietta O. Barnett, "Women as Philanthropists," in Theodore Stanton, ed., *The Woman Question in Europe* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1884), pp. 124–5; and "Pictures for the People," in *Practicable Socialism* 2nd edn. (London: Longman, 1894).
- 23 See the excellent history of the V & A by Anthony Burton, *Vision & Accident: The Story of the Victoria & Albert Museum* (London: V & A Museum, 1999).

- 24 William Stanley Jevons, *Methods of Social Reform* (London: Macmillan, 1883), p. 8.
- 25 Sir Henry Cole, *Fifty Years of Public Work*, 2 vols. (London: George Bell, 1884), vol. II, pp. 368.
- 26 Ibid., vol. II, 346.
- 27 Ibid., vol. II, p. 302; in a lecture at the École centrale d'architecture in Paris in 1867, he described museums as "une espèce de monument socialiste, où le niveau est le même pour tous."
- 28 Thomas Greenwood, *Museums and Art Galleries* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co: 1888), pp. 20, 26–7. Also see Giles Waterfield, *Palaces of Art: Art Galleries in Britain* (London: Dulwich Picture Gallery, 1991).
- 29 Greenwood, *Museums*, p. 153.
- 30 Ruskin, *Works*, vol. 34, p. 250. Echoing Ruskin, a National Gallery report of 1886 said the museum should avoid becoming, "especially on cold and wintry nights, the resort of a class of persons whose presence would be most undesirable." Quoted by Borzello, *Civilizing Caliban*, p. 42.
- 31 Edward Bradbury, "A Visit to Ruskin's Museum," *Magazine of Art* 3 (1879–80), p. 58.
- 32 Ruskin, *Works*, vol. 30, p. 48ff.
- 33 Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, p. 98 and passim. Codes of behavior were also put in place in France; see Daniel J. Sherman, *Worthy Monuments: Art Museums and the Politics of Culture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 1989).
- 34 Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 48.
- 35 Ibid., p. 128.
- 36 Ibid., p. 90.
- 37 Ibid., p. 106–8.
- 38 Greenwood, *Museums*, p. 249ff.
- 39 Burton, *Vision & Accident*, 127ff.
- 40 Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, pp. 29–30.
- 41 Cole, *Fifty Years of Public Work*, vol. II, p. 293.
- 42 See the essays by Luce Abélès and Dominique Poulot in Chantal Georgel, ed., *La Jeunesse des Musées*, (Paris: Musée d'Orsay, 1994), pp. 316–50; and Borzello, *Civilizing Caliban*.
- 43 William Hazlitt, "The Angerstein Gallery," *The London Magazine* XXXVI (December 1822), pp. 489–90.
- 44 Greenwood, *Museums*, p. 11.
- 45 Barnett, "Pictures for the People," p. 185.
- 46 Quoted by Borzello, *Civilizing Caliban*, p. 118.
- 47 William Stanley Jevons, "The Use and Abuse of Museums," in *Methods of Social Reform*, p. 60.
- 48 Greenwood, *Museums*, p. 182.
- 49 Ibid., pp. 7–8.
- 50 George Brown Goode, "Museum History and Museums of History," *Report of the Smithsonian Institution* (1897), part II.

- 51 Ruskin, *Works*, vol. 34, p. 247.
- 52 Greenwood, *Museums*, p. 26.
- 53 "Visitors to Pennsylvania Museum Express Preference for Period Rooms," *Art News* 28 (December 7, 1929), p. 9.
- 54 Justus Brinckmann, *Das Hamburgische Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe* (Hamburg, 1894), pp. v–vi; cited by Burton, *Vision & Accident*, pp. 158–9.
- 55 Alfred Mayer, "Educational Efficiency of our Museums," *North American Review* 177 (July–December 1903), p. 565.
- 56 R. T. H. Halsey and Elizabeth Tower, *The Homes of our Ancestors, as shown in the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Doubleday, 1925), p. xxii.
- 57 General Luigi Palma di Cesnola, *An Address on the Practical Value of the American Museum* (Troy, NY: Stowell Printing House, 1887), p. 10. Cesnola was the first director of the Metropolitan Museum in New York.
- 58 *Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin*, VII (1909), p. 19. On this historical moment, see Walter Muir Whitehill, *Museum of Fine Arts Boston. A Centennial History*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1970), and Alan Wallach, *Exhibiting Contradiction. Essays on the Art Museum in the United States* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998).
- 59 Benjamin Ives Gilman, *Museum Ideals of Purpose and Method*, 2nd edn. (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1923), p. 42. Gilman mentioned the low opinion held by foreigners of American culture, pp. 70–2.
- 60 Charles L. Hutchinson, "The Democracy of Art," *American Magazine of Art* 7 (August 1916), p. 398.
- 61 Mrs. Schuyler van Rensselaer, "The Art Museum and the Public," *North American Review* 205 (January 1917), pp. 81, 90; also see Florence Levy, "The Service of the Museum of Art to the Community," *American Magazine of Art* 15 (November 1924), pp. 581–7.
- 62 T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
- 63 To this day museums flatter potential donors in these terms; see, for example, *Merchants and Masterpieces*, a VHS video co-produced by the Metropolitan Museum of Art and WNET/13 (1989) and narrated by Philippe de Montebello.
- 64 Otto Wittmann, *Art Values in a Changing Society* (Toledo, OH: Toledo Museum of Art, 1974), pp. 18–19.
- 65 Frank Jewett Mather, "Two Theories of Museum Policy," *The Nation* 81 (December 28, 1905), pp. 518–19; also *Burlington Magazine* IX (1906), pp. 62–3; XIII (1908), 319–22.
- 66 *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* VII (December 1909), p. 44.
- 67 *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* VIII (August 1910), p. 28. The docent service was first offered in 1895, two years after Gilman joined the museum.
- 68 *Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Forty-First Annual Report for the Year 1916* (Boston: Metcalf, 1917).

- 69 *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* IX (August 1911), p. 40.
- 70 *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* VII (April 1909), p. 18.
- 71 Gilman, *Museum Ideals*, pp. 61, 68, 303.
- 72 John Cotton Dana, *A Plan for a New Museum* (Woodstock, VT: The Elm Tree Press, 1920), p. 16; and *The New Museum* (Woodstock, VT: The Elm Tree Press, 1917), p. 32. Carol Duncan is currently preparing a study of Dana and the Newark Museum.
- 73 John Cotton Dana, *The Gloom of the Museum*, (Woodstock, VT: The Elm Tree Press, 1917), pp. 6, 8. Two important articles by Paul DiMaggio apply these insights to Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston, I and II" *Media, Culture, and Society* 4 (1982), pp. 33–50, 303–22.
- 74 Dana, *The Gloom of the Museum*, pp. 14, 20–1; Dana, *Should Museums Be Useful?* (Newark, NJ: The Museum, 1927), p. 2.
- 75 Theodore L. Low, *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Art Museums in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), p. 46.
- 76 The Toledo Museum of Art is a good example, see *The Museum Educates* (Toledo, OH: Toledo Museum of Art, 1935). A fine history of museum education is provided by Terry Zeller, "The Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Art Museum Education," in N. Berry and S. Mayer, eds., *Museum Education: History, Theory, and Practice* (Reston, VA: Art Education Association, 1989), pp. 10–89.
- 77 Richard Bach, "The Fogg Museum of Art," *Architectural Record* 61 (June 1927), p. 476; also Clarence Stein, "Making Museums Function," *Architectural Forum* 56 (June 1932), p. 612.
- 78 Greenwood, *Museums and Art Galleries*, p. 178. The British Museums Association was founded in 1889; in 1932 it published guidelines for the recruitment of curators, the top priorities being a university education and a deep knowledge of a chosen field, *Museumion* 6 (1932), pp. 130–1. The American Association of Museums was founded in 1906; the Deutscher Museumbund in 1917.
- 79 Thomas Munro, "The Place of Aesthetics in the Art Museum," *College Art Journal* VI (Spring 1947), p. 183. Gisela Richter, curator of Classical Art at the Met, defined the curators four main priorities as the selection of new acquisitions, conservation, installation, and publication, "What is the Proper Training for Museum Work From the Point of View of the Curator?" *Museum News* XIII (January 2, 1936), p. 7.
- 80 On Sachs and his Museum Course, see Sally Anne Duncan, *Paul J. Sachs and the Institutionalization of Museum Culture between the World Wars* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Tufts University, 2001).
- 81 Paul J. Sachs, "Why is a Museum of Art," *Architectural Forum* (September 1939), p. 198.
- 82 Dana, *The Gloom of the Museum*, p. 23. For Gilman scholarship was a secondary function of the museum, *Museum Ideals*, pp. 95–7, 108.

- 83 Theodore L. Low, *The Museum as Social Instrument* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1942), p. 9; also *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Art Museums*, pp. 10, 88–90.
- 84 Low, *The Museum as Social Instrument*, p. 17.
- 85 Ibid., p. 9.
- 86 Low, *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Art Museums*, p. 190.
- 87 Francis Henry Taylor, *Babel's Tower. The Dilemma of the Modern Museum* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), pp. 22–3, 51.
- 88 Low, *The Museum as a Social Instrument*, p. 11.
- 89 Victor d'Amico "The Museum of Art in Education," *Art Education Today* (1941), p. 51, quoted by Low, *Educational Philosophy*, p. 80.
- 90 Philip Youtz, "Museumitis," *Journal of Adult Education* 6 (1934), pp. 387, 391; also "Museums Among Public Services," *Museum News* XI (September 15, 1933), pp. 7–9.
- 91 Philip Youtz, "The Sixty-Ninth Street Branch Museum of the Pennsylvania Museum of Art," *Museum News* X (December 15, 1932), pp. 6–7. On branch museums, also see Paul M. Rea, *The Museum and the Community* (Lancaster, PA: The Science Press, 1932); and *Museum News* XIII (January 1, 1936), p. 1.
- 92 See, for example, the monthly bulletins of the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford and the Art Institute of Chicago from the early 1930s.
- 93 *The Museum Educates*, not paginated. Elsewhere the brochure states that in "art appreciation" classes "Students grow familiar with emotional and mental pleasures derived from textures, line, color, volume, space, rhythm, tone. They are acquainted with these qualities emerging at their highest potency from master works."
- 94 See Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installation at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1998), p. 81 and *passim*.
- 95 See Thomas Crow, "The Birth and Death of the Viewer: On the Public Function of Art," in Hal Foster, ed., *Discussions in Contemporary Culture* 1 (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1987), pp. 1–8.
- 96 *Exposition Internationale de 1937. Musées et expositions. Section 1: Muséographie* (Paris: Denoel, 1937), pp. 18–19 (my translation). For the Madrid conference, see *League of Nations: International Study Conference on the Architecture and Equipment of Museums* (Madrid, 1934).
- 97 Gilman, *Museum Ideals*, p. 78.
- 98 Ibid., pp. 342–3.
- 99 Arthur Melton, *Problems of Installation in Museums of Art* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museum, 1935), p. 11.
- 100 T. R. Adam, *The Civic Value of Museums* (New York: American Association for Adult Education, 1937), p. 25.
- 101 Sir Kenneth Clark, "Ideal Picture Galleries," *Museums Journal* 45 (November 1945), p. 133.

- 102 James R. Johnson and Adele Z. Silver, *The Educational Program of the Cleveland Museum of Art* (Cleveland, OH: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1971), p. 26.
- 103 Gilman, *Museum Ideals*, p. 109.
- 104 Walter Pach, *The Art Museum in America. Its History and Purpose* (New York: Pantheon, 1948), p. 210.
- 105 Quoted by Burton, *Vision & Accident*, p. 179.
- 106 Eric Maclagen, "Museums and the Public," *Museums Journal* 36 (August 1936), p. 182.
- 107 John Walker, *Self-Portrait with Donors. Confessions of an Art Collector* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1974), pp. 51–2.
- 108 See Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (San Francisco: Lapis Press, 1986), p. 42.
- 109 On Soviet museology, see Theodore Schmit, "Les Musées de l'Union des Républiques Socialistes Soviétiques," in P. d'Espezel and G. Hilaire, eds., *Musées* (Paris: Cahiers de la République des Lettres, des Sciences et des Arts, n.d.), pp. 206–21; on labor union views on museums, see Mark Starr, "Museums and the Labor Unions," *Museum News* 26 (January 1, 1949), 7–8. Starr was Educational Director of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union in New York.
- 110 See Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*.
- 111 *The Arts Enquiry. The Visual Arts. A Report Sponsored by the Dartington Hall Trustees* (Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 145; quoted by Burton, *Vision & Accident*, p. 186.
- 112 Low, *The Museum as Social Instrument*, pp. 24–30.
- 113 Thomas P. F. Hoving, "Branch Out!" *Museums News* 47 (September 1968), p. 15.
- 114 Ibid., p. 16. On the 1960s and beyond, see Neil Harris, "The Divided House of the American Art Museum," *Daedalus* 128 (Summer 1999), pp. 32–56.
- 115 Hoving gives a brief account of these changes in his autobiography, *Making the Mummies Dance* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993).
- 116 I. Michael Heyman, "A New Day Begun," *Smithsonian Magazine* (August 1999; http://www.smithsonianmag.si.edu/smithsonian/issues99/aug99/heyman_aug99.html); also see Caryl Marsh, "A Neighborhood Museum that Works," *Museums News* 47 (October 1968), pp. 11–16; John Kinard, "To Meet the Needs of Today's Audience," *Museum News* 50 (May 1972), pp. 15–16; and Emily Dennis, "Seminar on Neighborhood Museums," *Museum News* 48 (January 1970), pp. 13–18.
- 117 S. Dillon Ripley, *The Sacred Grove. Essays on Museums* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1969), p. 105.
- 118 Ibid., p. 73.
- 119 "New York Annual Meeting: Going to Meet the Issues," *Museum News* 49 (September 1970), p. 18. Among the strident resolutions proposed by a set of AAM delegates was more organized effort to address the problems of "racism, sexism, repression and war" and increased opportunities for women, minorities and "other oppressed people."

- 120 Ibid., p. 19.
- 121 See, for example, Detroit Institute of Art, *Two Years Later: A Report on "Project Outreach" to the National Endowment for the Arts* (ca. 1971); *Museums: Their New Audience* (Washington, D.C.: AAM, 1972); *Museums USA* (Washington, DC: NEA, 1974); *Museum News* 55 (January/February 1977). A meeting of the International Council of Museums in 1974 agreed that museums were becoming more like "cultural centers for the communities within which they operate"; not merely "storehouses or agents of preservation...but powerful instruments of education." Quoted by Kenneth Hudson, *Museums for the 1980s* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1977), p. 1. In Britain from the 1960s the Labour Party has urged greater social responsibility on museums, see Mark Wallinger and Mary Warnock, eds., *Art For All? Their Policies and Our Culture* (London: Peer, 2000), pp. 146–9 and passim. A useful survey of recent trends is provided by Stephen E. Weil, "From Being *about* Something to Being *for* Somebody: The Ongoing Transformation of the American Museum," *Daedalus* 128 (Summer 1999), pp. 229–58.
- 122 Donald Preziosi has reflected a good deal on the relationship between museums and the discipline of art history; see, for a start, "The Art of Art History," in his *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 507–25.
- 123 Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public* [1969], trans. C. Beattie and N. Merriman (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991); Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* [1979], trans. R. Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).
- 124 Margaret Mead, "Museums in a Media-Saturated World," *Museum News* 49 (September 1970), pp. 23–6.
- 125 See Michael Conforti, "Hoving's Legacy Reconsidered," *Art in America* (June 1986), pp. 19–23.
- 126 Franz Schulz described the Pei wing as "a temple of cultural democracy," *Art News* 80 (November 1981), p. 132.
- 127 Rudolph Morris, "Leisure Time and the Museum," *Museum News* 41 (December 1962), pp. 17–18.
- 128 Alan Wallach, "Class Rites in the Age of the Blockbuster," *Harvard Design Magazine* 11 (Summer 2000), pp. 48–54.
- 129 See Rosalind Krauss, "The cultural logic of the late capitalist museum," *October* 54 (1990), pp. 3–17, who anticipated much of what Krens has done.
- 130 Jonathan Maher, "High Culture Hits the Strip," *Talk* (May, 2001), pp. 84–5. On Krens also see, Michael Kimmelman, "The Globe Straddler of the Art World," *New York Times* (April 19, 1998) and Peter Plagens, "In a Spiral," *Newsweek* (May 20, 1996).
- 131 Adam Gopnik, "The Death of an Audience," *The New Yorker* (October 5, 1992), pp. 142–6. On mass culture, entertainment, and nostalgia see the essays by Edward Shils and Hannah Arendt in N. Jabobs, ed., *Culture for the Millions? Mass Media in Modern Society* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand, 1961).

- 132 *Museums for A New Century*, pp. 19, 60, 104.
- 133 James Johnson Sweeney, "The Artist and the Museum in Mass Society," in Jacobs, *Culture for the Millions?* p. 95.
- 134 Walker, *Self-Portrait*, p. xiv
- 135 Ibid., p. 28.
- 136 Ibid.
- 137 Sherman Lee, "The Art Museum in Today's Society," *Dayton Art Institute Bulletin* 27 (March 1969), quoted by Zeller, "Historical and Philosophical Foundations," p. 31.
- 138 Grace Glueck, "The Ivory Tower Versus the Discotheque," *Art in America* (May–June 1971), pp. 80–5.
- 139 James Cuno, "Art museums should get back to basics," *Boston Globe* (October 26, 2000); and "In the Crossfire of the Culture Wars: The Art Museum in Crisis," Occasional Papers, Harvard University Art Museum, no. 3 (1995); Philippe de Montebello, "Musings on Museums," *CAA News* (March–April 1997); Calvin Tomkins, "The Importance of Being Elitist," *The New Yorker* (November 24, 1997); "Hip vs. Stately: The Tao of Two Museums," *The New York Times* (February 20, 2000), pits Krens and Montebello against each other, much as Hoving and Lee were pitted against each other thirty years earlier. Also see the forthcoming collection of essays by Cuno, Montebello and others, delivered as a series of lectures, "Art Museums and the Public Trust," at Harvard University in 2001–2.
- 140 See John Coolidge, *Some Problems of American Art Museums* (Boston: Club of Odd Volumes, 1953), p. 18; and Nelson Goodman, *Of Mind and Other Matters* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 179.
- 141 David Sylvester, "Mayhem at Millbank," *London Review of Books* 22 (May 18, 2000); Jed Perl, "Welcome to the Funhouse," *The New Republic* (June 19, 2000). For an explanation of the Tate philosophy, see Nicolas Serota, *Experience or Interpretation: The Dilemma of Museums of Modern Art* (London and New York: Thames & Hudson, 1996) and Iwona Blazwick and Francis Morris, *Tate Modern: The Handbook* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2000). On the Orsay, see Andrea Kupfer Schneider, *Creating the Musée d'Orsay: The Politics of Culture in France* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1998).
- 142 Cuno, "In the Crossfire of the Culture Wars," p. 3.
- 143 *Museums for a New Century*, p. 55.
- 144 R. L. Duffus, *The American Renaissance* (New York: Knopf, 1928), p. 239.
- 145 Bryan Roberston, "The Museum and the Democratic Fallacy," in Brian O'Doherty, ed., *Museums in Crisis* (New York: Braziller, 1972), p. 79. T. R. Adam had said much the same in 1937, *Civic Value of Museums*, p. 54.
- 146 See, for example, Beth B. Schneider, *A Place for All People* (Houston, TX: Museum of Fine Arts, 1998), which documents an extraordinary outreach program funded by a host of institutional grants. *Museums for a New Century*

- (1984), p. 57, noted that most of the outreach efforts described in *Museums: Their New Audiences* of 1972 no longer existed.
- 147 John H. Falk, "Visitors: Who Does, Who Doesn't and Why," *Museum News* (March–April 1998), p. 38ff.
- 148 Robert Coles, "The Art Museum and the Pressures of Society," in Lee, *On Understanding Art Museums*, pp. 185–202.
- 149 Blake-More Godwin, "What the small museum can do," *American Magazine of Art* (October 1927), p. 529.
- 150 *The Art Newspaper* (July–August 2000), p. 10.
- 151 Lord Freyberg, House of Lords debate, November 1999, quoted by Wallinger and Warnock, *Art for All?* p. 55.
- 152 Vera L. Zolberg, "Tensions of Mission in American Art Museums," in Paul Di Maggio, ed., *Nonprofit Enterprise in the Arts* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 185.