Museological Review, 7: 2001

CONTENTS

ISSN 1354-5825

Museological Review, Issue 7. 2001

MUSEOLOGICAL REVIEW

A Journal edited by Students of the Department of Museum Studies

Issue 7
2001

University of Leicester

GRADUATE STUDIES

MUSEOLOGICAL REVIEW

A Journal Edited by Students of the
Department of Museum Studies

Issue 7
2001

Editors:
Richard Toon
Kate Pontin

University *of* Leicester

Copies can be ordered at a cost of £8.00 per issue
plus postage and packing, from:

Leicester University Bookshop
University Road
Leicester
LE1 7RD

Tel: 0116 252 3456 or 0116 252 3000
FAX: 0116 252 5029
e-mail: bookshop@le.ac.uk

Design and layout: Jim Roberts, Department of Museum Studies

CONTENTS

Editorial

Welcome to the seventh issue of the *Museological Review*, a journal edited by Ph.D. students at the Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, which provides a platform for current museological research.

If this issue has a theme, it is the broad one that meanings are made by both museum professionals and those who visit museums. The theme is broad enough to include a variety of approaches and methodologies from contributors from around the world. George Hein provides an account of Constructivism in which he argues that the theory provides an explanation of how and what people learn in a way that has great significance for museum studies. Henry Johnson examines the way traditional Japanese musical instruments are presented in Japanese museums and how such display reflects Japanese cultural values in general. Jana Scholze discusses a contemporary art museum in Berlin, Germany and the ways in which it tries to eschew fixed meanings and interpretation. Sergio Lira explores the role that politics and propaganda played in museum exhibitions in his research on Portuguese museums during the *Estado Novo* era. Richard Toon's article examines the clash of meanings evident in the controversy surrounding an art exhibition on the American Flag in Phoenix, USA.

The final article by Segio Lira and Suzana Menezes describes their efforts to develop a new museum in Portugal. We welcome other contributions like this that describe plans for new museums and exhibitions. We also welcome other contributions to the journal, including articles and exhibition or book reviews. Please see *Notes for Contributors* for submission guidelines.

Richard Toon and Kate Pontin (editors)

Notes for Contributors

Aims

- To enable museum studies students and other interested parties to share and exchange museum information and knowledge.
- To provide an international medium for museums students and ex-students from around the world to keep in touch with a relevant centre of research.
- To bring to the attention of the practising and academic museum world, innovations and new thinking on museums and related matters.

Objectives

- To provide a platform in the form of a journal to be published per annum, for museums students, staff and others to present papers, reviews, opinions and news of a relevant nature from around the world.
- To widen up the constituency of the readership beyond the normal museological boundaries (e.g. to teachers, historians, artists, sociologists, environmentalists and others) in order to emphasise the importance of museums to society as a whole.
- To promote and advertise the research of contributors to as wide a public as possible via the journal and other means as the committee may from time to time decide.

Submission of manuscripts

The Editors welcome submissions of original material (articles, exhibition or book reviews etc.) being within the aims of the *Museological Review*. Articles can be of any length up to 5,000 words. Each contributor will receive one copy of the issue, but not a fee.

Four copies of the typescript will be required; three copies to the Editors and a copy for you to keep for your own reference. Make sure that all copies carry late additions or corrections. *It will not be possible for us to undertake or arrange for independent proof reading and the obligation for thorough checking is the responsibility of the authors not the Editors.*

Contributions should be set as follows:

TITLE OF ARTICLE

Full name of the author

Main body of the paper

Numbered endnotes (if appropriate)

Acknowledgements

References/Bibliography

Appendices

Author's name

Full postal address, professional qualifications, position held.

Please type on one side of the paper only, keep to an even number of lines per page, and use standard size paper (A4) with wide margins. Justified, double line-space texts should be submitted without any page numbering. The sub-headings should be typed in exactly the same way as the ordinary text, but should be in bold. Sub-headings should be displayed by leaving extra-space above and below them.

Do not use footnotes.

All foreign language extracts must be also translated in English.

Style

- Sub-headings are welcome, although 'Introduction' should be avoided where this is obvious. They should be in bold and aligned to the left.
- Words ending in -ise or -ize: -ise is used.
- Numbers: up to and including twenty in words, over twenty in figures, except that figures should not begin in a sentence.
- Measurements are given in metric (SI) units, thought Imperial units may be quoted in addition.
- Place names should be up-to-date, and in the Anglicised form (Moscow not Moskva).
- Italics should be used a) for foreign words not yet Anglicised, including Latin; b) for titles of books, ships, pictures etc.; c) very sparingly, for emphasis
- Quotations should be set in single quotation marks '...', using double quotation marks "..." for quotes within a quote. Quotations of more than two lines of typescript should be set on a new line and indented.

- Abbreviations should always be explained on first usage, unless in common international use. Full points should not be used between letters in an abbreviation: e.g. USA not U.S.A.
- Organisations and companies take the singular, e.g. 'the Royal Academy is...'.
- First person tense should be avoided.

Illustrations/Figures/Tables: Papers can be accompanied by black and white photographs, negatives or line drawings. All illustrations etc. should be numbered consecutively in the order in which they are referred to in the text. Please note that they must be fully captioned and inserted into the document. Contributors are requested to discuss illustrative material with the Editors at an early stage. If there is any requirement for special type (e.g. Arabic, Greek, scientific or mathematical symbols) this should be supplied as artwork. All artwork must be scanned and submitted on disk and fully captioned

Referencing/Bibliography: References must be presented using the Harvard system (author and date given in text, e.g. Connerton, 1989; Cook, 1991: 533).

This should be at the end of the paper, arranged alphabetically by author, then chronologically if there is more than one work by the same author. Use the inverted format as follows:

Connerton, P. (1989). *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Cook, B.F. (1991). 'The archaeologist and the Art Market: Policies and Practice.' *Antiquity* 65: 533.

Copyright

It is the author's responsibility to obtain copyright approval for any materials included in the article.

Once the paper has been accepted for publication, the Editors will appreciate if the contributor can send his/her article on a floppy-disk. We can deal with files prepared on PC or Macintosh computers using Microsoft Word (later versions preferred).

Articles should be addressed to the Editors, Museological Review, University of Leicester, Department of Museum Studies, 103/105 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7LG, UK. Telephone number: 0116- 2523963; Fax number: 0116-2523960.

Constructivism: More than Meaning Making

George E. Hein

Introduction

Constructivism is frequently described as a learning theory, a particular view about how people learn. Applied to education, however, constructivism encompasses a broader conception of how the mind functions; it is an *education* theory, not just a *learning theory* The distinction is important because constructivism addresses not only *how* people learn, but also *what* they learn.

Constructivism is also a pragmatic theory; it gains its meaning from its use. Thus, it is not an easy theory to understand and for many it's a disquieting, uncomfortable educational theory. It challenges our sense that education is about certainty, about obtaining "true" knowledge. Constructivist ideas about education require that we abandon any notion that knowledge is immutable, something absolute that, even if we cannot completely attain it, represents a goal for which we can aim. Constructivism, in contrast, stresses the importance of what people actually do and accepts ambiguity and uncertainty as central components of the human condition.

Constructivism incorporates personal meaning making as part of learning but goes beyond it to recognize that people are active learners and "constructors" of knowledge. It also acknowledges that groups of people - social groups, professional domains and, above all, entire cultures - develop common meanings. Concepts and ideas applicable to a wide range of experience emerge from these shared meanings.

In the sections that follow, I will describe the essential components of constructivism that make it a theory of education, not just of learning; summarize some of the arguments for accepting personal meaning making and constructivism; and elaborate on the consequences of supporting such a pragmatic theory of education. The last part, especially, owes much to the work of John Dewey

Essential Components of Constructivism

All educational theories need to address both how people learn and what they learn. To better understand and compare different theories of education, they can be arranged on a grid made up of two orthogonal continuum, representing

theories of knowledge and theories of learning, as illustrated in Figure 1 (Hein, 1994, 1998). To focus more specifically on museums and learning in museums, the quadrants can be used to describe four kinds of museums (or museum galleries, exhibitions, exhibit components or programs) as illustrated in Figure 2 (Hein and Alexander, 1998).

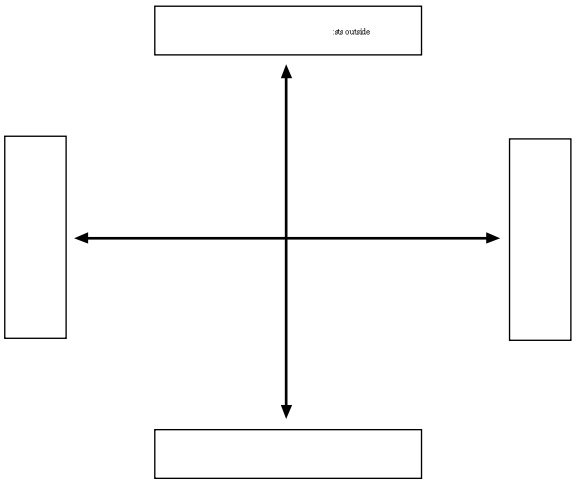


Figure 1

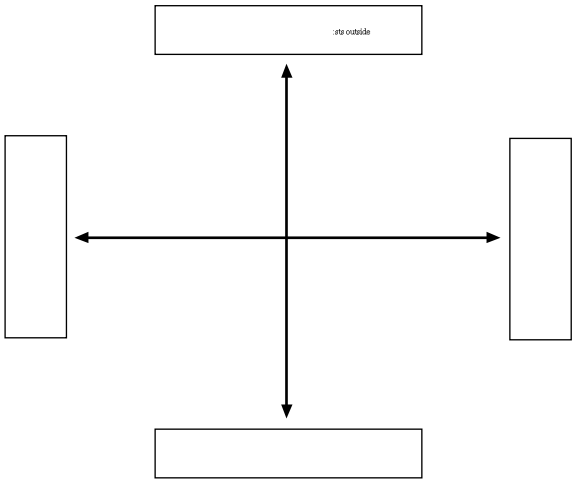


Figure 2

Constructivism argues that people actively construct knowledge - that the mind is not just a passive receiver of information (an empty vessel waiting to be filled) - but that it is active in learning. In addition, the theory proposes that knowledge is not simply an internalization of truth that exists in some ideal state, but is "constructed" by the learner. This position is in sharp contrast to what I have labeled "didactic-expository" education theory, its diagonal opposite in Figure 1. The didactic-expository theory affirms both that education consists of adding bits of knowledge to a mind which does little more than to receive this information (a view that has been described as a transmission-absorption learning model), and that what is learned is a mental representation of the "truth," of reality as it exists. Of course, misconceptions, errors and incorrect learning are always possible, but, according to this educational theory, there must be some criteria, independent of the learner or of generally agreed upon social conventions, that can always be invoked to differentiate truth from falsehood.

Applied to museums, the didactic-expository approach suggests that the educational goal of exhibitions is to represent the correct view, the truth of a subject. Visitors will have the best chance of understanding this "correct" interpretation if it is presented in such a way that the mind can comprehend the ideas in a rational, sequential order. In contrast, the constructivist position suggests that exhibitions need to be developed with concern for how visitors will perceive the material and use it to construct concepts. How does the exhibition relate to what they bring with them culturally, socially and intellectually? A constructivist exhibition designer takes the position that it is difficult to predict a priori which components will be most accessible to individual visitors, and, especially, what the best order of presentation might be.

The paragraph above describes aspects of a third, necessary component of any educational theory, i.e. a specific *pedagogy*. What does the teacher, exhibit designer or museum educator actually do in order to implement an educational theory? In the design of exhibitions or development of classroom lesson plans, what difference does it make if the developer or teacher espouses a traditional or constructivist educational theory?

Since constructivism argues both that visitors learn actively and that they construct personal knowledge, constructivist museum educators and designers need to:

a) Consider how individual visitors learn,

b) Consider what cultural/social personal constructs visitors bring with them to exhibitions and programs, and

c) Acknowledge, accommodate and value the personal meaning making visitors engage in as they interact with exhibitions and programs.

The first two of these three aspects of constructivism and their application to learning in museums have been discussed at length (see, Rochelle, 1995.) Most modern writers accept the notion that people learn actively and that our background and prior experiences influence our learning. For example, as Robert Coles (1992) and others have pointed out, our (usually) monumental buildings, the uniformed guards and the somber, quiet tone at some museums may have an intimidating rather than a welcoming effect on urban school children. Personal construction of what such settings signify influences how visitors interpret the contents. Museum educators have come to accept the idea that visitors "make meaning" (Silverman, 1995, Rounds, 1999) of their experiences. A central theme of Roberts' (1997) account of museum education is that museum staff developing exhibitions and visitors in viewing them are both "engaged in a narrative process."

The third component of constructivism, the significance of personal meaning making in education, is more controversial and requires additional discussion. Any educational theory that suggests that the mind is active in learning needs to consider what the nature of such activity might be, how it is stimulated and what it accomplishes. Thus, both discovery learning and constructivism (the two quadrants on the right hand side of Figures 1 and 2) argue that learners need to be able to manipulate objects and ideas, to have experiences in order to learn. But only constructivism emphasizes the personal nature of the knowledge so constructed.

Meaning making and constructivism are not synonymous, although the two terms overlap to a considerable degree. Their formal relationship is straightforward; meaning making is a general term that refers to what visitors inevitably do in museums. Constructivism is a particular educational theory that not only acknowledges visitor meaning making, but also uses it as a central component of a definition of education. All discussions of constructivism include meaning making; but meaning making, (although often appropriately called "knowledge construction") does not necessarily imply constructivism.

Constructivism is the educational equivalent of post-modernist literary criticism, which argues not only that readers make their own interpretations of a text, but that the important meaning of a text lies in the readers' interpretations, regardless of the author's intentions. In recognition of this position, authors are increasingly writing texts that deliberately suggest that multiple interpretations are not only possible but also inevitable and even desirable. *Rashomon*, a film that tells a story from multiple perspectives and requires the viewer to decide which version to accept, or to recognize that all versions contain some element of what actually occurred, may represent an ideal constructivist movie. Similarly, in museums constructivist exhibitions will encourage multiple interpretations.

The Inevitability of Meaning-Making

The universality of personal meaning making cannot be overemphasized; it's how we make sense of the world. It is independent of any particular educational theory; a consequence of our being human, of our neurological system and the way it develops and interacts with the environment. Three different lines of evidence support this conclusion.

Children are not born with the ability to interpret the world as their elders do. They have to learn the meaning of things and they do so gradually as they mature mentally and physically and gain experience. Piaget's clinical interviews of young children are full of these personal interpretations of nature or language, based on children's meaning making. Most "cute" stories about our children's and grandchildren's intellectual accomplishments stem from their efforts to make sense of the world based on their personal understandings of their experiences. My adult nephew recently told my sister (his mother) and me that he had always imagined that his granduncle Julius was a house painter. My sister and I puzzled over this strange interpretation of our uncle's sedentary life, especially since my nephew had never even met the man. Then my sister realized that long ago she had said, "Uncle Julius painted our house," because a legacy from him was used for that purpose. From this simple remark and his life experience, as well as his limited knowledge of metaphoric language (at age 5), my nephew had drawn a reasonable conclusion. All of us constantly make meaning of our experience using the knowledge we have, the experiences we can bring to bear and the associations we can imagine.

Further evidence for the universality of meaning making comes from the experience of those deprived of the full range of sensory connections with the world. Oliver Sacks has written about people with various neurological or sensory deficiencies. One striking group whose experiences he describes are the few individuals who, blind all or almost all of their lives, suddenly regain sight. These patients face profound, long-lasting sensory, intellectual and emotional changes in their attempts to make meaning of the overwhelming visual world they encounter. Sacks says,

The rest of us, born sighted, can scarcely imagine such confusion. For we, born with a complement of senses, and correlating these, one with the other, create a sight world from the start, a world of visual objects and concepts and meanings. When we open our eyes each morning, it is upon a world we have spent a lifetime learning to see. We are not given this world: we make our world through incessant experience, categorization, memory, reconnection. (Sacks, 1995: 114).

Sacks' point is that constructing meaning is a universal, life-long human activity. In the museum world, the "inherent ambiguity of sensory data" (Gregory, 1970: 26) is exploited to devise challenging perception exhibits. For example, Ames rooms, based on experimental work of psychologist Adelbert Ames, are distorted rooms with one far corner much farther from the eye of the observer than the

other far corner. In addition, the "farther" far corner is also made taller by constructing the floor so it slopes down and the ceiling slopes up in that direction. When two people of equal size stand at the two far corners and are viewed from a particular vantage point, the eye is fooled into thinking that the room is a normal rectangle and the people are different sizes. In such situations, as Gregory puts it,

> The mind is faced with a betting problem: "is the *room* an odd shape, or are the *people* of odd sizes?" It is an experimental result, not to be anticipated, that observers continue seeing the room as normal (which it is not) and the people as different heights (which they are not). The odds have been rigged and the brain makes the wrong bet. (Gregory, 1970: 27).

This same idea, that we construct what we see, is illustrated poetically by Proust as he describes the world of memory created by Swann.

> Even the simple act which we describe as "seeing someone we know" is to some extent an intellectual process. We pack the physical outline of the person we see with all the notions we have already formed about him, and in the total picture of him which we compose in our minds these notions have certainly the principal place. In the end, they come to fill out so completely the curve of his cheeks, to follow so exactly the line of his nose, they blend so harmoniously in the sound of his voice as if it were no more than a transparent envelope, that each time we see the face or hear the voice it is these notions which we recognize and to which we listen. (Proust, 1928, 1981: 20)

Finally, significant research by cognitive psychologists during the past few decades on how people learn, how they come to understand their jobs or professional work, how they learn to play chess or pursue other hobbies and, in general, how the mind functions, informs us that all humans construct knowledge. Summarizing this work in a recent National Research Council publication, the authors state,

> Humans are viewed as goal directed agents who actively seek information. They come to formal education with a range of prior knowledge, skills, beliefs, and concepts that significantly influence what they notice about the environment and how they organize and interpret it. This, in turn, affects then abilities to remember, reason, solve problems, and acquire new knowledge . . .. In the most general sense, the contemporary view of learning is that people construct new knowledge and understandings based on what they already know and believe. (Bramsford, Brown and Cocking, 1999: 10)

The emphasis on both the process of learning and on individual meaning making is important in this statement. Regardless of whether we call it "construct new

knowledge" or "make meaning," learning consists of meaning making.

In museums, visitors don't necessarily learn what is intended in an exhibit or program, nor do they necessarily learn in a sequence that is determined by the structure of the subject or the way the exhibit developers lay out the material. They make meaning based on the new experiences and how these fit into what they already have in their minds. The expanding field of visitor studies increasingly recognizes this: the emphasis of research and evaluation studies is shifting from asking whether visitors have understood the intentions of the designers or the content of the material, to asking what meanings visitors make of the exhibitions they have viewed.

Almost thirty years ago, Alma Wittlin (1971) pointed out the "hazards" of exhibit design based on visitors' perceptual limits and cultural biases. Similarly, McLean (1999) says, "The act of showing brings with it an inherent dialectic between the intentions of the presenter and the experiences of the spectator." The significance of this personal meaning making for interpretation forms the basis for most front-end evaluation (Dierking and Pollock, 1998) and can be used to design exhibitions that challenge visitors' understandings (Borun, Masey and Lutter, 1997).

Personal and Social Construction of Knowledge

The sections above discuss meaning making, the human act of constructing knowledge, as an individual activity. But the ideas in our heads, including how we respond to sensory data, are not independent of our interaction with other humans. We are social beings, influenced by the earliest interpretations suggested to us by our first caregivers and constantly modifying and expanding our views of the world through our interaction with others. Inspired by the work of Vigotsky, educators now talk about "situated learning" (Lave and Wegner, 1991) and about the importance of social factors in how we learn and what we understand. An essential aspect of finding out how the active mind makes sense of the world is to understand what role our social interactions contribute to meaning making. Thus, museum researchers, following the lead of educational research in general, are examining visitor conversations (see McManus, 1987, 1988) and other social interactions in galleries (see, for example excerpted articles on "audiences" in Durbin, 1996). The broad acceptance of the influence of others on our learning and our construction of knowledge is beyond the scope of this essay. While important, it does not change significantly the argument presented here.

Meaning Making and Educational Theory

It is possible to acknowledge the existence of personal as well as social meaning making, but still consider it only a necessary impediment to be overcome in the

process of education. Anyone who believes that there is a single "correct" way of' learning something, a "most efficient" order to learning a subject, or that one must start at point alpha and end at point omega in a learning sequence, chooses to put less emphasis on individual meaning making and more on pedagogy based on other principles. Thus, linear exhibitions that must be viewed in a particular sequence in order to "make sense" or exhibitions that purport to develop a theme in a specific order based on an inherent structure of a subject assume that the developer's intention can be accomplished by stipulating a single, "best" way to present information.

Many pedagogic systems propose apparently efficient ways to learn particular skills or subjects, and these clearly work for some learners; those whose personal learning styles as well as their previous knowledge and experience happen to match the developer's approach. Others may find the structure confusing. It may even make the material totally opaque to them. Most of us have had experiences in educational situations where well meaning teachers lectured at us, but we failed to comprehend their intended messages. The mismatch between personal meaning making and the teacher's or exhibit designer's intended structure may be of minimal consequence in circumstances where there is a strong bond and continuity of contact between learner and teacher, where the educational activity involves a serious commitment by the learner to engage on the teacher's terms, or where the learner or museum visitor is already familiar with the subject. Such situations do exist - people voluntarily submit themselves to learning languages, musical instruments, and all sorts of crafts, skills and academic subjects, often through didactic-expository methods - but they are not common for typical museum visitors. Most museum visitors, although interested in learning during museum visits, approach these differently from more formal educational commitments. Visitors come primarily for an *experience* not an *education*.They may report that an intention to learn is part of their motivation in visiting museums, but they are eager and prepared to create their own meanings.

There is a long tradition in education of belittling personal meaning making. Unexpected answers, rationally arrived at based on previous personal experiences, have been viewed not only as incorrect, but also as something that needed to be expunged with moral force, as a character fault. Charles Dickens' dogmatic schoolmaster, Mr. Choakumchild, in *Hard Times* illustrates a classic attitude. He chides a pupil who tells him that her name is "Sissy," informing her that Sissy is not a name. Even when she says "It's father that calls me Sissy, Sir." He corrects her; "Your father has no business to do it." (Dickens, 1854/1964). Today, poor school performance is still associated with moral qualities. In an influential study of tracking by "ability" in U.S. schools, Oakes (1985) reports that teachers of classes of lower tracked children more often describe their students in negative terms or as needing discipline or punishment than do their counterparts who teach higher tracks. Similarly, students in the lower track classes more frequently report that, "the teacher makes fun of me," or, "the teacher hurts my feelings," than do students in the higher tracks.

These negative attitudes also still influence exhibit design. Just as some teachers blame the children they teach if they don't learn the material presented to them, some exhibit developers have been known to express the view that if visitors don't understand the intended message of a particular exhibition, it's because the visitors are unprepared, uneducated or otherwise lacking. Whether we like it or not, visitor meaning making is an inevitable consequence of opening museum exhibits to visitors. It's something visitors always do, just as Moliere's hero, M. Jourdain, in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* had been speaking prose all his life.

Considerable evidence from the visitor studies literature supports the view that visitors don't just understand exhibitions, they interpret them. For example, a doctoral candidate at Lesley College who took her college undergraduates on a highly structured tour of the Museum of Fine Arts found that, based on their personal meaning making, students had significantly different experiences during the tour (Black, 1998). Audiences in Washington and Berlin responded differently to an exhibit of 2Oth Century avant-garde art that had been labeled degenerate by the Nazi regime (Doering, Pekarik and Kindlon, 1997).

Honoring Meaning Making

Constructivism carries meaning making further, it views personal meaning making not only as inevitable but also as desirable, not only as something that needs to be tolerated, but as a common human attribute that can be exploited to enhance learning. From the constructivist perspective, not only is all learning some kind of meaning making, but all meaning making is also learning. Simply because we have experiences we inevitably learn, and consequently, inevitably construct meanings. Fosnot (1996: 29) in a strong essay that lays out the developmental psychological basis for constructivism, says, "Learning is not the result of development; learning is development."

Thus, the constructivist exhibit will focus on the possibilities for visitors to enlarge their vision, make new connections or expand the scope of their understandings, more than focusing on particular ideas or concepts that visitors should learn. This Constructivist approach is not likely to result in exhibits that are books on walls, and may very likely encourage designs that provide alternatives to a linear presentation of information.

For example, at *Investigate*, a hands-on exhibit at Boston's Museum of Science Museum of Science, (1999), visitors are encouraged to experiment, and (at least for some of the staff) that they experiment is more important than whether they reach conclusions consistent with canonical science theories. At *Between a Rock and a Hard Place* at the National Museum of American History, visitors were provided a history of sweatshops in the United States and a display based on a recently discovered sweatshop in California. They could also pause at a section called "Dialogue" in which six different views on sweatshops were

displayed and visitors were encouraged to record their comments in large comment books. Visitors have provided detailed descriptions of their varied personal connections with the subject (Alexander, 2000). Although the temporary exhibition is now closed, visitors can still respond to the virtual exhibition posted on the World Wide Web (Smithsonian, 1999). Worts (1993) has collected amazing responses from visitors to an art museum, by providing a quiet exhibition setting which allowed visitors to express their feelings in their own words and visual representations.

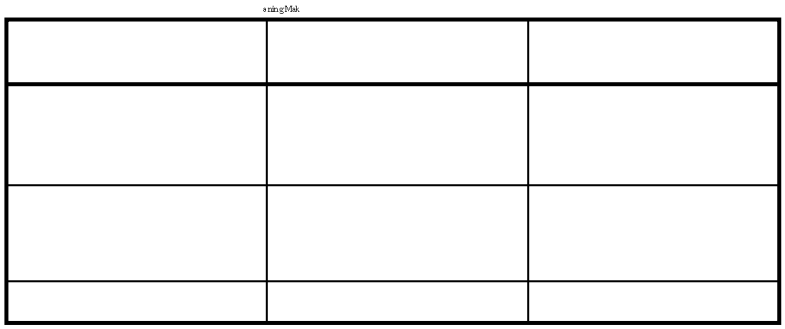
The advent of exhibitions accessible through the World Wide Web can transform even highly structured exhibitions into formats that allow the visitor more leeway in how the exhibition is viewed and, therefore, what meanings are constructed from it. For example, a web structure that provides a floor plan of the exhibition (as does the web site for the Smithsonian exhibition mentioned above) and invites the visitor to open a link to any point in the gallery, removes any possible requirement that the exhibition be viewed in a particular order.

These examples illustrate constructivist theories in action; exhibits in which visitors' personal meaning making is not only accepted, but encouraged. Constructivist exhibits are designed to accommodate personal meaning making and provide opportunities for visitors to validate (and modify and expand) their own interpretations. Constructivist exhibits emphasize that the material presented, whether works of art, a historical narrative or a science concept, represents particular interpretations of nature or culture, and that other interpretations may also contribute rich and interesting perspectives on the same material.

Constructivist theory suggests that the goal of an educational setting is to facilitate meaning making. Black and McClintock (1995) have suggested that the term "study" rather than "learn" may more appropriately describe what happens in constructivist settings. They evaluate the outcome of exposure to a constructivist school curriculum by the range of interpretation provided by students, not their knowledge of the subject. Krynock and Robb (1999) describe their method of student assessment thus: "We never assess students on 'right or wrong' answers, but on whether their conclusions are based on accurate facts and are logical and supportable." Ansbacher (1999), citing Dewey's work has argued that exhibition design teams should concentrate on developing and assessing the experiences they provide visitors, rather than looking for evidence of learning, a goal beyond their control.

The different perspectives by which educational theories view individual meaning making are illustrated in Table 1. Some theories focus on the subject to be learned, or the message to be delivered and either disregard meaning making or view it, at best, as a necessary problem to be overcome. Another set of educational theories acknowledges personal meaning making and recognizes that ideas, prejudices, opinions, memories and world-views visitors bring with them need to be considered in developing an educational plan. Finally,

Constructivist educational theory elevates personal (or socially mediated) meaning making to a central role in learning.



The distinction between a constructivist embrace of personal meaning making and other theories' cautious acceptance of it is profound, but not always obvious in practice. One way to identity the difference is to note the language used to describe personal conceptions. A large literature has developed, especially in science education, to identity and discusses learners' "misconceptions," implying that personal conceptions are always wrong if they don't match the canonical meaning. Such terminology may be appropriate if the goal of instruction is to prepare students to enter a professional field or to elucidate the specific concepts of an academic discipline. But it is inadequate if the intention of instruction (or exhibition development) is *constructivist* to develop strategies for increasing inquiry, to encourage students or visitors to think more deeply about and draw conclusions from experience. Among Piaget's many contributions to our understanding of human development was his insight that children's interpretations of the world were not "wrong" but represented their best rational conclusions based on their experience. More appropriate terminology for conclusions that don't match canonical knowledge is to consider them "personal," naive or alternative conceptions. As Piaget also pointed out, and considerable research since has confirmed, we tend to hang on to conceptions we have, even in the race of contradictory evidence. We all routinely make great efforts to incorporate new information into previously accepted theories, and only change our point of view (attribute new meanings) when some combination of factors - not necessarily "evidence" alone - is sufficient to persuade us.

Limitations of Constructivism

Perhaps the two most troubling issues raised by a constructivist educational theory are questions about the coverage of subject matter and the uncertainty of knowledge. Each of these requires some discussion.

"Coverage"

In constructivist pedagogy, subject matter cannot be designed solely by reference to a canon; rather it is more ambiguously determined by what appears to be fruitful in a particular situation: The criteria for including subject matter are likely to be criteria such as that it is rich in generating ideas, that it is capable of being challenged and tested, and that it stimulates curiosity and allows learners to make connections with what they already know. In science education and science exhibitions, this might mean that the topic is amenable to experimentation with the materials available and within a reasonable time frame for a learner's likely engagement.

Jonassen (1994) provides a "Constructivist Pedagogic Checklist," as follows:

1. Provide multiple representations of reality;
2. Represent the natural complexity of the real world;
3. Focus on knowledge construction, not reproduction;
4. Present authentic tasks (contextualizing rather than abstracting instruction);
5. Provide real-world, case-based learning environments, rather than predetermined instructional sequences;
6. Foster reflective practice;
7. Enable context and content dependent knowledge construction; and
8. Support collaborative construction of knowledge though social negotiation.

Other advocates of constructivism suggest somewhat different criteria, but all acknowledge that subject matter should be determined by its *pedagogic* value at least as much as by its significance as part of the subject content. Much recent education reform literature, following this reasoning, has stressed the need to include less subject matter in the curriculum and allow time for students to explore it in more depth. However, when reformers produce actual curriculum standards this principle often appears to be ignored as they describe everything that students need to master. Confusion between constructivist theory and traditional views on education causes this paradox. Museum exhibition design teams also need to consider this potential dilemma.

The constructivist focus on pedagogic qualities that may omit some traditional subject material can be a serious political problem for formal education settings, constrained by mandated content-based assessments and community

expectations. Fortunately, this limitation is of less consequence for museum exhibitions where wider latitude is not only permitted, but also expected in practice, museum exhibitions usually cannot (and don't attempt to) accomplish coverage of a topic in the manner common for textbooks, since a complex range of criteria in addition to considerations about "coverage" determine the content of exhibitions. What curators and educators consider the essential components of a subject may predominate in early scripts for an exhibition, but the final displays are often determined more by what is available in the collection, what can be developed into a reasonable exhibit component and what fits into the available space within the constraints imposed by time and budget (Roberts, 1997.) Inclusion of material that is most likely to allow visitors to make "rich" meanings, those that may expand their previous understandings, should be another consideration for exhibition design teams.

Uncertainty

For many people, the most uncomfortable attribute of constructivism is its denial of absolute truth. To abandon the view that knowledge is immutable and absolute, something that exists, even if it cannot be obtained fully, is unsettling. The more traditional view of knowledge allows us to hold the more reassuring notions of progress and perfectibility - we may not know it all, but we are at least always approaching greater truth, greater perfection.

The problems associated with this human "Quest for Certainly" were the theme of John Dewey's Gifford lectures. Dewey (1929) argued that man's (sic) sense of insecurity has led to a constant fruitless search for certainty in an uncertain world. This hopeless quest for certainty results in a false separation of theory and action. The necessarily uncertain outcomes of personal action have generally been considered unreliable as a basis for knowing, and theoretical knowledge has thus become more important than practical knowledge. As Dewey puts it:

> Practical activity deals with individualized and unique situations which are never exactly duplicable and about which, accordingly, no complete assurance is possible. All activity, moreover, involves change. The intellect, however, according to traditional doctrine, may grasp universal Being, and Being which is universal is fixed and immutable.... Man's distrust of himself has caused him to desire to get beyond and above himself; in pure knowledge he has thought he could attain this self-transcendence. (Dewey, 1929: 6-7).

> Perfect certainty is what man wants. It cannot be found by practical doing or making; these take effect in an uncertain future, and involve peril, the risk of misadventure, frustration and failure. Knowledge, on the other hand, is thought to be concerned with a region of being which is fixed in itself. Being eternal and unalterable, human knowing is not to make any difference in it. (Dewey, 1929: 21).

Browning describes in poetic terms the tension between the nobility of pure knowledge and the crude, humbling reality of practical work:

> Thus would you have some kingly alchemist
> Whose concern should not be with proving brass
> Transmutable to gold, but triumphing,
> Rather, above his gold changed out of brass,
> Not vulgarly to the mere sight and touch,
> But in the idea, the spiritual display,
> Proud apparition buoyed by winged words
> Hovering above its birth-place in the brain, -
> Here would you have this excellent personage
> Forced, by the gross need, to gird apron round,
> Plant forge, light fire, ply bellows, - in a word,
> Demonstrate - when a faulty pipkin's crack
> May disconcert you his presumptive truth!
> (Browning, R. *The Ring and The Book*)

Dewey's lectures go on to criticize Western philosophy's long effort to define absolute knowledge, whether realist or idealist (the top or bottom positions in my Figure 1) and to suggest a more pragmatic basis for knowledge claims. He emphasizes that there is no pure knowledge, in the absence of the activity that generates this knowledge. Dewey makes an analogy between perception and knowledge, arguing that both require a process as well as an outcome. In developing this analogy he refers to perception in ways that parallel the description of perception elucidated earlier in this essay:

> The common essence of all these theories [of knowledge], in short, is that what is known is antecedent to the mental act of observation and inquiry, and is totally unaffected by these acts; otherwise it would not be fixed and unchangeable. This negative condition, that the processes of search, investigation, reflection involved in knowledge relate to something having prior being, fixes once for all the main characters attributed to mind, and to the organs of knowing. They must be outside what is known, so as not to interact in any way with the object known. ...
>
> The theory of knowledge is modeled after what was supposed to take place in the act of vision. The object refracts light to the eye and is seen; it makes a difference to the eye and to the person having an optical apparatus, but none to the thing seen. The real object is the object so fixed in its regal aloofness that it is a king to any beholding mind that may gaze upon it. A spectator theory of knowledge is the inevitable outcome. (Dewey 1929: 23)

Just as perception is not a passive act, in which the mind serves only as a spectator observing what goes on in the world, but actively engages in interpreting the sensory data presented to it, our meaning making is an active engagement with

the world, involving constant decisions, interpretations and matching new experiences with past understandings.

Our challenge as educators is to embrace this uncertainty and see it as an opportunity rather than a limitation; to recognize that we can assist our visitors to "learn to learn," can help them broaden and deepen their understandings, and can provide opportunities for them to become more thoughtful and, as Dewey argued, better educated to contribute to building a democratic society.

Acknowledgement

The author is greatly indebted to the many colleagues who have read and commented on earlier versions of this article, particularly, Ted Ansbacher, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, Paulette McManus and Emily Romney for their detailed, critical comments.

References

Alexander, M. (2000) "Do Visitors Get It? A Sweatshop Exhibit and Visitors' Comments," *ThePublic Historian*Summer, in press.

Ansbacher, T. (1999) "Experience, Inquiry, and Meaning Making," *Exhibitionist*, 18(2), pp.22-26.

Black, J. B. and R. O. McClintock *(1995)* "An Interpretation Construction Approach to Constructivist Design," in

Wilson, B. (editor) *Constructivist Learning Environments*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology

Publications. Also available at http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/ilt/papers/ICON.html

Black, M. (1998) unpublished paper.

Borun, M., C. Massey and T. Lutter (1997) "Naive Knowledge and the Design of Science Museum Exhibits," *Curator*, 36(3), 220-234.

Bransford, J. D., A. L. Brown, and R. R. Cocking (editors) (1999) *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and Sch*Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Browning, R. (1868-69/1934) "The Ring and the Book," in *The Poems and Plays of Robert Browning*New York: Random House.

Coles, R. (1992) "Whose Museums?" *American Art*, Winter, 11-16.

Dewey, J. (1929) *The Quest for Certainty* New York, Minton Balch & Co.

Dickens, C. (1854/1964) *Hard Times* New York: Bantam Books, Chapter 2.

Dierking, L. D. and W. Pollock (1998) *Questioning Assumptions: An Introduction to Front-End Studies in Museums* Washington, DC: Association of Science-Technology Centers.

Doering, Z. D., A. J. Pekarik and A., E. Kindlon, (1997) "Exhibitions and Expectations: The Case of 'Degenerate Art'," *Curator*, 40(2), 126-141.

Durbin, G. (editor), (1996) *Developing Museum Exhibitions for Lifelong Learning* London: The Stationery Office.

Fosnot, C. T. (1996) "Constructivism: A Psychological Theory of Learning," in Fosnot, C. T. (editor), *Constructivism: Theory, Perspectives, and Practice* New York: Teachers College Press.

Gregory, R. L. (1970) *The Intelligent Eye* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Hein, G.E. (1994) "Constructivism and the Natural Heritage," in Astudillo, L., (editor), *Museums Education and the Natural. Social and Cultural Heritage, Proceedings of the 1994 CECA Meeting* Cuenca, Ecuador: ICOM/CECA.

Hein, G.E. (1998) *Learning in the Museum* London: Routledge.

Hein, G.E. and M. Alexander (1998) *Museums: Places of Learning* Washington: American Association of Museums.

Jonassen, D. (1994) "Thinking Technology," *Educational Technology*, 34(4), 34-37.

Krynock, K. and L. Robb (1999) "Problem Solved: How to Coach Cognition," *Educational Leadership*, November, pp.29-32.

Lave, J. and E. Wegner (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press.

McLean, K. (1999) "Museum Exhibits and the Dynamics of Dialogue," *Daedalus*, 128(3), 83-107.

McManus, P. (1987) "It's the Company You Keep…" *Int. J. of Museum Management and Curatorship*, 6 263-270.

McManus, P. (1988) "Good Companions: More on the Social Determination of Learning-related Behavior in a Science Museum," *Int. J. of Museum Management and Curatorship*, 7 (1), 3744.

Museum of Science, Boston (1999) "Investigate!" http:/lwww.mos.org'exhibits/current_exhibits/investigate.html

Oakes, J. (1985) *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Proust, M. (1928/1981) *Swann's Way* New York: Random House, Vintage Edition.

Roberts, L. (1997) *From Knowledge to Narrative* Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Roschelle, J. (1995) "Learning in Interactive Environments: Prior Knowledge and New Experience," in Falk, J. H. and L. D. Dierking (editors), *Public Institutions for Personal Learning: Establishing a Research Agenda* Washington: American Association of Museums, 37-52.

Rounds, J. (editor), (1999) "Making Meaning in Exhibits," *Exhibitionist* 18(2), Fall, 1999 issue.

Sacks, O. (1995) "To See and Not See," in *An Anthropologist on Mars* New York, Knopf.

Silverman, L. (1995) "Visitor Meaning-Making in Museums for a New Age," *Curator* 38(3), 161-170.

Smithsonian Institution, 1999 "Between a Rock and a "Hard Place," http://americanhistory.si.edu/sweatshops/

Witilin, A. (1971) "Hazards of Communication by Exhibits," *Curator*, 14(2), 138-150.

Worts, D. (1993) "Making Meaning in Museums There's a Lot to Learn," *Pathways to Partnerships. MEAA & MEANZ 1993 Conference Proceedings* MEAA (Victorian Branch), 39-83.

George E. Hein is Professor Emeritus, Lesley College, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

Insider/outsider displays: traditional Japanese musical instruments and their presentation in Japanese museums and archives

Henry Johnson

This article was initiated through undertaking field research at Japanese institutions which collect traditional Japanese musical instruments (see *Hôgaku Jânaru* 1995; Johnson 1999; and Roberts 1967, 1978, and 1987). While collecting data on the physical form of instruments, questions were raised about their very existence in such contexts in the first place, how they were grouped for display, and how the display method might influence the intended representation.

This discussion examines concepts and classifications of traditional Japanese musical instruments in terms of initial display groupings in significant Japanese museums and archives open for public viewing (cf Johnson 1996 and Kartomi 1990). Of particular interest is the way some displays use a method of grouping instruments in insider/outsider dichotomies. This reflects similar divisions in many areas of Japanese society and culture, but has rarely been discussed in Japanese and non-Japanese discourses on musical instrument classification systems. Several types of insider/outsider display methods are outlined in connection with their importance as initial classification systems in instrument displays (Table 1).

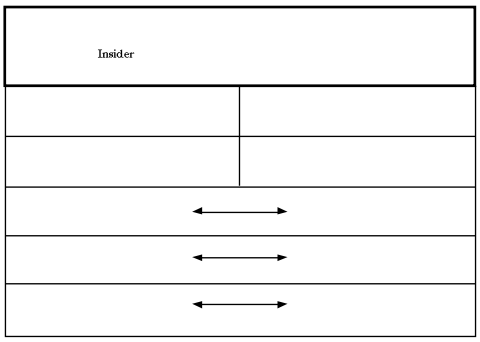


Table 1. Insider/Outsider Display Divisions

Instruments are more than sound-producing tools used by performers in music performance; they are objects of material culture which have meanings in a range of music and non-music contexts. Traditional Japanese musical instruments are displayed and collected in a range of contexts, including museums, archives,

shop displays (cf Yamaguchi 1991: 57), and the collections of instrument makers and performers. Each setting can influence an instrument's meaning according to where and how the object is displayed (cf Fienup-Riordan 1999; Velarde 1984; Thompson et al 1984; Macdonald and Fyfe 1996; and Karp and Lavine 1991). Different types of presentation can influence how the instruments are interpreted: a museum or archive might normally follow a scholarly or everyday grouping system; a shop would display its instruments according to its primary function of selling them; an instrument maker might display instruments for commercial reasons; and a performer might display instruments relating to their performance tradition. There are of course many possible reasons behind an instrument display or collection, but each is usually ordered following a set of rules or influenced by the purpose of the collection.

One could compare an instrument display, or exhibition, to a theatrical production in that the actors (the instruments) are organised following a set of rules that the audience (the viewers) will interpret according to cultural norms (cf Pearce 1992: 136-7). When instruments are removed from their primary live performance context and displayed in other environments, they still provide a performance. Even if displays have accompanying audio and visual materials, the performance in their new context might be viewed in terms of the ways the instruments are meaningful objects of material culture which have a visual function in addition to their musical one. It is this secondary context and the ways it might be interpreted which has influenced the current study.

The arrangement of instruments usually follows a logical system which relates the objects to other social or cultural groupings. A display could follow a scholarly or meta classification system, such as the one devised by Hornbostel and Sachs in 1914 (see 1961), which groups instruments according to the vibrating body (idiophones, membranophones, chordophones, and aerophones), or another method which might reflect the purpose of the collection. The Musical Instrument Museum at Osaka College of Music (Ôsaka Ongaku Daigaku Fuzoku Gakki Hakubutsukan),[1] for example, uses the Hornbostel and Sachs system as the basis of its display, with the additional category of electrophones (Ôsaka Ongaku Daigaku Fuzoku Gakki Hakubutsukan 1984). Instruments from specific regions are grouped together at further levels of classification. The method of presentation at the initial level emphasises the instruments' physical form and points to the academic role of the collection in the university. The collection represents a range of cultures and instrument types, and has not been built around a specific cultural or instrument variety. The use of a western (or international) classification system at Osaka College of Music might be explained by its use in an academic institution which teaches western music. As will be seen later, several other collections also use the Hornbostel and Sachs system, or a modified version of it, but rather than emphasising instrument form, distinction is made initially according to the origin of instruments.

Many displays mix classification systems, and some, as outlined in this discussion, are cultural groupings on which other classifications are superimposed. In other

words, instruments are sometimes grouped initially within a collection using a non-scholarly grouping, and then classified according to a scholarly system. This highlights the difficulty collections have in 'finding a way of satisfying the expert while engaging a wider audience which demands an entirely different level of interpretation' (Arnold-Forster and La Rue 1993: 44). Indeed, instrument classification, in displays or otherwise, might follow any of a number of different grouping systems. They are, as Kartomi (1990: 7) comments, 'often synopses or terse accounts of a culture's, subculture's, or individual's deep-seated ideas about music and instruments, as well as, in some cases, philosophical, religious, and social beliefs'. 'Only through a thorough knowledge of the place of each scheme in its own particular cultural web can it be understood in its own terms' (Kartomi 1990: 284).

Insider/Outsider Displays

In some Japanese museums and archives traditional Japanese musical instruments are presented as part of an insider/outsider (*uchi*/*soto*) dichotomy based on the origin, or perceived origin, of instrument types. This kind of division is found in other spheres in Japan where group association is an important concept in social and cultural organisation. To be an insider of a group, or groups, is essential in helping to establish one's place and identity. An outsider might be someone who is either perceived as not belonging to a group, or belongs to a different group. The *uchi*/*soto* concept or related words, as Hendry (1987: 39-40) notes:

> Are also applied to members of one's house as opposed to members of the outside world, and to members of a person's wider groups, such as the community, school or place of work, as opposed to other people outside those groups.

The importance of group affiliation is noted by Nakane (1984: 125), who shows that the concept of *uchi* permeates Japanese society at all levels:

> *Uchi* may mean an institution as a whole, or it may mean the department or section to which the speaker belongs. It is common for an individual to belong to a certain informal group (which is often a faction within a larger group), and this is the group of primary and most intimate concern in his [or her] social life (see also Hendry 1987 and 1993; Hendry and Webber 1986; and Ben-Ari, Moeran and Valentine 1990).

There are many examples of dichotomies between Japanese and non-Japanese (usually western) objects. While dichotomous classifications are found in many areas of Japanese culture and society, the divisions which emerged as a result of western influence on Japan from the Meiji era (Japan was extremely isolated during the Edo era, 1600-1868) are today especially evident. While the ultimate *uchi*/*soto* distinction is perhaps a Japanese/non-Japanese dichotomy,[2] which is

particularly evident in some musical instrument classifications, other inside/outside (or Japanese/western) divisions include objects such as cakes (*wagashi*/*yôgashi*: Japanese cakes/western cakes), style (*wafû*/*yôfû*: Japanese style/western style), food (*washoku*/*yôshoku*: Japanese food/western food), paper (*washi*/*yôshi*: Japanese paper/western paper), clothes (*wafuku*/*yôfuku*: Japanese clothes/western clothes), rooms (*washitsu*/*yôshitsu*: Japanese rooms/western rooms), and music (*hôgaku*/*yôgaku*: Japanese music/western music).

In connection with musical instruments, the *uchi*/*soto* division is between *wagakki* (or *hôgakki*: traditional Japanese musical instruments) and *yôgakki* (western musical instruments). While *wagakki* are the focus of this discussion as the insider instruments of Japan, *yôgakki* are found, used, and very often made in Japan. They by far outnumber *wagakki* many times over. The *wagakki*/*yôgakki* dichotomy has an interesting place in the classification of instruments in Japanese museums and archives. Instruments in such contexts are grouped according to an orderly system that allows the instruments to be viewed according to the objectives of the institution. However, even though an *uchi*/*soto* dichotomy might be found at an initial level of display grouping in many collections, it is not usually perceived as a scholarly classification that groups the instruments in the display. Rather, as a cultural, or non-scholarly classification, it is usually used as a way of dividing and grouping types of instruments at a level which precedes another type of instrument classification.

Japan/World Division

An institution which divides its collection of instruments into Japanese instruments and other world instruments is the National Museum of Ethnology (Kokuritsu Minzokugaku Hakubutsukan) in Suita in Osaka Prefecture (see National Museum of Ethnology 1991). The museum has over 200 instruments which comprise a small part of its collection of world artefacts. Most instruments are displayed in a single room, which is divided according to two themes: Musical Instruments of Various Peoples (divided according to country); and Japanese Musical Instruments. The Japanese instruments are also grouped in genres or general instrument types. For example, *gagaku* (court music), *kabuki* (a type of theatre), and *sankyoku* (ensemble of *koto* [zither], *shamisen* [lute], and *shakuhachi* [end-blown flute] or *kokyû* [fiddle]).

The national importance of this institution, which is also a major research centre, is reflected in its main display grouping of instruments. A comprehensive music display which identifies Japanese instruments vis-à-vis non-Japanese instruments emphasises the important role the institution has in displaying and researching Japanese culture. In a collection that includes diverse objects from a range of world cultures, the initial dichotomy between Japanese and world instruments allows immediate access to the insider culture.

A similar, although much smaller Japan/world type of insider/outsider display

is found at the Drum Museum (Taikokan) in Tokyo, which is housed above and owned by the Japanese drum shop Miyamoto Unosuke Shoten. The collection consists of around 600 drums from many cultures, of which about 150 are permanently on display.

A single display room houses the drums and divides into Japanese drums and world drums. The instruments are further grouped according to music genre when necessary. The museum displays many drums made by the shop, and acts as a type of scholarly showcase for the business. While a general insider display level groups Japanese drums together, the drums made by the shop might be seen to belong to a further insider level that is unique to this collection. When instruments are displayed in the shop, the function is clearly for retail purposes, but when the shop's drums are displayed in the museum they give the displays an emphasis and identity, and help promote the shop.

Japan/Other Region Division

The instrument displays at the Musical Instrument Museum at Musashino Academia Musicae (Musashino Ongaku Daigaku Gakki Hakubutsukan)[3] have a division based on region. The university's three campuses each has a musical instrument display. The two main collections are at Ekoda in Tokyo, and Iruma in Saitama Prefecture. The Parunasosu (Parnassus) exhibition room, which opened in 1993 at the newest campus in Tama, Tokyo, has just a small display of several instruments. Including instrument accessories, the museum has about 5000 artefacts from around the world, which includes around 700 Japanese instruments (Musashino Ongaku Daigaku Gakki Hakubutsukan 1996: 7).

The collections at the Ekoda and Iruma campuses are displayed according to region, with Japan as the only named country (eg Africa, South East Asia, South America/Oceania, Europe, and Japan). Each region is given a separate room. A second level of display groups the instruments according to genre or instrument type. While a division based on region is made at the initial level of display, the museum catalogues its instruments according to a modified version of the Hornbostel and Sachs system (Musashino Ongaku Daigaku Gakki Hakubutsukan (1969, 1974, 1979, 1985, 1989, 1995; see also 1996). (Sakurai (1978, 1980, and 1982 provides a re-evaluation of the Hornbostel and Sachs system of musical instrument classification from a Japanese perspective.)

The naming of Japan as the only country in this type of display highlights its place within an insider grouping vis-à-vis non-Japanese cultures. Like Osaka College of Music, this collection too uses the Hornbostel and Sachs classification system, although in this instance very clear regional divisions are made at the first level of display.

Japan/West Division

A more specific insider/outsider division is found in the musical instrument display at Hamamatsu City Musical Instrument Museum (Hamamatsu Shi Gakki Hakubutsukan). In 1995, the year the museum opened as Japan's first public musical instrument museum, the collection consisted of around 800 musical instruments (mainly from Japan and Europe); the museum aims to have 2000 instruments by the year 2000 (Hamamatsu Shi Gakki Hakubutsukan 1995: 1). Established as part of an aim to create a 'musical and cultural city' (Hamamatsu Shi Gakki Hakubutsukan 1995: 1), the museum's 'purpose . . . is to consider the meaning of "man" and "culture" through a display of musical instruments from different times and regions of the earth' (Hamamatsu Shi Gakki Hakubutsukan 1995: 1).

The museum's permanent instrument display divides clearly into Japanese and western instruments. The Japanese part of the dichotomy refers to instruments considered traditional to Japan (ie either existing before western influence from the mid-nineteenth century, or the result of such culture contact). Most of the museum's instruments are western, and a small exhibition is dedicated to traditional Japanese instruments. Apart from a small display of *gagaku* (court music) instruments, which groups a variety of instruments used in this genre, the collection is grouped according to instrument type. The instruments are catalogued and presented on one level according to a slightly modified version of the Hornbostel and Sachs (1914 [see 1961]) fourfold system, and further 'arranged according to the[ir] shape and design' (Hamamatsu Shi Gakki Hakubutsukan 1995: 1).

The division of Japanese and western instruments in this collection points to Hamamatsu City's connection with musical instrument manufacture, which is the home of two of Japan's leading instrument manufacturers, Yamaha and Kawai. However, these companies make primarily western instruments, and this is reflected in the museum's large collection of such instruments. Furthermore, considering the profusion of western musical instruments in Japan, the insider/outsider division might even be interpreted to include Japan on both sides of the dichotomy: insiders and outsiders to both Japanese and western instruments. Still, even though western instruments might today also be considered Japanese instruments due to their abundance in Japan, in order to understand the historical place of instruments in Japan, traditional Japanese instruments are classified distinctly on one side of a dichotomy.

World/West Division

The Organology Archive (Gakkigaku Shiryôkan) at Kunitachi College of Music (Kunitachi Ongaku Daigaku)[4] is intended 'to contribute research material to the scholars, educators and students of the college and to the public as well. To

meet the individual requests of every curriculum of the music college, that is, performance, composition, musicology and pedagogy, the collection . . . [includes] visible and audible material related to all kinds of musical instruments' (Gunji 1996: 6). The archive uses a sixfold classification system in its catalogues which is unique to this collection: massophone (*rittai*: solid), cupophone (*kûdôrittai*: hollow), clavophone (*bâ*: stick), tabulophone (*ita*: board), chordophone (*gen*: string), and membranophone (*maku*: membrane) (Kunitachi College of Music Gakkigaku Shiryôkan 1996a and 1996b).

The collection is displayed in a dichotomy based on origin. In this case it is between western and other instruments (ie non-western, which includes traditional Japanese instruments). The emphasis on western instruments in this museum reflects the university's focus on western music studies. In the main viewing room, the traditional Japanese instruments in the collection, of which there are approximately 400 (*Hôgaku Jânaru* 1995: 23; Kunitachi College of Music Gakkigaku Shiryôkan 1996a and 1996b), are presented alongside instruments from other non-western cultures according to a mixture of classification systems, including groupings of drums, harps, zithers, rattles, lutes, idiophones, and aerophones. The second level of this display places an emphasis on the physical structure of the instruments, rather than on the specific non-western region in which they are used. Also, as with the collection at Hamamatsu City Musical Instrument Museum, Japanese instruments might be seen to represent both inside and outside parts of the dichotomy: insiders in that they are Japanese instruments; and outsiders in that they are not the focus of music studies at the university.

Region/Other Region Division

The Large Drum Museum (Ôdaiko no Yakata) in Takanosu, Akita Prefecture, uses an insider/outsider division which divides instruments according to locality within Japanese regions. Like many regional museums in Japan, the Large Drum Museum promotes unique, local culture, especially as many of the museum's Japanese instruments are used in Tsuzureko Shrine Festival (Tsuzureko Jinja Saiten; also called Ôdaiko Matsuri: Large Drum Festival), which is held in the town on 14-15 July each year. The museum has transferred drums from their original festival context to a museum context in order to represent part of the town's collective identity, and to display drums for tourism and educational purposes.

This collection, which focuses exclusively on drums, divides into two rooms: the *inside* room, which displays drums that represent the main annual festival of the town (it focuses on six huge laced drums: *ôdaiko* - see Miyano 1989);[5] and the *outside* room, which displays other world drums according to country of origin, including some Japanese drums which are not used in the festival. The largest drum in the museum has a length of 4.52 m and weighs about 3.5 tonnes. The second largest is displayed as once setting a world record for drum size. It is labelled *Ginesu* (Guinness).

As with the previous two collections discussed above, each division might be seen as either inside or outside depending on the perspective taken by the viewer. However, from the viewpoint of the museum itself, the room displaying the *ôdaiko* is clearly the insider exhibit. The museum's main function is to exhibit the *ôdaiko* (the insider instruments), while the other drums (the outsider instruments) supplement the collection to give it further breadth.

Conclusion

The categorisation of objects and concepts, especially in dichotomous divisions, is a trait which is especially evident in many areas of Japanese culture and society in general - not only between Japan and the west. This article has focussed on instrument presentations in several key Japanese museums and archives which have a distinct insider/outsider dichotomy as the basis of the display. The study has shown that an examination of this level of display can reveal insight into instrument groupings, of which several might overlap at any one time. It has also shown that the purpose of an institution might be reflected in the way it presents its displays, and, in some cases, instrument groupings can reflect similar groupings in the society itself.

There are sometimes differences in the ways instruments are classified in catalogues (not all collections publish them) and the ways they are presented for display. In particular, the initial level of display is sometimes left out of a catalogue, or is given secondary significance due to focus being given to a scholarly classification system. Furthermore, the choice of classification or grouping is influenced by the focus of the context in which instruments are displayed, which will ultimately influence the way they are interpreted.

Organisation is integral to displays in that instruments must be presented and grouped in one way or another. This inquiry has revealed several groupings which are not always thought of immediately as scholarly instrument classification systems, but should be examined as fundamental ways in which a society categorises its instruments. That is, the display divisions form initially a visual component within display contexts to which scholarly classification systems are often applied.

Notes

1. The university has adopted the English name Osaka College of Music. A literal translation of the name is Osaka Music University.

2. The idea of ethnic difference in Japan is particularly evident at Osaka Human Rights Museum (Ôsaka Jinken Hakubutsukan), which includes displays of some of Japan's minority groups, including *burakumin*

(outcasts), Okinawans and Koreans. Some of the displays include musical instruments, especially those with animal skins (ie drums) prepared by *burakumin*.

3. The museum has adopted the English name Musashino Academia Musicae. A literal translation of the name is Musashino Music University.

4. The university has adopted the English name Kunitachi College of Music. A literal translation of the name is Kunitachi Music University.

5. The term *ôdaiko* refers to a variety of large double-headed drums. Some have their skins attached to the body by studs (compare the large drums at the Drum Village Archive - Taiko no Sato Shiryôkan), although the *ôdaiko* at the Large Drum Museum have their skins attached to a frame which is then attached to the body with laces.

References

Arnold-Forster, K. and H. La Rue. (1993). *Museums of Music: A Review of Musical Collections in the United Kingdom*. London, HMSO.

Ben-Ari, E., B. Moeran, and J. Valentine, eds. (1990). *Unwrapping Japan: Society and Culture in Anthropological Perspective*. Manchester, Manchester University Press.

Fienup-Riordan, A. (1999). 'Collaboration on display: a Yup'ik Eskimo exhibit at three national museums' *American Anthropologist* 101(2): 339-58.

Gunji, S. (1996). 'Interpreting musical instruments: a university collection in Japan' *Museum International*, 48(1): 6-8.

Hamamatsu Shi Gakki Hakubutsukan, ed. (1995). *Hamamatsu Shi Gakki Hakubutsukan: Shozô Gakki Zuroku IV: Nihon no Gakki* [Hamamatsu City Musical Instrument Museum: Catalogue IV: Japanese Musical Instruments]. Hamamatsu, Hamamatsu Shi Gakki Hakubutsukan.

Hendry, J. (1987). *Understanding Japanese Society*. London, Routledge.

Hendry, J. and J. Webber, eds. (1986). *Interpreting Japanese Society: Anthropological Approaches*. Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford Occasional Papers No. 5. Oxford, JASO.

Hôgaku Jânaru (1995). 'Gakki o tenji suru hakubutsukan gaido [Guide of museum exhibitions of musical instruments]' *Hôgaku Jânaru*, 107: 22-25.

Hornbostel, E. M. von and C. Sachs. (1961 [1914]). 'Classification of musical instruments' (trans A. Baines and K. P. Wachsmann) *The Galpin Society Journal* 14: 3-29.

Johnson, H. M. (1996). 'A survey of present-day Japanese concepts and classifications of musical instruments' *Musicology Australia*, 19: 16-39.

(1999) [forthcoming]. 'Japanese collections of traditional Japanese musical instruments: presentation and representation' *Musicology Australia*, 22.

Karp, I. and S. D. Lavine (eds). (1991). *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* Washington, Smithsonian Institution Press.

Kartomi, M. J. (1990). *On Concepts and Classifications of Musical Instruments* Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

Kunitachi College of Music Gakkigaku Shiryôkan (Collection for Organology), ed. (1996a). *The Collection of Musical Instruments* S. Kunji et al eds. Tokyo, Kunitachi College of Music Gakkigaku Shiryôkan.

(1996b). *The Collection of Musical Instruments* 2. Kunji et al eds. Tokyo, Kunitachi College of Music Gakkigaku Shiryôkan.

Macdonald, S. and G. Fyfe, eds. (1996). *Theorizing Museums: Representing Identity and Diversity in a Changing World* Oxford, Blackwell Publishers/The Sociological Review.

Miyano A. (1989). *Shashinshû Ôdaiko no Sato* [Drum Village in Pictures]. Akita, Mumyô Sha Shuppan.

Musashino Ongaku Daigaku Gakki Hakubutsukan, ed. (1969). *Musashino Ongaku Daigaku Gakki Hakubutsukan Mokuroku 1* [Musashino Music University Museum of Musical Instruments Catalogue 1]. Catalogued by S. Kikuchi and O. Yamaguchi. Tokyo, Musashino Ongaku Daigaku.

(1974). *Musashino Ongaku Daigaku Gakki Hakubutsukan Mokuroku 2* [Musashino Music University Museum of Musical Instruments Catalogue 2]. Catalogued by S. Kikuchi and O. Yamaguchi. Tokyo, Musashino Ongaku Daigaku.

(1979). *Musashino Ongaku Daigaku Gakki Hakubutsukan Mokuroku 3* [Musashino Music University Museum of Musical Instruments Catalogue 3]. Tokyo, Musashino Ongaku Daigaku.

(1985). *Musashino Ongaku Daigaku Gakki Hakubutsukan Mokuroku 4* [Musashino Music University Museum of Musical Instruments Catalogue 4]. Tokyo, Musashino Ongaku Daigaku.

(1989). *Musashino Ongaku Daigaku Gakki Hakubutsukan Mokuroku 5* [Musashino Music University Museum of Musical Instruments Catalogue 5]. Tokyo, Musashino Ongaku Daigaku.

(1995). *Musashino Ongaku Daigaku Gakki Hakubutsukan Mokuroku 6* [Musashino Music University Museum of Musical Instruments Catalogue 6]. Tokyo, Musashino Ongaku Daigaku.

(1996). *Kaleidoscope*. Tokyo, Musashino Ongaku Daigaku.

Nakane C. (1984). *Japanese Society*. Tokyo, Charles E. Tuttle.

National Museum of Ethnology, ed. (1991). *Guide to The National Museum of Ethnology*. Osaka, National Museum of Ethnology.

Ôsaka Ongaku Daigaku Fuzoku Gakki Hakubutsukan, ed. (1984). *Ôsaka Ongaku Daigaku Fuzoku Gakki Hakubutsukan Mokuroku* [Osaka Music University Musical Instrument Museum Annexe Catalogue]. Osaka, Gakkô Hôjin Ôsaka Ongaku Daigaku.

Pearce, S. M. (1992). *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study*. Washington, Smithsonian Institution Press.

Roberts, L. P. (1967). *The Connoisseur's Guide to Japanese Museums*. Foreword by L. Sickman. Rutland, Charles E. Tuttle.

(1978). *Roberts' Guide to Japanese Museums*. In Collaboration with the International House of Japan. Tokyo, Kodansha International.

(1987). *Roberts' Guide to Japanese Museums of Art and Archaeology*. Tokyo, Simul Press.

Sakurai, T. (1978). 'Shin gakki bunrui hô [Reconsidering the classification of musical instruments]' *Kokuritsu Minzokugaku Hakubutsukan Kenkyû Hôkoku*, 3(1): 40-62.

(1980). 'Gakki bunrui hô saikô [An outline of new systematic classification of musical instruments]' *Ongakugaku*, 25(1): 11-21.

(1982). 'The classification of musical instruments reconsidered' *Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology*, 6(4): 824-830.

Thompson, J. M. A. et al eds. (1984). *Manual of Curatorship: A Guide to Museum Practice*. London, Butterworths.

Velarde, G. (1984). 'Exhibition design' in J. V. A. Thompson et al eds. *Manual of Curatorship: A Guide to Museum Practice*. London, Butterworths, 394-402.

Yamaguchi M. (1991). 'The poetics of exhibition in Japanese culture' in I. Karp and S. D. Lavine, eds. *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* Washington, Smithsonian Institution Press, 57-67.

Henry Johnson: Department of Music, University of Otago, PO Box 56, Dunedin, New Zealand.

Email: henry.johnson@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

Dr. Johnson is Senior Lecturer in Ethnomusicology at the University of Otago, New Zealand.

Semiotic Observations in the Berlin *Museum of Things: Werkbund-Archive*

Jana Scholze

This article introduces a little-known museum in Berlin valued by many visitors and museum professionals because of its unusual approach to collecting and presentation. The museum stands in the tradition of early 20th Century cultural reform movements; influenced by philosophers such as Baudelaire (1857/ 1868), Benjamin (1961) and Aragon (1972), the theories of Dadaist and Surrealist artists,[1] and the ideas of structuralist and postmodern philosophers.[2] The *Museum of Things: Werkbund-Archive* displays cultural phenomena, introduces new and innovative ideas, and explores the nuances of barely noticed modifications of space, habit, environment and the relationship between people and objects. These elements are searched for and found in a phenomenology of things, which entails decoding the language of objects and revealing their many layers of meanings. The museum suggests that objects are traces, prints and trails of both historical and current processes, and projections and constellations — in the end they are memories of time and space. Beside this "archaeological" work with objects, the *Museum of Things: Werkbund-Archive* also presents opportunities to explore its own identity as a museum.

As a museum of cultural history, work at the *Museum of Things: Werkbund-Archive* involves the creation of spatial images that deal with the struggle of coding and decoding of meaning, with inquiry and uncertainty, and with closeness to and distance from museum objects. The museum's approach creates an exhibition space that allows free association by curators and visitors with the past, present, and even the future. The central motifs of this work with objects are discussed below under the headings of alchemy, an open system, the kaleidoscopic, the metamorphic, and netlike structures.

Theoretical Background to the Museum

For 20 years the phrase "Museum of 20th Century Everyday Culture" was used to describe the *Werkbund-Archive* in Berlin. In 1999, the name was changed to *Museum der Dinge* (*Museum of Things*), with *Werkbund-Archive* as its subtitle.

The *Werkbund-Archive* is named after *the Deutscher Werkbund* (German Craft Federation), which was founded in 1907 in Munich. The *Deutscher Werkbund* still exists and is an organisation of artists and companies dedicated to improving the quality of everyday culture, design, and architecture. Their focus is industrial design and mass production, with the aim of creating a new aesthetic of everyday life. The museum's approach and collecting policy is informed by an interest in

the reform movements of the early 20th-Century, in particular their concern with the aesthetics of everyday culture.

The *Werkbund-Archiv* was founded in 1973 as a centre for science and communication, with the aim of developing a critical documentation of the historical genesis of the contemporary world and nature as seen through the form and function of objects. In their early years, the emphasis was more on documentation and research and a priority was given to building its library. While searching for books and documents, some objects of material culture were also purchased, initially with the purpose of "playing" with them. "Playing" meant allowing curators to use particular objects to explore, illustrate and visualize the ideas and theories they were working on. Since 1980, however, the *Werkbund-Archiv* has become an institution for collecting and showcasing 20th century everyday culture. Beyond simply assembling material objects, its approach also embraces the ensemble of conditions, thoughts, and perceptions that structure everyday life. In the understanding of the museum staff, a representation of culture and life can be grasped by meticulous observation of the everyday.

A programme of thematic changing-exhibitions developed that embodied the museum's intention to avoid distinct interpretation, by differentiating the many meanings of exhibited objects and their combination. The museum avoids narrating history in linear or sequential displays according to didactic, educative concepts. It works, instead, with spatial images, so called *Raumbilder*, that deny the "neutral" museum space and celebrate an autonomous, associative, and aesthetic exhibition space. Museum objects together with the design and architecture of the gallery, including its colour, light, and sound, define a space that itself becomes the central exhibit.

Alchemy

The concept of collecting, as a metaphor of Baudelaire's *Lumpensammler*, reflects an interest in things that are usually ignored in museums. This search for hidden, universal, concealed, secret, and unknown connections, and the desire to combine collections rather than focus on single objects, is the meaning of the term alchemy applied to the *Museum of Things*.[3] Alchemy also suggests an interest in obscure, unexamined, untested, and unintended meanings that arise from the encounter with collections in the museum setting.

Most items in the current collection, mainly industrial products, were found in flea markets. Objects that were considered worth collecting were those with a structure that showed 20th-Century everyday culture, primarily in Germany. The museum staff aims for a collection where the social and cultural sphere is called to mind through every single object. For example, Angelika Thiekötter, the museum's director, collected black and yellow objects. This combination of colours was found on many ordinary objects from the 1950s, demonstrating (to

a contemporary understanding) the striking, conspicuous and provocative modernity of the period. On the other hand, these colours are also well-known signs of danger and attention. These objects brought together in a museum collection raise a number of questions: How is danger signalled through such harmless things as eggcups, watering cans, and biscuit boxes? In what way do black and yellow objects mean "modern" to contemporary viewers?[4]

> We don't have any system...The special kind of attention for things comes *inter alia* from the suspicion that artefacts embody former and actual actions as a special kind of communication. This information is found nowhere explicitly and is not present in conscious thought. The understanding of what we do and the finding out of what we know means decoding the language of things.[5]

An Open System

Despite this disavowal of a system, and although it seems contrary to the whole character of the collection, the museum still has a need for a systematic structure for its archives, collection, and exhibits. The demands of openness — where new combinations of objects should always be possible to motivate new interpretations — means avoiding both the loss of previous orderings of objects and the breaking up of the collection into single, separate elements. The approach the museum has taken is to adopt a net-like computer database structure. The computer system creates either a simple structural model or the possibility of overlapping ordering structures. By means of electronic data processing, and within the limitations of its software, the museum is pursuing a structure that allows infinite combinations. The advantages of such a computer-based strategy is that it uses the computer's ordering structure without foreclosing further possibilities, establishing and determining fixed sets of objects, building boundaries between groups of objects, or demanding definite categorization or explicit classification. Because of the flexibility of computer programmes, the museum object can find multiple locations within groups of objects according to its plural meanings.

The creation of an open collecting structure requires a classification scheme in accordance with the polysemic character of its objects. This requires semiotic models that divide the most relevant codes inherent not only in single objects or groups of objects, but also in the innumerable possible combinations and arrangements of similar, comparable, and even superficially opposing objects. To take the example above, black and yellow objects form one set of possible combinations of colours within the collection. In addition, black and yellow objects are also found in other subsets, such as household goods, textiles, industrial appliances, bric-a-brac, signs and symbols, etc. These objects cannot be characterised just by the colours black and yellow. To read them in this manner narrows the code to only one interpretation.

Photograph 1: Shelves with black and yellow objects.

Photograph 2: Shelf-Tower.

Different approaches and philosophies structure collections. The semiotic approach examined here shows how they overlap, hide, cover, reveal or emphasise different codes and codings. The ability of objects to change and transform themselves over time and in different locations makes pre-defining and determining them almost impossible. Working without a strict ordering system allows the *Museum of Things, Werkbund-archive* to move beyond the definite, secure, and determined to the ambiguous, changeable, uncertain, and unfathomable. Such an open structure allows objects "to live together" in the collection without a fixed idea of (past) reality.

The Kaleidoscopic

"Standing for" is the quality of signs that characterise museum objects and their function in museums and exhibitions. The museum process can be characterised as signs acquiring new meanings as contexts change. The museum process principally transforms an object's connotative character. The object's function is still denotable, although within the museum it has no everyday use or application. The various possible positions of an object in a museum system modify their relation and connection with other objects, as well as between the object and its user. In addition, the museum space itself creates additional special object codes. Finally, each person working with the collection or with a single object will find new meanings, interpretations, and conjectures, depending on their academic or personal interest. Eco (1968/ 1988) has described the ideological perspectives inherent in the use of historical artefacts as *Bereicherungskodes* (codes of enlargement):

> ...they (the codes of enlargement) allow us to change the context of antiquarian things and to enjoy their former meanings, but on the other hand using them for connotations on the basis of our current lexica.[6]

For the *Werkbund-Archiv*, these *Bereicherungskodes* offer a chance to explore hidden, secret, and unknown meanings. The interests and preferences of each curator are encouraged and valued as an opportunity to add a "special flavour" to the collection.

> The way of combining things and creating new constellations shows clearly the interests, directions and traces of the collection. You will find out the very individual character of the collection, the suspected potential of it, the hopes associated within the constructed collection and the manner in which the objects and the structures of order are treated.[7]

The *Museum of things, Werkbundarchive* works with the metaphor of the kaleidoscope, pursuing the idea that every single object added to the collection creates the possibility of a new constellation of meaning. The changeability of objects becomes the guiding principle of the collection, with new syntheses and constructions constantly emerging.

> Placing one object next to three different objects in succession will tell you at least three different stories.[8]

The dominant manner of presentation reflects an alchemistic pleasure in experimentation and combination. As a result of denying a categorical and definite object message, the narration of a past by means of chronology and reconstruction is also eschewed. The linear concept of the traditional museum is given up in favour of a "space" that enables different forms of reading, including the audience's. The idea of an open system, subordinating the architecture and the design of the presentation, is the precondition for movable borders, change of positions, and constantly new formations of the museum space. Such a flexible setting for exhibitions, where emerging new codes allow for arbitrariness, unsteadiness, openness and changeability, is defined as "poetic construction":

> The objects presented, the chosen architecture, the lights and the sounds constitute the exhibition space - on the other hand, the space intensifies the aura of the objects. The place becomes active in the characteristics of the subject...With the space the situation of the audience changes...The autonomous space comes into an exciting relation with the audience. The concept of the space offers the audience with nearly every single step, or, in the ideal case, with every change, a new constellation of the surroundings...There is no visitor in poetic constructions.[9]

In the exhibition *Untitled. Save as.*,.visitors entered the first gallery and were confused by the intensive use of space in the middle of the room. But at the same time, this configuration provided areas of emptiness and freedom of movement. Compact metal shelves, reaching almost to the top of the very high room, marked the centre. The remaining space was filled with small, single-standing or hanging objects, which were rarely noticed. Because of the light and sound installation, attention and concentration was demanded by the visually attractive, auditive shelves becoming 'operating towers' in the constellation of a total apparatus. On the shelves of this sound-space, everyday machines and former household appliances were recognisable. They were displayed, not only for their aesthetic qualities, but also to demonstrate their original functions. There was a fascination and enthusiasm in searching for common objects, which often changed to dissatisfaction when they were found to be inaccessibly high on the shelves. The only way to see them was to move into the remaining space. In changing the distance between the object and the audience, the relationship between the audience and the entire presentation was altered. Distinct objects on the shelves became members of groups organised by function, producer, or date of origin. The intermeshing of human beings and machines worked in a more immaterial way: that is, via the call-like sounds and other signals emitted by machines to which our modern sensory systems have become completely attuned. Moving through the exhibition space the audience came into contact with objects and through them with their own associations, histories, and memories.

Metamorphosis

> History releases their pictures only if the objects are brought within a new network of relations.[10]

In the *Museum of things* working on exhibitions means constructing pictures of past, present, and future by means of an intuitively integrated strategy based on visual combinations and connections. In particular, unconventional approaches to the reading history are encouraged. The de-coding or solutions of these readings by the visitor are found not only in the uncovering of hidden codes, but also in the creation of new codes. Rather than trying to reconstruct history, the museum is searching for subjective, poetic constructions where existing cultural interpretations will be destroyed (deconstructed) and coded anew. The open, netlike presentation system allows combinations of objects without predetermining meanings, readings, and understandings of these relations. The context of the exhibition space enables artistic articulations of the objects, not according to previously valid (traditional) codes, but according to presently existing ones. According to this conception, a museum is an artistic medium with the task of constructing and presenting unconventional, communicative, visual spaces. The influence of Surrealism, the *mythologie moderne* by Louis Aragon, and the ideas of Max Ernst are obvious. The philosophy of Walter Benjamin, especially his concept of museums and exhibitions, plays a key role in the way the museum deals with history, its traces, and lost items.[11]

Another facet of the fascination of alchemy is an endless metamorphosis, a process without definite aim. To change suddenly stable structures by means of small, directed additions, to hang something in the balance until its quality changes, to process the entire spectrum of materiality, to accept no absolute differences but to seek shadings, to see in all living the spirit of work - all these aspects in keeping with the times, constitute museums as re-perspective spaces of material memory.[12]

Networked structure

For the *Museum of Things. Werkbundarchiv* the logical consequence of exhibiting everyday culture is to work with integrated structures. The net approach provides a structure for tying elements together, combining and connecting them, while allowing for voids and gaps in between. The realisation of such fleeting structures, allowing eclipsing and overlapping, is found in its temporary exhibitions.

> The net is both, a flexible and stable structure, and has to be defined again with every new constellation. The permanent risk of decaying and breaking requires necessarily “networking”, the alchemistic process of fusion, corresponding thinking.[13]

The exhibition space is used for arrangements of constructed, complex, experiential, and wondrous pictures in space called *Denkbilder*.[14] By using familiar forms in unfamiliar ways, the objects interact in unexpected and surprising ways. A special aesthetic of exhibition design is used intended to challenge previous and current ways of seeing and thinking and to deny a false harmony of objects. The immediate application of familiar codes from everyday life is then limited in the museum. Everyday decoding often seems impossible or only marginally meaningful and useful in this context. For example, to decode a yoghurt cup or a plastic chair as functional everyday objects is neither challenging nor very informative. But to look for links between them as mass produced objects in shape and use one may find links in their very simple construction that show their flexibility as style, usage, taste, etc, alter. In this sense, everyday objects become signs and symbols of current cultural and social ideas, paradigms, conventions and their modification. Artistic constructions in and of the exhibition space uncover and communicate possible codes by means of association, stimulation and surprise as a response to the plurality of meanings inherent in objects.

Exhibiting images about the past and the present is not an effort to define closed meanings and to offer unequivocal messages, but an endeavour to create a state of suspense between object and subject. By means of conscious inclusion of the audience within the exhibition context, there is an attempt to overcome the distance between the object and the visitor. The visitor's inclusion in the networked structures of presentation is a precondition of the process of decoding. As the visitor defines his/her relationship to single or groups of objects, it is hoped that he/she will notice and understand the planes of signs, the communication between the layers of meaning and sense, and will uncover links and combinations.

> The entire exhibition is only in the head of the visitor.[15]

Notes

1. Artists like Man Ray and Francis Picabia attempted to demolish the current aesthetic standards through their art and such publications like *The Blind Man*, *New York Dada* and *Rongwrong*. In the context of museum presentations Marcel Duchamp was most influential with the creation of the first *ready made*, the "Bicycle Wheel", in 1913.

2. Only a small selection can be given here: Michel Foucauld, *The order of Things: An Archaelogie of Human Sciences* (1966) or *The archaeology of Knowledge* (1969); Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (1957/1993) and Jaques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (1967).

3. The first exhibition at that time still named *Werkbund-Archiv* in the Martin-Gropius-Building had the characteristic title: '*Alchemie des Alltags*' (Alchemy of everyday life); in the catalogue the subtitle 'Directions for a new type of museum' was added.

4. Summary of the essay "*Gelb-Schwarz*" (Yellow-Black) in "*Ohne Titel. Sichern Unter*". (Untitled. Save as), Berlin 1995: 18-21.

5. Translation by the author. Original: "*Wir haben dafür kein System...Die besondere Art unserer Aufmerksamkeit gegenüber den Dingen speist sich unter anderem aus dem Verdacht, daß in den Artefakten, den Verkörperungen einstigen und aktuellen Handelns, Mitteilungen besonderer Art enthalten sind. Mitteilungen, die nirgendwo expliziert, die im bewußten Denken nicht aufbewahrt sind. Zu verstehen, was wir tun, herauszufinden, was wir wissen, das heißt: die Sprache der Dinge zu entschlüsseln.*" (catalogue: "*Ohne Titel. Sichern Unter*". (Untitled. Save as), 1995: 18ff)

6. Translation by Antonella Giannone. Original: "*... ci (codici di arricchimento) permettono di inserire l'oggetto di antiquariato in altri contesti, di goderlo per quel che significava allora, ma di usarlo anche per le connotazioni che vi attribuiamo in base ai nostri lessici di oggi. È un movimento ansimante e avventuroso di riscoperta, di fronte a una forma, di contesti originari e di creazione di altri contesti*" (Eco 1988: 213)

7. Translation by the author. Original: "*Die Art, wie die Dinge zusammengestellt sind, wie immer neue Konstellationen geschaffen werden, verdeutlicht Sammlungsinteressen, Sammlungsspuren, Sammlungsrichtungen. Sie werden etwas erfahren von den stark individuellen Prägungen dieser Sammlung, den Potentialen, die wir darin vermuten, den Hoffnungen, die mit ihrem Aufbau verbunden waren, von unserer Umgehensweise mit den Dingen und von unseren Ordnungsstrukturen*". (catalogue: "*ohne Titel. Sichern unter*"... (Untitled. Save as), 1995: 9)

8. Translation by the author. Original: "*Plaziere neben ein Objekt nacheinander drei andere Dinge und es erzählt dir mindestens drei verschiedene Geschichten*" (Siepmann, 1987: 90)

9. Translation by the author. Original: "*Die ausgestellten Dinge, die gewählte Raumarchitektur, das Licht und die Töne konstituieren den Raum - der Raum wiederum steigert die Ausstrahlungskraft der Dinge. Der Raum wird tätig, er nimmt Eigenschaften eines Subjekt an... Mit dem Raum ändert sich die Situation des Besuchers... Der autonom gewordene Raum tritt in ein spannungsreiches Verhältnis mit dem Besucher. Der Raum ist so konzipiert, daß der Besucher mit jedem einzelnen Schritt, ja idealerweise mit jeder Bewegung sich in einer Konstellation*

befindet, die immer neu ist... In den poetischen Konstruktionen gibt es keinen Zuschauer mehr" (Siepmann, 1995: 10f)

10. Translation by the author. Original: "*Die Geschichte gibt ihre Bilder nur frei, wenn die Objekte in ein völlig neues Beziehungsgeflecht gebracht werden*" (exhibition leaflet)

11. Walter Benjamin's theories were the central theme in the exhibition of the *Werkbund-Archiv* between 1990/ 91: '*Bucklicht Männlein und Engel der Geschichte. Walter Benjamin, Theoretiker der Moderne*' (Hunchbacked manikin and the angel of history. Walter Benjamin, Theorist of the modern age). For further readings see bibliography.

12. Translation by the author. Original: "*Eine andere Facette des Faszinosums Alchimie ist die endlose Metamorphose, die Prozeßhaftigkeit ohne festes Ziel. Durch kleine gezielte Hinzufügungen haltbare Strukturen plötzlich verändern, etwas Erreichtes sofort wieder aufs Spiel setzen, etwas in der Schwebe halten, bis seine Qualität sich ändert, das gesamte Spektrum der Materialität prozessieren, keine absoluten Differenzen anerkennen, sondern Abstufungen suchen, in allem Lebenden den Geist am Werke sehen - alle diese Aspekte sind zeitgemäß, auch für das Museum als nachperspektivisches Raumgefüge der gegenständlichen Erinnerung.* (Siepmann 1995: 14)

13. Translation by the author. Original: "*Das Netz bildet eine zugleich labile und stabile Struktur, die mit jeder neuen Konstellation neu definiert werden muß. Aus der ständigen Gefahr des Zerfallens oder Zerreißens ergibt sich die Notwendigkeit der vernetzten Arbeitsweise, des alchimistischen Prozesses der Verschmelzung, eines korrespondierenden Denkens.*" (catalogue: "*ohne Titel. Sichern unter*". (Untitled. Save as), 1995: 7)

14. This term was suggested in the catalogue of the Benjamin exhibition and could be translated as 'images of thinking'. Further, '*Denkbilder*' is the name for a collection of gloss and polemics showing Walter Benjamin as brilliant observer and critic of the everyday life. See Benjamin (1994).

15. Translation by the author. Original: "*Die Ausstellung ist nur im Kopf des Betrachters vollständig*" (exhibition leaflet)

Bibliography

Aragon, L. (1972), *Le paysan de Paris*, Paris

Baudelaire, C. (1857/ 1868) *Verse. Les Fleurs du mal*. Paris (transl. By Richard Howard,1982)

(1869) *Le Spleen de Paris*. Paris (transl. By Louise Varese, 1951)

Benjamin, W. (1961), *Illuminations*, New York; Schocken

(1973), *Charles Baudelaire: a Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*. transl. Harry Zohn, London; New Left Books.

(1983), *Das Passagenwerk* (The Arcades Project.) Frankfurt/ Main; Suhrkamp, 1.Bd.

(1994), *Denkbilder*. Frankfurt/ Main; Suhrkamp.

Deutscher Werkbund, Darmstadt; Werkbund-Archiv, Berlin (ed.) (1982), *Die Zwanziger Jahre des Deutschen Werkbundes. (The 1920s of the German Craft Federation)* Gießen; Anabis-Verlag (Werkbund-Archiv 10).

Eco, U. (1968/ 1988) *La struttura assente*. Milano: Bompiani

Frecot, J. e. Krebs, D. (ed.) (1972), *Werkbundarchiv*. Berlin (Werkbund-Archiv 1).

Siepmann, E. (ed.) (1989), *Alchimie des Alltags: Werkbund-Archiv, Museum der Alltagskultur des 20. Jh.; Gebrauchsanweisung für einen neuen Museumstyp. (Alchimy of everyday life: Werkbund-Archive. Directions for a new type of museum.)* Gießen; Anabis-Verlag (Werkbund-Archiv 15).

Siepmann, E. (ed.) (1995), *Räume gegen die Beschleunigung. Zu einer Poetik des Museums. (Spaces against acceleration. Towards a poetics of the museum.)* [supplement of the catalogue 'Hunchbacked manikin…'].

Siepmann, E. e Thiekötter, A. (ed.) (1987), Packeis und Pressglas. Von der Kunstgewerbebewegung zum Deutschen Werkbund. (Pack ice and pressed glass. From arts and crafts movement to German Craft Federation) Gießen; Anabis-Verlag (Werkbund-Archiv 16).

Exhibition catalogues

Bucklicht Männlein und Engel der Geschichte: Walter Benjamin, Theoretiker der Moderne. (Hunchbacked manikin and the angel of history. Walter Benjamin, Theorist of the modern age.) Exhibition of the *Werkbund-Archive* in Martin Gropius-building in Berlin, 28. December to 28. April 1991. Gießen; Anabas-Verlag: 1990.

Ohne Titel. Sichern unter... Unbeständige Ausstellung der Bestände des Werkbund-Archivs. (Untitled. Save as…Impermanent exhibition of the *Werkbund-Archive's permanent collection*) in Martin-Gropius-building in Berlin, 13. January to 2. July 1995. Berlin; Werkbund-Archive 1995.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank Eckhard Siepmann for reading and discussing first drafts, Antonella Giannone for the Italian translation, Nikolai Delvendahl, and the editors of *Museological Review* for giving advice for the English version.

Jana Scholze: Jessnerstraße 31, D 10247 Berlin, Germany

Email: jana.scholze@gmx.de

Jana Scholze studied Museology in Leipzig, Amsterdam and Leicester, and is a Ph.D. student at the Technical University of Berlin; department of Semiotics.

Politics and Propaganda in Portuguese Museums and Temporary Exhibitions during the *Estado Novo*

Sérgio Lira

When, in May 2000, I had the chance to present a paper at the Research Seminar Week (Department of Museums Studies - University of Leicester) I decided it was the best opportunity to test the conclusions my Ph.D. research had reached. It was the opportunity to face the staff of the department and all my colleagues, arguing in favour of my conclusions and checking the possible weaknesses of my arguments. The paper I presented then, became the core of my thesis conclusions and, with all the necessary references and adjustments, is the paper I am presenting now.

This paper summarises two main issues: the political and cultural framework of the *Estado Novo* (because it is impossible to understand the propaganda of the regime apart from its nationalistic context) and the main aspects of the political and propagandistic use of museums and temporary exhibitions performed by that regime (as it was one of its most fundamental and purposeful activities of propaganda).

Framework

Main Political Events

The Portuguese Twentieth Century began in 1910, when the Republican Revolution put an end to a monarchy that had lasted for almost eight centuries. Portugal hoped that the First Republic would solve its major national problems, such as the financial and economic crisis along with the political instability that had characterised the last decades of the monarchy. The new regime proved unable to do so, however, and its difficulties only grew during the sixteen years of the First Republic (Marques, 1972; Mattoso, 1994; Serrão, 1990). In May 1926, military action put an end to the First Republic and imposed a military dictatorship that lead to the regime known as the *Estado Novo*. In 1928, a young, remarkable professor of economics at the University of Coimbra, António de Oliveira Salazar, became the strongest minister of the government. Four years later in 1932, he assumed the role of prime-minister, a position he kept until 1968 (Nogueira, 1977/81). In the late 1920s, Salazar undertook the political process that lead to the formal beginning of the *Estado Novo*, which was created with the referendum that approved the new Portuguese Constitution in 1933. The mid to late 1930s was a period of consolidation of the new regime. Salazar was presented through the propaganda of the *Estado Novo* as the new Portuguese

hero, the one who was able to solve the economic crisis, thus restoring national pride and international autonomy. The Second World War threatened Salazar's strategic and economic plans, but nevertheless, he was able to keep Portugal out of the war, preserving the integrity of its European territory and its overseas colonies. This was seen as one of the major achievements of the incontestable leader of the *Estado Novo*.

Opposition to the authoritarian regime of Salazar grew stronger during the late 1940s and 1950s. In 1958, the campaign for the presidential elections was a period of extreme political and social stress. The opposition candidate, Humberto Delgado, declared to the media that if elected he would dismiss Salazar as prime-minister. Humberto Delgado did not win and the opposition claimed the election had been a fraud. Allegedly, the Portuguese political police murdered Delgado some months later. The regime was, thus, facing severe internal political difficulties. This was intensified in the early 1960s, when the pro-independence movements of the African colonies initiated a war that became a major national and international issue that continued until 1974. The war was one of the main reasons for the collapse of the *Estado Novo*.

In 1968, Salazar became seriously ill and was unable to accomplish his duties as prime-minister; he died two years later. Marcello Caetano assumed the role of prime-minister and tried to reform the regime from the inside, but the colonial war proved to be an insoluble problem. In 1974, the military decided that it was time to end the war and the revolution of April also put an end to the *Estado Nova*.

Basis of ideological propaganda

The ideological basis of the *Estado Novo* can be summarised in four words: God, Homeland, Family and Work. These were the unquestionable pillars of the regime.[2]

Despite being a secular state, the *Estado Novo* recognised the large majority of Catholics in Portugal and considered religion one of the main characteristics of the Portuguese people. In addition, the beginning of Portuguese independence (back in the Twelfth Century) was presented as the will of God, a miraculous intervention that had given *Afonso Henriques* (the first Portuguese King) an otherwise impossible victory in *Ourique*.[3] The regime of the *Estado Novo* was not a religious regime, but was clearly opposed to the anti-religious policy of the First Republic.

Homeland was another of the ideological basis of the *Estado Novo*. From the end of the monarchy and the First Republic, Portugal went through several decades of internal political dispute and popular disenchantment with national

institutions was obvious.[5] The *Estado Novo* wanted to restore national pride and the word *homeland* became politically common. According to the ideology of the new regime, the smallest social cell was the family. Excluding priests and nuns, single men or women were seen as anomalies. It was common to comment that unmarried women would become *aunts*, meaning that they would live with the family of a married brother or sister and would take care of his/her children. The family was considered the social nucleus that should preserve morality and care for the transmission of the basic values of social life.[6]

Work was both a pragmatic and a moral necessity: the husband had to work to provide for his family, but also to be considered a respectable member of society, someone who contributed to the common well-being (Salazar, 1938). Idleness was seen as a major sin against society.

Together, these values were subsumed under another that conveyed a particular sense and meaning to living in Portuguese society: Nation. The Nation was one of the major concepts of the *Estado Novo* The needs of the Nation explained the existence of the regime, and the regime was presented as the only possible means for protecting the Nation (Salazar, 1935).

Main themes of the Portuguese Nationalism

The *Estado Novo* based its ideological construction on three main themes: the very existence of a nation, the right to its territory and the venerable age of its history and traditions. These were symbolic values that the *Estado Novo* proclaimed as the official and unquestionable truth. The Portuguese nationalism of the *Estado Novo* was based on these three symbolic values. The *Estado Novo* selected characteristics of the nation, aspects of the territory and themes of national history and traditions and used them as propaganda for the current regime. The nation was ancient, proud of itself, and highly relevant for the progress of civilisation and, therefore, for worldwide recognition. The territory was multi-continental, a consequence of the maritime discoveries that had given the Portuguese historical rights of occupation. The territory was therefore united and indivisible. Portuguese history and traditions were venerable and respectable, and consequently a motivation for the nation as well as individual pride.

In order to explain these assertions, the regime emphasised aspects of Portuguese history that reinforced such sentiments. The Nation was described as the oldest nation in Europe, built by the will of its first King, *Afonso Henrique*, which had corresponded to the will of his people in the middle Twelfth Century. The regime emphasised the fact that the Portuguese nation had remained independent ever since, resisting all attacks and preserving its independence against very powerful enemies.[7] The traditional enemies in the Middle-Ages were Muslims and Castilians; the attempts by Spain to conquer Portugal transformed the geographical neighbour into a permanent enemy; during

Napoleon's domination, the French tried unsuccessfully to conquer the country; other European nations, such as Germany, tried to occupy its overseas colonies during the Twentieth Century threatening the integrity of the territory. For the *Estado Novo*, the struggle against such enemies was necessary as the Portuguese nation had a higher mission to accomplish: to spread the *true* faith (the Christian Catholic faith) and civilisation.

Another important issue of propaganda was that the national territory was the oldest firmly established frontier in Europe. Except for some insignificant changes, the Portuguese European territory remained the same since the Thirteenth Century. Maritime discoveries allowed the addition of large possessions to the tiny motherland that became Portuguese by rights of discovery and occupation.[8] As a consequence, it became a country composed of one nation, ruled by one state, though scattered all over the world. The diversity of the territory was presented as a reason for unity, as each part was complementary to the others.

To strengthen this ideology the *Estado Novo* used History as final proof, stretching arguments in questionable ways. For instance, the thesis was used that the people who had lived in the Portuguese territory, even long before the existence of Portugal, had always had some tendency to be independent. The usual example was the resistance of *Viriato*, leader of the *Lusitanos*, to the Roman invasion. In addition, a long list of heroes who had fought for the independence of the country was presented as proof of the theory. The historiography of the *Estado Novo* elected some national heroes, men that had performed remarkable deeds and that should, therefore, be seen as examples to follow. The final hero was Salazar, whose financial miracle had saved the country from inevitable bankruptcy and external dependency (Amaeal, 1974).

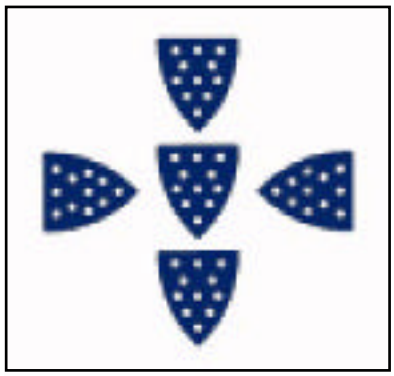
The use of museums and temporary exhibitions

Objects as 'the real thing'

The *Estado Novo* presented itself as a regime that was the guardian of the material remains of the past. Given that respect for national history was one of the main themes of Portuguese nationalism, the *Estado Novo* felt the need to care for its historical objects, monuments and documents. The preservation of the material evidence of a *glorious past* was an act of propaganda for the regime. It was imperative to match pragmatic action with ideological discourse in order to make it credible. The goals of nationalistic propaganda were both internal and external, as the regime wanted to be convincing inside and outside its borders. A constructed image of a nation that was taking good care of its past was a main objective of the *Estado Novo*.

In order to implement that image, the regime focused on three main groups of

Flag 1. Flag of Afonso Henriques before Ourique



Flag 2. Flag of Afonso Henriques after Ourique

Flag 3. Portuguese flag (end of the monarchy)

Flag 4. Portuguese flag (from the First Republic to present)

Photograph 1. Natives of Mozambique in the Colonial Exhibition of Porto (1934) in *ALBUM fotográfico da Exposição Colonial, Portuguesa - 101 clichés fotográficos de Alvão, fotógrafo oficial da Exposição Colonial* Porto, Litografia Nacional, 1934

Photographs 2 & 3. aspects of the Portuguese villages in the Exhibition of 1940 in Mário Novais - Exposição do Mundo Português - 1940, Lisboa, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian e Caminho do Oriente, 1998

objects: artistic objects, historical objects with some kind of symbolic value and ethnographic objects of popular art, culture and tradition.[9] Their common characteristic was the importance given to 'the real things' on display in museums or temporary exhibitions. Objects with artistic and/or aesthetic significance were kept in museums like the National Museum of Ancient Art (*Lisbon*), which was considered a prime example of the cultural policy of the regime. Displays of historical and archaeological objects were common in national and in local museums. Very special objects were venerated as national symbols, such as the sword of *Afonso Henriques* or the garment King John the First wore during the battle of *Aljubarrota*. These objects were used to evoke national pride and to tell a story, interpreting history in a nationalistic way.[10] Ethnographic objects were also of great importance. The *Estado Novo* wanted to affirm the originality of Portuguese material culture as one of the characteristics of national independence. Ethnographic material was also used to stress the 'thesis' that national unity was generated by regional diversity. Originally, this thesis was used to explain the diversity inside the European part of the country; but later was also used to justify one of the most important political and ideological statements of the regime: the indivisibility of the national territory that included the overseas provinces. Portugal was presented as one nation composed of many different parts, which together formed an indivisible unity.

The propaganda of the *Estado Novo* proclaimed that its policy concerning museums was based on a deep concern with artistic, historical and archaeological objects and with their conservation and cultural use. However, the regime allowed and encouraged other uses of such objects, even at the risk of jeopardising their integrity and against the advice of curators and museum directors. During official commemorations and temporary exhibitions with highly political and ideological purposes, museum objects were used with propagandistic intentions with little or no concern at all for possible damage.[11] The regime wanted to be identified with the care and devotion for art and history, but did not hesitate to use museum objects to pursue propagandistic interests.

People as objects

The Estado Novo did not only put objects that had ideological value on display, but also people were transformed into display objects. In some temporary exhibitions, in particular, human beings were displayed as curiosities. This phenomenon occurred with both 'natives' brought from the overseas territories and with another kind of 'natives': those who lived in the European territory in a rural, popular cultural environment at the time almost untouched by urban life. The two main examples of such practice were the exhibitions of 1934 in Porto and of 1940 in Lisbon.

In 1934 the Crystal Palace and its gardens in Porto became a miniaturised colonial

Empire (Galvão, 1934). Inside the exhibition area, it was possible to admire animals and ethnographic objects brought from all over the Empire. It was also possible to taste exotic foods from Africa and Asia. To give the exhibition a true colour, 'natives' from the colonies were also brought to Porto and lived in the gardens of the Crystal Palace for weeks. One of the reasons that attracted visitors to the exhibition was the possibility of seeing real 'natives.' Visitors were expected to stare in amazement at the sight of such *strange* human beings. In 1940, a Colonial Garden and a section called Portuguese European Ethnography were two main parts of the Exhibition of the Portuguese World (*Lisbon*). Again, people from the colonies were brought to be part of the exhibition, but in the section of Portuguese ethnography, 'natives' from rural villages of the mainland territory were also on display. The similarities between these two sections of the exhibition almost deny the possible interpretation of the presence of 'natives' from the colonies as an act of racism. People were used as objects of display not because of the colour of their skins, but because they were representatives of the 'great nation' of Portugal.

This use of human beings as objects of display demonstrates the importance of propaganda for the *Estado Novo* The aims of the regime had to be served. It seemed that if humans could be used in such ways, objects could be too. The fundamental intention of museums policy during the *Estado Novo* era was first and foremost ideological and political, rather than strictly cultural.

Symbols

In museums and in temporary exhibitions, the *Estado Novo* used the symbols of its ideology. Those symbols were 'mixed' with objects on display, making it virtually impossible to visit a museum or temporary exhibition without becoming imbued by the regime's subliminal message. The symbols most commonly used were related to power, religious faith and socio-political values. The presence of such symbols in museums and in temporary exhibitions was not perceived as abnormal because they were also common in day-to-day life.

The two main symbols of the nation were the national flag and the national anthem. The *Estado Novo* inherited and kept the Republican flag. The flag was always present at official ceremonies and was displayed on official buildings, such as monuments, schools and museums. The rules for the use of the flag were rigid and its presence prescribed specific behaviour (for instance, men should take off their hats). The *Estado Novo* did not ignore the historical evolution of the national flag and the symbolic meaning attached to it. As no actual historical evidence was available, the regime invented the 'first flag' of *Afonso Henriques*, transformed it into a national symbol, which it then used to evoke the deeds of the first King. The *miracle of Ourique* and the story of the nation's flag[12] were major elements of Portuguese myths about their national origins.

The national anthem of the *Estado Novo* was also an inheritance of the First

Republic. The lyrics exalt nationalism and warfare and evoke both the actions of the first kings and of the navigators of the maritime discoveries. A sentiment of redemption is also perceptible. Portugal is presented as a country that suffered from external attacks, but found the strength to redeem national honour.[13] All young children who went to school during the regime learned the anthem during their primary education (Mónica, 1978); also, young soldiers were usually taught the anthem while at their compulsory military service. When the anthem was being played, everyone was supposed to behave properly (at least in public).

Another symbol of the *Estado Novo* was the power of the army. Salazar stated, repeatedly, that only through force would it be possible to affirm and maintain the independence of the country. One of his decisions after becoming prime-minister was the improvement of the army. He affirmed that Portugal had no aggressive intentions, however, the country would not tolerate foreign interference or attempts against the integrity of its territory (Salazar, 1946). The image of the Portuguese soldier, well equipped and prepared to fight for his country[14] was an image of the *Estado Novo* The comparison with Portuguese soldiers of other times evoked heroism, courage and discipline, three characteristics that would enable Portugal to keep its independence against all enemies. Discipline and study were presented as main civic virtues that lead to respectable citizenship.

Discipline in the army and discipline in all other aspects of social life were presented as necessary to the accomplishment of the common good. The image of the tree or of the pyramid was used to symbolise the social and political organisation of the country. On top was the Leader (*O Chefe*,[15] who ruled over all the society and political structures of the regime. The leader was, incontestably, Salazar. He was often represented in his academic garments. As Professor at the University of Coimbra (the oldest and most prestigious of the country) he was a symbol of authority, intelligence and civic superiority. Salazar and the President of the Republic were the two symbols of the political organisation of the country and their photographs hung in most public places. The typical room of a public primary school under the *Estado Novo* had, a photograph of Salazar, another of the President of the Republic and, in the middle, a crucifix hanging on the wall over the teacher's desk. These three objects represented order and balance, power and protection (Bivar, 1971).

All these symbols could be found in museums and in temporary exhibitions. Their presence strengthened the ideological message of the displays and emphasised the role of the *Estado Novo* Propaganda was always present in museums and in temporary exhibitions both in explicit and in implicit ways. The regime used them as powerful instruments to spread and to impose its ideology. Even in museum's day-to-day life,[16] the strong presence of the *Estado Novo* could be found. Almost every act could be seen as pro or against the regime and, therefore, could be interpreted as a political action. Museums (in the quotidian) and temporary exhibitions (whenever held) were scenarios of propaganda, *locus* of politics and ideology.

Notes:

[1] *Estado Novo* is the political regime that ruled in Portugal from 1933 until 1974. The period between 1926 and 1933, although not institutionally part of the *Estado Novo*, is normally associated. In its common use, *Estado Novo* means the period between 1926 and 1974. See (Mattoso, 1994).

[2] One of the makers of the ideology of the *Estado Novo* was Salazar. One of the main sources for an understanding of his political ideas is the collection of his speeches (Salazar, 1935); (Salazar, 1946); (Salazar, 1959). There is an English translation of one of his books (Salazar, 1939).

[3] The *Estado Novo* negotiated a settlement with the Vatican to put an end to decades of hostility between the Catholic Church and the Portuguese State. The name of the agreement was *Concordata* and it was signed in 1940. See (Cruz, 1998).

[4] *Ourique* is a village in south *Alentejo*. By the time of the battle (1139) *Afonso Henriques* had conquered the territory north from the river *Tejo* and *Ourique* was almost 200 Km away from that natural border. The legend of *Ourique* tells that *Afonso Henriques* had an army of just a few knights and was opposing his forces to a powerful Muslim army, one hundred times more numerous. The same legend tells that Christ appeared in the dawn of the battle reassuring *Afonso Henriques* and promising him an important victory. This miracle and the consequent victory were pointed out by the nationalistic historiography as the beginning of Portuguese independence.

[5] During the last decades of the monarchy and during the First Republic, the number of governments per year was impressive, reaching an average of four during some particularly difficult periods. The political instability led to economic and financial problems. Portuguese participation in the First World War was another reason for public disbelief in politics as Portuguese troops were left abandoned in northern France and died because of the lack of supplies, because elections decided a new government that was not in favour of a belligerent participation by Portugal.

[6] These assertions were part of the official ideology. It is possible to find Salzar's opinion on these questions in (Ferro, 1933).

[7] Salazar, in his political speeches during the 1930s, repeatedly insisted on this question. In 1940, during the celebrations of the Portuguese independence he went to *Guimarães* (the city that was said to be the

birthplace of the country) and made a speech from the tower of the castle where he emphasised the long lasting tradition of independence of Portugal (Salazar, 1959).

[8] The document that best represents this way of thinking is the Colonial Act (*Acto Colonial*) added to the Constitution of 1933.

[9] The legislation of the period considers as most important objects of historical, archaeological and artistic value. Even the official and legal definition of museum objects emphasise those characteristics. See decrees number 11445 and 20566; (Lira, 1999).

[10] The sword of the first King was kept in a museum of *Porto* (National Museum of *Soares dos Reis*), but was displayed elsewhere in exceptional occasion, such as the commemoration of the conquest of *Lisbon* in 1947.

[11] It is possible to find in the archives of national museums letters from directors protesting the use of museum objects in temporary exhibitions. In particular, the director of the National Museum of Ancient Art protested violently against the administrative decision to use objects from the museum during the exhibition of 1940, disregarding his formal opposition to the use of such objects based on conservation criteria.

[12] The invented flag of *Afonso Henriques* was white with a blue cross. After the battle of *Ourique* the first King supposedly changed the flag using intricate symbols that related the number of defeated Muslim Kings with the number of coins received by Judas to betray Christ. The interpretation of the symbolic of the flag was, thus, the result of legend and nationalism.

[13] In a free translation the first strophe of the anthem is: 'Heroes of the Ocean, noble people, / Immortal and brave Nation / Rise today, once again / the splendour of Portugal! / From the shadows of memory/ Oh Homeland, comes the voice / of our glorious ancestors / that will lead You to victory! / Handle your weapons, handle your weapons! / Over land and over sea / Handle your weapons, handle your weapons! /For Homeland must we fight / Against the cannons we shall march, we shall march!'

[14] In the Exhibition of 1940, one of the pavilions was dedicated to the *deeds* of the *Estado Novo* (Pavilion '*Portugal – 1940*') and inside one of its rooms a huge image of Portuguese soldiers displayed the new vessels that equipped the Portuguese navy. (Castro, 1934)

[15] This image was used in the Exhibition of Paris (1937) and then repeated in other events.

[16] E.g.: it was not possible to work in a national museum without a previous confirmation of the political police files, verifying if the candidate was admissible from a political and ideological point of view. Another example is that even scientific papers and articles had to pass the censorship in order to be published.

References

Ameal, João (1974). *História de Portugal das origens até 1940*. Porto, Livraria Tavares Martins, 7th ed.

Bivar, Maria de Fátima (1971). *Ensino primário e ideologia*. Dom Quixote, Lisbon.

Castro, Augusto (1940). *A Exposição do Mundo Português e a sua Finalidade Nacional*. Lisbon, Empresa Nacional de Publicidade.

Cruz, Manuel Braga da (1998). *O Estado Novo e a Igreja Católica*. Lisbon, Ed. Bizâncio.

Ferro, António (1933). *Salazar - O homem e a sua obra*. Lisbon, Emprensa Nacional de Publicidade.

Galvão, Henrique (1934). Álbum Comemorativo da Primeira Exposição Colonial Portuguesa, Porto, Litografia Nacional.

Lira, Sérgio (1999). 'Portuguese legislation on museums during the *Estado Novo* from the First Republic inheritance to the changes of the sixties.' *in Museological Review*, Leicester, Museum Studies Department, vol. 6, p. 73-87.

Marques, A. H. de Oliveira (1972). *History of Portugal. Volume II: From Empire to Corporate State*. New York and London, Columbia University Press.

Mattoso, José (ed.) (1994). *História de Portugal*. Lisbon, Ed. Estampa, vols. 6 &7.

Mónica, Maria Filomena (1978). *Educação e Sociedade no Portugal de Salazar*. Lisbon, Ed. Presença.

Nogueira, Franco (1977/81). Porto, Livraria Civilização.

Salazar, António de Oliveira (1935). *Discursos*. Coimbra Coimbra Ed, vol. I.

Salazar, António de Oliveira (1939). *Doctrine and Action: internal and foreign policy of the new Portugal, 1928-1939*, translated by Edgar Broughton, London, Faber.

Salazar, António de Oliveira (1946). *Discursos e notas Políticas*, Coimbra, Coimbra Editora, 2nd ed., vol. II.

Salazar, António de Oliveira (1959). *Discursos e Notas Políticas*, Coimbra, Coimbra Editora, 2nd ed., vol III

Serrão, Joel and Marques, A. H. de Oliveira (dir.) (1990). *Nova História de Portugal* Lisbon, Ed. Presença, vols. XI and XII.

Sérgio Lira: Rua D. Afonso Henriques, 3688, 4º Esq., 4425-057 Águas Santas MAI, Portugal.

e.mail: ramos.lira@clix.pt

Sergio Lira is a Ph.D. student at the Department of Museum Studies - University of Leicester.

The American Flag Exhibition Controversy at the Phoenix Art Museum[1]

Richard Toon

The Controversy

On March 16, 1996, the Phoenix Art Museum in Arizona, USA, opened a temporary art exhibit called *Old Glory: The American Flag in Contemporary Art* Beginning with the work of Jasper Johns from the mid-1950s, the exhibition displayed and interpreted 79 works of 50 artists on the image and symbolism of the American flag over the previous forty years. A number of the works were highly controversial and rekindled disputes about the use and the supposed misuse of the American flag that had raged some years before and were included in the exhibition for that very reason.

Two exhibits came in for particular condemnation. One was an installation by Kate Millett, created originally as a protest against the Vietnam War. It was a large wooden cell containing a toilet draped with a US flag. The other was an installation by Dread Scott, where a US flag lay on the floor, requiring visitors to step on it to write in a comments book.

The exhibition drew immediate protest from local veterans groups and what the media referred to as Concerned citizens. In March, a crowd of more than 300 filled the museums courtyard in protest. Shortly after, protest groups organized a daily picket, mainly comprising uniformed veterans with flags and banners. Several times during the run of the exhibition, museum visitors rescued flags from the Millett and Scott exhibits. The flags were folded neatly and handed to museum staff members, who later returned them to their installations. Later, the American Legion honored an eleven-year-old boy at a special ceremony of its national organization for retrieving a flag from the Dread Scott installation.

The *Arizona Republic*, the major local newspaper based in Phoenix, gave the various protests extensive and favorable coverage. Stories covered the organization of a day of protest outside the museum by the American Legion and National Flag Alliance (the attendance of which was variously reported between 750 and 2,000); a Phoenix City Council womans call for the museums sale; the Arizona state legislators debate of whether the states Attorney General could bring prosecutions under a law protecting sacred objects; the sponsoring Dial Corporations request to the museum to withdraw its name from publicity material and from subsidies of free admission (the Dial Corp did not, however, withdraw financial backing from the exhibit); and the Salt River Projects (a local major power company) withdrawal of support for an upcoming exhibit at the museum because of the flag exhibit controversy.

Eventually, the show gained national media attention and widespread criticism from politicians, including Bob Dole and Newt Gingrich. Bob Doles office, during the run up to the 1996 presidential election, released a prepared statement, which included the following comments:

> This exhibit mocks the very symbol of this nations freedom and the standard that has inspired brave Americans to fight and die in defense of that freedom. First amendment freedoms C which all of us revere C do not excuse such a disgusting display of contempt for the people and ideals of this nation.[2]

In the year following the exhibit, a conference and a public lecture in the Phoenix area continued to debate issues raised by the exhibition. The Arizona Humanities Council and the Arizona State University College of Law, for instance, in February, 1997, organized the conference, *Free Speech and Community: Who Speaks for American Values in Public Institutions?*

Despite the protests, or perhaps because of them, the show was the most successful in the museums history to that point. When the exhibition closed on Flag Day, June 16, 1996, more than 51,000 visitors had attended the 13-week run, donations were up 40 percent, and the museum claimed a record number of new members. This paper aims to examine some issues raised by the controversy and place it in the context of the changing role of museums in contemporary society.

The Museum's Defense

In the face of protest at the museum and adverse publicity in the media, the museums executive director, Jim Ballinger, defended the exhibit as artistic freedom of expression and emphasized its protection under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The *Arizona Republic* quoted him several times during their coverage of the controversy, for example:

> Ballinger noted the exhibit features 80 works of art and he has had requests to remove only two that were considered disturbing to viewers . . . Ballinger refused to pull either piece from the exhibit. To do so would be censorship, he said. And once the people have a chance to see the entire exhibit, I think that will help them understand better the content. The artists here are just celebrating their First Amendment rights. (*Arizona Republic*, 25, March 1996).

> Ballinger: While many people will find this choice objectionable, U.S. Law provides the artist his freedom of expression. For those not comfortable with standing on the flag, another comment book is provided nearby. (*Arizona Republic*, 3, April 1996).

On April 13, 1996, a day of public debate was held at the museum on issues raised by the exhibit organized by an Outreach Advisory Committee made up of invited educators, lawyers, journalists, politicians, and artists. Discussions included the American flag as a civil religious symbol and the constitutional issues of artistic freedom, although it did not offer the opportunity to debate with the protesters directly. Local media did not report the content of this attempt at dialogue. Thus, despite this effort, the main message received by the general public was that a publicly funded museum[3] was going out of its way to allow artists their constitutionally protected right to expression, no matter how offensive it was to those to those who cherished the patriotic symbolism of the American flag. Furthermore, by constantly referring to the artists rights, the Phoenix Art Museums official representative gave the impression that it merely provided a venue for the art and the artists to speak for themselves, as if the professional museum staff were bystanders. But as Stephen E. Weil put it, We delude ourselves when we think of the museum as a clear and transparent medium through which only our objects transmit messages. (Weil, 1990, p. 52). Although the museum was happy to defend the right of artists, it was unable or unwilling to defend its own role in mounting and interpreting the show.

The closest to an articulation of why the museum mounted the exhibit was given by Ballinger in a guest column in the *Arizona Republic*, the day after the exhibit opened, but before the controversy began. It had the headline, Old Glory art strives to provoke: exhibit probes nations freedom of expression (*Arizona Republic*, 17 March, 1996). Clearly, Ballinger did not see the exhibit as merely a historical retrospective on the use of the flag in contemporary art; it was an exhibition, as the headline proclaimed, to provoke a public reaction to the issues of free expression. The mounting of the exhibition reframed much of the original political protest, no longer simply agitprop art for particular causes; all the works became a re-flection on art and its need for protection. The Vietnam War Milletts installation protested against, for example, was over, but now the work was repoliticised in terms of attacks on the way artists used the American flag. Ballingers article explained that the exhibit was inspired by a significant increase in the use of the American flag in contemporary art in recent years, a trend that he interpreted as a response to three events that occurred around 1989: the U.S. Supreme Courts ruling on flag burning, the Senates restrictions on art funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (the so-called AHelms Amendment@), and the controversy over Robert Mabelthorpes homo-erotic exhibition in Cincinnati. The flag was used, therefore, as a symbol of the attacks on and defense of free expression and particularly artistic expression.

A longer article expanding this theme was published after the exhibit closed, by David S. Rubin, the exhibits curator, who originally presented the show in 1994 when he was the curator at the Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art. He concluded his article with the following observation,

> When I organized *Old Glory: The American Flag in Contemporary Art* in 1994, my intentions were to document the considerable impact of a

> significant cultural icon upon contemporary artists, and to use contemporary art as the point of departure for discussion. I had no indication that, as the exhibit traveled in 1995-6, it would be timelier the second time around. Indeed, with Congresss renewed determination to legislate the American flag, one can only wonder whether or not this exhibition could be possible in the future. (Rubin 1996, p.8)

Despite the curators suggestion that he was unaware of the exhibits timeliness, he was quite aware of the many legal and legislative attempts to protect the flag that were happening precisely as the exhibit was being planned (and he referred to them in his article), in particular, a constitutional amendment to protect the flag from burning and other forms of desecration was defeated just a few months before the exhibit opened. A flag protection constitutional amendment was introduced to both chambers of Congress in March 1995. It passed the House by a 312-120 votes on June 28 and lost in the Senate on December 12, when it failed to gain the required two-thirds vote.

Much of the exhibits content was originally political art, using the image of the flag to express a diversity of positions: against the Vietnam War, against the neglect of victims of AIDS, and so on. Brought together and mounted in a single exhibition, the flag was now used to record what Ballinger described as, The artists celebrations of the many freedoms our citizens enjoy. It thereby became political art reinterpreted to make a new political statement. In the context of the exhibition, this entailed celebrating the freedom to invert the traditional symbolic meaning of the flag. The flag became a symbol of repression. By so doing, the exhibition rubbed salt in the recent wounds of those veterans groups that had so narrowly lost the vote for a constitutional amendment and it was impossible for them not to see Ballingers celebration as one at their expense.

More importantly for this analysis, the exhibit suggested that the American flag had become an icon fully appropriated by the Art-world. Artists could freely tap into the veneration the flag has for many and use it as a device of irony and reversal to point out social and political problems. Those who objected were told the realm of artistic expression was an especially protected arena. From the protestors point of view, this was, perhaps, the greatest irony of all: only artists had flags that were especially protected by the Constitution, precisely the protection they were seeking. Yet how did they celebrate that protection? According to the protesters, by stuffing them in a toilet and inviting, museum visitors to trample on a flag placed on the floor (Citizens Flag Alliance, 29, April, 1996).

The Protesters Argument

The Citizens Flag Alliance, the organization that coordinated much of the protest, is a coalition of organizations that share the goal of seeking a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag from what they call physical desecration.

Their publicity literature, for example, included the following statements,

> The Citizens Flag Alliance believes the Flag of the United States of America is a national treasure. No statue, no monument, no document, no artifact says America so eloquently. No other symbol of our nation has led men and women into battle, been sanctified by the blood of patriots, and then draped – in honored glory C over the caskets of those who gave their last full measure of devotion.
>
> Desecrating the flag of our nation dishonors the memory of those who died defending it.
>
> The American flag represents all that unites us as one nation, under God. (Citizens Flag Alliance, 1996).

The associations of the flag with on the one hand, sanctification, when treated appropriately and, on the other hand, desecration, when treated inappropriately, clearly places it as a key symbol in Americas civil religion. Civil religion is used here in the sense Martin E. Marty used it when he wrote,

> The nation, state, or society is one of the most potent repositories of symbols in the modern world, and can often replace religious institutions in the minds of the people. The nation has its shrines and ceremonies, demands ultimate sacrifice, and specifies behavioral patterns (e.g., the care and handling of the flag, saying the pledge of allegiance) and in other ways takes the place which formal religions once did. (Marty, 1974, p. 140).

This version of the concept equates civil religion with religious nationalism. It is not surprising, therefore, that many equate Americas civil religion with repressive, right wing political views, as did Robert Bellah in the article that rekindled scholarly interest in the topic (Bella, 1974). For Bella, civil religion was closely allied to an ideology that attacked liberal and non-conformist views. The political worthiness of the cause is certainly an issue for debate and it is true that the active protestors in this case were generally from the right of the political spectrum, nevertheless, it is also true that the American flag has enormous symbolic power for most of its citizens. The Flag Alliance quoted opinion polls that suggest that more than 80 percent of the US population support some form of flag protection.

Once the assertion is made that the flag needs protection, however, arguments for protection soon involve transcendent claims. The flag object becomes a literal fetish: an inanimate object venerated for its symbolic spiritual power. The unquestioning devotion, reverence, and respect given to the national cult object issues forth in rules for how the flag should be hung and folded, treated when not in use, and destroyed when no longer suitable for display. It also leads to the desire to seek the special protection of a constitutional amendment when belief

in its power seems to be under attack.

The veneration of the flag leads to cognitive dissonance when an exhibit like Old Glory comes along. If those who believe that the American flag is intrinsically good also believe art is intrinsically good, then either they were wrong about the flag or the exhibition is not art. This is precisely the move made by retired Major General Patrick Brady, the spokesman of the Flag Alliance, in an editorial entitled, Phoenix Flag Exhibit isnt Art: Its an Outrage (Brady, 1996). The museum director, Jim Ballinger, made the opposite move when he articulated it simply as an issue of artists celebrating their freedoms in the face of censorship. For Ballinger the flag could be used artistically to show evil as well as good. The result was stalemate, with no possibility of either side understanding the other, because each was reading the issue according to a transcendent narrative that allowed no room for compromise.

A final irony was that each side of the choice required the other for the choice to have any significance: the exhibition rekindled the issue of protecting the flag for the Citizens Flag Alliance and gave the movement considerable free publicity. Conversely, the museum would have seemed less of a protector and celebrator of artistic freedom if no one cared about what it was displaying. As so often in polarized political debate, each side required the other for the argument to have power, but neither side was able or much interested in listening to the others arguments. This is a theme Stephen C. Dubin noted when commenting on the Robert Mablethorpe controversy and the battles over the Library of Congress exhibition on Freud. His remarks are equally applicable to the battle over the flag exhibition: Adversaries sustain an odd symbiosis. Each is the others *raison d etr*éThey are coupled in an obsessive dance that usually neither one can stop (Dubin, 1999, p.128).

Issues raised by the exhibition

Museums do provide interpretations of what they display, even if they try to suggest they are just bringing the voice of the artist to the public. Interpretation is as fundamental to an exhibition as it is to other modes of expression. What is peculiar about museum exhibits is how often they appear to go un-authored. As original curator and the person who brought the exhibition to Phoenix, Rubin was clearly the author in the Phoenix case, but once the controversy began there was an unwillingness for anyone to speak for the exhibits interpretation and a reliance on the art speaking for itself. The Phoenix Art Museum suggested there were many authors (50 artists), yet the curator remained largely silently on the issue during the controversy. One news article quoted a protestor as saying, We gave Mr. Rubin the opportunity to defend the museum, and he ran and hid. (Arizona Republic, 25, March 1996).

The analogy of an exhibit to a written text focuses our attention on the exhibition as an authored whole. We are thereby made aware that someone put the

exhibition together, someone chose and assembled the works of art, and someone wrote the accompanying interpretative text. We can ask not only, What is this exhibition trying to say? but also, Who is trying to say it? We can thus focus on the relationship between the displayed objects in an exhibit and the conceptual and interpretative framing that the exhibitions author(s) provide. A conference held in 1988 by the Smithsonian Institution referred to this in its title: *The Poetics and Politics of Representation*. According to the programs preliminary description:

> Poetics, in this case, may be understood as identifying the underlying narrative/aesthetic patterns within exhibitions. The politics of representation refers to the social circumstances in which exhibits are organized, presented, and understood (Weil, 1990, p. 61).

It was this underlying narrative, or poetic, that was called into question in the Old Glory exhibit, the consequences of which played themselves out in the arena of the politics of representation. By not engaging the public in the poetics of the exhibit, the Phoenix Art Museum missed an opportunity to say why they interpreted the particular works of art as they did and, more importantly, not just that artistic freedom needs to be defended but why, and why art requires special constitutional protections, and how this exhibit illuminated those issues.

To view the exhibition as a text follows the approach begun by Roland Barthes in the 1960s and since then the insights of semiotics have been applied to museums and museum exhibitions to reveal the often *hidden* agendas of gender, political, and cultural biases. But in this particular case the message was not so hidden, or at least not sufficiently well hidden, for a number of ordinary members of the public to challenge the meaning the this particular text carried for them.

The usefulness of the analogy of an exhibit to a written text should not be overstated, however, for there are important differences, including the collaborative nature of exhibit creation, the effects of spatial arrangements, etc. (Harris, 1995), but the most significant difference is that the framing of an exhibition is integral to its argument, whereas a books argument is not carried in its actual physical form. Another way to state this is to say an exhibition is a site not simply of reading, but ritual enactment. The visitor is involved in a sort of performative-utterance of the curators poetic narrative. Carol Duncan spells this out in detail in her, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (even though she does not borrow such philosophical terms):

> In art museums, it is the visitors who enact the ritual. The museums sequenced spaces and arrangements of objects, its lighting and architectural details provide both the stage set and script . . .. The situation resembles in some respects certain medieval cathedrals where pilgrims followed a structural narrative route through the interior, stopping at prescribed points for prayer or contemplation. (Duncan, 1995, p12).

In a sense, the performance of an exhibition by its visitors leaves little or no

room for dissention. To walk the gallery is to acquiesce to its interpretation. Neil Harris saw exhibitions as intrinsically authoritarian compared to a written text:

> The display mode of the exhibition is more authoritarian than the pages of a book; citations are meager; it is more difficult for the visitor to revisit argument and evidence than in a portable text; it is often impossible to know the range of choices from which the objects were selected. Discursive argument, in short, is more difficult to debate or follow in a conventional show, unless its textual elements are extended to inappropriate and unacceptable length. (Harris, 1995, 1107).

The ritual and authoritarian modes of presentation of exhibits, thus, leave little space for the visitor to engage with the underlying interpretative structure and assumptions. Indeed, given the tendency mentioned above for exhibits to go un-authored, the visitor might be unaware that there is an interpretative structure. Rather, she or he is left to simply embrace or reject the implicit message framed through the work on offer. But this can happen only if the *hidden* message can be identified and comprehended. It is not surprising, then, that exhibitions so often take on the form of master narratives, which, if once brought to consciousness and rejected by the public, lead to highly polarized debates.[4]

Once this critical debate begins, the organizations that produce exhibits are more prone to attack than book publishers, according to Harris:

> If private and corporate, it places the sponsor in the uncomfortable position of apparently endorsing or withdrawing from a particular argument. If public, popular interest in the exhibitions message may be more aggressive and intrusive than where subsidies are more indirect and where disagreement is more protected. (Harris, 1995, p. 1109).

In the Phoenix case, the museum was vulnerable on both counts. Corporate sponsorship dissociated itself from the exhibit and local politicians questioned the role of local government paying for art over which it had no say. For example the Arizona Republic reported a local councilwomans attack on the exhibition:

> She [councillor Barwood], along with several other councillors wanted the exhibit pulled. They were told there was nothing the city could do, because private dollars funded the exhibit. The uproar prompted Barwood to take a broader look at the museum. She said she is appalled that the city kicks in more than $400,000 annually, but has no say in what is included in, a building paid with taxpayers money (*Arizona Republic*, 19th April, 1996).

Given these pressures, it took some courage to resolutely refuse to change the exhibition, but, of course, the exhibit was precisely about this issue. If changes were made, then the exhibit would have contradicted its own message.

Unfortunately, the public did not get to hear much about this message, other than its repetition (artistic expression is constitutionally protected), and was left feeling frustrated with an intractable and authoritarian position.

Museums as they search for relevance to their communities must question their status as providers of master or transcendent understandings. They do not and cannot inhabit realms set apart from the issues that shape taste, power, and knowledge in general society. But if they want to shape as well as reflect the values of their visitors, they need to find ways to more directly articulate their institutional values and find ways to listen to those of their public that differ. The First Amendment issue, as handled by the Phoenix Art Museum, suggested the museum was merely bringing art to an interested public and defending the artists right, rather than their own institutions right, to do so. Clearly, the public is increasingly unwilling to accept the interpretations museums and galleries hand them and less willing to see exhibits as un-authored

The Clash of Transcendent Narratives

It was Theodor Adorno who coined the term museal to refer to the function museums perform in interring objects or ideas to which the public no longer has a vital relationship (Adorno, 1981). This role of museums as the funerary sites of historical narratives becomes highly contested when the public objects to the narrative (as in the Enola Gay exhibition at the Smithsonian) or is unwilling to allow the object to die (as in the Phoenix case). Opposition was expressed against the museums right to display and interpret a symbol that was still alive for its believers. The result was a discourse often at cross-purposes: while the protesters were horrified at a museum desecrating, embalming, and rendering culturally inverted a symbol they were still interpreting their existence by; the museums defenders were equally horrified at the public reaching into an exhibit, crossing the sacred boundary of art and ignoring signs which read, Do not touch. In short, there was a clash of transcendent narratives.

It is no surprise that the Millett and Scott installations were the main focus of the fight. It is true that there were some objections voiced to Hans Burkhardts depiction of a headless crucifix in front of the American flag, Andrew Krasnows flag made of human hair and skin, and Ronnie Cutrones man in Ku Klux Klan regalia holding a baby painted onto a flag, but these were mild in comparison. The reason for the special attention given to the Millett and Dread works is their inclusion of what, to the protestors understanding, were real flags, and what to the museum (following Marcel Duchamp) were ready-mades. The protestors were simply unable or unwilling to allow that an American flag can become a ready-made for art.

The issue becomes complicated when we examine the role the American Flag has played in contemporary art since Jasper Johns first painted *Flag* in 1955. As

Arthur Danto explains it, Johns' work was not a 'ready-made', but a 'reverse ready made':

> *Flag* reconnected art with reality. It showed how it was possible for something to be at once an artwork and a real thing. *Flag* achieved this by virtue of being at once a representation and the object of representation C a painting of the American flag that was in truth the American flag. It was, in effect, like what Marcel Duchamp referred to as a Areverse ready-made@ . . .. A reverse ready-made is a work of art transformed into a utilitarian object C using a Rembrandt as an ironing board was Duchamps suggestion. One could fly *Flag* or salute it. (Danto, 1997, p. 33).

The protestors were not exactly happy with the reverse ready-mades in the exhibition, but more importantly they could not agree with Danto that an American Flag can be both an artwork and a real flag. For them, there were no crossover categories and they tended to treat painted works like Johns as wholly art, even if politically objectionable art. The true ready mades, however, produced the cognitive dissonance mentioned above, resulting in the judgment that it was a real flag (not a painted flag) and, therefore, not real art. The power of Dread Scotts installation, *What is the Proper Way to Display the U.S. Flag?*, was that he asked the public to confront the emotional dilemma that the real and representational creates, literally to take a stand.

The reason the two sides C the Phoenix Art Museum and the various protesters, aided and abetted by the Arizona Republic C could not resolve their differences or even understand each other very w ell, was that they could not discuss the relationship of the representation and the object of representation from within the language games of each transcendent narrative.

The Flag exhibition is just a single example of what I suspect is likely to be a general trend. With a more sophisticated public, less willing to accept museum experts master narratives, and with museums pursuing social relevance and public engagement, we might expect many such controversies to develop. Museums can and should celebrate our many freedoms, but they would be unwise to hide behind them. Just as the flag protestors need to engage the public in the arguments for protecting the flag, then museums need to engage the public in the arguments for protecting art.

Notes

1. A version of this paper was originally presented at the Eastern Sociological Society Annual Conference, Baltimore April 1997.

2. This and various other political press releases were available during

the controversy at the Citizens Flag Alliance web site (www.cfa-inc.org), many of which are no longer obtainable.

3. The museum is a private not for profit institution that receives substantial annual funding from the City of Phoenix, Arizona, plus it received $24 million a few years earlier to pay for extensive renovation and expansion.

4. See various comments in *The Journal of American History*, 82, 3, December 1995 issue, AHistory and the Public: What Can We Handle? A Round Table About History After the *Enola Gay* Controversy,@ pp. 1029-1144.

Bibliography

Theodor Adorno (1984), AValery Proust Museum,@ in *Prisms*, Cambridge, Mass., trans. Samuel and Sherry Weber, 1981.

Maj. Gen. Patrick Brady (1996), *Phoenix Flag Exhibit isnt Art; Its an Outrage*, http://www.cfa-inc.org/edit2.htm.

Robert Bellah (1974), ACivil Religion in America,@ reprinted in Russell & Jones, eds., *American Civil Religion*, New York, Harper and Row.

Citizens Flag Alliance (1996) web site, http://www.cfa-inc.org/cfa.htm.

Citizens Flag Alliance (29/4//96), Press release.

Carol Duncan (1995), *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*, NY Routledge.

Arthur C. Danto, AJasper Johns,@ *The Nation*, 1/27/1997, p 33.

Steven D, Dubin (1999), *Displays of Power: Memory and Amnesia in the American Museum*, New York, New York University Press.

Neil Harris (1995), AMuseums and Controversy: Some Introductory Reflections,@ *The Journal of American History*, 82, 3, pp 1102-1110.

Martin E Marty (1974) Two Kinds of Civil Religion,@ in Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones, eds., *American Civil Religion*, New York, Harper and Row.

David S. Rubin (1996), AHistory Repeats Itself With Recent Flag Art,@ *Focus On Art*, 1,1, Spring, 5-8.

Stephen E. Weil (1990), *Rethinking the Museum and Other Meditations*. The Smithsonian Institution, 1990.

Richard Toon: 6286 East Catalina Drive, Scottsdale, AZ, 85251.

Email: toon@azscience.org

Richard Toon is a Ph.D. student at the Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, and Research Scientist at the Arizona Science Center, Phoenix, Arizona, USA.

The Hat Industry Museum of S. João da Madeira (Portugal)

Sérgio Lira and Suzana Menezes

The Hat Industry in *S. João da Madeira*

The *S. João da Madeira* hat industry dates from 1802 when J. Gomes de Pinho opened the town's first factory. In 1858, José António da Costa opened another factory, followed in 1862 by Francisco Dias Pinho who established an industrial unit to produce wool hats. By 1867, there were fifteen documented hat factories in *S. João da Madeira*. The industrial production of hats has its roots in small factories that produced several kinds of hats, but especially those used with traditional cloth (Amarl, 1967). By 1909 (Amaral: 1967, 134), hats were the most important industrial activity of *S. João da Madeira* with twelve different factories, one of which had a steam engine producing over 200,000 hats annually. There were also seven other factories that specialised in hat finishing processing.

After the First World War, the hat industry in *S. João da Madeira* developed through the use of new machinery and raw materials of superior quality bought from abroad. In the late 1940s, it became one of the most important centres of production for hats in Portugal: the local hat industry represented 75 percent of activity of the country; in 1946 the hat industry employed 1,175 workers, of which 1,212 worked in *S. João da Madeira* (Amaral: 1967, 131). By the mid-1960s, *S. João da Madeira* was the only centre for the hat industry in Portugal. It is no surprise to find that the recent history of *S. João da Madeira* is deeply marked by its industrial past and that its population's social and cultural life still shows very strong evidence of the industry.

One of the most important hat factories was the one António José de Oliveira Júnior built in 1914, the *Empresa Industrial Chapeleira*. Until the 1960s, it was the biggest industrial unit of the town and was always referred as a model for other factories. António José de Oliveira Júnior installed his factory (known as the New Factory, *Fábrica Nova*) with the most up-to-date machinery of the time (Martins e Teixeira: 1944, 93), although he faced serious opposition from trade unionists who feared that the new machines would lead to unemployment.

This new industrial unit was the only one in the country that had the technology to produce high quality hats and the business maintained a prosperous monopoly for many years. The importance of this factory in the recent history of *S. João da Madeira* is clear: several generations of locals worked there, the factory was a "barometer" of the economic conditions of the population, and the *Fábrica Nova*

is still active in the memory of many families. It was closed in 1995 and the local authorities, after two years of negotiation, acquired the buildings and part of the factory's machinery and documents, with the intention of establishing the Hat Industry Museum of *S. João da Madeira*.

The Hat Industry Museum

There was a strong local desire to have a museum in *S. João da Madeira*. The museum would inevitably include the industrial history of hat production, so the acquisition of what remained of the *Empresa Industrial de Chapelaria* provided local authorities with an appropriate building to mount such a museum. Yet, the building is not in the best physical condition, so a significant intervention is still needed to preserve it.

One of the first steps taken to develop the museum project was research developed by a local secondary school (*Escola Secundária João da Silva Correia*), which resulted in the gathering of important information and materials related to the hat industry. This resulted in a one-room display about the hat industry, supported by the local authorities.

Recent social, economic and cultural changes in *S. João da Madeira* contributed to the urgent need to build a museum dedicated to the preservation of the memory of a century of industrial activity. The decision to use the former building of the *Empresa Industrial de Chapelaria* as a museum was taken in the late 1990s, although earlier plans to develop the town had already considered that use. The re-designation of urban space around the old building and its classification as a building of public interest are directly related to the creation of the museum. For the last two years, local authorities have undertaken intense fund raising activities and have gathered a team to produce a plan for the museum.

Despite all these efforts, the Hat Industry Museum of *S. João da Madeira* is only just taking its first steps. While local authorities established the basic notion for the museum, pledged to make it happen and acquired both the buildings and the machineries, a conceptual and theoretical approach was also necessary to actually implement the project. What should the museum include and exclude? What kind of relationship will the museum establish with the public? In short, what kind of museum is it supposed to be?

The hat industry is no longer one of the main industries of *S. João da Madeira*, therefore, the museum represents the past. One of the tasks of the displays will be to establish a link between that (recent) past and the present day. The museum is intended to be a place for youngsters to learn about what their city was like some decades ago when the hat industry was one of the most important economic activities of the region. The museum will have to present not only the machinery and the buildings of the hat industry, but also the people that worked there:

their houses, their clothes, their food, their fears and desires, the relationship between workers and between workers and owners, that is, the human and material can be reached by using both the extensive documentation available and the testimony of the many people who belonged to that time and who are still alive today. It is important to display the machines that were used to make hats, but it is also important to display the things that could be purchased every week with a worker's salary and that speak to the social, economic, political and cultural environment of those who worked in the hat factories.

A primary objective of the museum is to have a close relationship to the local community. A significant number of former workers in the hat industry are still alive and feel nostalgia for their jobs in the industry. The museum will be a place of reunion for those who want to remember and to share their recollections. There is no social or cultural heritage without memory and the museum will assume the task of collecting and taking good care of the "memory" that still exists.

Another important role for the museum is an analysis of the social uses of hats. Who wore a hat? What kinds of hats did the different social and economic groups of the population purchase? Hats were used in many different situations, according to social codes of conduct that are no longer practiced. These codes will also be on display. When the habit of wearing hats was in decline, hats were advertised in local newspapers, for example, and organised campaigns were created to keep the hat an indispensable accoutrement.

There were many different kinds of hats produced in the factories of *S. João da Madeira*, for example, hats for out-door workers were produced in the town (for policemen and roads and railway maintenance workers) side-by-side with bowler-hats, caps and top-hats. The museum will present the industrial process of producing hats, from the raw material to the final product. It will try to "follow" hats from the door of the factory until they reached someone's head and performed their social role.

Finally, the Hat Industry Museum is part of a larger plan for local and regional museums. That plan includes several other industrial museums that together create a network to present the history, up to the present day, of industry in the region.

In order to implement this project it is necessary to build an archive. The Hat Industry Museum will do this by gathering material evidence and documentation that illustrate all aspects of the local industrial activity. There is a well-preserved administrative archive of some of the factories and a large collection of photographs exists that illustrates important aspects of industrial activity. The archive will also have a section for oral testimonies. The gathering of such material will follow strict criteria and special care will be taken to preserve the interviews on digital, high-quality media. Another object of the museum is to enable both scientific research and general public use of the archive.

This, in brief, is the plan for the Hat Industry Museum being developed in *S. João da Madeira*. Any further suggestions from readers would be greatly appreciated by the authors.

Bibliography:

Amaral, José Alberto Fontes Serra (1967), *Subsídios para a História da Indústria da Chapelaria em S. João da Madeira*, Porto.

Martins, Mário Resende Martins and Teixeira, José de Sousa (1944), *Monografia de S. João da Madeira*, Porto.

Sérgio Lira: Rua D. Afonso Henriques, 3688, 4º Esq., 4425-057 Águas Santas MAI, Portugal. e.mail: ramos.lira@clix.pt

Sérgio Lira is a Ph.D. student at the Department of Museum Studies - University of Leicester.

Suzana Menezes: Câmara Municipal de S. João da Madeira, Avenida da Liberdade 3700 S. João da Madeira, Portugal. e.mail: gabimpresnsa@ip.pt

Suzana Menezes is responsible for S. João da Madeira City Council's public relations.

The authors are currently developing the proposed Hat Industry Museum of *S. João da Madeira* in Portugal. In the next year they will work on a temporary exhibition that will form part of the future museum, develop the structure of an archive (documentation in a database, oral histories on CD and in database, etc.), hold a conference on the hat industry with contributions from the on-going research, and create a publication about the hat industry. These events are the starting point for the museum, which they hope will attract public interest in the new institution.

The new museum will be in an old factory building occupying two floors and a basement. The building currently faces a main road that is planned to close and be replaced with a park. While the number of prospective visitors has not yet been determined, local and regional schools are expected to provide a large number of students every year, and in addition, they hope to receive a significant number of visitors from around the country.

Sérgio Lira is working on the conceptual and theoretical aspects of the museum and is contributing to the preparation of the archive. Suzana Menezes is the head of the museum team and works directly with the local authorities that are funding the project.