ROBERT L. CHANEY'S THE EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF
THE TRADITIONAL ART MUSEUM EXHIBITION:
A CASE STUDY OF A MODERNIST EXHIBITION DESIGN

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This case study of a single exhibition was undertaken in order to examine the effects of American art museum's exhibitive practices on education. The traditional modernist exhibition design narrowed the educational scope of the exhibition to the point that it could only be concluded that it was inherently hostile to the needs of the viewer. This complete disregard for the educational capabilities and principles led to an exclusionary and elitist art exhibition. Interviews, qualitative observation, a review of theoretical literature formed the data which, through ethnographic and textual analysis, collectively informed the findings of the study in order to provide an historical record of the ill-effects of the modernist exhibition design. By illuminating these shortcomings this study ultimately served as an impetus to improve the educational effectiveness of exhibitions.
Dedicated to Ted and Stephanie
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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM AND THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Background to the problem

Throughout their evolution, public art museums have assumed the monumental task of managing a large portion of the cultural wealth of society. This responsibility is one of paramount importance as these cultural products are generally viewed as the barometer of a society's social, political, and intellectual well-being. Equally as important are the educational goals that have come along with this type of management since its inception, not only in the form of an inquiry based educational tool and an access to cultural wealth of society but also as a means to an increased understanding of others and other points of view that are indicative of our time (Barrett, 1990). Because of the social significance of their task public, art museums have been continually scrutinized, researched, and redefined (Vergo, 1994). During frequent changes of perspective there have been three consistent areas of emphasis, these have included: the cultural preservation and conservation of our cultural wealth, assuming the role of a trust of scholarship in relation to these objects, and serving as sources of enrichment through the education of its visitors (Harris, 1991).

It is in this last category that the role of education has currently assumed a leading role in the redefinition and revitalization of the primary purpose of museums-to serve the public. Due in part to the economic recession and in part to a calling for an increased sense of social responsibility our public institutions have been persuaded to eschew their focus on a specialized audience in favor of mass appeal (Levin, 1981). From its earliest incarnations the public museum has assumed an important educational role in society (Levin, 1981). The public
museum, in its early forms, was able to fulfill its duty and maintain its livelihood by serving a specialized audience and did not address the issues and needs of society in the largest sense (Harris, 1991; Levin, 1981; O'Doherty, 1986).

The targeted audience of the public museum has been drastically broadened to the point of all-inclusivity (Levin, 1981). Yet this newly discovered desire for mass appeal among public museums, which has also become a necessity for most, has not resulted in an increase in related educational research on the subject (Harris, 1991).

As early as the 1930's there had begun a calling for research involving the role of the museum as educator and the psychology of the viewer (Robinson, 1933; Youtz, 1933). In the early 1930's Edward S. Robinson, Philip Youtz, and others supported by the Carnegie Corporation undertook a research project, composed of studies and experiments, which was to establish a plan of action for museum management and design that would increase public visitation and make it more effective (Harris, 1991). Philip Youtz' (1933) statement that museums "must emphasize their educational and recreational services if they are to avoid the danger of being labeled in the luxury class" seems to foreshadow the meanings of more recent research on the subject (p. 6). However museum professionals lacked the interest and insight to heed the advice of this unique and unsurpassed research. Sixty years later the question of whether the public museum remains more accessible to the elite than to the masses is still seen as valid and yet unresolved (Levin, 1981). Until the 1960's most museum-centered research, with the exception of the Carnegie study, did not utilize the knowledge and techniques of the social sciences. As a result, those in charge of shaping the direction of museums gained little or no knowledge regarding their audience from museum related studies (Harris, 1991). A professional reluctance to acknowledge that the demands of the audience and related social and psychological concerns were linked to the functions of the public museum has always existed (Harris, 1991). By eschewing concerns about the desires and satisfactions of its audience, the museum maintained its character of exceptionalism as an institution unaffected by the developments of life (Harris, 1991).
The internal promotion of this image reinforced the museum's desired image of temple-like aloofness and prestige. This is evident in the 1945 annual report from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. "The Review of the Year 1945" found the year's activities to be "of normal, gratifying progress" in spite of the momentous events taking place throughout the world. The report further concluded that a future reader might exclaim "good heavens, the Metropolitan's Annual Report for 1945! and no mention in it of atomic bombs, reconversion, or labor paroxysms. Fancy that! We shall not be ashamed that our true fire has been kept burning, even though its blaze was not spectacular" (Harris, 1991, p. 141-142). This pride in presenting the museum as high institution unaffected by contemporary civilization would take many undesirable and counterproductive forms through the years, not the least of which was to be a complete disregard for the social and psychological needs of the viewer in relation to the educational possibilities of art.

In the following decades of the 1960's and 1970's museum research began to involve their audience, but primarily as a marketing target through "more aggressive marketing of museum goods and services" (Harris, 1991, p. 143). This was a result of a desire for increased public funding, due in part to rapid expansion and mounting inflationary pressures. An example of this situation can be found in the annual report of the Boston Museum of Fine Art from 1964. In "The Annual" the director announced that the institution "is operating with inadequate space and inadequate funds [and ] is operating at a deficit" (Harris, 1991, p. 143). As is evident in this report, public museums had finally encountered the financial stress that had already affected other public institutions and a direct result was the commissioning of social research, but of a type based purely on economic reasons (Harris, 1991). This type of information had little or no knowledge to contribute regarding the the social and psychological needs of the viewer.

As these events have taken place, it can be said that museum research and museum concern throughout their existence have been driven by a self-interest that complemented a disinterest with regard to the viewer. They generally have not involved their potential audience in any manner except as a means to economic enhancement or to support impressive attendance claims.
which enhance their reputation as a vital public institution. As a result, the usefulness and effectiveness of their most well-known function, that of viewer education, remains "perversely mysterious" (Harris, 1991, p. 149).

Statement of the problem/research questions

Suppose, if you will, that a new sport is developed that will be presented on a regular basis to a large metropolitan community in the Midwest. The sport is obviously going to need support by this community in the form of regular attendance. Since it is a newly developed sport the majority of this potential audience will be unfamiliar with the structure of the activity and could be characterized as 'uninitiated' as to the presentation and content of the event. The role of playing positions, the rules, the design of the playing field, and, in general, the way in which one is expected to perceive and understand the event will be foreign to a large portion of the targeted audience. In spite of these stumbling blocks the interested parties (i.e. the managing team, related professionals, athletes, and investors) desire and require the regular attendance of a relatively large cross-section of the community in order to justify and maintain their existence. It would seem overly optimistic to rely solely upon the uniqueness and inherent quality of their services and a healthy advertising budget to be sufficient in attracting and sustaining an audience. It would seem equally naive to neglect research which could propose presentation styles that promote an easier understanding of the sport.

This hypothetical situation highlights the extremes of an organization whose leaders have relied upon a shortsighted, shallow vision of audience, which drastically limits the viability of an institution's claim to public service. These extremes seem to be a part of the operation of the contemporary art center in this research. The 'sport' of the contemporary art center, as it is addressed here, is the presentation of contemporary visual art. Its 'facility' is a row of four galleries that are used in a traditionally modernist way (i.e. possessing sparse white walls, minimal signage, and unannounced methods of organization). Its 'support,' much like that of the hypothetical sport is sought in the form of significant regular attendance that is available in the form of a relatively large and broad cross-section of the community. At the moment the
contemporary art center is not attracting or maintaining this type of support. The current audience of the contemporary art center is a specialized one. They are 'familiar' and 'initiated' with approaches to understanding contemporary art, being active and knowledgeable members of the local arts community.

Purpose of the study

The researcher intended to uncover the stated and implied reasoning which guided the modernist design and implementation of an exhibition, *Face Value: American Portraits*, at a contemporary art center. The purpose of this investigation was to relate the modernist tendencies of the exhibition design with their educational implications.

Among other things, the modernist approach to exhibition design neglects the social and psychological needs of the viewer when he or she is attempting to interpret an artwork (Harris, 1989; O'Doherty, 1986). As the artworld has become more complex it is increasingly difficult for the viewer to achieve this (Blocker and Parsons, 1993). It was an aim of this research to determine how well a modernist exhibition is equipped to foster an understanding among artwork and viewer, which is satisfying for the viewer, and reflective of the current goals of art education. During this case study of a modernist exhibition design, a comparison of a stark non-informative modernist exhibition design and the concern for political, social, and cultural elements that comprise the type of understanding that is a part of current educational advocacies was addressed. It was expected that this comparison will yield evidence that depicts the modernist exhibition space as an environment that is unfriendly to the viewer's needs if he or she wishes to gain an adequate understanding of the art installation presented. This evidence established this modernist exhibition as resistant for the current goals of art education (i.e. contextualism, pluralism, and other empathetic aims).

In order to fulfill the mission of the contemporary art center and attract the desired widespread community involvement their methods of presentation needed to be studied and questioned. The contemporary art center must ask itself "Does the modernist museum environment adequately foster an understanding within the viewer who is not an existing member of the arts
community?" The potential - and targeted - audience segment classified as 'unfamiliar' or 'uninitiated' with the contemporary art center's activities were those members of the community who are not active members of the arts community; who seem to be uncomfortable with the presentation and consequently unable to grasp the content of the contemporary art center. These are potential audience members that the art center desires and needs if it is to fulfill its mission to serve the university and the community in its area.

In this study, the researcher proposed to investigate the contemporary art center's modernist exhibition practices and educational programming and policies in relation to their intended audience. In this light, the findings of this research provided documentary evidence that calls for the creation of exhibition designs that do not subscribe to the conventions of modernism. Furthermore, this study clarified the viewer's needs so that they may be more accurately addressed in practice and in further research. An increased concern for viewer understanding may be realized if the museum exhibition is designed to produce more accurate and more productive representations of artistic endeavors through current empathetic aims of art education.

**Conceptual structure for the study**

An important step in the critical evaluation of a museum exhibition is the careful examination of the audience as cultural consumers. In this study the appropriateness of museum methods could only be assessed in conjunction with an accurate account of the audience as the recipient of an intended message. The audience was thereby reconceived as being actively involved in the construction of the work of art; without the act of interpretation, the art object remains incomplete (Dewey, 1980; Wolff, 1981). In this respect an art object, like any human product, is only complete when it fulfills its purpose; to be consumed (Dewey, 1980). It is of utmost importance for museums to produce exhibitions that have the potential to play a significant role in our lives (Dewey, 1980). The joint production of meaning that constitutes the art experience must be encouraged. In this context our museums must offer a point of reconciliation among the positions of artist and viewer.
Recognition of the active role of the viewer raises significant problems for the modernist notion of art exhibition. In Inside the White Cube, O'Doherty (1986) encourages the rethinking of the role of art in museums by placing their dilemma of elitism and exclusionism squarely on the shoulders of the museum practitioner. ‘Objective’ meaning in art is negated allowing the viewer’s experience to be privileged along with the art object. Thus, the modernist ideal of the autonomous art object is exposed as invalid. Modernism has caused our museum exhibition to place an undue amount of emphasis on the nature of cultural production and the language of the art object while virtually ignoring the third element of an art work, its reception (Dewey, 1980). As museums come to realize that interpretation complements and completes the work of art they will come to view the object as an entity conjoined with life (Dewey, 1980). Interpretation is taken for granted in modernist art exhibitions and, as a result, the continuity that connects art to our process of living is lost (Dewey, 1980). As concerns of viewer reception are reintegrated into the missions of our museums, it will be realized that the art exhibition cannot simply be designed to accommodate art without addressing the issue of who is viewing it, and how.

Dewey’s (1980) Art As Experience offers alternatives to the museum professional. His conception of the aesthetic is important in helping them break their modernist dependence by adopting an anti-foundationalist philosophy. In addition, Dewey’s aesthetic naturalism can lead us to realize art’s inherent instrumentality. Blocker and Parsons (1993) defines how we understand works of art arguing for the need to arrive at interpretation based on a consideration of the elements of the artist’s time as mediated by our own beliefs. Wolff (1981) demonstrates that any notion of understanding in the arts must include a sociological perspective in order to be considered whole. In her work she illuminates the ideas that inform Gadamer’s moderate relativism which establishes the active role of the viewer in understanding art. Collectively, the writings of Blocker and Parsons (1993) and Wolff (1981) can be instrumental in encouraging museums to promote interpretations that, among other things, speak of the worlds and experiences of the visitors.
The function of a good presentation at a public art museum is to enable the viewer to better understand works of art. Presentation then is of special importance when addressing the cognitive psychology of a viewer in unfamiliar surroundings. If the content of the contemporary art center is sufficiently important, interesting, and relevant to sustain a broad audience then presentation is a viable way to attract and sustain an audience unfamiliar with the methods of inquiry related to the understanding of contemporary art (O'Doherty, 1986).

Design and methodology of the study

The purpose of this study was to meaningfully tell the story of the evolution of a modernist exhibition design and how it among other things inevitably influenced the viewer's understanding. The primary goal of this research activity was to bring the underlying influences of modernism, now commonly present in most museum exhibition designs, to the collective consciousness of the museum community so that they may more thoughtfully determine the future design of exhibitions.

A contemporary art center was selected as the site for this research. This contemporary art center is a relatively new contemporary arts institution located in the Midwestern United States. It relies upon public funds and private donations for its operating budget. A substantial amount of its financial support comes from its mother institution, a prominent Midwestern university. This contemporary art center was selected because of its multi-disciplinary contemporary programming, its traditional methods, and its responsibilities to serve the public as a whole. In this sense the public can be defined as a broad collective of people that is often described by their diversity of age, race, gender, and socio-economic background (Wolff, 1981).

The focus of the study, Face Value, is an exhibition intended to highlight the nature and implications of contemporary portraits. Approximately 75 portraits of varying media were assembled. Through use of comparative examples the exhibition sought to define the character of contemporary portraits against a backdrop of historical portraits from America's past.
Participants in the study included both contemporary art center staff and visitors. A diversity of museum visitors were selected, paying particular attention to age, race, gender, socio-economic background, and who was available and willing to participate in the study. With these goals in mind, four participants were recruited on a volunteer basis. The selection of staff participants focused on those professionals involved, in some capacity, in the decision making process of the exhibition design. These included: an exhibition designer, an assistant registrar, a curatorial editor, a preparator, the curator and, the Director of Education.

Within the framework of the case study a multi-method approach to data collection was utilized involving: formal interviews, informant discussions, and qualitative observation. Additionally, concepts drawn from modernism, the traditional museum exhibition design, Deweyian educational theories, and other current art educational theories were subjected to careful content analysis. Interviews were conducted with all participants and provided the basis for analyzing the contemporary art center's educational goals, exhibition practices, and viewer responses and understandings. Conclusions and recommendations were drawn from this analysis.

Significance of the Study

The growing body of art education literature that focuses upon the educational implications of the modernist museum exhibition space is indicative of a recent concern for continued research in this area. As art education researchers clarified their field as a facilitator of cross-cultural socially responsible understanding it became evident that it can and should become an integral part of the mission of the public museum. If this is done the public museum can strengthen its role as community servant by utilizing a current educational approach which emphasizes the way in which art can foster empathetic views based on more complete understandings of works of art which are based on social, political, and economic considerations. This study was directed toward that potential in the relationship of art, education, and the public museum.
To realize this potential art education researchers recommend an examination of the modernist museum environment as it affects the social and psychological needs of the viewer (Vergo, 1994). This idea has not been fully investigated at this point. The modernist museum exhibition space has many underlying educational implications which are yet to be extensively researched. It was the goal of this study to contribute to the correction of this deficit.

It was anticipated that this study would determine that this modernist exhibition design was unfriendly to the viewer's educational needs. Causational analysis of this problem was traced to the aims of the aesthetic codes of modernism as they influenced this modernist exhibition space. The current art educational goals of achieving understandings and empathies within the viewer through thorough interpretations of artworks require that one consider social, political, and economic contextual elements. At the conclusion of this case study it became apparent that the current goals of art education are not attainable in the modernist museum space. This then implied that if the current goals of art education are to be endorsed by the public museum, an alternative to the conventional modernist exhibition design must be arrived upon.
CHAPTER 2

MUSEUMS AND EDUCATION

The Aesthetic Experience

Museums currently view themselves as educational institutions and aspire to be viewed by the public in the same role (Hooper-Greenhill, 1983). The term ‘education’ is and always has been problematic. It reflects the changes of society and culture, is not well-defined, and consequently has not been employed with any consistency (Levin, 1981). However, it can be said that ‘education’ implies learning about something (Hooper-Greenhill, 1983). Therefore, a common element of all educational institutions is a learning environment. In order to distinguish among disparate educational institutions which have different needs and aspirations, other more descriptive methods must be used. Knowledge and learning can be validly represented in many ways (Davis and Gardener, 1993). Forms of intelligence, the ability to conjure meaning from signs and symbols, can therefore be represented in various equally valid ways (Davis and Gardener, 1993). From this perspective it is the means and subject of the learning which determines the distinct form of education that defines the unique character of an educational institution (Davis and Gardener, 1993).

It can then be said that it is the type of knowledge that is dealt with which makes various educational institutions distinct from one another. In more concrete terms it can be said that museum education, like formally taught mathematics, entails learning the process of constructing meaning out of signs or symbols. In the case of mathematics, the student must adequately interpret mathematic symbols in order to learn. Similarly, museum education involves
the interpretation of visual symbols. While both require an interpretive act, the abilities required in order to complete each interpretation are distinct. These are both examples of transfers of knowledge indicative of an educational institution. It is the subject of the institutions and - in turn - the required intelligence which provides the distinctions among them and make museums a unique site of learning. This, however, is not the most important aspect of the museum experience and only serves to distinguish it from other educational organizations.

Most educational institutions offer knowledge as indirect accounts of experience, as such, museums - due to their modernist leanings and their desperate desire to seem relatively important - have sought to distinguish themselves by highlighting the fact that they offer authentic encounters with art. Museums claim that their inherent strength, as centers of learning, lies in the somewhat trivial notion that they offer 'real' objects (i.e. cultural specimens) in their programming. Such value has been placed on this modernist notion of the power of autheticity that education is eschewed as museums present 'real' objects as a quasi-mystical form of unadulterated knowledge and experience (Davis and Gardener, 1993; Hooper-Greenhill, 1983; Wittman, 1967). This modernist indoctrination of museums has led to Formalist pursuits or the 'museum notion of art' as our art institutions have failed to address the continuity of the aesthetic experience that connects our cultural artifacts to our process of living (Dewey, 1980). In order to win their struggle to establish themselves as socially indispensable institutions, museums must recognize that the act of looking at art extends into our lives in a way that makes the aesthetic experience consummatory in its ability to aid us in making sense of our environment (Dewey, 1980).

It is important to remember that the aesthetic experience the museum offers is not so distinct that it is unrelated to other non-artistic educational domains such as the religious or the scientific. This misguided assumption is a fatal flaw of modernism. The very fact that learning entails interpreting symbols and cues is indicative of its aesthetic character and its common origin in our primary experiences (Burnett, 1989). Crude or primary experiences in which the human organism does and suffers are the bases for habits of response in
various types of situations (Dewey, 1980). As these are challenged or otherwise become problematic, secondary experience emerges "to criticize, refine, and extend [our] responses" (Burnett, 1989, p. 52). These secondary actions can be characterized as education and are often divided into distinct subjects such as the artistic, the scientific, or the religious (Dewey, 1980). Thus, not only does the museum offer a unique educational experience associated with cultural studies, it also has the potential to function as a designate for the "pervasive quality that gives experience the unity, order, and definiteness of character that we identify as 'aesthetic'" (Burnett, 1989, p. 53).

It is this secondary consummatory quality of the aesthetic experience that has been consistently missed in museums. As they concentrate on the uniqueness of their offerings they are carving a niche for themselves that could prove fatal. Visitors are being alerted to the unique language of art without realizing its primary benefit as a potential resolution of the problematic and the challenging (Dewey, 1980).

'Museum education' can be understood to refer to a wide variety of activities and accommodations for the public (Hooper-Greenhill, 1983). For the purpose of this research only those educative aspects of museums that involve exhibitions will be examined. This will be done, in-part, out of convenience, but also because in their current situation the exhibition is widely perceived as the primary function of museums enabling them to offer educational opportunities distinct from those of other institutions. Educational activities, such as formal talks, tours and lectures, and cultural events of all kinds (e. g. films, concerts, lessons, and demonstrations), do not directly involve concerns regarding the exhibition design and, as a result, will not be considered. In summary, museum education, as it will be referred to in this research, involves learning arrived at by making meaning out of direct contact with art objects that - in turn - facilitate the growth of new ideas or new concepts involving the application of previous skills and knowledge (Davis and Gardener, 1993; Hooper-Greenhill, 1983; Patterson, 1966).
Private Collections

The educational developments in American museums are considered to be distinct in character and accomplishments from those of other countries (Harris, 1991; Wittlin, 1967). There are many reasons for such a distinction. Among them are the contrasting nature of the collectors of European and American heritage and the educational differences between Europeans and Americans in relation to the arts. For the purposes of clarity and simplicity these events will be considered in isolation from European or other non-American museum occurrences. As will be demonstrated, collections were assembled for numerous purposes. In the later years they were displayed publicly. Collections are distinct from museums not because of public display, but because they were the result of motives unrelated to public service; their distinction from museums rests in their disinterest in providing a service to benefit the public. This distinction accounts for the limited educational role collections played in the lives of our citizens. This is not to say that collections did not play a role in the development of educational goals for museums. Private collections not only became the source of most museum collections, but perhaps more importantly, their attempts at public display raised the first questions of public service which would spur the type of self-reflective educational research that has come to, in part, characterize museums of the United States throughout their development.

Private collections will be considered initially in as much as they comprise the direct predecessors, the frequent contributors, and sources of influence for museums (Wittlin, 1970). As public service was not one of the functions of private collections, this period must be examined by considering the bundle of assumptions and aspirations that constituted the ideas of private collectors of this era (Wittlin, 1970). By accessing these thoughts the shape given our early art collections and their display can be better understood, and the events which led to the aspiration that education, as an intrinsic function of museums, be uncovered (Wittlin, 1970).
In the period preceding the concept of the public museum, private collecting was a common practice. During this time the idea that private collections could be educational agencies was, for the most part, overlooked. There was little reason for collectors to engage in audience analysis as the function of their collections did not involve public needs or desires. This is not to say that private collection in the United States did not have serious implications for the educational developments which were to take place in the museum world. As private collections were opened to select audiences problems related to the educational needs of the beholder became apparent. Additionally, the various purposes behind the development of each collection would affect the educational qualities of the museum as collectors would bequeath their acquisitions to a museum. Frequently, the holdings of a museum in its early stages would be made up entirely of a single collection, since collections served as the beginnings of museums. Consequently, the practices of the original collector would directly affect the educational abilities and approaches of the institution.

The human desire to collect objects of no direct utilitarian value has been recorded in America since European settlers established themselves on the continent (Wittlin, 1970). Wittlin, in *Museums: In Search of a Usable Future*, categorized these collections under six headings according to function and purpose. There were economic hoard collections, social prestige collections, magic collections, collections as expressions of group loyalty, collections as a means of stimulating curiosity and inquiry, and collections as a means of emotional expression. These categories serve to illuminate and differentiate among the widely varied impetuses beneath the initiatives of collectors which have influenced museums.

Economic hoard collections can be characterized as the activity of acquiring objects as a symbol of wealth. In the United States the primary purpose of these collections was to impress by virtue of the quantity, variety, value, and rarity of the objects collected (Wittlin, 1970). William Randolph Hearst engaged in this type of collecting. Hearst specialized in the collection of entire buildings-churches, monasteries, palaces, among others (Wittlin, 1970).
As he displayed a non-particular taste (or a particular non-taste) he acquired objects "from armor to choir stalls; from mummies to Cardinal Richelieu's bed; from wall hangings to tiny scarabs" (Wittlin, 1970, p. 12). Emphasis on the size of these collections, which was an intrinsic part of their value, can be seen as a common thread which extends throughout the history of museums. Like economic hoard collectors, the sheer size of a collection has consistently been viewed as a barometer for judging the quality of museums.

Social prestige collections had the primary purpose of ostentatious display. These collectors engaged in the practice of upgrading their image by using their wealth (which by itself is incapable of being displayed effectively) to acquire objects. In the late 19th century the change of America from an agrarian society to an industrial one coupled with the political calm of the post-Civil War era allowed wealth to become concentrated in a few hands which enabled select Americans to engage in economic hoard collecting (Wittlin, 1970). John Pierpont Morgan focused on the acquisition of European masterworks which were conspicuously displayed and reported on throughout the nation (Wittlin, 1970). It is said that Morgan's collections were intended to gain respect among his peers as well as satisfy his thirst for fine art. Although the second purpose may have been uncommon, the first almost certainly was the motivating force for all social prestige collectors. It can be said that throughout the history of museum activities not only was the sheer size of a collection helpful in gaining respect among peers but, as with social prestige collections, the quality and uniqueness of the objects of a museum collection was successfully used in conjunction with elaborate methods of display for the same purposes.

Magic collections refers to groups of objects to which imaginary powers were attached. These collections were most popular as people were groping for insights into causes and effects of natural events which were as yet unexplainable in more concrete terms. 'Supernatural' items such as the horn of a stag or various precious stones would provide comfort to men and women who had no other explanations or antidotes for natural events ranging from
snake bites to 'bad luck' (Wittlin, 1970). As scientific methods of discovery and explanation were embraced in the newly industrialized world collections of 'magic' specimens ceased to serve their intended purpose. More concrete evidence was sought in providing explanations of nature. Magic collections then became little more than social documents of an antiquated perspective and as people treated them as such they had minimal impact on museum practices.

Collections as expressions of group loyalty had similar intents or purposes as those of magic collections. These collections were often expressions of the human imagination through its attempts to cope with natural events. Prominent examples of these can be found in organizations of common belief such as Catholicism or patriotism which placed value on natural and manmade objects with connotations of their cause. Additionally, group loyalty collections may be based on a shared practical activity such as an agricultural cooperative or a record of historic events (Wittlin, 1970). Groups of early American settlers considered themselves to be part of a significant time, the founding of a country based on democratic ideals. Accordingly they felt compelled to record details of events for posterity and assemble them into collections which told stories of the early years of our government. An example of this was Mr. Browere’s Gallery of Busts and Statues which exhibited busts of patriots such as Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson (Wittlin, 1970). Historically, museums have demonstrated an air of exclusivity in regard to common interest which reflects the attitudes of this type of collecting activity. The museum as an organization of common interest has directed its attention toward the aesthetic objects of culture and those who are well-equipped to appreciate such objects. Much to the detriment of their claim of public service, museums have been most attentive to the needs of viewers who share and understand their cause. In effect, often at the expense of those not familiar with activities and objects deemed culturally significant, museums have operated on two levels of public service; one in which they attempt to facilitately cater to the physical needs of the general public and another in which they attend to the needs and wishes of those who readily share their interests (i.e. those of the arts community). In this
latter category one can find the type of selective membership in regard to common interest which the museum shares with collections as expressions of group loyalty.

Collections as a means of stimulating curiosity and inquiry characterizes groups of objects which have no purpose behind arrangement or selection, but are chosen to arouse a curiosity or inquisitiveness which would, in theory, lead to an increase in the cumulative knowledge of humankind (Wittlin, 1970). While visiting these collections it was hoped that one's intellectual horizons would be expanded. In many ways these groups of objects were not collected or presented in a consistent manner because they were thought of as a means to inspire viewers to seek more in-depth knowledge on an object or objects in a collection. An example of a curiosity and inquiry collection was one assembled by explorers Lewis and Clark during their well-known expedition of the Northwest (Wittlin, 1970). Notes, maps, and specimens referred to mineral deposits and plant and animal life of a heretofore undescribed area (Wittlin, 1970). These, and similar later explorations subsidized by the government, were meant to assemble diverse groups of items which would encourage viewers to thoughtfully investigate and hypothesize further about the collections so as to increase their knowledge of the country. It could then be said that of all the collections of the pre-museum era, these were of the few intended for public consumption and more remarkable for their explicit educational purpose.

Collections as a means of emotional experience were another example of private collections frequently intended for public consumption. Unlike collections of curiosity and inquiry, however, education was not a consideration. Instead these collections were assembled to evoke an intensely emotional experience among viewers. These objects, frequently paintings, dealt with either fact or fantasy and were intended to stir one’s senses in a unique and otherworldly manner. A recurring theme of these collections was the attempt to bring about an emotion without reference within the viewer such as the
aesthetic experience which is occasionally referred to in the display of modernist painting. It is not surprising that collections dedicated to the emotional experience were not common in the pre-museum era of the United States. As will be demonstrated, the primary impetus behind the introduction of museums in the United States was to afford an emotional experience (Harris, 1991). Prior to this time thoughts of survival and sustenance more often occupied the minds of America's early settlers (Harris, 1991; Wittlin, 1970; Wittman, 1967). Little time or effort was therefore spared on purposes which were seen as superfluous. In short, the social and economic climate was not yet ripe for the aesthetic domain of museums to take hold as an institution of social significance.

The Roots of Museum Education

Presentation as a private endeavor

Until the end of the seventeenth century in the United States the variety, quality, and value of items were the only aspects with which one would have characterized the relative merits of these collections (Wittlin, 1970). As the seventeenth century passed, private collectors began to loosen their selectivity in regard to admission (Wittlin, 1970). Consequently, the aspect of presentation became more prominent, and as more and more diverse numbers of visitors were admitted, educational factors became an issue. The consequences of a more open admittance policy were unexpected and disappointing to both collector and visitor because the subject of education has been left unconsidered. Problems of presentation adversely affected the quality of the viewing experience and thereby undermined the educational potential of collections. In similar ways these problems have recurred throughout the history of museums (Harris, 1991; Wittlin, 1970).

Education implies a transfer of knowledge through the presentation of information (Esteve-Coll, 1993). Therefore, the viewer required a sensible method of display in order to find satisfaction. In spite of or because of expectations of understanding between viewer and collector, dissatisfaction arose due to a mutual lack of comprehension. Although these expectations
were unrealistic considering the circumstances, the questions which inevitably arose from this dissatisfaction can be seen as the first steps toward an effective educational program for exhibits in the United States.

These questions relate to the misconceptions and assumptions on the part of the private collector (Wittlin, 1970). The exhibition space of the private collection was most often merely a storeroom which doubled as a meeting place for the collector and select artists and connoisseurs (Wittlin, 1970). The style of presentation was necessarily informed by the storeroom atmosphere. Paintings or other collectibles covered every available space with any excess relegated to the floor (Wittlin, 1970). As the meetings conducted in these rooms were between a few knowledgeable aficionados and the collector, there were few stumbling blocks to a satisfying educational experience. The visitors were well versed and interested in the language of the collection or they would not have gone to the effort of arranging a visit to view a private owner's holdings nor would they have been welcome there. In short, mutual understandings among visitor, collector, and collection facilitated an educational experience in spite of the overall disorganization of the event. This, however, was not the case following the opening of the same collections to the public.

In the period of open admission, the late seventeenth century, private collections in the United States aroused disappointment amidst the expectations of collector and visitor (Wittlin, 1970). The collectors observed the viewers' confusion and subsequent dissatisfaction with their visits. The public's frustration stemmed from their inability to access the educational potential of their encounter with a collection of specimens. Visitors frequently endured lengthy and involved interviews to prove their mettle and subsequently obtain admission to what was promised to be an exhibition of wondrous, inspiring things (Wittlin, 1970). Without clues to the unfamiliar items in a collection and lacking the knowledge base required for unassisted appreciation the visitors were unable to enjoy and enrich themselves. They lacked, in most cases, not only a background of specific knowledge into which the new experiences could
fit but "all general education of a literate kind" which could have enabled them to educate themselves in spite of an unorganized presentation (Wittlin, 1970, p.71).

Private collectors, on the other hand, failed to foresee problems of presentation because their previous experience with more knowledgeable viewers had never required any additional effort at information or structuring their collections. Their new audience required an organized presentation designed specifically to facilitate enjoyment and educational enrichment. Collectors were unable to realize this and subsequently failed to gain educational status for their collections. The question of public education which arose from these situations would set the tone for inquiries into presentation, contributing to research and to education during the following periods (Wittlin, 1970).

There were notable exceptions to the non-educational interests of this group of collectors which substantially contributed to the educational developments to come. The American patriot Charles Wilson Peale was far ahead of his time in voicing educational concerns relating to presentation which he felt would help capture the interest of the "uninformed" public and assist them in grasping the meaning of exhibits (Wittlin, 1970). Peale demonstrated his awareness of the importance of the educational function of museums in a letter he wrote in 1800:

...it is only the arrangement and management of a [collection of objects] that can constitute its utility. For it should be immensely rich in the number and value of article, [however] unless they are systematically arranged and the proper modes of seeing and using them attended to, the advantage of such a store will be of little account to the public (Wittlin, 1970, p.80).

Peale's early realization that the admission of bodies does not necessary include the admission of minds foreshadows future research into museum education. For the most part, however, private collections were ill-equipped to serve the general public and primarily served the needs of the privileged few
who were knowledgeable enough to benefit from their experience. Such was the limited educational role of collections and their display through most of the 1700's.

Presentation as public service

America's first era of museum foundation occurs in the late eighteenth century. The museums of this time were privately owned and operated, but they were distinct from collections because they were organized with the intent of public display (Harris, 1991; Wittlin, 1970). The purpose of public service distinguishes museums as we know them from the groups of objects referred to as collections. In this light it can be said that the first known public museum of the United States was founded in 1773 in Charleston, South Carolina (Wittlin, 1970). This and similar museums of the period offered specimens of natural history or historical souvenirs, usually intermingled with amateurish paintings and objects of undisguised entertainment such as wax figures, exotic animals (stuffed or alive), and illusionistic mirrors, among other things (Wittlin, 1970). The primary reasons that museums of this time were such a mixed bag of legitimate items and superficial attractions are numerous. They were a reflection of private initiative and lacked an overall governing authority, and therefore had none of the guidance required for an effective, responsible, and coordinated program designed to serve the public (Wittlin, 1970). Secondly, issues of presentation were not believed to be important. As in the collection era, it was widely presumed that the exposure of people to exhibitions would bring about the communication of thought and idea which embodies education (Wittlin, 1970). Finally, because of the inability of substantial objects to interest the public without effective presentation, objects of spectacle were necessary if a museum was going to spark an interest in the public. These curiosities, which had little intrinsic value, were able to stimulate interest in the viewer without the need for context or the challenge of substantial educational effort.

The few museums of this early time which did have educational goals dealt primarily with natural science. These natural history exhibitions, which were often the result of the visions of a single great intellect, were viewed as the most important exhibitions because they were thought to help orient Americans
to their new surroundings (Wittlin, 1970). As such they were the only type of collection at the time that was actually perceived as an educational experience. Their purpose was to serve as a directory to the available natural resources of the country (Wittlin, 1970). The most prominent example of a natural history museum under private ownership was Charles Wilson Peale's museum founded in 1758 which became the largest of the private museums around 1810 (Wittlin, 1970). It displayed objects of nature and art, mostly related to natural history, which Peale felt "might be curious or instructive." At its peak Peale's museum held approximately 100,000 specimens ranging from insects and Native American artifacts to casts of ancient statues and models of new machinery (Wittlin, 1970). Peale's museum was significant because it was the first known instance where the question of education was addressed. His vision and his museum related ideas of exhibition and education which foretold of the promise and potential of museums of the future by providing useful information in an interesting and accessible manner. Peale can be seen as a pioneer in the tenuous relationship between museums and the goals of education. His work, however, was more the exception than the rule during this period of the private ownership of museums. For the most part, education was not yet a consideration, as museum directors believed merely opening their doors and maintaining their collections was the limit of their responsibilities (Harris, 1991; Wittlin, 1970; Wittman, 1967). The selection and presentation of objects was ill-conceived since it was thought that the responsibility lay with the visitors to be well-informed beforehand about the subjects if they were going to increase their knowledge or feel stimulated to further study (Wittlin, 1970). In this period of relatively poor educational standards and long work weeks the typical American citizen had neither the tools to appreciate nor the inclination to visit such uninspiring institutions (Wittlin, 1970).

A period of significant development in museum education occurred among historical and natural science museums in the late nineteenth century. A trend toward specialization and new styles of presentation served to increase the potential and abilities of museum education. These changes involved museums of history and natural science because education in these areas was believed to be urgent and in the country's best interest (Wittlin, 1970). This is
significantly different from later museum educative developments which were
centered around the best interests of the public as individual thinkers. In the
late nineteenth century, providing solid ground on which the United States
could stand was still a primary concern of the nation (Wittlin, 1970). Unified
nationalistic thought was believed to be a strength worth cultivating and
museum education was a means to achieve this patriotic goal. Historical
societies came into being at this time with the purpose of strengthening the
national awareness of American citizens (Wittlin, 1970). It can be said that
historical societies were the first instances of museums with purposes involving
education. As educational goals became a part of the mission of historical
societies, educational considerations became a part of collection and exhibition
practices. As historical societies engaged in self-examination in regard to these
issues, it was determined that limiting collection practices to a controlled scope
would provide thematically grouped objects which better fit their purpose.
These measures produced mixed results as museum professionals had yet to
understand that presentation must have the same focus as collection practices,
if an educational program is going to be effective. More importantly, historical
societies demonstrated for future museums how self-examination and the
resulting measures of specialization can intensify and refine their mission.

A more focused form of presentation was developed in the specialized
museums of natural science in the United States. The most significant of these
was the National Collection of Science, which became the Smithsonian
Institution in 1846. A building was designated to house and present
governmental collections of science and natural science (Wittlin, 1970). Forms
of science were deemed important to educate the American of the natural
resources at their disposal as well as inform them of great technical inventions
which they could utilize. Thus, the Smithsonian Institution had its beginnings in
a practical purpose which was intended to serve educational needs. The
museum offered direct contact with 'real' objects of science which would be
more likely than simple instruction to spark an interest within the viewer.
However, an educational design was needed if the presentation of these
objects was to inform and encourage further inquiry. In matters of display the
exhibitions of the Smithsonian set precedents through examples of orderly
display consistent with the educational goals of the institution (Wittlin, 1970). Industrial exhibits were arranged in logical sequences from raw materials to manufactured product; biological specimens arranged in progressive order and genus were intended to form a consulting library (Wittlin, 1970). In accordance with the rising status of science in the United States, museum professionals developed an advocacy program which prescribed that museum objects of any type be arranged in order of their perceived 'evolution' in a scientific manner (much like collections of the past); this approach came to be called the 'scientific approach' which was similar to those commonly found in private collections of the past (Wittlin, 1970). While it had considerable educational value among scholarly visitors the general public saw these often massive groupings of similar items as monotonous and uninteresting (Wittlin, 1970). Art museums too, adopted the scientific approach as art history became an established area of study and in turn a primary influence upon the practices of art exhibition (Levin, 1981). Art history gained its legitimacy, in part, from an adherence to the precepts of science which encouraged art museums to produce displays of clearly defined order. It was then widely held that works of art should be presented in an order which reflects their chronology and influence upon artworks which followed modernist precepts. In the end, the orderly exhibition practices developed in conjunction with the advent of natural science museums served research purposes well as a sort of "museological Darwinism," but failed to attract other elements of the public who were not as knowledgeable and not intensely interested in the order of things from science to artworks (Wittlin, 1970, p. 135). In the end this type of arrangement required a depth of knowledge about a field and an awareness of artificial and in often arbitrary boundaries that the masses could not hope to be able to participate through comprehension. This was characteristic of the staff of museums who were often chosen for their scholarly achievements with little regard for their social skills (Wittlin, 1970).

A differing view of educationally effective presentation was developed when museums of natural history came into existence in the early nineteenth century, as it was realized that the dry, research oriented exhibition styles of the recent past were not attractive to the public. Museums of natural history sought
to attract those previously disenfranchised back into their institutions by combining the utility of a museum as a research facility with a concern for the dissemination of knowledge to the general public (Wittlin, 1970). These combined aspirations were spurred on by the addition of socially based goals to the mission of museums. Through self-reflective research into the area of education it was concluded that opening a center of scientifically arranged specimens was sufficient for research purposes but ill-suited to the interests of the general public. In order to open up the considerable knowledge base of collections, which science and nature museums failed to achieve some 25 years earlier, natural history museums introduced plans for adult education which featured the presentation of specimens in a simulated natural environment (Wittlin, 1970). This line of thought in regard to presentation displayed the utmost concern for the education of the general public, in direct contrast to the scientific approach. The new approach favored as the "synthesis" of appropriate objects into a meaningful whole. These took the form of habitat groups of animals and dioramas displaying Native American artifacts, among other things (Wittlin, 1970). While it is believed that these measures met with a certain amount of success they did not have the widespread effect that had been expected. Contextual forms of presentation were widely seen as being well-suited for museums of natural history with little relevance to other museums such as those of art and science (Wittlin, 1970). In general, there was no sense of camaraderie among museum professionals who saw each institution as a unique entity whose successes and failures had little applicability to the others. The museum professionals of the late nineteenth century were still scholars primarily concerned with research capabilities; as such, they had little motivation or inclination to attract the non-scholarly public. Resources also played a part in the educational developments of museums. New types of museums specializing in science, history, nature, art, et cetera were provided with a multitude of objects from governmental collections as well as private ones. These private donors were inspired by their dedication and interest in contributing to the development of the United States as a relatively young country with unique aspirations of freedom and plurality. Such was the case when James Smithson, an English nobleman, was so attracted by the
charisma of the United States that he left his entire estate of $508,318.46 to America even though he had never visited the country (Wittlin, 1970). Smithson's only stipulation was that the money be used to aid an institution in "the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men" (Wittlin, 1970, p. 125). Smithson no doubt felt that this was more likely to be achieved in America where equal opportunity was the foundation of its political institutions. What Smithson probably failed to account for was the limited scope within which museum professionals of the time viewed education. While some felt the need to open the doors of their institutions of history and science to all, the resources and effort which went into presenting specimens were dedicated to scholarly interests. Since the professionals who guided these institutions were from scholarly backgrounds, research was erroneously seen as the most direct way to fulfill nationalist missions. To the museum professionals of the latter half of the nineteenth century, it was in the best interests of the country to encourage research. Allowing the public to visit these laboratories was merely an obligation that came with their democratic culture.

On the whole, from the middle of the nineteenth century, throughout its end, and - some would argue - throughout this century, the resources of art museums remained incomprehensible to the majority. Acquisitions and presentations were made in a less haphazard manner, but their purposes were likewise remote. Concessions to the public were not of an educational nature, revolving instead around the physical admittance of visitors through a wide range of business hours and low admission fees (if there were any at all) (Harris, 1991; Wittlin, 1970). In short, it was still taken for granted that the physical exposure of human beings to information in various forms automatically metamorphoses into an understanding in their minds.

Museums

Later in the period of specialization - in the late nineteenth century - art museums began to appear in significant numbers (Harris, 1991; Wittlin, 1970). The expectations and assumptions of the art museum's professionals as well as
society’s was of influence in fostering a poor educational climate in art museums. Art museums, as institutions of high culture, had little reason to engage in audience analysis and its related educational implications. Art museums were seen as unique institutions: unlike science and history museums; as organizations of high culture, they were perceived as places of leisure with little educational purpose. In this regard, they were seen as a source of entertainment that could not educate in a way to strengthen the nation. The basic purpose underlying institutions of high culture was the unadulterated presentation of valued forms of art (Harris, 1991). As with history and science museums, it was believed that with accessibility (inexpensive admission, long opening hours, useful labels, and—in the case of art museums—explanatory catalogs), the public would be able to make good use of the objects exhibited (Harris, 1991). While museums of history and science measured their success in terms of the amount of research facilitated, the successes (or failures) of art museums were measured in terms of attendance (Harris, 1991; Wittlin, 1970). This highlights a fundamental difference in the educational perception of historical and scientific museums as compared to art museums which is still prevalent. History and science museums were viewed as educational resources because of their perceived pragmatism. It was believed that they could inspire individuals to contribute to the United States through invention, innovation and patriotism. Conversely, art museums were thought to be institutions of personally oriented leisurely pursuits which had no significance as a source of national strength and consequently had little educational significance. Art museums were therefore given secondary status where educational possibilities were concerned, because even if they had any they could not help a fledgling country in terms of unity, invention, and exploration. As non-educational organizations, art museums of this time were not unlike businesses in their operation. They were still rooted in the aesthetic of a production culture concerned with finding customers to admire a product but not designing a product for the customer (Harris, 1991). In the case of art museums the product was high culture, and problems of delivery that affected attendance were the only concern (Harris, 1991).
Museum research

In the post-World War I era it was realized that as the political, economic, and social climate of the United States changed museums were able to gain more importance, acceptance, and interest among society. While some museums may have aspired to adopt a more active role in society in the past, the time was right for this aspiration after the conclusion of World War I. It was during this reconceptualization that museums began to be viewed not as an end in themselves, but as a venue for the display of collections and attempted to develop (and continue to do so) into a means to serve the people and their cultural evolution (Wittlin, 1970).

It is significant that after World War I, as the United States became more self-confident and its natural resources were better understood and utilized, art museums began to be thought of as potential educators. As the nation became more secure with its image as a unique, powerful and inspiring nation, individual pursuits such as art museum visits became more socially acceptable. In this time of national security and prosperity the education of the individual for the purpose of internal growth was now a viable alternative to the view of education as a means of collective thought for the betterment of the nation. It is in the light of post-World War I confidence that art museums began to establish their potential as educational institutions. While these developments enabled art museums to claim potential as American educational institutions, it was the advent of the social sciences in the 1920's which made educational research possible (Harris, 1991).

As the social sciences became well-established as an appropriate and measurable means of education research they were, in the form of socially oriented goals, incorporated into the daily functions of museums. The social sciences uncovered new possibilities of interpretation as the objects in museums were often seen as social documents. In this new light, specimens were attended to as historical objects which created educational possibilities of a less academic and more accessible form (Harris, 1991). These developments increased the educational aspirations of museum professionals who felt that an educational approach of social concerns would awaken interest in a much broader audience. As these educational programs were installed, objects in
museums could be presented in terms of the social implications of past and present while retaining their scholarly form. References to the background of life in which the stuff of museums had come to light, were seen as an approach which bridged the gap between intellectually challenging objects and the public.

As social documents these items enable the public to unearth a type of knowledge from museum exhibits which had a direct connection to people's lives. In the case of science and historical museums their educational function was broadened; in the case of art museums, whose numbers were dramatically increasing, educational possibilities were realized to a limited extent (Wittman, 1967). In both instances, the new social approach of museums quickly increased their accessibility and visitor satisfaction, and ultimately their popularity and public support (Harris, 1991; Wittlin, 1970).

As the presentations of museums began to integrate a social perspective in regard to their objects, viewers were provided with a setting which invited them to learn instead of challenging them to understand without contextual support. This newly found desire to use the museum as a disseminator of knowledge to the public inspired scattershot experimental methods of selection and presentation. Exhibits of the time included period rooms, dioramas, and habitat groups; all showing a few specimens as parts of a total simulated environment. These experiments were conducted without study to justify application. While they had their successes (as well as failures) they lacked the consistency, documentation and research necessary to generalize these measures into widely applicable methods (Harris, 1991). In its early stages, the goal and applications of the promising blend of social science and museum education produced enthusiastic yet inconsistent visions in both research and application. With this in mind it can be said that the educational activities of museums from 1914 to 1940 was characterized by haphazard questioning and inspired application (Wittlin, 1970).

The most visible research of this period was conducted from the mid 1920's to the mid 1930's (Harris, 1991). In Museum News (1933) Edward S. Robinson, Arthur Melton, Paul Rea, Philip Youtz, Louis Powell, Marquerite Bloomberg and others supported by the Carnegie Corporation undertook a
series of carefully structured visitor studies and experiments. Their stated goal was to establish a plan of action for museum management and design which would increase public visitation and make it more effective. For them, and others of a social perspective, the most compelling evidence for change in museums was in the scientific study of the needs of the public. This signified a new attitude among museum professionals about their institutions. From their perspective museums most needed to develop a more complete concept of public service. While facilitating scholarly pursuits was always seen as an important part of the function of museums, broadening the appeal of their offerings through a combination of entertainment and enrichment needed extensive research. These sentiments reflected previous neglect in this area as well as a sense that museums as public servants should strengthen the minds of many instead of a select few. Edward S. Robinson believed that in order to do so required thoughtful changes engaging in a combination of scientific study which would produce objective facts and psychological inquiry which would attend to the needs of the viewer. Robinson demonstrated his belief in the museum as public servant by confidently concluding that "museum directors [should] generally become experimental psychologists" (Robinson, 1933, p. 7).

While Robinson led the research group toward its path of scientific and psychological investigation, it was Arthur Melton who produced the most striking vision of museums as viewer-centered institutions in opposition to the traditional perspective of the museum as an object-oriented center. By asserting that visitor attitude was independent of qualitative differences in the objects of museums Melton sought to undermine the attitude that direct contact with quality specimens is all that is needed to properly serve the public (Robinson, 1933). Collectively, these researchers believed that in order for museums to justify their status as public institutions their concerns must revolve around the education and enjoyment of the museum by the public. In his writing of 1933, Philip Youtz concluded that "The public cannot be expected to support institutions which house only an unrelated series of private memorials" (Youtz, 1933, p. 8). These researchers further asserted that museum professionals must employ scientific methods of experimentation when studying the psychological needs of the viewer. While these researchers were primarily
psychologists, and as such favored psychological inquiry, they clearly believed that effective presentations which would result from these prescribed activities would be centered around the social aspects of the objects (Youtz, 1933). In the end, they felt that their research had produced justification for the reorganization of museums in the public interest (Harris, 1991). They felt that museums must determine how the public could make more effective use of museums and thereby "avoid the danger of being labeled in the luxury class" (Youtz, 1933, p. 7). Their psychological inquiries were summarized by a calling for increased interest in the needs of the public. This is reflected in the goals and operations of museums which engaged in a social classification of art instead of an aesthetic one (Youtz, 1933).

In the second decade of post-World War I exploration, the influence of the social sciences on the educational goals of museums intensified primarily through the psychological investigation of viewer needs by researchers such as Youtz, Robinson, and Melton. These activities not only signified an interest in the refocusing of museums as public servants, but also began a shift in museology toward widespread experimentation and research which is distinct from the self-confident authoritarianism which was characteristic of pre-War museology.

The promotion of museum objects as social documents was not without its share of detractors, most infamously those of the art institutions, who often felt that this was equivalent to attaching loosely related meanings to objects in order to facilitate the goals of education. This opposing view can be seen in the opinion of Dr. John Walker who wrote about the National Gallery of Art in 1944, stating that the chief purpose of the art museum "is to allow each painting, each piece of sculpture, or other object of art to communicate to the spectator, with as little interference as possible, [thereby allowing it to provide] the enjoyment it was designed to give" (Walker, 1944, p. 23). It can be said that the purveyors of this approach felt that a museum object which was not primarily an historical document-such as a work of art-should not be treated as such. For them the needs of the public were not an issue beyond the aspects of admittance. Those who came to the museum with the previous knowledge required to appreciate an object were the ones that the museum was appropriate for. While this point
of view was pervasive in the pre-World War I era, as museums came to require more public support due to the financial duress of the Depression and the increasing aura of elitism perceived by the public, it became necessary to put forth an effort to attract a non-scholarly audience (Harris, 1991). By the 1930's education was seen as the obvious means with which to achieve this goal. The barriers between the meanings of objects and the public served to discourage the viewer from inquiry. Forms of museum education were methods of making this knowledge more accessible. The social aspects of museum objects as historical specimens seemed the obvious path for education of this kind to take as these areas serve to describe human existence.

In this early period, the study of the relationship between museums and the needs of the public different kinds of exhibits were often evaluated in terms of learning and enjoyment (Wittlin, 1970). Due to the influence of educational research, the "total environment" exhibit became an accepted and widely used method of presentation. Art museums, museums of science, and historical museums all subscribed to this approach in order to draw more attendance and make museum visits more meaningful and enjoyable. The culmination of the "total environment" exhibition was the creation of the outdoor Museum of Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia (Wittlin, 1970). This metamorphosis of a depressed and deteriorating town into an accurate contextual study which would facilitate learning among the public was initialized in 1934 and completed in 1936 (Wittlin, 1970). This and other installations were the result of the influence of educational research in improving the effectiveness and accessibility of learning when directly confronted with not wholly familiar objects by providing a truer impression of the way of living contemporaneous with the objects. While this approach quickly became the state-of-the-art form of presentation in museums of history and natural science and continues to retain its status, in museums of art it never progressed beyond the experimental stage in-part because works of art have always been viewed as primarily aesthetic objects with little or no social content. In the years that follow, it can be seen that this, more than any other factor, restricted the popularity and reputation of the art museum as a public learning institution.
The dark ages of museum research

From the period between the two World Wars extending to the early 1960's the fervor of experimentation and self-reflection which characterized the post-World War I era was lost. The concern for positive change and increasing the role of education and public service waned as museums became content to stay with the course of exhibition without concern for the needs of the public (Harris, 1991). In a sense, after more than thirty years of research on the subject, museums seemed to know little more about the public they claimed to serve than when they began. This was not the case with other institutions and organizations of the time. With this in mind it can be asked - as two researchers did in 1961 - "Why do museums lag behind commerce and industry in employing the knowledge and techniques of the social sciences in the solution of fundamental problems?" (Cameron, 1968, p. 28). There have been many opinions offered to explain the resistance in museums to adopt the methods of research in order to enact a positive change. Some felt that this failure rested primarily in the inadequacy and sometimes even the incompetence of previous surveys, and on a negligent attitude toward publication and distribution of results (Cameron, 1968). Others believed that it was because other more mainstream institutions such as schools, universities, and libraries began to employ broader notions of education which encompassed many of the educational goals of museums (Wittlin, 1970). In this situation, it was felt that the saturation point in the supply of educational facilities was reached and museums were the first institutions to fall out of educational consideration because of their secondary status as educators.

While these points probably identify real problems which contributed to this thirty year stasis, it seems convincing that the fundamental reason for this deficit of research and progress lay in the professional reluctance to acknowledge that museums were functionally linked with other social organizations which were concerned with their market share (Harris, 1991). Marketing, at this time, was widely used by business and some non-profit organizations as an effective tool for establishing a correlation between what was provided by the organization and what was needed by the consumer (Harris, 1991). Exemption from this sort of consumer-related research and
development was a primary feature of the museum's identity as a scholarly institution (Harris, 1991). It was this exceptionalism that helped establish the museum as an institution of unique and precious status whose importance precluded any foray into the procedures of contemporary economic survival. It was this indifference to investigating the market and to change in general which constituted, for some, the power and attraction of the museum as a timeless depository of treasures beyond the fickle mercy of some poll.

As always, a defining characteristic of the museum was that the fact that they were staid unchanging institutions asserted that they were above change. Because of this attitude there were no significant educational developments made in the decades of the 1930's through the 1960's (Harris, 1991; Wittlin, 1970). As a result, the increased social demands and refined investigative techniques of this time were not influential in matters of museum operation. They left museums ill-prepared for the demands for increased and more effective community and public service which intensified the friction between the public and museums in the 1960's and beyond.

It can then be concluded that the experimentation and research of the post-World War I era produced few permanent changes in the following decades. Aside from the "total environments" of historical and natural science museums, it was now evident that the research and experimentation of this period was viewed by museum professionals as outdated and quaint (Harris, 1991). The "total environment" with its saturation of contextual cues proved to be insufficient, by itself, to facilitate a more accessible educational environment and was subsequently abandoned by most. It was apparent that most museum professionals still maintained the position that as long as they presented unique objects of quality the public would come. The lingering influence of authoritarian ideals and traditional wisdom were still at work and there was a pride taken in presenting the museum as a refuge from the rapid change which had come to characterize the commercial world (Harris, 1991). The notion of the palace or temple remained the prevalent promoted image of museums and the most common symbols of museum legitimacy (Harris, 1991). Those who were knowledgeable and consequently were therefore best equipped to obtain a satisfying experience from a museum visit did come, much to the satisfaction.
of those in charge. There would come a time, however, when this would not be sufficient to maintain and justify their existence as public institutions. Educational research and resulting implemented measures and programs would be looked upon once again as a means for broader more effective public service.

**Museum research as a marketing tool**

In the 1960's and 1970's the major museums of America were entering both the retail market and the political arena (Harris, 1991). It was a matter of politics that increased the urgency for museums to attract and satisfy a much broader audience. It was a matter of marketing which would best determine how to do so. The museum's older aristocracy of private donors was dwindling and the financial demands of operating a large institution were increasing at an alarming rate. In order to compensate a broader segment of the public and specifically the surrounding community needed to be nurtured and thereby justify an increase in state and federal assistance through grants (rapidly becoming a lucrative means of support with the advent of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities in the 1960's which based its support on ideals of service and breadth of constituency).

Unfortunately, as with the commercial world, the foray of museums into marketing procedures produced a mass of unscrupulous, misguided, and superfluous information through surveys and research activities. Many of them, for instance, focused on enhancing the reputation of the institution by producing results that attempted to portray the museum as a widely used facility which produced hours of satisfying enrichment among its visitors. Their research was little more than opinion polls, conducted by prominent museums such as an Art Institute of Chicago survey conducted by the Leo Burnett advertising agency in 1974 (Harris, 1991). This report produced glowing public endorsements and exaggerated attendance figures intended to attract more visitors much in the same way of commercial business (Harris, 1991). Other surveys focused on the physical needs and wishes of the viewer without considering other areas relating to education. In 1973 The Museum of Modern Art commissioned Daniel
Yankelovich to research the physical needs of the public with the intention of increasing attendance and membership (Harris, 1991). The results suggested such changes as larger gift shops, lounges, better restaurants, more expansive lobbies, and more modern lecture halls (Harris, 1991). It was perhaps felt that increasing the educational effectiveness and accessibility of museum presentations and related activities would not get the public to come. This shallow and short-sighted vision—perhaps due to the contemporary advertising and marketing style-generated practices which might have been able to increase attendance initially, but had no method for maintaining this increase. If a museum visit was about contact with "real" objects of intrinsic value, then the museums of the 1960's and 1970's needed to concentrate their research on this experience in order to increase their audience in a meaningful way.

**Museum research as social study**

Many were unhappy with these responses to the needs of museums. The Director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston reacted to these activities by arguing that the motives behind such efforts were "less to deepen the experience of our visitors than to broaden the appeal of the museum... [in order to]...increase its income" (Harris, 1991, p. 143). Inquiries centered around the needs of the viewer relating to exhibitions and educational goals were embarked upon by more scholarly and less commercial researchers. Issues of community representation and multiculturalism were studied with a concern for expansion of the museum constituency by considering measures which would make a visit a more effective and inviting encounter with objects of museums. Hoping to compensate for a history of indifference, ignorance, and neglect surveys were created which resulted in redefined mission statements and calls for commitments to change (Harris, 1991). In this view, the unique aspects of the museum were emphasized.

As school and university curricula became more specialized and covered a wider variety of subjects, including those of museums, museum professionals interested in increasing the popularity of museums in a thoughtful way felt it necessary to eschew traditional educational practices and programs in museums in favor of a form which would accentuate the uniqueness of the
museum experience. A focus of much of this work was about the nature of the exhibition space as the unique educational entity of museums. But, unlike the "total environment" solution of similar studies in the 1930's, this research was less concerned with the exhibition space studied in isolation from other factors and more concerned with the relation between the viewing public and the exhibition space. An essay by Duncan F. Cameron (1968) at the beginning of this movement, reflects this perspective by calling for museum professionals to clarify their educational objectives and define the uniqueness of museums. As Cameron saw it, the uniqueness of the exhibition and the one-on-one contact with 'real' objects defined the character of the museum. For him the primary problem of museum accessibility was that museum professionals "know virtually nothing of those factors which do and do not make exhibits effective as communication" (Cameron, 1968, p. 29). Museum researcher A. E. Parr also felt that museums must reevaluate their methods of presentation in regard to their educational goals because this area is unique to museums. He believed "if the exhibits themselves, unaided by docents, lecturers, guidaphones, or other aural (sic) verbalizers are not the principle vehicles of museum teaching there is little reason for the museums to remain in business" (Parr, 1966, p. 28).

The comments of Cameron and Parr can be seen as seeds of a new conception of museum education. A concept which sees museum education in a much broader context, that can accentuate the unique experiences museums have to offer, and make education more effective in museums by considering the educational implications of decisions of exhibition design. Those concerned with educational goals now aspired to borrow some of the principles of museum purists who felt the exhibition was the strength and uniqueness of museums, but believed that matters of education were secondary and intrusive to the museum experience. The view of these purists centered around the uniqueness of museums in providing intimate contact with actual specimens. They felt, however, that education was not necessary and even secondary to the exhibition of such objects and subsequently emphasized educational concerns related to secondary activities not directly relating to the exhibition. In the traditional view, understanding was not a concern because a correlation between the goals of education and the viewer's ability to comprehend the
significance of the object was not identified. Museum purists felt the opportunity to behold such objects was sufficient to attract and enrich visitors as the painting would take on its own life when confronted by the viewer. Conversely, in the 1960's educational goals relating to exhibitions were emphasized by researchers as places of learning unique to the museum. This created an ideological conflict between the museum researcher and the museum professional. Researchers saw potential in the relation of education to the exhibition as it constituted the ability of museums to broaden their constituency by providing a unique, inviting, and enriching experience. As such, education was seen as a way of both increasing accessibility and establishing a niche for museums as educational institutions. However, at this time, the sort of sweeping changes in museum educational philosophy, which these researchers aspired to achieve, were not possible as most museum professional continued to hold to their purist ideals, further reinforced by the similar ideas of modernism the premier art of the time.

Museums' unresponsiveness to research

In retrospect, most of the museum studies of the 1960's and 1970's represented new self-reflective activities which have come to define the research activities of most contemporary museums. Most of these studies were driven by marketing needs which involved issues of education and exhibition because the neglect or misuse of these aspects was thought to be the source of most institutional deficits, especially those relating to a limited constituency. However, these studies did not always - or even usually - produce dramatic results in the museum field (Harris, 1991). In a 1978 study, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, Brown, Dimaggio, and, Useem accounted for nearly 300 audience studies which were conducted by museums and performing arts institutions in the 1970's (in Harris, 1991). This amount of activity can be seen as an encouraging sign of museums taking a renewed interest in their audience and their related needs. The authors, however, concluded that these research activities had little effect on the policies of museums. The results of most of this research were largely ignored as results challenged fundamental points of view. As a result, findings were frequently
misused to guide decisions on issues of promotion or employed selectively with little effect. In short, they tended to be ineffective at challenging the primary goals and operations of museums because the responsibility for change was passed on to museum professionals who subscribe to traditional methods and values of the museum. Problems of popularity were addressed through refined methods of marketing and promotion which had little or no impact on education. These studies had little direct impact on the educational goals of museums, but constituted a vital phase of museum research which laid the groundwork for more effective museum analysis.

**Art education research and museums**

From the 1980's to the present American museums and museum researchers were not content to commission demographic studies. With the advent of multiculturalism and pluralism which has come to define our time there is a renewed interest in sociological and psychological insights relating to the museum visit and the visitor's background (Barrett, 1990; Harris, 1991). In related developments there had been an interest in learning theory and its implications on the educational impact of the exhibition which determined what kinds of presentations were most effective educationally. A research project concluded in 1990 for the Getty Center for Education in the Arts and the J. Paul Getty Museum reflected these interests. In this work, focus groups composed of visitors, non-visitors, staff members and the professional staff of eleven prominent American museums were questioned with the expressed purpose of exploring the expectations and educational needs of the public regarding museums. The conclusions of the qualitative research aspired to guide museum professionals and staff in creating meaningful and interesting experience for first-time and repeat museum visitors. Research of this type represents a great leap for museum research in realizing that there is value in assessing the educational needs of the viewer when attending to the objects of museum presentations. They have also associated an increase in their educational effectiveness with the needs and interests of the community and society as a whole. In a sense, the recent research of museums has reflected a more genuine interest in the visitor in conjunction with a new interest in the non-
visitor; treating them less as attendance figures and more as thoughtful human beings in search of enrichment as well as entertainment. In short, the time has come when museums have begun to realize their potential as places of learning.

Additionally, there has been a call for educational institutions, such as museums, to intensify their efforts of inclusion and respect regarding the diversity which comprises their constituencies (Barrett, 1990; Blocker and Parsons, 1993). In this light, it can be said that the type of knowledge museums deal in creates a unique type of educational situation which is particularly well-suited to the socially oriented goals of our culture. Museums, throughout their relatively short history as educational institutions, have been defined by an evolution based on frequent reevaluation and reexamination (Harris, 1989; Wittlin, 1970). As such, they can be particularly responsive to the changing demands of society. While this responsiveness has been more evident in museum research than in practice, it is widely believed that museum professionals are becoming more open to the research of their field (Harris, 1991; Wittman, 1967). Museums as unique educational alternatives to more established institutions, such as schools and universities, can expand their role as a productive contributor to society by engaging in research and practice which is responsive to the social needs of the public. The stuff of museums, for various reasons, are often thought of in a social light which is a part of their possible meanings. This has been the case, especially in research, throughout the history of museums as educational institutions. If museums are going to take full advantage of the aura of increased social awareness upon us, in order to solidify their position as educational institutions and perhaps even thrust themselves to the forefront of this realm, they must utilize the wealth of knowledge on this subject which exists in their field.

Extensive research by psychologists, sociologists, museum professionals, and others has been conducted throughout this century. In order to take advantage of the knowledge of social implications, further research and practice of museums must involve reflection preceding action. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the exhibition practices of museums. Too often, in the history of museums and research, educational goals have been isolated from
the ‘true’ business of museums; presenting objects of quality and value. By allowing education to take hold in museums through the implementation of lectures, tours, catalogs, classes, among other activities museum, professionals have been able to isolate the goals of education from the exhibition. In doing so, they have made spurrious claims of educative relevance while systematically isolating educational concerns from the museum exhibition. Ideally, the very concept of the museum - what it should contain, whom it should serve, and how it should function - should reflect changes in society and culture (Levin, 1981). Unfortunately, as is evident from the disingenuous educational efforts of many museum professionals, this is not the case. As social concerns are now called for in presentations due to the ideas of the community and society it is becoming apparent, through a consideration of past research, that education is best suited for the attainment of these goals. Yet for nearly a century, museum professionals have continued to hold to the precepts of art history for guidance in their basic operations of exhibition. This has produced an environment well-suited for scholars and others knowledgeable about the arts, but ill-suited for the needs of the community.

In this new era, museum professionals must consider what research has called for in the past decades; exhibitions which are designed to facilitate the goals of education and better serve the needs of the public. As Jose Ortega y Gassett (1981) stated in The Rehumanization of Art “the problem is not that the majority does not appreciate new art, but that they do not understand it” (p. 34). By incorporating the goals of education into exhibition practices of museums, meanings of objects and their social implications can become accessible to many; thereby creating a unique educational experience for the public. The focussing of museum interest upon the obligation and opportunity to assist the community and society in attaining its goals is the most urgent and important task facing the museum today. The value of that task is inestimable to the museum, to the community, and to society.
CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Modernist Exhibition Design

Our museums have sought to provide a service to the public through the preservation and presentation of our cultural artifacts. Historically, their policies and attitudes have displayed an overall dedication to the conservation and presentation of this cultural wealth while paradoxically demonstrating a general disregard for the interests of the visitor. At the root of this contradiction of public service is the prevalence of the exhibition format of the modernist museum as it has been primarily designed to serve the consistent codes that define the modernist aesthetic. These aesthetic codes can be described as "the common conventions and expectations" about an artwork which are seen as "natural and universal" to the artist and his or her audience (Blocker and Parsons, 1993, p. 88). Of the multiplicity of the aesthetic codes that have been claimed as a part of Modernism the most widely held and most influential are:

...an optimism regarding technology; belief in the uniqueness of the individual, creativity, originality, and artistic genius; a respect for the original authentic work of art and the masterpiece; a favoring of abstract modes of expression over narrative, historical, or political content in art; a disdain for Kitsch in culture and a general disdain for middle-class sensibilities and values (Barrett, 1990, p. 9).

These codes have formed the declared dogma of the aesthetic genre known as modernism which lead to a perception of art as atemporal, scientific objects of
aesthetic truth which are only accessible to the privileged. Essentially the modernist museum has, by virtue of its dedication to the codes of modernism, subscribed to a one-dimensional dogmatic approach which refers to an art movement now widely believed to be outdated and ill-conceived.

Prior to these developments art was inevitably displayed in a salon fashion (i.e. in a patchwork manner utilizing as much of the gallery wall as possible from floor to ceiling and edge to edge). A representation of these shows can be found in a painting by Samuel F. B. Morse entitled “Exhibition Gallery at the Louvre” (1832-1833). Here one not only sees the cluttered gallery walls but also the casual atmosphere of the space that includes artists painting, groups openly conversing, and furniture randomly placed to facilitate these activities.

Salon shows were an aesthetically viable method of display for museums until the late 19th century because the visual codes of work in the representational genre, which composed nearly all western art activities until the time, was especially appropriate for them (O’Doherty, 1986). In his book *Inside the White Cube* Brian O’Doherty (1986) describes the codes of the representational work or ‘easel’ picture as being like a window that can be placed on any wall area and penetrate it with deep space (1986). The perspective aligns everything within the picture “along a cone of space” (O’Doherty, 1986, p. 18). The frame serves as a compositional grid as it “echoes” those cuts of foreground, middleground, and background (O’Doherty, 1986). O’Doherty also describes the frame of the easel picture as a “Psychological container” for the artist to create a space in which the viewer can “step” firmly into and easily glide through as tonality and color are used to create gradual spatial transitions (O’Doherty, 1986, p. 18). Collectively the aesthetic codes of the easel picture can then be described as illusionary. They are employed to invite the viewer’s eye to be “abstracted” from the body and “projected” through the picture plane to inhabit the painting and experience the articulations of space (O’Doherty, 1986). O’Doherty concludes that it is then the stability of the frame which is of the utmost importance to the success of the easel picture as it employs its representational aesthetic codes. As it is suggested here a representational artwork, with its self-contained perspectival
code, does not lead the viewer’s eye outside the rigid boundaries of the frame. The frame itself is traditionally pronounced with its bright metallic finish and substantial bulk. Thus allowing the viewer a clearly delineated area that designates both the point of entry and the viewer’s outer limit. From this point of view we can perceive the salon show as a logical and efficient method of displaying pre-modern art when considering its related aesthetic codes. As modernist aesthetic theories supplanted the representational style of easel painting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as the predominant art genre the salon show with its crowded style and informal character was seen as an unfit exhibition design (O’Doherty, 1986).

The evolution of the modernist museum into its current form can be seen at its earliest stages as a direct result of the development of the photographic process (O’Doherty, 1986). The development of the photographic process and its subsequent use as an artistic medium had an important and lasting impact on the visual arts and their exhibition. From this point on the use of painting as a representational medium along with its aesthetic codes and their notation of depth was gradually supplanted by photography (O’Doherty, 1986). In addition to the decline of the representational aesthetic in painting, photography offered a new aesthetic that offered the location of the edge [as] a primary decision, since it composes - or decomposes - what is surrounds. “Eventually framing, editing, cropping - establishing limits - become major acts of composition [for all visual arts]” (O’Doherty, 1986, p.19). As the artist and viewer become aware of the limits of the edge of a work when understanding the modernist aesthetic and its associated codes, there emerges a concurrent awareness of what extends outside these limits. Therefore, as one considers a modernist work of art, one observes what falls outside the boundaries of the artwork at the same time as one perceives what is contained within. As these aesthetic codes (framing, cropping, and editing) were accepted and eventually recognized as a primary decision of modernist artists it was deemed necessary to allow modernist artworks a substantial amount of unoccupied space around its frame during exhibition, contra the “salon” show.
In this way the frame becomes "a kind of parenthesis [and] the separation of paintings along a wall...becomes inevitable" (O’Doherty, 1986, p.19). As modernist art rejected the notation of depth as an appropriate aesthetic code in which to operate, the inherent flatness of a work emerged as the most constant emphasis of those works exhibited and championed as the beacons of modernism. This attribute is one of the few aesthetic codes which consistently permeates the rapidly changing aesthetic codes of Modernism. The recognition and emphasis of flatness can be found earlier in the work of the Impressionists, then later in the Cubist idiom, eventually reaching its climax in the dogma of the Abstract Expressionists. "[This] development of a shallow literal space containing invented forms, as distinct from the old illusionary space containing ‘real’ forms put further pressures on the edge" (O’Doherty, 1986, p. 20). The emphasis on flatness in conjunction with the recognition of the edge of a painting became two prevalent modernist aesthetic codes which directly affected the concept of the picture, the way work as displayed, and the nature of the exhibition space (O’Doherty, 1986). As these aesthetic codes were acknowledged and eventually assumed, the viewer inevitably relaxed his or her eye and included the surrounding space, perceiving it as an extension of the plane of the picture (O’Doherty, 1986). As compositional and subject matter were conceived outside the boundaries of the artwork it became necessary for the modernist work to be given room to breathe (O’Doherty, 1986). We can scarcely imagine a "salon" style exhibition of Monet’s landscapes because among its modernist aesthetic codes, cropping and patterned flatness are emphasized, which draw the viewer across the edge of the work to imagine what lies outside the painting (O’Doherty, 1986). The modernist work then depends upon the neutrality of its exhibition surroundings in order to be effective. the solution which has contributed to the character of modernist exhibition space and persists to this day is the stark uninterrupted expanse of white wall, aside from the most minimal signage within view of each singular work.

The influence of modernism can also be seen beyond the blank white walls of the modernist museum. By ascribing to the notion of absolute truth, modernist theorists laid claim to a progression of scientific discoveries in
aesthetics during each successive phase of inquiry. Each theoretical development deemed by modernists to be ‘unique’ and ‘progressive’ aspired to be ever more atemporal and purposive by virtue of its pursuit of absolute truth. In order to be properly accommodate these artistic gestures it was believed that the exhibition environment had to become an atemporal area where their “eternal presence was to be protected from the flow of time” (McEvilley, 1986, p. 8). This notion of eternal display is reminiscent of the religious space and has been linked to the Egyptian tomb, the temple, and the medieval church (Levin, 1981; McEvilley, 1986; O’Doherty, 1986).

Thomas McEvilley writes that “the condition of appearing out of time, or beyond time, implies a claim that the work already belongs to posterity” (McEvilley, 1986, p. 7). Therefore, if the exhibition space is to legitimize the modernist work’s claim to truth in its absolute form, it must appear timeless and logically foreign to all who enter. O’Doherty (1986) captures the alienating nature of the typical modernist space as he perceives it:

The outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling become the source of light. The wooden floor is polished so that you click along clinically, or carpeted so that you pad soundlessly, resting the feet while the eyes have at the wall. The art is free, as the saying used to go, “to take on its own life”. The discreet desk may be the only piece of furniture. In this context a standing ashtray becomes almost a sacred object, just as the firehose [sic] but an esthetic conundrum. Modernism’s transportation of perception from life to formal values is complete (p. 15).

Within this sacred space of the modernist exhibition works of modernist art conceptualized the gallery wall as a timeless unworldly area with which to project their aesthetic ideas. Here then there is an uneasiness of the artificiality of viewing artworks establishing an aesthetic territory but no place “in the context of the placeless modern[ist] gallery” (O’Doherty, 1986, p. 27).
The Incompatibility of Museums and Modernism

American museums, by virtue of their nationality, should obey an implicit mandate to be accessible to everyone (Ambach, 1986; Garfield, 1992; Hirzy, 1992; Karp, Kreamer, Lavine, 1992; King and Glaser, 1990; Lowenthal, 1992; Spalding, 1992; Youtz, 1933). As a public institution, the museum and particularly its gallery should be areas of inclusivity that exist to serve the needs of the public. Much to the detriment of museums and despite numerous scholarly recommendations, this is not the case. In a climate of rapid political, economic, and social change museums have stood stubbornly against these currents, refusing to acknowledge and fulfill their responsibilities. If they are to maintain their credibility museums must aggressively seize the remaining years of this century to display a more sincere responsiveness to changes in society by immediately reevaluating their ideas about art.

Within the body of artists, critics, scholars, and other enlightened observers of the arts there have always been discussions about the role of museums and their impact on related aesthetic issues. The most visible and contentious of these discussions revolves around a primary museum function; the exhibition. In many ways the importance of the museum art exhibition as a highly visible entity has become synonymous with the museum mission and, in a more general sense, of the state of affairs of the arts in our times. The galleries of museums are the primary sites of interaction between the public and art and their continuing viability is vital to the health and survival of the contemporary museum (Spalding, 1992). For these reasons, it can be said that the heart of all museum operations is the gallery and the way in which it is utilized sums up the ideology of the museum as a whole. Because of this, it is a place held sacred by the museum professional. As a result, it is in this area where change has been most resisted.

The museum professional often rejects proposed changes to the traditional exhibition style as a matter of principle. Most American museums have relied upon the enduring image of the gallery space to demonstrate to the world the inherent stability of their methods. As a result, an implied sense of correctness and order is expressed in their treatment of the arts creating a
legitimizing atmosphere. Paradoxically, the inherent visibility of the museum exhibition fuels the convoluted logic behind the resistance to change, while at the same time confirming the urgent need for reevaluation of this same logic. This exposes the contradiction between the image of the museum as an unwavering institution and its role as an active respondent to the changing needs of society. It becomes increasingly evident that the inherent problem with the rationale of stability as a theoretical component of the museum exhibition is that in order for the gallery space to become a part of real life it must reflect the characteristics of life which are, first and foremost, constant change and growth.

It is the heavily defended exhibition space which has regularly been placed under the microscope of research and become the primary battleground for competing ideas relating to various aesthetic formulae. Consequently, it is inevitable that this area is often looked at when assessing the effectiveness of the museum in terms of the welfare of our culture, and the well-being of society (Postman, 1990; Vergo, 1994). As public perception increasingly focuses on the centuries-old wall of indifference to the general populace and the deference to the elite in museums, careful reflection and deep philosophical introspection are needed to rebuild the image of the museum. This should take place in a broad-based spirit of direct public service informed by contemporary research and related art education goals.

To evaluate the effectiveness of museums and the core of their effectiveness, their basic operations - their ideological premises - must be examined; for taken in aggregate, they shape not just each individual institution but the field itself. It can be demonstrated that the theories derived from modernist aesthetics have effectively and covertly directed the operations of America's art museums, progressively turning museums away from the public in response to the demands of modernism. In effect, since the turn of the century, American museums have experienced increasing public indifference toward the arts as their ability to attract a broad patronage was stunted by their transformation into cultural monoliths of modernism. With the benefit of hindsight, it becomes transparently obvious that one must question the choice of modernism as the prevalent Western aesthetic of the modern era. It is no exaggeration to say that modernism has taken root through the programmatic
devaluation of alternative aesthetic perspectives by a minority of art critics and aestheticians. As we delve into this mine of philosophical intrigue, it is useful to delineate the way in which the practical application of Kant's analytic aesthetics to the arts, referred to as modernism, served as the primary tool with which this minority seduced the museum practitioner. Through the covert introduction of the compelling ideas of modernism, the institution of the museum was enlisted to convince the public that this was the only way of looking at art regardless of any inherent diversity. The argument against modernist aesthetics as the only appropriate museum ideology is reinforced by demonstrating the inappropriate ways in which this philosophy established its ascendance.

Prior to these developments, American museums viewed their role in public service as an obligation to preserve and present our cultural artifacts. In short, it was thought that all one need do in the business of museums is open one's doors; the public will come, and the responsibility of public service will be fulfilled (Wittlin, 1970). Historical attitudes therefore displayed a disregard for the interests and need of the public and a lackadaisical attitude toward the cognitive implications of exhibition decisions. In the post World War I era of museum foundation ground-breaking research by Philip Youtz (1933) and his associates first revealed that museums could take a more active role in society. This reconceptualization called on museums to cease to be exclusively an end in themselves, serving as a cultural depository that led to an influential minority of cultural elite (Harris, 1991). It was felt that museums, as public institutions, should evolve from being a venue for the display of collections into an active participant in the evolution of society by adopting educational goals (Youtz, 1933). This sentiment has been reiterated in the following decades in several areas of scholarly research, from psychology to museum studies and art education (Harris, 1991). As persistent as these scholars have been the museum field has most often answered their call with only facile change and even outright indifference or denial (Harris, 1991). This complete disregard for the capabilities of the principles of exhibition practices can - at best - be characterized as incognizant or - at worst - elitist. This negligence made possible the ascension of the modernist dogma in the museum gallery. If
museum professionals had taken their associations with ideas of the aesthetic more seriously the contradictions of a modernist tradition in museums would have been apparent.

Unfortunately, the late 1950s museums, in catering to current fashion trends regarding the modernist genius and the avant-garde, had become mired in an elitist, unnatural, and exclusionary artistic mode. It is now obvious that our museums mistakenly placed too much emphasis on a single aesthetic which embodied elitist and exclusionary principles. At the time of its inception, however, modernism seemed irresistibly appealing as its dogma of 'universal' and 'truth' were sprung upon unwary and uninformed museum professionals by a dedicated minority of influential and persuasive critics and aestheticians. It has proven difficult to establish a pedigree for modernism so as to better evaluate its suitability to the goals of the museum. Its conceptual roots have been linked to every important philosopher of Western thought from Plato to Descartes (Barrett, 1990; McEvilley, 1986). It can be argued that the most direct progenitor claimed as the father of modernism is Immanuel Kant (Barrett, 1990; Shusterman, 1989). This genealogy is the most believable because there is evidence that modernist aesthetics, a philosophy of art evolved from Kant's (1994) ideas, was the aesthetic treatise which most influenced modernism (Shusterman, 1989).

Kant's modernist aesthetics

As external forces such as the Industrial Revolution, the advent of Capitalism, and the institutionalization of our traditions became issues to reckon with, philosophers, including many aestheticians, turned toward Kant's deep philosophical hypotheses of the previous century for forceful explanations which could result in the formal justification of these activities and the formation of an ideological pedigree (Copleston, 1994). In order to complete a family tree of modernism which places Kant at its roots it must be established that the ideas of modernist aesthetics, chiefly taken from Kant's Critique of Judgment (1994), are reflected in the practical manifestation of modernism (Barrett, 1990; O'Doherty, 1986; Shusterman, 1989). To this end, it will be established that
Kant's ideas of the aesthetic inspired a school of modernist aesthetics that eclipsed all other ways of thinking about art by the 1950's (Shusterman, 1989).

Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful" (1994), given substance in his Critique of Judgment of 1790, proposed the philosophical constructs which were seen by many to be particularly well-suited to explain and ultimately justify the principles of the modern condition. In the course of his discussion of the aesthetic Kant draws upon ideas which, whether we accept them or not, are certainly worthy of consideration (Copekston, 1994). Among the many concepts within Kant's aesthetics, his notion of the 'disinterestedness' of the aesthetic judgment and the 'purposiveness' without purpose in the aesthetic judgment are most significant. In his most prominent philosophical discourse regarding the aesthetic Kant is primarily concerned with the faculty of judgment which, for him, is "the power of thinking the particular as being contained in the universal" (Kant, 1994, p. 353). In "Critique of Judgment" Kant proposed that one is to regard an art object much like one would regard Nature. Kant believed that reflective judgment is necessary when looking at Nature and as such one is to regard it as though it were a purposive whole thereby being "adapted to our cognitive faculties" (Copekston, 1994, p.353). This approach has the express purpose of making possible knowledge of Nature in terms of perceived empirical laws. As such, this principle is empirically verifiable through reflective judgment, as opposed to direct observation when investigating objects (Copekston, 1994). For Kant, empirical inquiries in the name of truth regarding Nature, such as aesthetic judgment, entail regarding the subject "as though it embodied a system of empirical laws which are unified through their common ground in an intelligence other than ours" (Copekston, 1994, p. 353). The reflective judgment of the aesthetic, as distinct from the teleological judgment, is purely subjective in the sense that it is about "the accordance of the form of an object, whether natural or an artifact, with the cognitive faculties on the basis of the feeling caused by the representation of the object and not with reference to any concept" (Copekston, 1994, p. 354). It is significant to note that as Kant equated our subjective ordering of Nature with the consideration of artifacts such as art objects he implicitly divorced the conceptual from the realm of consideration in forming an aesthetic judgment. In this way, Kant claimed that
the faculty of judging the aesthetic is a "special power of judging things according to a rule, but not according to concepts" (Kant, 1994, p.355). In Kant’s view “a judgment is called aesthetic precisely because its determining ground is not a determinant concept but the [inner] feeling of harmony in the play of the mental powers, so far as it can be experienced in feeling” (Kant, 1994, p. 355). Accordingly, we can say that Kant’s aesthetic judgment is a judgment of beauty, for he is saying that much as we engage in an aesthetic judgment of a flower without a need for a concept we can and should consider art objects without conceptual concerns.

Kant identified the judgment which necessarily declares an object satisfying or dissatisfying in regard to beauty as falling within the realm of taste (Copelston, 1994). For Kant the judgment of ‘taste’ was an emotive proposition expressing feeling and not conceptual knowledge and as a result was subjective (Copelston, 1994). As a result, Kant’s definition of beauty was “that which pleases universally, without concept" (Kant, 1994, p. 356). This idea is best illustrated as we appreciate a specific object, for example, the Statue of Liberty. We are in accordance with Kant’s principles of aesthetic judgment if we can comment on its form as an entity distinct from its conceptual background.

Kant also believed that it is necessary to represent an object through an “entirely disinterested satisfaction or dissatisfaction” (Kant, 1994, p. 355). In his view aesthetic appreciation is a contemplative state in which the object of appreciation brings about a sense of satisfaction without reference to desire (Copelston, 1994). As we look at the Statue of Liberty and declare that it is beautiful in the context of an aesthetic judgment we are able to divorce its form from its conceptual associations by engaging it in an entirely ‘disinterested’ way. This is to say that we are not thinking of it as if it were real which - according to Kant, would improperly relate the aesthetic judgment to appetite or desire - but rather that we are thinking exclusively about its form. His aesthetic judgment, in a ‘pure’ and ‘disinterested’ state, implies that we are attending solely to the form of the thing because it is pleasing as an object of contemplation, complete in itself.
It is important to realize, however, that Kant implied a certain level of interest within such an aesthetic judgment. The aesthetic judgment, as a 'disinterested' state, is complemented by an interest in communicating the satisfaction or dissatisfaction one feels in the aesthetic experience (Copelston, 1994). This is an empirical interest in the beautiful (Copelston, 1994). The 'disinterestedness' of the aesthetic judgment is preserved because though communicative interest may be associated with aesthetic judgment, it is not a determinant element. In order to maintain 'disinterest' while displaying an interest in communicating one's satisfaction in beholding the object, one must ensure that judgment is not dependent on private conditions peculiar to oneself; one should be neither impelled by desire nor dictated to by the moral imperative (Copelston, 1994).

Under these conditions communicative interest brings forth the necessary universal validity of aesthetic judgment. When we speak of the Statue of Liberty we do so by eliciting our subjective feelings in such a way that they are not peculiar to ourselves, but applicable to others in a similar situation. When we speak of the beauty of an object we implicitly claim that it is beautiful for all, or at least that it should be so. This, then, is the technical sense of the 'aesthetic judgment' which Kant uses: the universal appeal of a judgment that is 'disinterested' or 'free.' In Kant's terminology this claim cannot be proven logically; it has already been established that the claim of universal validity within an aesthetic judgment does not rest upon any references to the cognitive faculty, but rather on the "feeling of pleasure and pain [found] in every subject" (Copelston, 1994, p. 359). Therefore, according to Kant, the aesthetic judgment is exemplary and if we aspire to communicate our subjective feelings about an object, via an aesthetic judgment, such feelings must be claimable as universal. It is most significant that in Kant's view a judgment is purported to be an aesthetic one when it is a judgment about beauty. Therefore, there is simply no concept resulting from cognition to talk about; only an "inner feeling of harmony" or mysticism in the particular type of cognition of the aesthetic judgment which may be shared (Kant, 1994, p. 361).
The profound effect of modernism on our contemporary aesthetic can be seen clearly by looking through the lens of modernist aesthetics. Throughout the course of its development, the founders of the movement believed that it was manifest to follow the principles of modernist aesthetics as a savior. With this sort of determination, modernism became, for its advocates, not only a way of perception, but a logical end to all further analysis. The philosophical work of Kant and Descartes proposed that a faith in the methodologies of science should come to fruition in a foundation of universal truths (Barrett, 1990). This logically led to a declaration of practical application that areas of discourse - such as art - can be “independent of and autonomous from other ideas, values, and ordinary life itself” (Barrett, 1990, p. 4). This can be seen as a measure to supplant the societal demands of previous centuries that works of art reflect moral values and “imitate nature, praise God, or praise God’s creations” with up-to-date scientific demands so that a style of aesthetically pure art - one not subservient to issues of the ‘real’ world - would prevail (Barrett, 1990, p. 2). In this respect, artistic activities reflected society’s shift from an unyielding faith in religious beliefs to a dedication to all things scientific. It was proposed that, to achieve this modernization, art could avail itself of Kantian immanent criticism by enlisting his formulated principles in order to justify its values (Greenberg, 1965).

In this endeavor Kant’s guidance would enable the arts to pursue scientific inquiries which would associate them with the age of reason by definition, thereby avoiding any possibility of being relegated to the realm of mere entertainment. Modernist aesthetics found new life as Kant’s principles of ‘aesthetic judgment’ were enlisted by those interested in formulating a cogent argument that would explain the continuous revolt against prevailing styles which became a symptom of modern times (Howe, 1970). The authors and proponents of these extensions to Kantian aesthetics are frequently referred to as modernists and those activities informed by their studied application as modernism or modernist aesthetics (Barrett, 1990; Howe, 1970; Shusterman, 1989).
Modernism, a misinterpretation of Kant's aesthetics

The modernist only selectively adopted Kant's ideas and methods, and in so doing liberally extended hypotheses proposed in Kant's clinical examinations. Since Kant refuted cognition as being outside of the a-priori elements of the aesthetic judgment, the modernists saw fit to identify art objects as purely esoteric objects (i.e. not created in response to a posed problem) (Shusterman, 1989). Those works which displayed this noninstrumental and gratuitous nature were therefore regarded as more worthy of being regarded as 'high' art and the product of genius (Shusterman, 1989). By downplaying the cognitive aspects of the art experience, the true modernist refuted any responsibility to accommodate his or her audience. Similarly, the modernist artist may follow truth and his or her genius under the auspices of modernism and claim to do so without consideration of the real world. In this method can be discerned the sense of inwardness, interrogation of the subjective, and formal pursuits which leave little or no place for an audience. In the modernist world the audience is to blame if they are not able to adequately appreciate the work (Howe, 1970).

In his *Critique of Judgment* Kant is concerned, first and foremost, with the nature of the aesthetic judgment; "with what we can say about it 'a-priori'; that is with its universal and necessary features [exclusively]" (Copeland, 1994, p. 362-63; Shusterman, 1989). Unlike the modernist adaptations of his analytic aesthetics, Kant purposely does not extend his treatise on the aesthetic beyond the notion of the aesthetic judgment. In this way, he sought to place a specific instance of the aesthetic under the microscope of immanent critique. The subsequent modernist version of analytic aesthetics is not entirely the same creature as Kant's notion of the aesthetic judgment. Kant's work is a simplification with the purpose of narrowing its focus and facilitating a concrete definition. It is significant that he is not concerned with giving assistance in educating or cultivating aesthetic taste as he perhaps felt that these areas would be too idiosyncratic and too broad in scope to be suited to his method and purpose (Copeland, 1994). It is important to note that in modernism, his work has been expanded without license to address virtually all areas of the aesthetic. In assessing Kant's inquiry, we can see a metaphysical investigation
of a specific area of aesthetics, that of aesthetic judgment. In contrast, the modernist mission indiscriminately applied Kant's methods and principles to virtually all areas of the aesthetic with little semblance of their original purpose. It can be said that Kant's ideas about cognition, universality, and the role of the audience have all been met with a much greater degree of skepticism than they deserve only because they have been extended beyond their intended scope by the machinations of the modernists.

The Politics of Modernism

In examining the impact of the widespread popularity of an aesthetic movement such as modernism, we must uncover the path of its transformation from an essentially philosophical treatise of a few into the predominant aesthetic of our time. Was modernism simply the will of the people understood and endorsed by all of those involved in the arts or were there significant proponents whose position in our cultural institutions enabled them to politically influence the acceptance of a select artistic ideology which they endorsed? It is accurate to say that, in the strictly idealistic sense, we are all responsible for our cultural leanings. However, in practicality, it can be observed that those firmly ensconced in the decision-making processes of our cultural systems or traditions are in a much larger part responsible for the material presented to us as culturally significant. Therefore, to better understand the rapid ascension of modernism it is necessary to account for its sociopolitical maneuvers as well as its purely philosophical content in order to accurately assess its impact upon our cultural activities. To offer something as art, such as works which fall under the Modernist umbrella, "an atmosphere of artistic theory [and] a knowledge of the history of art" is required which when assembled with all other theories of art collectively constitutes what we know as the artworld (Danto, 1992). Artistic theory is often romanticized as a revolutionary sweep of radical changes in a sudden burst of ideological energy spontaneously accepted by the people. However, on looking beneath the skin of such romantic notions one can find a deeply political albeit loosely organized collection of thought which determined
the direction of our cultural activities. It is inevitable that social, economic, and political factors should exert an influence upon the relationship between artist, object, and audience which form a framework of traditional systems referred to as the artworld (Dickie, 1974). It can be said that our artworld is a broad social institution which is based upon the ideas of artistic theory and the empirical data in the history of art (Dickie, 1974). Each person who considers himself or herself a member of the artworld becomes part of the core personnel of the artworld (Dickie, 1974). In this light the artworld appears to take on an air of democracy in the sense that all members are equally represented. However, as is often the case when ideals of democratic representation are modeled into a system of influence such as the artworld, the relative degree of representation inevitably becomes skewed.

It has been a condition of the artworld since the decline of Realism as the dominant art movement of the West that new art forms and art movements arise to challenge the prevailing conventions and demand decisions on the parts of those interested and influential as to whether the concept of art should be extended to accommodate such innovations (Weitz, 1956). As this sort of political climate came to define our artworld those movements that were so accepted, such as the Abstract Expressionists, became dependent upon finding a convincing artistic theory to include them in the historical course of art (Danto, 1992). This line of thought has to appear to be consistent with previous theories of art and collectively constitute the beliefs of what we consider the artworld (Danto, 1992).

An empowering elite exists among the artworld whose pronouncements determine, in large part, which art becomes significant (Danto, 1992; Dickie, 1974). Luckily modernism had the enthusiasm and support of a significant number of powerbrokers (those individuals with influence and vested interests in the artworld) and was able to effectively promote changes within the artworld (Dickie, 1974). It is significant that such powerbrokers were almost always among those inclined to write about art, such as critics or theorists (Weitz, 1956).
The institution of the artworld, insofar that it is a tradition or "established practice," functions as a framework for presenting works of art (Dickie, 1974, p. 87). That is its primary convention. Within the artworld there are an unlimited number of sub-systems such as painting or sculpture which utilize this presentation (Dickie, 1974). The primary purpose of these, in the institutional setting, is to provide a method with which to present particular set of art objects (Dickie, 1974). Within the artworld the validity of the decrees of powerbrokers as to what should count as art are affirmed through several interwoven avenues of presentation. This increases the degree of influence and the perceived importance of those members of the artworld who are most involved in the activity of presentation. They are intimately linked to the final stage of the decisions of the artworld; those involving issues of exhibition. Nowhere can this be seen as strongly as within the museum.

Modernism and Museum Presentation

It is reasonable to assert that both the artist and the audience are involved the presentation of art objects in the museum setting. However, the involvements of artist and audience are severely restricted by those traditions of the museum involving exhibition practices. In this scenario what the artist creates and what the audience beholds as an art object is perceived as such mainly because the object is presented in a traditional setting such as the museum gallery. In Dickie's artworld, the acknowledged systems of exhibition practices confirms the artistic merit of something precisely because the museum gallery, among other areas, is a part of systems which represent the conventions of the artworld. Dickie's conception of the artworld identifies museums as arenas of presentation and accordingly assigns them considerable amount of responsibility for determining what we consider art (1974).

Museum professionals who direct issues of presentation and regard galleries as traditional settings, present art objects utilizing the traditions of the artworld. In so doing, they elevate select art objects which have not previously
attained such status by gracing them with their personal confirmation. By influencing the standards of acceptance of museums through ideological treatises, powerbrokers are able to indirectly control what type of work artists make as well as what the audience eventually sees and expects. It is obviously important for artists to accede to and participate in a scenario that may identify their work as valuable in our cultural system. Because of their final role in the process of validating theoretical decisions a significant part of the responsibility for the ascension of modernism can be placed squarely on the shoulders of America's art museum professionals.

Within the realm of museums, it is all too often assumed that it is a relatively straightforward and value-free endeavor to exhibit art objects. The conventions of our cultural traditions encourage us to think of objects as art solely because they are presented in the familiar and accepted contexts of the artworld, forcing us to make these decisions in an inherently value-laden political environment. The political nature of such decisions is invariably veiled by the assumption that they are the only logical and inevitable choices, unanimously accepted, that balance the best interests of the viewer, the artist, and society. Consequently, the modernist exhibition style has become unquestioningly ingrained in the minds of both viewers and exhibitors.

By engaging in this process, the propaganda of modernism invaded the museum gallery space establishing a familiarity and empathy with - but not an understanding of - its principles among public perception. As a result, it is now often assumed that there is only one way to exhibit works of art. The assumptions behind modernist exhibition practices should be exposed as political decisions reflecting particular philosophical principles and their relevance to issues of our times should be reassessed.

Pre-modernist presentation

Prior to the influence of modernism the conventions of hanging artwork were not rigid or widely known and consequently have an unrecovered history (O'Doherty, 1986). In this former era, the mode of exhibition was not seen as relevant to perception or comprehension (Wittlin, 1970). It was in this atmosphere of indifference and confusion that modernism initiated its program
to control the gallery space. It promoted the widespread conformance to a fixed set of exhibition conventions. This process logically involves time, for the interpretation of what a picture implies and ultimately demands about its context is always delayed by the matter of formal reception into the artworld (O'Doherty, 1986). It is speculated that the early instances of artists claimed in the lineage of modernism, such as Gustav Courbet and the Salon des Refusés of 1855, involved setting up their own exhibitions and attempted nothing startling or particularly different from the prevalent salon mode of exhibition (O'Doherty, 1986). During the early development of modernism, although the art may have been considered radical, its presentation usually was not (O'Doherty, 1986). The Impressionists, for example, hung their early exhibitions in the same style as in the salon tradition that preceded them, with works placed side by side in a casual if not haphazard fashion (O'Doherty, 1986).

**Modernism and the museum exhibition**

In the late fifties the art critics Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg were powerbrokers of the artworld dedicated to the cause of modernism (O'Doherty, 1986). By the end of their reign they had been instrumental in promoting the cause of modernism to such an extent that it was generally seen as the only way of looking at art. Since the interpretations of critics are functions which depend upon artistic identification to transform material objects into works of art, the interpretations of modernist critics were the first steps toward the elevation of the works of Abstract Expressionism to the Formalist ideal of what a work of art should be (Danto, 1992).

As the critical writings of Greenberg (1965; 1986) and his colleagues proved deceptively persuasive and were all the more convincing by incorporating as evidence the artistic efforts of the Abstract Expressionists and others which fell under the Formalist umbrella, art dealers and critics swiftly surrendered to the modernist pressure. It was the paintings of the Abstract Expressionists which stood most prominently and silently as the exemplars of Formalism while critics praised them as a natural extension of the ideas of modernism. As the congress of the empowering elite of the artworld and their willing allies the Abstract Expressionists coalesced into a unified force driven by
the common cause of modernist ideology as it became a virtually unstoppable force unlike any before it in the history of art.

How were a small number of art critics able to seize control of the artworld under the name of the modernist dogma? Their strategy can be seen as two-fold: to redefine the goals of Abstract Expressionism to fit their own, and to convince dealers and curators that their movement advanced the tenets of modernism making it the logical and inevitable future of art. In order to comprehend the endorsements of dealer and curator, we must examine the persuasive claims of modernist art critics who proposed Abstract Expressionist painting as the modernist imperative. In order to promote their favorable evaluations as a decisive victory for their cause extensions of the modernist framework needed to be invented and presented as natural and not forced adaptations (O'Doherty, 1986). In this way the paintings of prominent Abstract Expressionists, such as Jackson Pollock and Willem DeKooning, were said to follow the modernist logic because of a post hoc relationship to previous art movements and formal qualities claimed as advancements in the name of science, both central issues in the rhetoric of modernist aesthetics. Implying lateral expansion was tantamount to confirming the alliance as an issue which should inform the gallery space. Therefore, it can be said that it is only in the context of the gallery space did Abstract Expressionism find its credence.

The movement, it was claimed, followed the logic of modernism by formally extending the work of art outside the limits of the picture frame and refining the modernist conception of those edges as structural units "through which the painting entered into a dialogue with the [gallery] wall beyond it" (O'Doherty, 1986, p. 14). In this way the causal relationship between the bare white expanse of the gallery space and the principles of modernism was reiterated. When associations of this type were being trumpeted by modernist critics and theorists as aesthetic advancements and the work of Abstract Expressionists seemed to reflect these ideas their work was irretrievably transformed into the ideal of the imperatives of modernist aesthetics. Abstract Expressionism obviously benefited by becoming increasingly well-known and more respected as a result of its inclusion into the modernist program.
Consequently, it was with the cooperation of the Abstract Expressionists that the critics were able to endorse the extension of modernism referred to as Formalism as the prevailing artistic ideology of their time.

Critics such as Rosenberg and Greenberg and aestheticians such as Clive Bell and Roger Fry considered the application of Kant's ideas to all areas of the artwork to be reasonable and made such expansions more concrete by developing the extreme and reductionist theory of modernist artistic concepts which would be known as Formalism (Barrett, 1990). This further enabled the ideas of modernism to establish the museum gallery as the highly controlled context of minimal cognitive and contextual cues with which it is presently identified. Formalism, as a more concrete and more extreme phase of modernism, provided a point of unifying clarification to rally around (O'Doherty, 1986). As its ideas related specifically to principles of presentation, this could only be achieved by co-opting the gallery space.

The influence of modernism upon the gallery space was most evident during the introduction of Formalism, a watershed moment in the history of modernism. Formalism represents the instance in which the on-going relationship between modernism and the gallery space was made explicit. Formalism overwhelmingly established the subservient role of the gallery as a mere facilitator of the modernist principle. In defining Formalism, proponents sought to extend Kant's aesthetic reduction to additionally exclude contextual elements which could not be derived directly from the work. Formalism completed the move of modernism to remove all factors but 'purely aesthetic' ones from consideration. The Formalist theory succeeded in discounting specific elements of our experiences, our surroundings, and our world as irrelevant including such items as: the artist's intent, any social or ideological function the work might have, and the time, place, and personal identity of the viewer (Barrett, 1990). Those aligned with modernism championed the artistic medium as work in and of itself without further reference; in this mode painting, in its ideal form, emphasizes its internal properties - i.e. two-dimensionality, color, line, and materiality - without associations with things of the ordinary world which we can experience more 'authentically' elsewhere (Greenberg, 1986). Modernist art logically moves toward abstraction and emphasizes the
materiality of its medium, using the 'aesthetic judgment' of Kant's analytics to extend its authority and thereby remove all elements of real life from consideration. As a result, in matters of presentation, we are left with an attempt to teach people to view art in a wholly unadulterated sense resembling the practice of speaking in tongues in order to radically redirect the aesthetic experience.

Within this art movement, conspicuous examples, such as Abstract Expressionist works, were recruited by modernist powerbrokers to illustrate their principles and create a sense of duty to purity among the various modes of presentation which make up the artworld. It is significant to note that modernist propositions regarding an object's form, seemingly unreasonable in hindsight, may not have been so willingly and unquestionably accepted by contemporary practitioners if specific high-profile artistic activities of the avant-garde had not been implicated in a way which demanded decisions in regard to modes of presentation. The proponents of Formalism slyly recognized this fact and ceremoniously attached the aid of such artists as Jackson Pollock and Barnett Newman whose work fit neatly into their scheme. In a concurrent act of appropriation, the gallery space of the museum was forcibly occupied by ideologues of modernism who appreciated the conspicuousness of the museum gallery more than museum professionals. In this manner the elements of Formalism coalesced to produce modernism's authorization of the stark white museum gallery and the condition that has come to represent the aesthetic of our time.

The Effects of Modernism on the Museum

While this relationship may have benefited the American museum in the short term as a result of the immediate popularity of Formalism, their complicity with the modernists can be seen, in the long term, as a hazardous promise to support and inevitably have to defend the dogmatic ideals of a limited aesthetic which would with time come under critical scrutiny. As the political maneuvering became more intense during the Formalist period the interchange among artist,
the museum, and modernism degenerated into a contest of manipulation in order to elevate the ideas of modernism at the expense of the autonomy of the art object and the gallery. In turn, as tools of ideological empowerment the Formalist art object and the modernist art gallery lost significant amounts of their artistic vitality. Due to the silent complicity of most artists whose work was claimed as Formalist and the museums whose exhibition styles were enlisted as modernist, the written work of modernist critics and theorists became increasingly indispensable to the artworld. As justifications and prescriptions for developments in modernist painting and ultimately as signifiers of the modernist progression these critical and theoretical writings on Formalism gained importance as aesthetic treatises. This occurred at the expense of the gallery space as an independent venue receptive to the diversity of the art object.

The conceptual space of the artworld, in which the Formalist art object was embedded, became the currency of late 20th century modernism, while the objects and their venues themselves were devalued as the unwanted residue of physical justification and the written ideological treatise of modernism supplanted traditional modes of aesthetic exploration. As the abstract art of Formalism, by its very nature, confounded interpretation, the artworld came to rely increasingly upon the critic and theorist as the primary authorities in matters of value and interpretation. Henceforth new art objects needed their written justification for a pedigree. There has always been a network of empowerment among the interested and influential - the powerbrokers within the artworld - which produces candidates for artistic confirmation (Danto, 1992). However, until the predominance of the modernist intellectual these candidates represented a broad range of theory, style, and content, creating a colorful and eclectic mosaic which made up a healthy artworld. As the modernist critics were able to increasingly control the imaginations of artist, dealer, and curator during the fifties and sixties it became much easier to dictate conditions of reception within the artworld - including the treatment of art in the gallery space - through written directives in their treatises. Modernist intellectuals were able to form a loose but fervent clique of powerbrokers rallying around the flag of Formalism in order to promote their dogma about presentation and disseminate
modernist principles throughout the artworld. In this authoritarian climate the museum gallery space became - for those who were not privy to and empathetic with the modernist dogma - a cultural void of mute artists and difficult work, a platform for esoteric ideologues and modernist rhetoricians.

Summation

As the modernists engaged in successful self-promotion of modernist aesthetics involving manipulative and mercenary tactics, they influenced the art museum to radically veer away from public education to favor the academic introspection of the avant-garde. The aesthetic codes of modernism became the pervasive perspective of the artworld and the museum responded by reflecting and ultimately promoting these codes in its galleries. This scenario hindered the museum in fulfilling its mission; most significantly because the elimination of educational concerns from the realm of the gallery was a prominent item on the modernist agenda. As the museum endorsed and catered to these ideas, its public spaces implicitly accommodated aesthetic codes of modernism. These codes constituted the removal of art from the context of its making and reception and - in the process - the systematic separation of the art object from its possible significance to the viewer by preventing it from being associated with the issues of real life (Dewey, 1980). These codes, as “the common conventions and expectations” about an artwork which should appear “natural and universal” to the artist and the audience, logically favor those art objects which seem to conform to them (Blocker and Parsons, 1993, p. 88). Over a short time the history of modernism’s abstraction into the extremes of Formalism became intimately framed by the gallery space (O’Doherty, 1986). As an agent of modernism, the museum exhibition has ceased to be an arena suited to accommodate diverse perspectives of the artworld. In the end, modernism leaves us with a single revelation: if we radically reduce the possibilities of the aesthetic experience, to the point that little or no cognition takes place, we can ascribe to a notion of universal
applicability thereby relieving us of the burden of facilitating the possibilities of educational goals. The result is that many elements of art which make the aesthetic experience a distinct and individual enterprise are eschewed.

As museums endorsed the principles of modernism, their gallery rapidly degenerated into a manipulated environment; as an expression of an ideology its artistic vigor, diversity, and importance as a significant entity in society was seriously undermined. Without a doubt, the museum exhibition practices of our time have catered so obsequiously to the ideas of modernism that they have compromised and confounded the varied interpretations and educational principles which make up the potential richness of the art experience. A venue intended expressly for cultural well-being has paradoxically subverted the realization of art's educational potential and placed into question the continued existence of the museum as a viable public institution.

The goals of education have interpretive implications which empower the museum as public servant by catering to the needs of society. As a result it is education, along with its collections, which constitutes the structure and being of the museum (Able, 1991). The art object, unlike the natural object, proves to be significant to society only after comprehension, for it is through a confirmation of usefulness, as indicated by consumption, that a product fulfills its essence, and the reception and interpretation of works of art "cannot be taken for granted or treated as unproblematic" (Wolf, 1985, p. 88). Paradoxically, the modernists are among the few who have displayed a sincere interest in this revelation; albeit for their own elitist agenda. Interpretations among uninitiated viewers in the gallery space can be greatly affected by the collective efforts of museum professionals (Ambach, 1986). Decisions involving the design concept of the nature of the exhibition have important interpretive consequences (Ambach, 1988; O'Doherty, 1986; Spalding, 1992). That the endorsement of modernism by museum professionals resulting in the proliferation of the modernist design of the gallery space has had a dire and significant impact on the interpretability of artwork as attention was redirected from life to the formal values defined by the technological aesthetic of modernism (O'Doherty, 1986).
In artistic disciplines such as production, criticism, and aesthetics the ideas of modernism are now generally considered outdated and too limiting to be a valid means of resolving artistic issues. Introduced at the dawn of the modernist fervor, these ideas have devolved from a reflection of a segment of our aesthetic explorations into an antiquated concept about art which has come to dictate the principles of gallery design and little else. It is at once perplexing and disappointing that museums, our appointed ambassadors of artistic creativity, continue to lag behind the rest of the artworld by relying upon the principles of modernism. No area is more visible and influential in the public's perception of the welfare of the arts than the museum gallery; it is in this area that the public museum has been entrusted with the responsibility of informing us about art (Karp and Lavine, 1990). As a political entity in the artworld the museum exhibition space itself is engaged in decisions which reinforce or collapse belief structures through which notions of identity and culture are asserted, contested, and ultimately understood (Karp and Lavine, 1990). Unfortunately, it is these areas of exhibition that have been most drastically discounted as unimportant, philosophically underestimated, or systematically ignored by museum professionals whose misdirected efforts have resulted in a lackadaisical approach to ideological issues.

In light of the inherent incompatibility between the principles of modernism and the educational goals of museums it is not surprising that ineffectiveness and superfluity typify society's image of its museums. We have come to realize that, as ambassadors of our cultural welfare, the educational effectiveness of the museum colors the way in which the arts are publicly perceived. It is a sign of our times that as museums are being held increasingly accountable for their decisions a large portion of their perceived success as a public institution is determined by the effectiveness of its educational programs. A reevaluation of the relationship of audience, artwork, and museum with a concern for rectifying the shortcomings of a longstanding adoption of modernist ideology in gallery design is urgent. Increased interest in serving the viewer properly and treating the artwork appropriately would be a significant advancement for museology in our times and should be perceived by museums as a prominent shortcoming of modernist principles and their receptors. While
museums may have been attracted to modernism as a simple and direct way of exhibiting art unencumbered by difficult text or other facilitators of meaning. It is precisely these elements, deemed aesthetically unnecessary by modernism, which enable the museum to carry out its mission. Modernism, once the dominant aesthetic ideology of the West, has been questioned to the point of extinction in most circles (Barrett, 1990; Shusterman, 1989). More tolerant, broader ideologies that address comprehensively contemporary issues have been formulated by engaging in philosophical discourse. It is well past the time when museums must also engage in such philosophical inquiry so that they may be more responsive to the rapidly changing conditions of our times.
CHAPTER 4

COMPETING THEORIES OF ART

The Science of Modernism

The arts, as an educative discipline, have historically been misrepresented and overlooked. Frequently viewed as a diversion for more serious pursuits, the arts were vulnerable to the influence of the ideologues of modernism. As a result of the prevailing modernist attitudes of museum circles, education has largely been removed from the exhibition agenda of museums.

In modernist terms the well-being of art rests solely in its suitability as progressive rational exercises. This belief was driven by society’s “slavish adulation of science” (Morgan, 1967, p. 18). The artworld reflected these conditions through the lens of modernist aesthetics. As an ideology modernist aesthetics’ credence increased as society’s thirst for scientific knowledge gained in popularity, making modernist aesthetics particularly attractive to museums whose popularity was waning and whose importance was increasingly being questioned (Morgan, 1967). Modernist aesthetics thrived by claiming to illuminate the value of art in quasi-scientific terms. As notions of modernism and Formalism became increasingly popular the museum other theoretical perspectives were crowded out so that the viewer was offered only specious perspectives for looking at art. Art was either a decorative diversion or a “peculiar second-rate substitute for true blue empirical knowledge” (Morgan, 1967, p. 19).

Contrary to modernism’s claim to lay a foundation of objective ‘truth’ in art, works of art are inherently products of our imagination (Graham, 1995). Modernist conventions assume a purposiveness on behalf of both artist and
audience that is expressed exclusively in our intellectual experience. However, if museums are to re-establish themselves as a vital component of a healthy society, the vitality which we saw in the arts as it was contextualized within the scheme of our entire realm of experiences (i.e., the emotional and the sensory as well as the intellectual) must be rediscovered.

A significant part of art's usefulness lies in its ability to expand our understanding and enrich our experience of nature through imaginative reflection. Because of this unique feature art demands to be treated as a unique discipline; one fundamentally different from science. To the degree that modernism mirrors the goals of scientific inquiry, the 'museum conception' of art is antithetical to the nature of art. Unlike science, art addresses the kinds of questions which cannot be answered by uncovering more facts. Instead, art requires us to think "through the consequences of what we already know" (Blocker and Parsons, 1993, p. 8). The work of art has the unique ability to clarify and concentrate meanings that are contained in noncohesive ways in the substance of other experiences (Dewey, 1980). Unlike scientific theories which seek to progress from base to terminus in a chain of reasoning, works of art have no direct reference outside of themselves; while the journalist is constrained by what is actually happening the novelist is under no such parameter (Graham, 1995). The "Brooklyn Bridge" by Joseph Stella is no less extraordinary even though the bridge cannot possibly be viewed from the artist's perspective.

It has long been held that a unique feature of art is its unity of form and content (Graham, 1995). Because the elements of art (i.e., form and content) are simultaneously unified and internal there is not a logical strand of reasoning that can be dissected and reach beyond its boundaries. A work of art cannot lead the viewer in logical increments to an answer as acts of science purport to do. In contrast, scientific inquiry has a structure of logical reasoning by which it moves from premises to conclusion. In this way the mind is confronted by factual information or hypotheses as we are directed through a progression of thought (Graham, 1995).
Dewey’s Pragmatist Aesthetics

Dewey’s (1980) *Art As Experience* gives substance to his conceptualization of art and its educative complexities. Dewey’s work is based on pragmatist aesthetics and addresses the reconstructable features of communication in art. Pragmatics are the study of social and cultural usages of language (Braaten, 1991). Because it is compatible with the current demands of society it has had a significant influence on art education and now deserves special notice.

Today, continentally inspired aesthetic theories, based on any number philosophies under the postmodernist umbrella, have posed serious challenges to the analytic aesthetics of modernism making the importance of Dewey's work apparent (Shusterman, 1989). Dewey's aesthetics are the antecedents of such current trends in the philosophy of art as deconstruction, Marxism, feminism, and multiculturalism, among others (Shusterman, 1989). Frustrated with the inability of modernism and modernist aesthetics to respond to the rapid changes of society in meaningful ways, scholars have turned to forms of pragmatist aesthetics for an alternative. Among these, art educators found the application of such pragmatist derived movements as multiculturalism and feminism to be helpful in strengthening their approach to art. With pragmatist aesthetics educational researchers have found an effective way of representing the aesthetic experience which utilizes Dewey's emphasis on art's socio-historical context and responsibility (Shusterman, 1989).

It is time for pragmatist aesthetics to be reinvestigated. Dewey provides us with a constructive framework of thought to illuminate the collection of assumptions that we use to address the complexities of art in our time. *Art As Experience* is the construction of an aesthetic theory that radically challenges the status quo in museums; the modernist concept of art. In effect Dewey’s aesthetic challenges all concepts of art, including his own, by relegating them to an instrumental status to be constantly challenged and revised in order to achieve the optimal, individual art experience. In this sense, Dewey treats the concepts of art, work of art, and aesthetic experience in an intermeshed dialectical manner (Burnett, 1989).
Naturalizing art and its aesthetic value are notions central to Dewey’s aesthetic. Throughout his writing the aesthetic is grounded in “the natural needs, constitution, and activities of the embodied human organism” (Shusterman, 1989, p.61). Consequently, aesthetic qualities are identified with natural ones. By tracing art to its natural roots Dewey aims to reintegrate “the continuity of esthetic experience with normal processes of living” (Dewey, 1980, p. 16). He reconceptualizes the relationship among the artist, viewer, and art object as an interaction between the living organism and its environment which can then be characterized the aesthetic experience often referred to as the ‘work of art.’ A reorganization of energies, actions, and materials takes place and reconstitutes the material object as art within the context of the aesthetic experience via its aesthetic counterparts - the artist and viewer.

The most radical theme of Dewey’s aesthetic is his propensity to privilege the aesthetic experience over the material object. The ‘work of art’ is the dynamic and developing experiential activity of artist and viewer that surrounds the material object (Dewey, 1980). For Dewey “the actual work of art is what the [art] product does with and in experience” (Dewey, 1980, p. 9). An important aspect of this reconceptualization involves the way in which the viewer is empowered to become an integral part of the artistic process. When one ceases to identify the art work solely with the artifact, the power of commodification and fetishization which has stifled the art world for the better part of this century is defeated. It becomes illogical to refer to material objects as ‘autonomous’ or ‘self-sufficient.’ Yet acts of reification such as this are common among museums and other art circles as a result of the influence of analytic aesthetics. In order to address art in a logical manner while utilizing a full conception of the work of art, we must not segregate the beings involved from the art object. Human adjectives are well-suited to describing art objects because we identify human activities that extend beyond the boundaries of the artifact. Emotions and thoughts are relevant to the art object only when one actively accounts for the beings involved in the artistic process (i.e. the artist and viewer).
By addressing art in the context of real life, Dewey's naturalism inherently promotes a broader and more diverse audience. By permitting the aesthetic experience to be seen, not only as a formal inquiry, but additionally as a social, political, and economic element, art can function as an educative and informative endeavor (Shusterman, 1989). In his most ambitious reconceptualization Dewey (1980) allows art to flow through the business of life. This involves increased complexities of consideration and representation in regard to art. It is more important to produce accurate and more productive representations of artistic endeavors - even at the cost of soiling one's hands with the substance of real life - than it is to sacrifice the wholeness of art for the sake of a clinical and artificial clarity.

Dewey identifies art's power of praxis as its instrumental value; that is a logical consequence of grounding the functions of art in nature. In defending the aesthetic by proving its educational worth Dewey promotes a greater appreciation of art's "historico-political" and "socio-economic" determinants (Shusterman, 1989, p. 62). In doing so, he asserts that art has value as a means with which to "serve the needs and enhance the life and development of the human organism in coping with its environing world" (Shusterman, 1989, p. 63). In Art As Experience art is not attached to any specialized, particular end but it is, instead, a way to satisfy human beings in an all-encompassing fashion. By serving a variety of ends and ultimately enhancing our immediate experience, art can modify our perception to inform, energize, and inspire us. An example of this is found in art's ability to improve our cross-cultural understanding; a notion which is at the forefront of our mindset. Art can provide us with the raw data which promotes this sort of understanding. Dewey's openness to view aesthetic experience as a means to enhance and aid our achievement of whatever ends we pursue reflects his desire to characterize art in an educational light. A complete conception of art necessarily entails that it is seen, not as a tool of specialization, but as a modifier that accentuates and intensifies our desire and ability to learn about our world. For Dewey, the artistic enterprise fulfills its educational potential as it performs the essential function of helping us order and cope with experience (Dewey, 1980).
The naturalism of Dewey's aesthetics also attempts to break the clinical grip of "the compartmental conception of fine art" that is a residue of analytic aesthetics (Dewey, 1980, p.14). By denying that there is any rigid dichotomy or opposition among disciplines, such as science and art, he reclaims the natural associations among all disciplines. It has, for instance, become commonplace in Western thought to privilege the scientific discipline over all others. This has led to a rigid compartmentalization which has given birth to artistic movements such as modernism. Dewey's 'continuity thesis' was aimed at rescinding these clear cut disciplinary distinctions in order to revitalize the intermingling of disciplinary thought. By disavowing disciplinary distinctions Dewey hoped to reinvigorate creative thinking thereby enabling the natural fluidity of individual experience and social life to take place (Shusterman, 1989). He insists on the fundamental continuity of concepts which are thought to have been established, by analytic aesthetics, as being binary. The rigid dualisms and distinctions among: art and life; fine and practical art; and artist and audience; are questioned. Analytic aestheticians embraced these dualisms so that they could more easily wrestle with elusive subjects that by their very nature are complex and constantly changing (Blocker and Parsons, 1993). Yet, dealing with complex subjects, such as art, in a simple and concrete manner seems arbitrary and unfounded. In Dewey's aesthetic it is clear that the methods of analytic aesthetics have forgone the practical issues of art with the expressed aim of concocting an artificial clarity that evidences their aesthetic truisms.

Evaluation and reform are of utmost importance to Dewey's pragmatic aesthetics. Dewey aims to provide an accurate account of our concept of art that treats aesthetic issues in a manner appropriate to our time. In their modernist past, museums have embraced the idea of redefinition as a means to reflect the changing needs of society. Their re-evaluative efforts, however, have seldom been realized. They lacked a clear methodology and purpose which undermined their task. Museums engaged in projects of re-evaluation without having a clear understanding of what it was they were to scrutinize, leaving them obsequious to modernism. In this way modernist aesthetics, pursued under the guise of science, tended to ignore issues of re-evaluation and reform (Shusterman, 1989).
The standards of modernism, presented as fact, influenced the posture of the museum in a way that afforded them little opportunity to reflect on their methods without contradiction. In Dewey’s aesthetic, however, experience, not truth, is the final standard (Shusterman, 1989). It is illogical to search for aesthetic truth in a realm where values “cannot be permanently fixed” by theory or criticism (Dewey, 1980, p. 100-101). It is more valuable for museums to strive towards achieving a richer and more satisfying experience. In order to reflect the changes in society, aesthetic values must be continually tested and may be overturned by the “tribunal of changing experience” (Shusterman, 1989, p. 64).

Reconceptualization in Museums

To improve our immediate experience we must overcome “the chasm between ordinary and esthetic experience” - between art and real life - that modernist aesthetics have attempted to make theoretically convincing (Dewey, 1980, p. 34; Shusterman, 1989). It is often overlooked that the unique educative quality of the aesthetic experience rests in its ability to clarify and intensify meanings which are scattered and unfocused in the residue of other experiences (Dewey, 1980). Dewey (1980) asserts that we must reconceptualize art in a way that reflects the changes of society so that one will be left with a more complete and more intimate notion of what art is about. In this way Dewey prescribes a socio-cultural transformation, where art is richer and more satisfying to more people because it would be closer to their most vital interests and as a result better integrated into their lives. Dewey recognizes that socio-economic factors and a collection of other societal conditions also affect not only art but philosophical theories about art (and everything else). Thus, our concept of art needs to be reformed as part and parcel of the reform of society which has so constituted it (Shusterman, 1989, p. 65). In this way, the need for museums and others of the artworld to attend to and thoughtfully reflect the changing needs and requirements of society is made clear. Changes in our society, most significantly an increased recognition of socio-cultural and socio-economic forces, has made it necessary for our
concept of art to be expanded accordingly. In this way here-to-fore 'extraneous' conditions become vital to more complete comprehension of art and philosophies of art. As a result our concepts of art will open up new avenues that will enable the art experience to be richer and more satisfying for more people.

It is undeniable that art objects are a product and facilitator of our interactions with our environment (Dewey, 1980). When art objects are treated as such their intrinsic value increases dramatically becoming vital elements of our lives. As a species dependent on learning we have found the elemental process of making sense of our environment compelling and rewarding (Csikszentmihályi, 1995). We are intimately linked to interchanges within our environment and our existence as we are influenced by the elements of our surroundings (Dewey, 1980). Therefore, we must consistently have environmental experiences in order to satisfy our needs. As we strive to enhance our existence we engage in an open process of learning that involves an interaction with and reflection of our environment (Csikszentmihályi, 1995). Providing that they seek to redefine their mission based upon less esoteric and more enlightening conceptions of art, our art museums can play a vital role in this process.

The effectiveness of our art museums has been severely limited by the modernist’s theoretical inflections. It is often assumed that the development of our learning process necessarily entails the discovery of previously unthought of facts about our existence. This assumption is antithetical to the educational stance of art. It is often overlooked that the unique educative quality of the aesthetic experience rests in its ability to clarify and intensify meanings which are scattered and unfocused in the residue of other experiences (Dewey, 1980). The tenets of modernism, as a quasi-scientific aesthetic, have led museums to emphasize those aspects of the art object which are most likely to spark our intellectual faculties. However, the learning process involves the entire being "not only the intellectual, but the sensory and emotional faculties as well" (Csikszentmihályi, 1995, p. 35). Throughout this century our art museums have driven a wedge between art and life, thereby depriving the public of the diversity that is the aesthetic experience. The art museum, as a product of modernism,
has promoted notions of objectivity, specialization, fetishism, and academicism that has led us to view art as an unreachable entity far removed from the scope of possible experience.

Throughout the existence of museums the educational value of art has been portrayed as non-essential. Only recently have the tenets of education crept into the museum and even then only in areas separated from the exhibition. The art museum has largely ignored the intrinsic motivations of the aesthetic experience as a tool of learning. Art is most important when understood in its fullest conception; as an element of learning that is seen as integral to the exhibition. Many elements of art involve our real life concerns and constitute the unique ability of the aesthetic experience to reconstitute these in stronger ways than would otherwise be imaginable (Dewey, 1980). If provided with the settings for a meaningful art encounter, our lives could be enriched. It is our art museums who have been left with the responsibility to facilitate such encounters. Ultimately, it is those art museums which respond appropriately to these responsibilities that will benefit from visitors who are compelled to return to their galleries as a continued source of enlightenment and enrichment.

Art as an educative resource

Art has frequently been seen as an activity that is subservient to Nature. Aesthetic theory has been dominated by the thought of representation as correspondence. This empty and slavish notion which has colored the perspective of our museums. As ‘the’ way of approaching art, it suggests that we first look independently at reality and then at art in order to evaluate how well the latter has represented the former (Graham, 1995). It is more appropriate to the nature of art to reverse this process. If we look independently at art as a means to see reality anew the aesthetic experience will be deeper and more satisfying. It seems to be incorrect to look at a painting such as Georges Seurat’s “A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte” and surmise that it is an inaccurate representation of reality. By attending to these unique experiences offered by works of art, we may become more profoundly aware of our everyday experiences. Although artworks can direct the viewer’s
mind, it is important to note that this inquiry does not lie beyond, but, rather, within the work of art (Graham, 1995). By supplying us with unique perspectives, art can provide us with imaginative ways of seeing. In this way what is most significant about a work of art is its fittingness of expression (Graham, 1995).

What is essential to art, in regard to its educational potential, is its experiential and unified nature. What matters most about the mental aspects of art are the internal harmony of form and content that facilitate active engagement (Graham, 1995). When considering the educative value of art it is important to remember that “the visible, the audible, and the tactile comprise the content of the mind as well as the intelligible” (Graham, 1995, p. 32). Sensual experience is not merely passive; it is an active experience that requires focused looking and listening (Graham, 1995). Art’s ability to engage the mind by directing perception is most valuable to the aesthetic experience. It possesses resources through which we achieve a greater understanding of ourselves and our surroundings.

Nature plays a greater role in the function of human beings than we frequently acknowledge. While many of our intellectual efforts are dedicated to establishing a sense of superiority over elements of nature, it is undeniable that our existence shares the patterns which are a characteristic of all living things. Some of our behavior is not wholly purposive as is often assumed. Significant parts of our being which are not part of our facility of understanding and therefore are not considered by us to be rational. Some of our natural behaviors can, at best, be described as adhering to patterns, styles, and complexes that form concepts similar to those we find in nature (Howarth, 1995). In such instances, phenomenological description can make explicit the meaningful interactions that underlie all systems of representation. It is a viable means of understanding the products of beings who are grounded in nature. Therefore, it is evident that we must engage in more than conceptual analyses of our thoughts and formal analyses of our actions if we are to have experiences that draw on all aspects of our being.
A primary educative possibility of art resides in its ability to facilitate conclusions about the nature of things that are relatively broad in scope, though non-scientific. There are many important questions about our surroundings that confound because we often find it difficult to make consistent sense of what we already know (Blocker and Parsons, 1993). It is not due to a lack of information, but rather a result of the arduous path that leads to understanding based upon the complexities involved in sharing one's emotions (Blocker and Parsons, 1993). For example, it is widely held that Edward Hopper's "Morning Sun" embodies a profound sense of loneliness. How does one share this feeling? Do we know that the emotion the critic was feeling when he or she attended to Hopper is similar to our own reaction? How can we be sure that this is similar to what Hopper experienced when painting? Loneliness is an essentially private experience; it is not the sort of thing we can easily point to, share, or confirm consistently across persons. It cannot be made comprehensible by uncovering new facts about loneliness.

In order to empathize with the non-purposive, such as our emotions, we must strive to make consistent sense of it by identifying the patterns and complexities that we have in common with nature. Art enables us to express the inexplicable by bringing persons together at a locus of understanding. There is an active mental aspect to art that revolves around its ability to communicate our ideas to better understand our experiences. It enables us to "think through the implications of what we already know" by virtue of its capacity to strengthen our understanding of ourselves and our surroundings, making it an educative discipline in its own right (Blocker and Parsons, 1993, p. 9).

Educative purpose in art

Most current forms of art education are antithetical to the modernist idea of placelessness. Understanding art as it is currently seen by most implies an access to contextual elements which the placelessness or atemporality of the modernist exhibition space cannot accommodate. Blocker and Parsons' (1993) book Aesthetics an Education offers a contemporary view of art education that proposes a multicultural perspective of interpreting artworks that would require a rethinking of the modernist exhibition space and its related theories. In their
chapter "Art and Audience," evidence is presented which indicates that we are in a time of rapid change (Blocker and Parsons, 1993). Change in art education, the world of art, and our world in general makes it necessary for us to rethink our abilities and needs in relation to understanding works of art. This kind of change has become a reflection of our times by embracing the cultural and ethnic diversity of our country and the increased respect and recognition of these differences (Barrett, 1990; Blocker and Parsons, 1993). This recognition and respect of differences is referred to as pluralism and consequently our society can be characterized as pluralist (Blocker and Parsons, 1993). In light of these developments our society has "adopted multiculturalism as a goal and regards cultural diversity as desirable because it is a fulfillment of democracy and a national strength" (Blocker and Parsons, 1993, p. 83). In conjunction with the advent of a pluralist society there has been, among other things, a demand for the goals of art education and aesthetics to reflect the ideas of multiculturalism (Blocker and Parsons, 1993). In *Criticizing Photographs*, Barrett (1990) recognizes that the goals of multiculturalism are intended to "recognize the plural nature of society and work politically for plurality, diversity, and individuality rather than conformity and sameness" (p. 23).

If art education is going to take part in the views of our time, then interpretations of art that reflect these goals must be encouraged. Subsequently, the vitality of art as a product of our time rests on the mutual understanding among artists and their audience about the conventions and relevancies of art (Blocker and Parsons, 1993). In short, artist and audience must come to an agreement of interpretation by recognizing and valuing each other's differences. "Art in this respect is like language: it exists only within a community of persons that understands it in approximately the same way" (Blocker and Parsons, 1993, p. 87). This community of understanding facilitates similar interpretations among artist and audience that account for the significance of art from a current educational perspective (Blocker and Parsons, 1993). In order to arrive at a community of understanding we must consider the creative environment of the artist as well as our own backgrounds as cultural beings (Blocker and Parsons, 1993). This involves "a two-way and alternating
interaction" in which the viewer attempts to empathize with the perspective of the artist through the mediation of his or her own perspective (Blocker and Parsons, 1993, p. 98).
CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

The Case Study

This research took on the form of a case study as it examined the bounded system of a single art exhibition, *Face Value: American Portraits*, during its sojourn at a contemporary art center in the Midwest. This research was a form of qualitative research that emphasized episodes of nuance such as the sequentiality of happenings beginning with the initial stages of the exhibition's planning process, which occurred two months prior to the inception of the show, and concluding with visitor interviews, conducted for the proceeding two weeks. This case study documented the history of a traditionally modernist museum exhibition with the expressed purposes of generating new theories in the process.

It was of utmost importance to demonstrate why certain strategies failed and why others succeeded. In this study conceptual evaluation was emphasized by utilizing frameworks and perceptions that supported critical evaluation (Reinharz, 1992). Equally important, personal experience, qualitative observation, and interviews were relied upon to "cultivate prudence and shrewdness" out of and through experience (Stenhouse, 1985, p. 132). In doing so, six staff members - a curator, a preparator, a curatorial editor, an education director, an exhibition designer, and an assistant registrar - who have a prominent role in the exhibition and four visitors to the exhibition were interviewed.
Among other things, the relationship between the contemporary art center's internal structure (i.e., its ideology, its political structure, and its methods) and its external effectiveness were examined. A case history of this site was intended to allow us to reevaluate the role of education in the museum. In this vein this research may serve as a wellspring of ideas for policy makers and practitioners by presenting them with the nature of problems and, ultimately, confronting action (Stenhouse, 1985).

The structure of the study

Within the framework of the case study four basic methods of data collection were utilized: formal interviews, informant discussions, qualitative observation, and a review of pertinent literature. By correlating researcher-conducted interviews with researcher-located literature the researcher was empowered to better understand the relationship between the beliefs of the individual and the ideology and history of these beliefs (Luker, 1992). Multi-method research expanded the researcher's database and enriched the findings of this case study (Chancer, 1992).

The study of cultural products, such as art criticism and artistic ideologies, offered the researcher a wellspring of nonreactive naturalistic data (Reinharz, 1992). Since these documents were not created for the purposes of this case study they were not influenced by the processes of the person studying them (Reinharz, 1992). They provided the researcher with historical documents to study. Cultural products require careful examination because they are thought to mediate experience by reflecting the values of those who produced them (Walsh, 1992). In this respect they were examined as historical documents that often shaped the norms of the museum.

Content analysis was important to this case study in order to provide an account of events as they happened during the inception of the modernist movement. By systematically interpreting the themes contained within them, the researcher was privy to insights that could not have been available otherwise. Modernist treatises on art offered written records that served as narratives of this movement. Studying these modernist records through the lens of educational ideas exposed their pervasive elitist and exclusionary culture. Goffman's
(1992) frame analysis techniques were utilized in order to study the rules of modernism that limited the opportunities, experience, and autonomy of the museum audience. In this analysis the uncovering of rules previously hidden provided the researcher with a means to bring about an awareness of them and change consciousness in the process.

Interviews were conducted immediately following the completed installation of the exhibition. The succession of interviews did not follow any set order from one person to the next. Instead the interview order was dictated by who became available first. The purpose of the interviews was to test the hypotheses of the researcher (Reinharz, 1992). To enhance the thoroughness of the case study the interviewees were encouraged to provide concrete information over abstract opinion (DiNunzio, Spaulding, and Verba, 1992).

In using the interview approach this research actively addressed a widely perceived problem by soliciting previously unreported attitudes and needs (DiNunzio, Spaulding, and Verba, 1992). Additionally, the questions of the interview recounted the details of the event by presenting respondents with opportunities to comment at length on their experiences (DiNunzio, Spaulding, and Verba, 1992).

In this study the interview was used to illuminate the needs of all potential viewers, as they are perceived by museum professionals as well as museum visitors, in relation to a modernist museum exhibition. The results were extended to uncover the inherent problems with this style of exhibition design in relation to the social and psychological goals of art education. These needs and problems were then incorporated in the case study in order to hypothesize about the requirements for a museum exhibition space that was responsive to the needs of all viewers, if they were going to arrive at satisfactory understanding of an art exhibition.

Ethnographic methods permitted the researcher to draw upon different techniques due to their open nature (Jaeger, 1988). The data for the accounts of this research was written from a variety of perspectives, among them: documentary, socialistic, and conceptual. The variety of comparisons derived from such diversity allowed the researcher to best reveal the nature of an approach to art exhibition and related educational issues. As a part of a major
tradition of the case study, ethnographic methods most effectively met the purpose of the study - to provide a broad overview of the contemporary art center's educational philosophy and develop a set of recommendations for improvement. Ethnographic techniques in this case study enabled the researcher to call into question the culture it examined rather than passively build on assumptions already in place. From this activist posture the data of this research intended to invalidate the assumption that education had already found its home in the museum.

The research episodes of this case study were as follows:
Qualitative observation:
> Exhibitions staff meetings
> Interpretive brainstorming session by the Director of Education and her staff
> Training session for Education staff led by the Curator
> Docent training session led by the Assistant Director of Education
> Docent led tours

Description of physical contexts:
> The contemporary art center for the Arts
> "Face Value: American Portraits"
> The Ohio State University and the community

Review of pertinent literature:
> Mission statement
> Gallery guide
> Text panels
> Educational training literature
> Conceptual research
Formal interviews:
> The Curator at Large
> The Director of Education
> The Curatorial Editor
> Select viewers

Informal interviews:
> An Exhibition Designer
> A Preparator
> An Assistant Registrar

Content analysis of collected data focused on:
> modernist concepts (i.e. the autonomous art object, unadulterated understanding, and the quasi-scientific program of modernism)
> art educational ideas (i.e. pluralism, contextualism, and other empathetic aims)
> related themes, such as the esotericism and elitism of the modernist exhibition design and its inherent hostility to the needs of the viewer.

Synthesis of data analysis will follow in the form of concluding statements about the research.

The case study provided the researcher with the opportunity to examine an art exhibition’s development over time. The purpose of this sort of descriptive case study was to provide documentary evidence for the discussion of practice. It provided an opportunity for intensive analysis of many specific details that are often over-looked when using other methods (Stake, 1995). In this respect the case study was useful in documenting history and generating theory (Reinharz, 1992).

In order to preserve the multiple realities that exist at the contemporary art center the research emphasized different and sometimes contradictory interpretations by focusing on the formal and informal interviews of the participants. Important information was accumulated for this case study via
personal statements made about one's day-to-day activities (Stake, 1995). We often say more than we know. For example, the desire to remain anonymous was expressed by four out of the six staff members who agreed to be interviewed and one person refused to be interviewed at all. Anonymity was the residue of the political pressure that existed within the structure of communication at the contemporary art center.

Among the things the researcher set out to accomplish in this study was to tell the story of an arts institution striving to establish an identity for itself under the self-imposed pressures of modernist restrictions. The researcher concentrated on how the contemporary art center staff struggled with constraints and coped with other problems. In this respect, the researcher attributed his interpretation to sources culled from these interviews as often as possible. Additionally, the researcher triangulated data by asking the same or similar questions of many people.

Data analysis

Forms of evaluation were chosen with the expressed purposes of positively influencing decision-makers so that they may select wiser paths of action in the future (Weiss, 1990). The data analysis of this case study aspired to provide information through evaluation for judging and improving the educational worth of the art object in the context of the bounded system of museum exhibition. It was the intention of this research that it be used by museums in order to refine and improve policies and programs in this regard.

The researcher initially viewed each aspect of the creative processes of the exhibition as potentially significant. In the initial fieldwork everything was recorded including formal lectures, casual conversation, and all forms of written material on the subject.

Analysis began by rereading the data of the research. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) refer to this as scanning. Scanning has two primary purposes: to check the data for completeness and to take note of the most striking, and perhaps most important ideas. This selection process was affected by the researcher's bias, the theoretical framework of the research, and the parameters defined by the participants and the context of the study. Notes taken
while scanning constituted the beginning stages of analysis. Among the resultant abstractions a search for patterns and irregularities was initiated. Uncovering connections and confirming relationships among individual constructs involved establishing the order of incidents and making inferences as to how these formed a causal relationship (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984). Categories were then created by sorting and organizing the results. The categorization schema of this research was based upon three areas of concern: the nature of the art experience, the role of art education in museums, and the political situations of museums.

These categories allowed the researcher to analyze the data by distilling it further into subcategories describing specific phenomena within the study. Descriptive subcategories involved notions such as: the naivete of the viewer, the desire for control among the staff, a concern for the Formalist aesthetic among all participants, the lack of depth of understanding among the viewers, a lack of concern for understanding among the staff, and others. The development of these descriptive subcategories involved moving backwards and forwards between data and description as a process of refinement took place based upon broad areas of concern (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984).

Within the stage of descriptive subcategorizing a process of theorizing took place to develop and confirm explanations of the events that took place (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984). Goetz and LeCompte (1984) define the formal tasks of theorizing in the context of research as: "perceiving; comparing, contrasting, aggregating, and ordering; establishing linkages and relationships; and speculating" (p. 167). Each of these tasks constituted a part of the more comprehensive whole of this research. In processing the data derived from this case study the researcher identified the phenomena that was the modernist exhibition design, compared and contrasted it with values and related ideas of art education, and selected those ideas that the researcher felt warranted the most attention and acted accordingly. Other frequently occurring, but not universally represented ideas and values were noted as the construct of the analysis was altered accordingly in order to increase the thoroughness of the study.
Various ideas were then ordered in specific fashions in order to help explain the most important issues of the case study. In this process analysis was viewed as a stepped process whereby phenomena were divided into components and then reassembled, under the guidance of theoretical literature, in order to create new rubrics of explanation that led to the findings of the research. In this respect, analysis constituted an investigation for the expressed purposes of generating descriptions of phenomena and theories that would explain the findings of the study.

Evaluation is a sense-making enterprise (Norris, 1990). The kind of sense made from this research was, in large part, determined by the “interpretive schema” of this case study (Norris, 1990, p. 103). Paying particular attention to the ideological character of the research site was of utmost importance in the researcher’s interpretive framework. The researcher worked systematically to uncover the foundations of traditional museum exhibition and made problematic that which was taken for granted (Werner in Norris, 1990). In this context, the implied view of worth during evaluation focused on the appropriateness of the ideas and assumptions of museum professional in facilitating their goals. The primary goal of interpretation in this case study was to encourage the sort of reflectivity and scrutiny about museum methods that would allow those involved in museum exhibitions - professional and viewer alike - to become aware of the beliefs that inevitably inform everyday practice. In this interpretive approach the museum’s exhibition program were exposed as a set of assumptions, beliefs, and values that unfolded and were latent in the activities associated with the exhibition’s creation and installation.

The interpretation of these results was initiated in order to assess the implications of the study. The procedures of matching and testing various categories remained the same for interpretation as they were for research. By integrating the overall findings into a complete scenario, the raw data of the study was assigned meanings thereby illuminating what was observed within the case in terms of the implications of the study. Carefully reasoned arguments were utilized in order to develop inferences that established connections that went beyond the confines of the study. The goal of this research was ostensibly to encourage those involved in museums to adopt a more productive stance in
regard to art’s power of praxis. Theories drawn from pragmatist aesthetics were distilled into a more naturalistic conception of art - highlighting art’s usefulness - in a systematic way via the case study so that the reader will have little choice but to draw similar conclusions.

Generalizability

It is important to remember that the selection of the case study method rested upon the assumption that this particular case is typical of others. Adelman, Jenkins, and Kemis (1990) highlighted the manner in which case studies are “strong in reality, down to earth and attention-holding, in harmony with the reader’s own experience” to the point that they provide a natural basis for generalization (pp. 131-132). To ensure this sort of relevance, intensive analysis was used to reveal that generalizations may be made that are applicable to other cases of similar constitution (Reinharz, 1992). Face Value was chosen because, among other things, it comprised a variety of recognizable artistic styles displayed in a traditional exhibition design. The relationship between the institution’s internal political structure, its ideological leanings, and its effectiveness as an educational entity were examined with an emphasis on its broader applicability. With diligent description and careful analysis this case study permitted evaluation and speculation regarding the educational effectiveness of our art museums.

It is clear that since the actions of administrators and select practitioners will tend to have general effects, the type of research most likely to influence their decisions will be that which offers general data applicable across cases (Stenhouse, 1985). The improvement of the critique of museum exhibitions is central to the museum’s ability to produce effective educational programming. If change is to be encouraged the practitioners response to the case study must include the extension of their own experience through their readings of other cases.

In the case study the relationship between a case and any population in which similar meanings may apply, is essentially a matter of judgment on the part of the reader (Stenhouse, 1985). The thoroughness of this research was intended to to discourage abstraction on the part of the reader. Such judgment
relies heavily upon the quality of the assessments contained in the research in order to discourage abstraction (Stenhouse, 1985). Sharp judgment, on the reader’s part, is directly linked to the thoroughness of the study. It is the researcher’s intention to provide a preponderance of information so that the museum practitioner will be wise and confident in extending the findings of the case study to other cases.

A crucial part of practice is critique (Stenhouse, 1985). It is the intention of this researcher that this case study to increase the reader’s practical wisdom and discretion. As the reader becomes aware of the conclusions of the case study he or she will gain the ability to discern the most suitable course of action (Stake, 1995). The case study provides us with a systematic group of critical standards with which to interpret and evaluate practice (Stenhouse, 1985). By instilling a sense of prudence and perceptiveness within the practitioner their capacity to interpret situations more efficiently and more thoroughly will be enhanced (Stake, 1995). The case study should encourage the museum staff to revise their methods and assumptions in light of the experience provided to them in the findings (Stenhouse, 1985).

Researcher’s bias

While this research was based upon concerns for museology, it is important to remember that it was borne out of the personal experience of the researcher. The motive for initiating this research stemmed from an interest in modernism as an art movement and the researcher’s personal involvement in the study of art education. The strong belief that accepted modes of art exhibition are frequently inadequate led the researcher to investigate the relationship and effects of ideology on the gallery space. Specifically, the researcher believed that modernist ideas that have become the tradition in art presentation and are inherently hostile to the viewer. In this light the modernist exhibition design was seen as doing a tremendous disservice to the museum, the art it exhibits, and its constituents. The researcher’s frustration regarding these issues came, not so much from a disdain for the modernist exhibition design, but from a realization of the enormous educative potential of art. This research sought to defeat the widespread acceptance of the modernist
exhibition design by exposing its esotericism, elitism, and exclusionism. This document is further evidence of the poor status of education as well as its lack of educational effectiveness in museums. It was the intention of this study to offer, as alternatives, Marxist influenced theories that focused on the relationship between the museum's purpose and the function of art such as John Dewey's (1980) *Art as Experience*.

This research drew upon, among other things, the researcher's personal experience as a docent, Graduate Assistant to the Registrar, and preparator at the contemporary art center. An association with the contemporary art center for over five years provided invaluable insight, specifically in the area of exhibitions. Being an active participant in the exhibition programming made the researcher more aware of the institution's glaring deficiencies as well as its enormous potential. These experiences led the researcher to fashion this case study around the dominant issues and select certain contexts that were more important than others. This informed the development of this study effecting choices about who and what to scrutinize. The goals of the contemporary art center and the quality of its resources, especially its staff, were held in the highest possible regard by the researcher. Therefore, it was hoped that this case study would contribute to its mission, and those of similar institutions, by producing constructive criticism and directives for moving into the next era of museum exhibitions.
CHAPTER 6

DATA ANALYSIS

Background

The contemporary art center

A contemporary art center located in the Midwest on a large university campus was the research site. It was selected based on three criteria: its aim to present the art of our time, the traditional modernist character of its exhibition spaces, and its desire to attract a broader audience among its constituency. At the time of the study the contemporary art center had been in existence for a little over five years, a relatively short period of time. It received its funding through public grants, private donations, and support from its mother institution, the university. The contemporary art center’s constituency includes the university, the Midwest, a large metropolitan area, and the public at large. It is a multi-disciplinary institution intended to present the finest examples of contemporary art to its audience.

Up to this point in time, the contemporary art center was most notable for its architectural design. Designed by a much-heralded architect the aesthetic of the contemporary art center’s facilities garnered praise on both a regional and a national level. It is intended to be a sort of non-building with the heart of its facilities - its exhibition spaces - underground and just enough above ground features to subtly signify its contemporary leanings.

While the building’s orientation, a glorified underground corridor, suggests an unassuming facility, the contemporary character of the contemporary art center’s features appear ostentatious in relation to the rest of the university’s more conservative architecture. The odd exterior angles in
which its large white and gray geometric volumes are seemingly haphazardly arranged, much like a child's building blocks, combined with its greenhouse-like skin and elevated metal gridwork construe the entire ensemble as an oversized playground. The interior of the contemporary art center is no less radical with its nonconventional angles that often converge in strange arrangements. Its glass walls extend two and one half stories upward to enclose an interior gridwork of oversized beams, and its luxurious, yet oddly placed, materials of oak and granite. All of these elements conspired to create a space of seemingly otherworldly proportions; especially within its unorthodox galleries. Both inside and out, the contemporary art center is a building with a decidedly contemporary aesthetic that commanded attention.

This unconventional configuration of the art center's galleries reflected the institution's contemporary programming. Due to the highly unpredictable and diverse nature of contemporary art, the galleries anticipate the inherent difficulties of accommodation. The architect believed that we were in an age of uncertainty. He felt that in this era it was impossible to adopt a classical stance. In his view our positions were always being undermined and challenged. This underlies the basic character of the contemporary art center. It is a structure intended to be nontraditional and placeless in regard to function.

Contemporary art was thought to represent the sort of difficulty epitomized by this era of continual change. The architect believed that, instead of passively attempting to anticipate the undefinable, his building's design would confront art. In this way the contemporary art center's galleries demanded a response from the artist. The design, therefore, reflected the over-idealized notion that the contemporary art center would exclusively accommodate site-specific installations, the vogue in contemporary art during its conceptualization. The design appeared to have been influenced by the works of contemporary artists such as Robert Smithson. It was as though the architect had determined that Smithson's ideas represented the future of contemporary art and demanded a similar response in the form of a building. In fact, the artist's work had been presented there on more than one occasion since the contemporary art center's inception.
The audience

To those who were more intimately familiar with the community and the region it became increasingly obvious that contemporary art had such a narrow focus for an art institution’s programming that it would be especially problematic in the conservative Midwest. The real perception of the goings-on in the artworld made matters more difficult for an institution that was intended to address highly complex and extremely difficult realm of contemporary art. As the artworld had come to be seen as an esoteric playground of the luxury class, especially in more isolated and conservative areas, the general public came to look at these activities with great skepticism. Therefore, an exhibition whose programming was made almost entirely of contemporary subject matter would only serve to crystallize the public’s withdrawn attitude toward art. It was determined even before the contemporary art center officially opened that if they were going to capture the interest and imagination of the public their exhibitions should reflect a broader mixture of art objects than a strictly contemporary program would allow.

Accordingly, a menu of historically based art, frequently claimed as the lineage of contemporary work, shaped the contemporary art center’s programming in order to provide them license to exhibit more easily recognizable artists. Face Value fit this schema. This pattern that has persisted in the logic of the contemporary art center’s exhibition schedule. Exhibitions liberally spiced with artists such as DeKooning and Stella are interspersed with less recognizable work such as the site-specific works of the Chinese avant-garde exhibition. The well-known artist’s work were frequently seen as objects whose associations with fame and notoriety would serve as a magnet with which to draw in the public. Site-specific and other contemporary work was retained for the expressed purposes of exposing the Midwestern audience to objects they would not otherwise have an opportunity to see. However, the results of this exhibition strategy were disappointing at best. Even the most facile of barometers of success - raw attendance figures - have resulted in disappointment. As several directors have come and gone, the mission statement has been in a continual state of revision (as observed by the
Curatorial Editor, and the Board of Directors repeatedly offered new solutions, one consistency remained - their modernist style of exhibitions' methods, strategies, and configurations.

Although those involved with the contemporary art center continually search for solutions to their problems, they failed to look at the very heart of their operations, their ideological foundations, for answers. The most recent 'blockbuster' exhibition (a Lichtenstein retrospective) failed to significantly increase attendance figures, it is time that they diverge from their object-centered inquiries. Only when the contemporary art center comes to realize that it is their conception of art and its applications, and not the pure object-oriented configurations of its exhibitions, that is their primary stumbling block can their populist ambitions be realized.

**Face Value, the exhibition**

*Face Value: American Portraits,* was a travelling exhibition of approximately ninety notable portraits from America's past and present. The exhibition occupied two of the contemporary art center's four galleries and became the locus of much of the center's programming during its tenure. After its sojourn at the contemporary art center, it traveled to three other venues. Traditional portraits of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were presented in an isolated area in order to provide a contrast which would underscore the many changes portraiture has undergone to reach its contemporary forms.

*Face Value* aspired to tell us about contemporary portraiture by addressing the changing artistic boundaries and shifting social values which determine our interpretations of these works and the constitution of the works themselves. Its explicit purpose was to establish what constitutes a contemporary portrait and how it has affected the perceptions of society. In terms of its meaning, the curator offered that *Face Value* carried the promise to encourage the viewer "to realize that identity is a very complex and organic enterprise" (CU5) (refer to appendix A for the curator's complete interview).
Furthermore, once people consider Face Value's implications, the curator believed that they would become more “critical” of notions of identity as they became more “conscious of the way faces play out in culture” (CU5).

From a practical standpoint, the curatorial editor speculated that Face Value was attractive to the contemporary art center because, among other things, its organizing institution, had “a large cache of portraits” that temporarily enriched the institution with prominent art objects (CE11) (refer to appendix C for the Curatorial Editor's complete interview). In her eyes it was expected to solve the “pressure...to bring in crowds” that the staff at the contemporary art center felt (CE14). By being centered around the work of famous artists such as Warhol, Close, Sherman, and others, Face Value - it was hoped - would solve many of the social and economic problems associated with museums that only appeal to a small specialized elite.

For the curator in charge of the exhibition, Face Value meant the establishment of the position of portraiture today. By generalizing historical portraiture as a staid endeavor of tradition-bound modes of representation, conversely, contemporary portraiture was to appear diverse and dynamic. The vigor of contemporary American portraiture was represented by approximately twenty artists working in media ranging from painting and photography, to video installations and examples of popular culture, while traditional portraiture was limited to realistic oil paintings.

In the end Face Value's significance was perceived as the assumption that the fictional nature of the portraits of our past has been stripped away by the more honest meanings of contemporary portraits. The audience, in becoming aware of this, would somehow become aware of what constitutes human identity.

A metropolitan community and the Midwest

The metropolitan area and the Midwest, which the contemporary art center call home, have been dominated by rural agriculture for over a century. The city has thrived economically due to its base of predominantly white-collor employment opportunities. Although economic success is a key ingredient in a vibrant arts scene, the city does not support the arts as one would have
expected. Much like the Midwest, in general, the city and the surrounding area has a small area of cultural activity. Due to the ultra-conservatism of the Midwest and the relatively low status of the arts in the broader scope of leisure activities, arts activities have suffered profound neglect. Even the established and staid arts institution of the city found itself in dire need of public relations changes and programming alterations in order to attract a larger share of the public's interest.

The Midwestern community is primarily interested in passive entertainment activities such as sporting events or trade shows that demonstrates a lack of interest in activities associated with informal education. Except for the science museum, which boasts to be one of the most advanced programs in the country, the community has failed to support their extracurricular educational institutions. It became increasingly difficult for institutions that offered valuable cultural and educative resources to the community if they required the active participation of the viewer. Passive activities, such as television, sports, and computer-related activities, had so consumed midwesterners that educational activities seemed out of reach or unworthy of their attention. Such shortsightedness led the public to take for granted many of the entertainment-oriented, yet educative activities that have become increasingly available in outposts throughout the culturally-deprived Midwest. A vital aspect of the contemporary art center's mission was its desire to become such an outpost. Although they have failed to become an important institution in the Midwest, this has not led them to question their methods or ideas. Instead they pointed their fingers at their constituency and merely shrugged their shoulders.

The Midwestern community felt alienated from their arts institutions. A small fraction of the public has formed a loosely grouped Midwestern consortium intended to promote the arts in the Midwest. Organizations, such as the statewide arts council and the bi-monthly journal Dialogue, have dedicated themselves to promoting the arts in the Midwest. However, while they indirectly affect some of the decisions at the institutions they support, they did not have a direct involvement in their programming decisions. As a result, these
organizations found themselves promoting exhibitions such as *Face Value* whose elitist practices may have more to do with alienating the public from the arts than sparking their interest in them.

The cultural climate of the Midwest has left those interested in the arts as an isolated within the community as a whole. There were sharp lines that distinguished those who support and participate in the arts from those who did not. This fostered an 'us versus them' attitude among both camps that was counterproductive to the needs of the community as a whole. Both groups seemed content to conduct their business with only the most facile salutations directed toward one another. Thereby elitist art exhibitions were tolerated and people came to museums to simply say they were in the presence of culture.

The art institutions of the Midwest seemed either unwilling or incapable of reevaluating their methods and purposes. They were content to simply mirror their more prominent brethren on both coasts. This provided them with easy answers to many difficult questions, such as how to cater to their immediate constituencies. The Midwestern community did not have the same interests and attitudes about culture as those of large metropolitan areas such as New York or Los Angeles. Midwestern art institutions either lacked the confidence or the interest to break their chain of emulation and elitism in order to investigate ways in which the needs of their immediate audience could best be served. As a result, the Midwest remained a community sharply divided among those privy to the power of the arts and those disinterested or mystified by it.

**Staff members**

Staff members were selected based upon their willingness to participate in the study and their relatively intimate position to the creative processes of *Face Value*. Many of them were the senior members of their departments. As a condition of their participation in this research many of the participants requested anonymity. This requirement pointed to a general feeling of creative and intellectual insignificance and oppression on the part of many staff members. This impotence was a symptom of the top-heavy political character of
the contemporary art center's lines of communication. By requesting anonymity the staff also indicated their overall dissatisfaction with the contemporary art center's methods and product.

Curator

The curator's title at the contemporary art center was Curator at Large. She held a similar position at her previous institution, and had been hired recently by the contemporary art center of this research. Face Value was her initial show. As a result, she was under a considerable amount of pressure to produce a show which would impress her peers. Under this sort of duress, it was understandable that she wanted the exhibition to attain a high degree of excellence. As the senior member of the Curatorial Department assigned to this exhibition, the curator was in charge of its creation and installation. Every decision was in her hands and she rarely delegated her responsibilities. Nothing associated with the make-up of the exhibition escaped her scrutiny. She obsessed over every detail from the color of the entryway to the height of the lettering announcing the title of the show. The considerable amount of resources dedicated to this exhibition afforded her the luxury of arranging and then rearranging the physical position of the art objects. While, upon the first impression, this made her seem unsure of her decisions, over time it became clear that this was her way of exerting her authority and heightening her importance as she engaged in a daily ritual of calling the preparators into the galleries to juggle objects throughout the final week of preparations. Her actions were, above all, about establishing control. During the creative process the staff was her target. As the curator discussed the creation of Face Value, there was a distinct lack of reference to any other staff members. This was indicative of her intention to create the exhibition in her own image.

By establishing complete control over the exhibition, the curator's ideological assertions went unchallenged. Most creative decisions involving Face Value were of a decidedly Formalist bent such as a concentration on the color and shape of the object with little regard for its possible meaning. The arrangement was determined according to the color of the work's frame or what the medium of the work was. This was based on an unbridled concern for how
well, they would coalesce into her aesthetic vision. The curator’s attention to the formal elements of the work arose out of her belief in the autonomy of the art object as the ‘real thing.’ This led her to narrow her scope of Face Value to problems associated with accommodating the object’s formal properties. How works were related to each other in terms of their meaning and how the audience would understand them was never an issue for the curator. This was most apparent on the day the curator walked away from the exhibition leaving it in the hands of others, such as the education staff; this was the day Face Value opened to the public.

In the modernist notion of the autonomous art object she saw a sense of purpose that artificially heightened her role in Face Value. In this manner she elevated her role in Face Value by circumventing the audience’s need to understand art. Instead of working to enable thoughtful interpretations of Face Value’s subject, the curator saw her purpose as a narrator who would dictate what she saw as important to her audience. Face Value degenerated into an outlet for the curator’s creative expression in a way that undermined its relevance to the public.

Director of Education

The education director’s role in Face Value was minimal. In Face Value the potential to contribute to the final shape of the exhibition was consistently marginalized. In light of the curator’s dictatorial style and her modernist leanings, the education director’s duties were limited to supervising the training of docents and coordinating tours of large groups such as groups of public school children. In many ways these responsibilities became of heightened importance. Since the exhibition was virtually indecipherable to all but the most seasoned art viewer, the general public required much more interpretive assistance.

While the education director seemed to find her voice in assisting tour groups to understand the exhibition, she longed for a more complete role in Face Value in which her educational ideas could reach audience members that did not participate in tours. Although she subtly raised these objections during the interview process, the politically charged atmosphere of the contemporary
art center discouraged her from doing so on an official basis. Ultimately, she graciously resigned herself to her position as supervisor of tours and lectures as she bemoaned the fact that the contemporary art center lacked a ‘team approach.’

Her fear of making waves, by suppressing any displeasure about *Face Value*, spilled over into her tours. She constantly grappled with the obtuse nature of the exhibitions trying to find the path to learning that reflected the contemporary art center’s programming in a most positive light. In light of the inherently difficult content of much of the contemporary art center’s contemporary subjects this challenging task became her primary responsibility.

In the end, the education director found her role in *Face Value* as little more than a public relations expert for whom encouraging visitors to realize that they were in the presence of an important exhibition was all that mattered. Her influence reverberated throughout the Education Department as tours concentrated on highlighting tidbits such as the size of film a particular artist was using or the notoriety of particular subjects that could lead to significant ideas if they were attached to meaning in the work. Instead, the education director attempted to heighten her audience’s attentiveness by conveying a message of the importance of the show without knowing why it was so. By introducing small bits of information that related to the formal elements of the work, and not to the broader interpretive schema of art, the education director allowed the Education Department to sink into a well of insignificance as they accomplished little more than that of a public relations department.

**Curatorial Editor**

The Curatorial Editor’s responsibility was to insure that all written materials associated with the exhibition were both grammatically correct and ideologically sound. From an academic perspective, she was an accomplished writer who was overqualified for the job. She reformatted the text panels from the exhibition’s previous venue so that they would compose *Face Value’s Gallery Guide*. She also supervised the content of the identification labels and the text panel. In keeping with the academic, non-populist, and non-educational tack of the show only this member of the Curatorial Department was
permitted to make suggestions regarding the writings of the curator. Since the purposes of these refinements were strictly academic the Education Department was not consulted. In this light, it became obvious that the text of *Face Value* was intended implicitly to impress the curator's peers. The text of *Face Value* was purposefully esoteric and the Curatorial Editor was given the responsibility of preserving this modernist ideology by ensuring that the text was eloquent and grammatically sound if not easily decipherable.

The Curatorial Editor requested anonymity during this research. This points to the repressive highly-charged political atmosphere of the contemporary art center wherein the fear of reprisals was the guiding force in most everyone's work. The Curatorial Editor had reasons to be personally dissatisfied. They ranged form the personal - the lack of professional courtesy in the curator's actions - to the ideological - a perceived weakness in the curator's theoretical argument. Significant among her objections was their lack of educational substance. Coming from an academic and art historical perspective that was similar to the curator's, it was not altogether surprising that the Curatorial Editor's overriding educational concern in regard to *Face Value* was the danger that they may 'over explain' something. The Curatorial Editor was part of a select group whose heady writings on artistic issues garners her praise and respect among artistic circles who was simply dissatisfied with her relatively low position.

Assistant Registrar

The Assistant Registrar was the most senior member of the Registration Department to work on *Face Value*. Her responsibilities included: arranging transportation of art, documenting the condition of the work, and supervising its unpacking and installation. The Assistant Registrar performed her appointed tasks with an unquestioned loyalty. She fulfilled her responsibilities and then distanced herself from the final product. This reflected the lack of pride and interest the Assistant Registrar had in the business of the contemporary art center. When she speculated that most of the staff did not know what their mission was, she counted herself among the uninformed. This did not trouble
her. She was content to put in her hours and then go home. In this sense, she
did not participate in *Face Value* in any capacity that extended beyond her
responsibilities.

The Assistant Registrar’s disinterest in the contemporary art center was
symptomatic of the prevailing apathy found among the staff as a whole. By
being a part of an oppressive political structure, all staff members below the
most senior positions were denied the opportunity to significantly involve
themselves in the exhibition. As a result, staff members, such as the Assistant
Registrar, divested themselves of any sense of ownership that they could
potentially have gained from being an integral part of the contemporary art
center’s programming. The Assistant Registrar accomplished this distancing
effectively as she failed to consider the implications of *Face Value* even when
helping it toward its completion.

**Exhibition Designer**

The Exhibition Designer’s responsibilities in *Face Value* revolved around
the physical construction of the exhibition. He supervised the physical
preparations for *Face Value* such as: building temporary walls, preparing the
space by painting and cleaning, and unpacking and hanging art. In many ways
he had the greatest impact on the curator’s vision of *Face Value* because it was
he who determined the feasibility - in terms of time, cost, and construction
principles - of many of her ideas. However this did little to lend him a sense of
ownership about the exhibition as most of his decisions, when they were
accepted, had little impact on the significance of the exhibition. He too
requested anonymity and, like his fellow staff members, he successfully
distanced himself from the exhibition. For him, working in *Face Value* was a
necessary component of his responsibilities as the Exhibition Designer. He had
little interest in the impact of *Face Value* as it opened to the public and quickly
turned his efforts toward preparing for the next exhibition.

When his objections about *Face Value* surfaced they most often referred
to experiences in his past and had little to do with the educative impact of the
exhibition. His distrust of formal institutions of learning and his disapproval of
allowing an educational presence within the exhibition spaces centered around conclusions he had arrived at long before he began working at the contemporary art center. As he talked about the implications of Face Value and frequently digressed into deep-rooted objections about education. He was content to fulfill his duties in regard to Face Value and then redirect his attention to future exhibitions. For the Exhibition Designer and his crew the construction of exhibitions had become routine. In this sense, his position as a facilitator, but not a creator, of exhibitions had numbed his ideological sensibilities in regard to his work to the point that he had little ideological investment in Face Value.

Preparator

The Preparator's responsibilities were inextricably linked to those of the Exhibition Designer. The Preparators were a crew of approximately ten people who worked with and assisted the Exhibition Designer. The Preparator also requested anonymity for fear of reprisal because he was forthright about his opinions of Face Value and the contemporary art center in general. However, being a part-time employee allowed him to be less inhibited in his discussion of Face Value. He was frank and frequently made off-the-cuff comments that reflected his displeasure, if not a careful consideration, of the contemporary art center.

The Preparator took more of an interest in the potential of resources of the exhibition while he failed to view its final conception as equally promising. For him art had the potential to take on an increased importance in the context of the contemporary art center. Unlike most of the other staff members, for whom Face Value was merely a job, the Preparator seemed to hold out some hope that the contemporary art center could produce effective exhibitions. However, for him, this did not necessarily entail the involvement of the Education Department. Like most of his fellow staff members he held in high regard individual unassisted encounters with art. But, unlike the others, he saw an ability in education to enhance the art experience. This seemed to be a result of his ability to recognize the humanness of art. To him, there was a potential for a more humanistic approach to art in exhibitions such as Face Value. In this respect, he saw a need to question artistic decisions and
demystify the art experience so that museum object become approachable regardless of one's artistic knowledge. In the end this perspective seemed to endorse educational ideas even if it did not support the motives of the Education Department. The Preparator’s opinions seemed refreshingly optimistic in an institution where the political oppression and perceived mediocrity of its programming more often than not discouraged those involved from taking a genuine interest in their work.

Viewers

Viewers were chosen with the aim of representing a diverse public. Additionally, emphasis was placed on selecting visitors who were not required but, felt compelled to go to Face Value. Visitors were also selected based on their relative inexperience in art viewing. This was based on the researcher’s assumption that the contemporary art center’s constituency - the general public - was not deeply invested in the artworld and would have to rely upon their own initiative if they were to participate in the contemporary art center’s programming. Certain restrictions were in place at the site in regard to selecting visitors for this study. Finding a diversity among the contemporary art center’s visitors proved difficult in light of the elitism of the institution. While men and women were adequately represented, a diversity of socio-economic class, that reflects the constitution of the public as a whole, was virtually nonexistent. As a result, while the participants came from a wide range of educational and artistic backgrounds, a diversity of age groups, and from both genders, all were Caucasian. This is representative of the contemporary art center’s difficulty in serving its intended audience; the public as a whole.

Kate was a white female who was 23 years old. She was at the contemporary art center in order to participate in tour as an assigned activity. Her Art Education 225 class (an introduction to art education), that totaled approximately 20 students was brought to Face Value as an introduction to museum education. Three Graduate Associates of the Education Department
gave a presentation that specifically addressed museum education and included an abbreviated tour of *Face Value*. Afterward, she wandered around the exhibition.

Kate was from a small Midwestern town and had had little exposure to cultural activities. In high school she developed an interest in theater production and came to the metropolitan area to attend a small liberal arts college in order to pursue this interest. At the time of the interview Kate had recently determined that she wanted to begin studying art education with the purpose of becoming a public school teacher at the secondary level.

Kate was fairly withdrawn and seemed confused about what she expected from art. She had had little experience in fine art except for a few art history classes she had enrolled in in recent months. For her *Face Value* seemed difficult to talk about at length because of her lack of confidence in speaking about the work and the lack of understanding she had about the exhibition. She was attentive to the questions and genuinely wanted to speak about *Face Value* but, her lack of familiarity with the subject and fine art in general prevented her from doing so. Hers was the least informative but, by no means the least enlightening, interview of the study.

Gretchen was a white female who was 27 years old. She had a Bachelor’s degree in Economics with an Art History minor. Her visit to *Face Value* happened simply because she wanted to look at an art exhibition. She said she liked to attend cultural events at least once a month and this seemed the most interesting option open to her. Gretchen was confident in her ability to understand art. She felt that she had little use for educative assistance and preferred to experience *Face Value* in much the way the curator had intended it to be encountered, without any access to the information and perspectives of others. Much like the curator and other staff members, Gretchen felt that she should not need to have access to educative assistance in order to enjoy the exhibition.

Gretchen’s desire for solitude in *Face Value* seemed to be the product of a deep seated fear that she may not be gaining an adequate experience from her visits to art exhibitions. When queried about the significance of *Face Value*
she seemed to get defensive as she stubbornly repeated her overly simplistic take on the exhibition. Her experience in art history prepared her for the conventions of art presentation but, the limited ideas she came away from *Face Value* with indicated that she was ill-equipped to experience the exhibition without some sort of assistance. In the end, Gretchen seemed content to engage in the process of being cultured even if she could not take full advantage of her experience. Because of her art historical background she was familiar with the names of the artists and their claimed aesthetic lineage. For her this constituted the significance of *Face Value* and made her a willing participant in the curator's ambitions to dictate style and taste. In Gretchen's case looking at pictures meant simply being in their presence; as long as she could follow this pursuit alone she was satisfied.

Stephanie was a white, female who was 23 years old. She was an undergraduate student studying philosophy with an emphasis on aesthetics. On the spur of the moment she decided to participate in a tour that was open to the public. Stephanie speculated that she spent more than half of her free time while on campus at the contemporary art center either at the cafe, the bookstore, or in the galleries. She usually visited exhibitions without assistance but, given the opportunity she decided to take a tour for a change of pace. For her the tour was a sort of test to see if accessing education in this form would be beneficial. Much like Gretchen, Stephanie had confidence in her ability to make sense of art exhibitions while in isolation from educative assistance. However, unlike Gretchen, she seemed to be open, and perhaps not afraid of the possibility that she may discover some piece of knowledge of which she was previously unaware. In this sense, Stephanie's self-assuredness in her interpretive abilities manifested itself in a wholly different course of action than Gretchen's insular approach to art viewing. For Stephanie, her knowledge of the arts formed a sort of proving ground where her understandings could be held up against the ideas of others.

Stephanie's experience in *Face Value* proved to be confounding in many ways. Her depth of understanding of the exhibition was relatively advanced. This could ordinarily be attributed to the educative assistance the tour provided
her but, she rejected this proposition. She was surprised how simplistic the
docent was in his approach to the art as she indicated that the tour failed to
augment to her ability to understand the exhibition. Having not previously
known about Stephanie's other solitary experiences in art exhibitions, it is
difficult to conclude whether this was true. Perhaps she would have come away
from *Face Value* with the same conclusions had she been unassisted.

Stephanie's formal education in aesthetics established her as an
experienced viewer. Unlike the other visitors of the research she was privy to
methods of considering art that significantly increased the depth of
understanding she achieved in *Face Value*. It seemed as though she was the
sort of viewer that for which the curator had intended to serve in *Face Value*.
She was familiar enough with contemporary art to overcome the obstacles of
the exhibition's minimalist treatments. In this sense Stephanie provided the
study with a point of demarcation in regard to the background a visitor required
in order to have a satisfactory art experience in *Face Value*. While her expertise
in the arts allowed her to make connections to art's historical lineage and
uncover references to her world, it is undeniable that there was still the
possibility of further illuminating art's power of praxis by providing an educative
perspective. In the end Stephanie's observations about *Face Value* proved
enlightening in the way they uncovered the limits of the exhibition. If the
viewers were going to begin to truly understand the exhibition they needed
something more than a familiarity with the conventions of museums. In
Stephanie's case, her academic background proved to be useful in overcoming
the esotericism of the exhibition's modernist style of presentation. In this
respect she was a part of the elite for whom *Face Value* was intended.

Ted was a white, male who was 64 years old. He had an undergraduate
degree in accounting and was a retired computer programmer. He came to the
contemporary art center because he had some free time after a computer club
meeting on campus before he met up with a friend. Ted's interest in the arts and
pronounced conservatism regarding artistic styles led him to chose the
contemporary art center and *Face Value* over other campus activities because
he read about the traditional portraits of the exhibition in the local newspaper.
While his taste was more restricted than many other audience members, his dedication to the arts surpassed many of those same visitors. As a practicing artist and an avid museum-goer Ted seemed to realize art's purpose as a facilitator of experience more than most. For him art activities represented an enhancement to life that went beyond the desire to become culturally aware that led so many visitors to come to Face Value.

Ted represented the interested yet apprehensive type of visitor that for whom exhibitions such as Face Value should have seemed appealing. While he had allowed the arts to become an important part of his life he had failed to make a connection with contemporary art. He readily admitted that he often found it strange and, as a result, uninteresting. If the exhibition had presented contemporary art in a way that would not have made the nomenclature of contemporary art seem so inscribed it may not have seemed so strange to visitors uninitiated in contemporary art. In doing so, Ted would have been afforded the opportunity to realize that many of the same qualities he found in representational art were available in Face Value. In this sense, it can be said that the esotericism of Face Value's treatments of contemporary art led Ted to fail to see the similarities that exist in all styles of art.

Analysis

Empirical meanings were assigned to the beliefs and behaviors of the participants from a content analysis of in-depth interviews of select individuals. In coding and analyzing these interviews, particular attention was paid to the those aspects of the modernist exhibition design that determined the degree of its educational effectiveness. In doing so, categories of regularities were produced among the participants' actions, such as: the neglect of the social and psychological needs of the viewer, the modernist tendencies of all participants, the lack of a significant role for the viewer in the exhibition, and the exhibition as an avenue of creative expression for the curator. This data was then compared and contrasted to modernist concepts - such as the artificiality of the museum experience, the pseudoscientific program of modernism, and the
autonomy of the art object - and current art educational goals - such as contextualism, pluralism, and other empathetic aims. As these relational examinations tested the aforementioned regularities to see if they were consistent with the theoretical framework, interpretations were facilitated that led the researcher to conclude that the modernist exhibition design was antithetical to the goals of art education.

**Face Value as the Curator's Vision**

**Description**

*Face Value's* exhibition design followed truth in art - in modernist terms. Inwardness and interrogation regarding the art object constituted the subjective and formal pursuits of *Face Value* and left little place for an audience. The individual elements of *Face Value's* modernist exhibition design - its shadowless interior, white walls, clean minimalist appearance, absence of contextual and educational information, its lack of creature comforts - collectively conveyed a sense of artificiality that attempted to transport art from real life into a clinical realm where formal values of the aesthetic would exist in an allegedly unfettered state. *Face Value's* modernist exhibition design was intended to expel all traces of the exterior for the purposes of subtracting form the aesthetic experience whatever cues might serve to ground art in its place in the real world.

The curator's modernist ethos was evident as she limited her concern for the viewer to measures that dictate “certain ideas to the viewer” (CU3), eschewing all notions of education and merely allowing the visitor to “trust their own instincts” (CU9) when considering *Face Value*. As she prized the “visual experience” (CU17) over all other concerns, she espoused the modernist creed that the work is sufficiently “compelling” simply because it’s ‘just visually very rich” (CU14). As a devout modernist the curator, much like a benevolent dictator, sought to purge the contemporary art center's galleries of any references in conflict with her own streamlined modernist notions. As the curator attempted to suppress the nearly infinite number of ways an art
exhibition can be understood, she enlisted the galleries of *Face Value* to assist her in narrowing the scope of what one could consider when visiting the exhibition. There is limited amount of control the artist has over content (Haag, 1972). The curator utilized the concepts of modernist exhibition design to exploit the fact that reception, in large part, determines the perceived content of art. As she aspired to dictate the entire art experience the curator was unwilling to allow the visitors “to have the freedom” to move about *Face Value* as they chose (CU3).

The odd configurations of the contemporary art center’s galleries allow too much freedom of movement, by virtue of their wide open spaces and multiple paths of ingress and egress, to be compatible with the ideas of modernism. The highly specific quest for purity and scientific claims to truth in art which informs modernist exhibition design, necessitated closing off the more accessible avenues of understanding in favor of an authoritative posture. To this end, the curator used very few existing walls in *Face Value* and reduced the multitude of paths the enter the galleries by “just closing [many of] them off” to establish a more traditional space (CU3). In furthering her vision for a modernist gallery, she manipulated the context of the unsettling effect of the radical angles of Gallery B so that you had “a sort of stage set” to the extent that Eleanor Antin’s “Portrait of Lynne Traiger” appeared natural and logical (CU3).

The final result was that the contemporary character of the gallery spaces of the contemporary art center were largely obscured by a modernist shell of temporary walls. As they snaked around in a succession of normally proportioned rooms, like a modernist maze, they no longer confounded viewer expectations but confirmed them. By fashioning a chain of modernist norms the curator enforced the modernist notion of linear progression in order to “control the narrative” which was her interpretation of *Face Value* (CU3). The curator sought to make the space much more “controllable” in terms that would “preserve the organizational categories that [she] had devised for the show” (CU2). By dividing the large expanses, which were the contemporary art center’s galleries, into several average-sized rooms the modernist notion of
formal categorization was imposed upon the context of exhibit, thereby providing a structure that reflected the curator's personal theories about contemporary portraiture.

In order to isolate art as a realm to be considered apart from life, the modernist gallery space of *Face Value* adhered to strict parameters of artificial compartmentalization and linear progression which, among other things, limited viewer choices in regard to interpretation. The curator overcame the anti-modernist sentiments in which the contemporary art center's galleries were designed by systematically exiling their influences from the gallery spaces of *Face Value*. In keeping with her modernist leanings, she met the challenges of alternative perspectives by either neutralizing their effects or eliminating these elements altogether, in order to reduce the references which surround the art experience to those which are seen as 'pure' in modernist terms.

The curator's contributions were closely associated with the perceived effectiveness of *Face Value*. The fact that this was her first exhibition at a new work site only intensified her desire to control every aspect of the exhibition. Her approach to the exhibition, in which she sought to reconstruct it as her "narrative," made it clear that she wanted *Face Value* to be 'her' exhibition (CU3). In dealing with a traveling exhibition, it became apparent to the researcher that the curator felt the need to compensate for *Face Value's* tendency to rob her of the responsibilities of selecting artwork commonly associated with curating an art exhibition. As a substitute, she painstakingly addressed the interplay among the formal properties of the art object and the layout of the galleries. No detail was small enough to not warrant her attentive speculations regarding its appropriateness to *Face Value's* arrangement and its relevance to the formal properties of the exhibition. Issues such as 'which side of the column the Tony Oursler labels would be placed' and 'which shade of green, among two virtually undiscernibly different ones, would be appropriate for the traditional portrait corridor' were pored over as if they would significantly affect the success or failure of the exhibition. In one instance the preparators were asked to paint areas of one of the galleries with both shades of green and then tape miniature color reproductions of Robert Henri's "Lady in Black" in the center of each area in order to assess the appropriateness of either color.
As the curator labored over design issues, such as whether the white frame of the Billy Sullivan portraits looked appropriate when placed on the wall adjacent to the black and gold frame of Ray Johnson's "James Cagney" portrait, it was apparent that her modernist bias led her to commodify the art object and, in doing so, further justified her role as the perceived caretaker of the art objects in Face Value. Her formalist tendencies produced a fetishization of the work, as a logical extension of objectifying the art object, which furthered her program of inflating her role, and reinforcing her sense of ownership about the exhibit.

Interpretation

Although addressing a contemporary subject in Face Value, the curator nevertheless enlisted a traditionally modernist form of exhibition design. Hence, the realm of contemporary art, an area commonly associated with embracing different perspectives, was given a narrow and one-sided conceptual treatment in modernism. In spite of these and other apparent contradictions between contemporary ideas and modernism, it was not surprising that this choice was made. Current attitudes regarding reevaluation and self-examination, pervasive in our museums, have only increased the ability of those adhering to the modernist tradition to invent covert ways to resist the pressure to change. Museum staff members and visitors, blinded by elements of tradition, routinely accept the conventions of modernist exhibition design. As the modernist exhibition design was institutionalized and ingrained in our collective psyches, it became common for viewers to accept the fragmentary and compartmentalizing ideas of modernism as the way of looking at art (Dewey, 1980; O'Doherty, 1986; Shusterman, 1989). Therefore, the audience of Face Value was numb to its exclusionary and elitist implications. The adherence of Face Value to the limited modernist vision seemed to convey more about the curator's conception of the function of art than it did about the relevance of contemporary portraiture to our lives. Face Value, as exhibited at the contemporary art center, was a show that was counterproductive to the mission of museums and possibly to the intentions of its original creators by failing to recognize the power of praxis in art and by allowing a narrow conception of art to overshadow a broad subject matter.
Modernism, as the purported savior of all that is pure (i.e. purposeless) in art, empowered the contemporary art center staff to dictate to the viewer the results of their own modernist conclusions. The curator did not want visitors "walking through from whatever end" they desired because it would be more difficult "to control" their understanding of Face Value (CU3). For such aesthetic stereotyping to become convincing, the visitor's ability and desire to interpret needed to be radically limited. That the curator even aspired to dictate such conclusions and to assume an authoritarian posture was indicative of her conception of the viewer as largely unknowledgable. In attempting to influence the viewer's level of understanding, the measures taken by the contemporary art center's staff constituted a lack of concern for the needs of the viewer, symptomatic of the modernist ethos.

Conflicting goals

The curator, as the practitioner of modernism in Face Value, would have you believe that she was motivated by contemporary issues such as increased accessibility, anti-elitism, and multiculturalism. The curator espoused such notions as she spoke of Face Value's ability to alert the visitor to "issues of racial stereotype and gender stereotype" (CU5). When heard talking about Face Value in this vein, one could hardly recognize the curator's authoritative posture. To espouse some noble ideas about increasing our awareness and respect for our differences may seem contemporary, but, in the context of the modernist exhibition design, it was improbable that these sort of goals were realizable. In Face Value, the curator's aesthetic perspectives left little room for alternative perspectives. The dogma of modernism, presented as gospel, restricted the posture of the curator and the exhibition in a way which afforded little opportunity for flexibility. Caught in a modernist trap where the basis of one's methods are notions purported to be exclusively true, the curator was left little alternative, but to abandon such noble gestures and attempt to dictate to the viewer and staff how art should be considered.

It was characteristic of the curator's modernist leanings that she should identify the initially egalitarian nature of the contemporary art center's galleries as "problematic" (CU2). In curating Face Value, her agenda was not to
accommodate the diversities of the art experience. Instead, she chose to align *Face Value* with a strictly defined modernist notion of exhibition. The curator, looking through the lens of modernism, perceived the museum visitors as uninformed viewers who should not be given free rein lest they may not arrive at the intended modernist deductions when looking at *Face Value*. In this respect, engaging the ideas of education raised undesirable possibilities of empowering the visitor to understand *Face Value* in a way which would not be in line with the modernist program. Modernism, informed by its systematic quest for clarity about the nature of art, proposed a factually based prescription of how to look at art which left no room for education to engage the cognitive faculties of the viewer (Shusterman, 1989). This search for truth dictated that the exhibition would provide the viewer with an experience based solely upon what we can say factually about the objects. As a result, the exhibition design of *Face Value* was forced to explicitly conceal the complex references found in its subjects in order to restrict the possibilities of interpretation to those consistent with its own credos. Privileging art presentation over the art experience was the only strategy available to the curator to successfully negate the inherent demands of the art object.

As *Face Value* promoted the aesthetic significance of art over its cultural and historical significance, it sacrificed the fullest conception of art - as an element of learning - for clinical and artificial notions. Only if the viewers were coerced into suspending their own beliefs would they be able to consider art for its purely visual qualities. *Face Value*, by design, ignored the meanings of art objects. To do so was to deny the widely recognized need for interpretation in considering art (Barrett, 1994).

**A modernist narrative**

According to the theory of modernist exhibition design, the curator believed that, if the visitor understood *Face Value*, it would be “as a well constructed narrative” (CU14). One would ordinarily expect such a narrative to be formed of parts - a beginning, middle, and end (Danto, 1991). It is not surprising, then, that it became important for the curator to control the visitor’s movement through *Face Value* to the point that they know “where’s the
beginning" and "where's the end" and to try to make *Face Value* read like a narrative (CU3). The beginning of this narrative was the traditional portraiture hallway which constituted, for her, the way we considered art prior to the advent of the modernist exhibition style. There the walls were colored, the space was intimate, and the work was hung in a condensed fashion. The space was to appear less artificial (i.e. less modernist) than the rest of the exhibition. That the curator could not do a more convincing job, perhaps hanging the work salon style or allowing furniture to creep into the gallery, was symptomatic of the unforgiving nature of the modernist program. In any case, the point at which the co-opted traditional style of displaying art gave way to the modernist presentation method also signified the end, and the extent, of the curator's narrative.

The curator's treatments of art were associated with an element of truth that purportedly went beyond the conditions of our existence and the potentialities of the actual objects in *Face Value*. The narrator and his or her narrative are said to possess a "historical knowledge" that "always seems more than human knowledge" (Danto, 1991, p. 239). The historical knowledge that *Face Value* was said to possess empowered its practitioners over its viewers because the modernist ideas it represented were inaccessible in earlier times. The visitor was treated as being uninformed and therefore, in the curator's opinion, it became necessary "to control the narrative," but only if the art experience was limited to modernist perspectives (CU3). The curator attempted to present all the logical consequences of assuming a modernist perspective because she assumed that viewers were incapable of doing it for themselves. By restricting the visitors' freedom to draw their own conclusions, she admitted that their interpretative efforts "may not [lead them]...to view it as a well constructed narrative" (CU14). The modernist deductions about art that the curator was providing, or perhaps forcing, 'freed' the viewer from having to go through *Face Value* without making "all sorts of choices that may not have anything to do with the show" (CU3).

The nature of modernism's pseudoscientific program was to attempt to impose a sense of order onto an essentially organic enterprise. It reflected an attempt to impose gross generalizations about the nature of art onto the
intricacies and individualities of the art experience. These attempts at control represent the vanity of science as its adherents strive to impose aesthetic truisms over conditions that we can never hope to predict, such as viewer understanding. By subscribing to the mythical narrative the curator eliminated the possibility of interpretation from the viewer’s experience in *Face Value* and replaced it with the residue of modernist theories about art. The curator’s narrative in *Face Value* presented modernism as truth in a way that was tantamount to granting the audience the privilege of experiencing the conclusions she reached after she “had seen different expressions of portraiture in contemporary work” (CU4). The narrative format selected by her, as the framework of *Face Value*, was indicative of the unyielding posture of modernism, and that certain reckless impropriety in bracketing together the art experience and the narrative can be seen as the creative expression of the curator-as-artist. But, as consideration of mediating factors in the art experience were deemed unnecessary, *Face Value* lost any potential relevance as an educative entity. The narrative of *Face Value* was not about the differences between traditional portraiture and contemporary examples as much as it was about our progression into modernist modes of exhibition. The contemporary art center staff was deeply invested in the modernist sense of ‘truth’ in art. The end of *Face Value*’s narrative was a claim to purity in art that gave them such a sense of conviction about their beliefs to the extent that expressing modernist ideas about art seemed to become the only function of the exhibition, overshadowing any issues dealing directly with portraiture.

The imposition of modernism over contemporary art

In order to appear successful, *Face Value* became an attempt to reshape viewers’ thoughts about art to conform to a narrow prescription originally designed to accommodate art objects created specifically to modernist values. Unlike such art objects, however, contemporary art is no longer solely about aesthetic interactions with the gallery space. That it is more about interactions with the viewer makes it incompatible with the modernist exhibition design. The design of *Face Value* constituted an aesthetic perspective by superimposing the ideas of modernism upon the collection of art objects it featured, faithfully
reflected the modernist definition of the pure art experience. This can be said to embody “the disinterested and sympathetic attention to, and contemplation of, the work of art for its own sake alone” (Levin, 1981, p. 30). In modernist theory the art exhibition should be dedicated to presenting a visual experience unadulterated by the real life implications of art, and therefore in Face Value it became important to consider how each painting related to the space to the point of the extinction of all other considerations. The overriding concern had to be how the art objects worked as an ensemble within the confines of the modernist gallery space (O’Doherty, 1986).

The curator’s conception of the viewer

The modernist aesthetic, the true subject of Face Value, had as its mission the coaction of the viewer into becoming an advocate of modernist ideas about art. Education was not only unnecessary but counterproductive to the mission as visitors informed and able to think for themselves would be distracted from a proper appreciation of the gallery as an aesthetic object and of recognizing the curator as the bona fide creator. The decreed lack of importance of understanding in the production of Face Value encouraged a posture among the museum staff that identified the ‘natural’ instincts of the viewers as the determinant as to whether they would have a satisfactory art experience. Without being allowed to foster cognition the education director was left to equate the art experience with whether the viewer would “get it” or not (ED9) (refer to appendix B for the education director’s complete interview). The visitor was required, by the curator’s noneducational exhibition design, to simply try hard enough and “trust their own instincts” in order to find Face Value to be clear and simple to understand (CU9).

The curator relieved herself of any responsibility to the needs of the viewer because the transcendent power of her modernist treatments of the art object were believed to be capable of subsuming the responsibilities of education. Her belief in the modernist conception of aesthetic understanding was instrumental in sequestering education from Face Value. The proper accommodation of the art object, if correctly done, was deemed to be so effective that the visitor had no need for education. The art experience Face
Value eventually offered was a test of mettle whereby the viewer could only overcome the obstinence of modernism and the complexities of the subject if he or she exerted enough energy. In order to justify such an unconcerned attitude toward viewers, the degree of difficulty encountered by them in attempting to assimilate an art object was claimed to be an essential indicator of the quality of the art experience. This implied that the visitor would not sufficiently appreciate nor gain the fullest enrichment from the art experience if they were assisted in interpretation. As a result, the Curatorial Editor developed a concern for "the possibility that we will over-explain something" (CE19). These artificial barriers constituted an elitist posture whereby the modernist exhibition design eschewed the needs of the visitor in favor of a formalist commodification of the art object as a prize for the determined. Indefensible in the context of a public arts institution, an approach that makes the inexperienced viewer work for his or her interpretation with no assistance or assurance of success truly establishes the social and moral emptiness of modernist theory.

Face Value’s implicit purpose was in its very essence antithetical to the goals of an education. In order to be an educational institution which seeks to open up the possibilities of interpretation, art must be examined in the broader context of the processes of life (Dewey, 1980). It is clear that the curator’s goal was to coerce the viewer into only considering "the different works in terms of the [modernist] aesthetic issues they raise" (CU5). This conflict illustrates the paradox of Face Value or any exhibition, to be mounted in an educational setting and yet, use modernist dogma as its guiding force, as such a program of aesthetic justification removes educational ideas from its realm. As a result of modernism’s obsession with its own image, there appeared to be little need for the measures of education or any other practical response to audience needs. The curator’s specious claims that her exhibition are clearly contradicted by Face Value’s hostile stance toward interpretive assistance. The pseudoscientific nature of modernism’s inquiries encourages a clinical attitude toward art that allowed the curator to treat Face Value as if its only mission were to dictate to the viewer the true way of looking at art. In this sense, Face Value was solely about creating an artificial environment that coerced the viewer into considering art from a ‘pure’ state of mind, without any attention to spare for art’s
inherent complexities as an organic enterprise. The only subject left for a viewer to consider, after the successful stripping of all context from a piece of art, would be the dialog between the piece and its environment, and the only experience available would be to appreciate the efforts of the exhibition designers.

The Education Department

Growing out of modernism is a mode of exhibition design that acknowledges the importance of presentation over interpretation and exploits its influence on perception in order to affirm the viability of its own dogma. Accordingly, the design of Face Value promoted a separation of the art object from its possible meanings in a way which left little room for the ideas of education. While several of the Education Department's systems for dealing with an exhibition were left intact, their purposes were subverted and their effectiveness neutralized. Since education was largely excluded from the design process of Face Value, tours and teacher's workshops were all that remained in the domain of the Education Department, since these activities fell outside the purview of exhibit design they were not co-opted as thoroughly as other activities that normally came under the aegis of education. Coerced by the design of the exhibit, the education director's role was reduced to reshaping her programs to promote Face Value as a visually effective exhibition or else be seen as heading an idle department. By emptying the exhibition of contextual and educative references in favor of a minimalist treatment of art, the curator arranged its emphasis to fall on the art object's physical properties so completely that the education director was left little alternative than to consider formalist issues as the defining the elements of Face Value, including its educational approach. Through the lens of modernism the art object was once again viewable as a viable commodity, an illusory means to afford the museum practitioners a sense of ownership and affluence during the exhibition. It is paradoxical that Face Value, consisting as it did of works created largely before or after the modernist ethos dominated the production of art, would exclude
viewer experience from its realm of considerations so completely that the contemporary art center's education director would be left with little alternative than to talk about the uniqueness of the art object in a formalist sense. She sought to enlist many of the contemporary art center's forms of presentation as reconceptualizations of art objects; accommodations orchestrated by the institution were then re-presented as instrumental in their composition. The education director frequently commented that the contemporary art center "did things...differently" in regard to these accommodations (ED4). In this context, the education director claimed that it was a "nice touch" for *Face Value* to contain a traditional portrait that would be "representative of [a more traditional local art museum's] collection" (ED4). When queried about education, she only saw significance in the way in which Felix Gonzalez-Torrez' piece was placed "on our beam" (ED4). When pressed to illuminate the educational implications of such a gesture she speculated that she "can't imagine any other museum offering that as a space" (ED5). She further illuminated that "the artist knew of the plans [to place it on the beam] and approved of them, so, it almost became site specific" (ED5). This is indicative of the lengths the education director was forced to go to in her program of enlisting the formal details of the art object in *Face Value* as a means to establish a greater sense of ownership about the exhibition. It became increasingly evident that the education director could only find pride in *Face Value* by identifying the efforts of her own department the measures of formalist accommodation which served to delineate the contemporary art center's treatment of the exhibition. Yet, these formal investigations seemed trivial in regard to the fullest conception of art as a product and facilitator of human experience, an approach more suitable for the education practitioner and one which could yield a considerable sense of ownership and accomplishment as well. The modernist exhibition design of *Face Value* led to a fetishization of the art object which forced the education director to seek to acquire ownership, not through the institution's ability to enhance the exhibition's power of praxis, but rather by magnifying the most minute formalist properties of the presentation.
These decisions were concerned with the formal relationships of the exhibition with increasingly little concern for the needs of the viewer in terms of an overall art experience. The modernist exhibition design of *Face Value* coerced those with a deep investment in the exhibit down a path of commodification and fetishization of the art object, misdirecting them to become involved in formal details while ignoring aspects of the exhibit that might have given their work a sense of validity within the context of the art center's mission. Art exhibition is a vehicle of public learning which lies at the heart of and is essential to the museum's mission (Esteve-Coll, 1993). In the final analysis it can be seen that the modernist design imposed on the exhibition of *Face Value*, by the curator and reluctantly adopted by the education director, led the entire staff to lose sight of this primary purpose of presenting art.

The political networks of the contemporary art center

Description

The political networks of the artworld and a lack of resources prevented the contemporary art center, in its early stages of development, from procuring art objects that were famous or prestigious for exhibitions originating within itself on a regular basis. It is entirely possible that the contemporary art center frequently opted for the only other available means of exhibiting well-known art objects - the traveling exhibition in light of their status as an unseasoned and, as a result, somewhat marginal member of the museum community. The strategy of enlisting the services of travelling exhibitions with well-known objects enabled the contemporary art center to present prominent works of art, and indirectly elevate itself by association with more powerful institutions. The large number of such traveling shows made it possible for the contemporary art center to choose groups of artworks which were appropriate in regard to the desires and directions of the institution. *Face Value* fell into this category. Originating at a well established institution, and featured prominent and recognizable artists such as Cindy Sherman, Chuck Close, Andy Warhol, Robert Henri, William Merritt Chase, and George Bellows among others.
The contemporary art center's need to focus its energies on traveling exhibitions resulted in a perceptible sense of inferiority about their work among the staff. Rather than producing their own show, more often than not they had to depend upon someone else's aesthetic decisions about selection and appropriateness of artwork and subject. As the registrar surmised, the attitude of practitioners toward the contemporary art center is "in a lot of ways...like a second-run movie house" (RE6) (refer to appendix F for the registrar's complete interview). The negative effects of focusing on traveling exhibitions combined with the modernist directive to elevate and commodify the art object worked to effectively disempower the contemporary art center's staff. By referring to art objects as autonomous or self-sufficient in their modernist exhibitions, smaller in-house shows are marginalized due to their lack of high profile art objects, in spite of the fact that the staff puts more creative effort into them. Even the education director surmised that the Education Department was "doing more for Face Value...because the show is much larger...and has a [higher] number of [reconizable] artists" (ED1).

This quest for prominent art objects directed the staff to place a premium on such traditional art objects such as Robert Henri's "Lady in Black" in Face Value or Edward Hopper's work from a more recent exhibition, simply because they possessed a greater history and as a result a deeper sense of prominence than contemporary work. Thus, the potential for seeking to offer quality art experiences based on education was easily undermined by an insatiable thirst for multitudes of famous art objects.

The registrar observed that as the staff came to perceive the contemporary art center as "a space for prepackaged shows," their attention and energy were implicitly directed to focus on the more glamorous traveling exhibitions (RE6). Similarly, the Education Department gave a noncommittal nod to the smaller shows which were created in-house. As the education director commented that her department is "trying to give, if not equal weight, at least we try and pull in something from all of the exhibitions" it became apparent that the staff was obeying a mandate from the administration to concentrate on featuring the attention-grabbing elements of the traveling exhibitions (ED2).
By “focusing much more on Face Value and the ideas in Face Value than the others,” the Education Department prioritized the fame of the art object over the subtleties of viewer experience contrary to its mission (ED2). Any of the exhibitions offered by the contemporary art center had the potential to offer a fulfilling art experience, but only Face Value could provide objects of supposedly intrinsic value and interest. By prizing the object above experience, the staff of the contemporary art center assumed a posture of deference to the modernist ethic that made their position particularly vulnerable to subversion. As a result of their intense focus on the art object, the staff generally failed to completely realize their mission: to provide the creative efforts necessary to establish an environment that promotes significant art experiences through effective presentation. When the registrar observed that “there isn’t a clear sense of the mission,” she summarized the effect on the staff of the contemporary art center’s deep investment in the autonomous art object (RE6). Locked into the confines of the modernist conception of art, the staff could only see creativity in terms of the selection and formal arrangement of the art object in Face Value. As a result, the registrar commented that there was not “a clear sense of purpose in what anybody [was] doing” (RE6).

Interpretation

As the art experience is overlooked and the art object separated from its conditions of existence the purpose of art is lost (Dewey, 1980). An exhibition, such as Face Value, that engaged in a modernist exhibition design, fell into this predicament as the exhibition became a more or less purposeless act of facilitation for many. Since the staff at the contemporary art center were uninvolved in the selection or conceptualization of Face Value, they failed to see past the glamour of the object to find a purpose in their work. In their near-sighted attitude toward traveling exhibitions, the staff of the contemporary art center cast themselves in the role of elevated to furniture movers.

The contemporary art center has consistently produced exhibitions that have reflected the modernist conception of art as being separate from the business of life, by separating the art object from its possible meanings. In Face Value this modernist bias was reflected in the treatment of the prestigious art
object as a tool to draw visitors into the exhibition. Modernism fragmented the art experience in *Face Value* by focusing on the art object and denying its artfactuality. Inevitably, as the wholeness of the art experience is undermined, notions of commodification and fetishization take root (Shusterman, 1989). Staff members that found themselves coerced into these promotions became disheartened by the lack of educative substance in their programming. The Exhibition Designer summarily dismissed *Face Value* as a means “to provide [those in art circles] with another social setting” pointing to the lack of purpose many see in the contemporary art center’s programming due to its inability to reach beyond the museum aristocracy (EX8) (refer to appendix D for the Exhibition Designer’s complete interview).

A fragmentary reconceptualization of the art experience resulted from the modernist treatment of the contemporary art center’s exhibitions as the usefulness of art as an educative entity was lost. As a result, a sense of accomplishment and purpose in the contemporary art center’s methods was unavailable to most of the staff. High-profile art objects and exhibitions were regularly enlisted with the express hope that their fame would attract more people to the contemporary art center’s galleries. As a result, it became inevitable that the contributing members of the staff would come to the realization that exhibitions such as *Face Value* were little more than social milieus devoid of any educative intention. The Curatorial Editor characterized *Face Value* as a means to “provide a venue for people to look at some art, nothing more and nothing less” (CE11). This statement, indicative of the pervading superficiality of the curator’s purposes as well as those of the visitors, characterizes the attitude of the contemporary art center staff. The matter-of-factness of the Curatorial Editor’s assessment underscores the sense of resignation which was held by the majority of the staff.

It is apparent, therefore, that although the contemporary art center may have been conceived as a contemporary art space with an educational mission, subtle forces were always at work pushing it to adopt a traditional modernist posture. This precarious position disenfranchised the staff and kept them from feeling a sense of ownership of the artwork they installed.
Since the bulk of the contemporary art center's programming focused on the accommodation of traveling exhibitions, this lost sense of purpose was not unusual enough to raise any outcry when, during *Face Value*, the duties of the staff were increasingly eviscerated. The modernist notion of exhibition established in *Face Value* that artificially heightened the importance of the art object while relegating the viewer's experience to secondary status was not entirely unfamiliar to the staff. Relieved of the responsibilities of developing a thematic purpose and procuring and selecting art objects accordingly, they were left without a sense of importance about their contributions in *Face Value*. The immediate responsibilities of their positions became their primary responsibilities and any creativity in regard to planning and installation was eliminated from consideration. In this state, the registrar could not help but observe that "the main responsibility everybody has is to unpack it, hang it, and open the doors" (RE6). However, some - most notably the education director and the curator - still had opportunities for creative decisions in *Face Value* that prevented them from adopting a disinterested attitude about the exhibition. The responsibilities of the curator and the education director were such that their contributions were to be closely associated with the perception of *Face Value*, although for very different reasons.

**The curator's political position**

**Description**

The desire to legitimize its own existence led the administration of the contemporary art center to focus on the imported exhibition. This also became the main motivator that shaped the political microcosm of hierarchies within the institution. Within the politically charged atmosphere of the arts, being responsive to the ideas of one's superiors is tantamount to doing one's job successfully. A high turnover rate cast its shadow over most arts institutions making job security a constant concern. In particular, the contemporary art center's staff felt a fear of reprisal that inevitably led to a reluctance to attach personal responsibility to their creative decisions. One need only consider the conditions of anonymity which most of the participants in this study insisted upon to realize the extent of their apprehension when giving voice to their ideas.
about their work and the perceived mission of the center. By operating in constant fear of the possible implications of their decision-making, they inevitably became passive and withdrawn when questioned about their individual responsibility for the effectiveness of Face Value. The widespread acceptance of such instability and uneasiness about one's position has led many art institutions to resemble a fascist regime where implicit intimidation is utilized as an unifying device so that the voice of those in the most powerful positions becomes the voice of the institution.

The unspecific nature of the political structure of the contemporary art center accorded the majority of the power to those able to claim the highest position, thereby enabling the curator to dictate without question that Face Value would reflect her own vision of art. Within the political structure of the contemporary art center, clear cut disciplinary distinctions encouraged the curator to view the responsibilities of other contributing departments as having little consequence on her own responsibilities. That this was a common stance among all of the curators at the center was indicative of the institution's poor communication practices. Much like the other senior curators, provided she had the interest, the curator felt comfortable controlling every aspect of Face Value.

As a seasoned veteran of museum curatorial practices, the curator saw her vision of Face Value as accurate and interesting to the degree that all other staff members were seen as comparatively unknowledgable. This attitude naturally had a profound effect on the staff who worked with her, making them passive toward the exhibition and making them relinquish their sense of ownership of their own contributions. The Curatorial Editor was resigned to a work situation where she made changes that made the educative text that the curator wrote "more accessible" (CE6) and yet, "my changes are inevitably deleted" (CE7). That the curator did not "want to write by committee...[because it would]...dilute things down" was symptomatic of her desire to co-opt Face Value into her personal venue of creative expression (CU11). Her single minded efforts to this end seemed to emanate from her desire to impress during her intial endeavor at the contemporary art center as well as the sense of expressiveness and creativity she perceived as her role in the museum. Because the curator of Face Value seemed to fancy herself as an artist and not
as an educator, she was more concerned with making a strong initial impression by showcasing the individuality of her own exhibition decisions than she was in consulting informed opinions about such matters as education.

**Interpretation**

For the curator, curating *Face Value* did not entail opening up the educative possibilities of contemporary art, it offered an opportunity to give voice to her own opinions about art. As *Face Value* became a podium for her modernist concepts, the contemporary subject matter of the exhibition was generally ignored. The politically charged atmosphere at the contemporary art center undermined the exhibition as a venue of learning, making the curator's highly individualistic and singular approach possible.

To the same extent that the contemporary art center staff allowed a fear of reprisals to suppress their creative contributions to *Face Value*, they adopted a passive stance toward the curator in which their only actions were reactions to her requests. Any attempt to contribute ideas to the processes of facilitating the exhibition was inevitably seen as "counterproductive" (EX7). The staff saw their subordination as a state of affairs desirable to the elite because "they don't want anybody to make waves" (EX7). Failure to elicit opinions from the staff, and - in turn - their failure to voice them - led to an exaggerated sense of purposelessness about the exhibition. In the end, the staff concluded that the significance of *Face Value* was reducible to its means, to "keep people around here busy" (PR7).

**The education director’s political position**

**Description**

As might be expected from a politically oppressive atmosphere, poor communication was a normal state of affairs at the center and typically evident during *Face Value*. The flow of information to the Education Department about *Face Value* was kept to such a minimum that although the curator and the Curatorial Editor were aware that additional text panels accompanied the installation of the Byron Kim pieces - according to "the artist's wishes" (CE9) - the education director could only respond with a baffled "Ummm?" (ED15) when
so informed. The education director was so completely excluded from the installation process, that even the most rudimentary concerns, such as needing “to know what the content of the exhibition is going to be” went unanswered until the final stages of _Face Value_’s design (ED22).

The treatment of Cindy Sherman’s pieces provides an illuminating look into the way in which poor lines of communication at the Wexner assisted the curator in furthering her own ends. the education director saw a great need for the inclusion of text panels in _Face Value_, and specifically in the case of the Shermans, but this need went unacknowledged and once again she was left in the dark even as to why, as she is forced to admit: “I don’t know why that isn’t the case, why it doesn’t have additional information” (ED16). The curator maintained an appearance of having an interest in providing educational content by taking a conciliatory tone when she allowed that “that’s one where a text panel would probably work” (CU16) because the viewer “probably would need to know something else about the piece” (CU15). However, since the text panels were not included, it was indicative of the curator’s willingness to appear more friendly towards educational concerns than her actual practices evidence. The Curatorial Editor exposed the virulence the curator felt for the ideas of education by objecting to additional text on the grounds that “the exhibition simply wouldn’t look as good” (CE19). It was apparent that both the curator and the education director had no common interest in the establishment of an educational presence in the form of a text panel for Cindy Sherman’s piece. the education director ended up with a sense of resignation about the lack of credence her suggestions were given by the curator, while, in turn, the curator’s modernist agenda distracted her from engaging in any efforts to remedy any educational deficiencies she acknowledged in _Face Value_.

**Interpretation**

As seasoned political players, curators seem particularly adept at operating within the restrictive communicative structure of the art institutions. As an up and coming museum professional, the curator of _Face Value_ was no exception. This proved especially damaging for the Education Department - originally conceived of as a primary player in the exhibition’s programming -
which had to be eventually content with an ancillary role in Face Value. As the ideas of education have been consistently and progressively marginalized in museums, it was inevitable that the Education Department would be singled out as a disruptive force in Face Value by the curator, although in the contemporary art center’s power structure was technically an equal in regard to their responsibilities in Face Value. What power the curator did not acquire by virtue of position, she was granted by virtue of museum’s tradition of marginalizing Education Departments.

The curator had intimate knowledge of all information relating to the exhibition and it rarely occurred to her to disseminate it to other staff members unless she felt it was absolutely necessary. By controlling the flow of information relating to the progress of Face Value, the curator selectively released facts based upon what she hoped to accomplish at a particular moment. This allowed her carte-blanche in regard to the creation of the exhibit and, as a result, there was little chance she would have to justify any decision to another staff member prior to it being implemented, avoiding any discussion. The education director’s optimism was impressive as she concluded that she would have “liked to think that [the curator’s tight-fisted communicative practices] are not to keep information within a certain level of command and then handing it out as a finished product” (ED22).

Without any exchange of ideas taking place, the curator had no need to fabricate a justification for her vision of Face Value. The rigid disciplinary distinctions of the curator’s modernist ideas about art encouraged her to see the responsibilities of the Education Department as distinct and subordinate to primary considerations regarding the exhibition. It may have not occurred to her to do anything but withhold complete information about Face Value until the exhibition was fully designed. The only instances where the curator acknowledged the need to communicate to the Education Department about Face Value’s installation was by “explaining to them what my intent was” (CU10).

In her subordinate position, the education director felt she had little alternative but to resign herself to the fact that “Education [was] simply not a part of the planning process [of Face Value]” (ED21). The lack of input the education
director had over *Face Value* was evident as she offered the paradoxical statement that the extent to which the curator assumed the role of educator "really depends on who is curating the show and how much they want to get involved" (ED3).

Under the pressure of the curator's modernist intentions, the education director was forced to adopt the attitude that "education was simply not a part of the planning process" (ED21). It was symptomatic of the education director's essentially passive stance that she felt compelled to attempt to put a happy face on the neglect her department endures during the creation of exhibitions. The education director, referring to this preemption of her duties as a "collaboration" between herself and the curator where either "[the curator] writes the text or I write the text" (ED8), attempted to put a positive spin on a substandard situation. The education director's subordinate position was further illuminated as she observed that if the curator does not have "the interest or the available time" then the Education Department assumed additional responsibilities (ED9). Whether it was made out of embarrassment about the position she and her department were placed in or out of simple resignation, her statement that "we don't have anything to do with the way the exhibition is installed, or laid-out, or designed" did not bode well for the valuation of educative content in *Face Value* (ED19).

When queried about the curator's receptiveness to the ideas of the Education Department, the education director acknowledged that "there are some negotiations that can happen, but not much" (ED20). The education director recognized educational deficiencies in the contemporary art center's programming and had previously called for an increased educational presence in the galleries. Infusing the exhibition with educational panels was "one of the things that the Education Department has tried to [do] and talked about doing" (ED18). However, the department's sense of resignation about their circumstances and their reluctance to voice any objections regarding their marginalized, effectively gave the curator permission to deal with educative issues in exhibitions however she saw fit. Although the Education Department would clearly like "to have something [educational] next to the wall labels," until they are able to summon up the courage and the political skills to challenge the
anti-educational biases of curators, they will continually find themselves excluded, as they were in *Face Value*, blaming themselves by saying “we just haven’t pulled it together” (ED18).

When the education director was asked to consider the possibility that the ideas of the Education Department might have had greater substance in the curator’s eyes if the department had been allowed more of a voice during the planning stages of *Face Value* she responded, “I don’t think so, but that’s okay” (ED20). Contradictorily, the curator claimed that she “likes education to have a role in *Face Value*” and favored such “a collaboration between education and curatorial departments” (CU11) and, yet she also confessed “I really don’t know what [the Education Department’s] doing” (CU8).

Throughout the design and production stages of *Face Value*, numerous issues came to light that lead one to seriously question the sincerity of the curator’s espousal of the inherent value of “collaboration” (CU11). Despite her rhetoric of inclusion, it is not difficult to discern in the curator’s control of the total exhibition a familiar modernist approach, wherein all individuals not inspired by the modernist vision are perceived as ignorant or irrelevant. The result of the supposed collaboration between departments was that the educators at the center were left little opportunity to address the visitor’s needs. Although it had become apparent even in the early stages of planning that her approach would ensure that a visitor to *Face Value* would be hungry for far more information about the artwork, the curator restricted the Education Department’s role in *Face Value*, standing by the modernist principles that the unmediated encounter is the most meaningful approach to a work of art. With each repetition of her slogan “let's look at the real thing,” the curator progressively diminished the chance that the Education Department would be allowed to carry out any part of their original mission (CU14).

The apparent nature of the collaboration offered by the curator to the education director was: that to have any role in the production of *Face Value* and to appear useful, the Education Department would have to redirect its efforts toward the justification of the exhibit’s design. As a senior member of the staff at the contemporary art center, the large investment the education director had in *Face Value’s* success became the key to lending her support to the
curator's program. The curator justified her marginalization of education on the grounds that it would get "outside of [the visitors] really having to work to get at something" (CU17); the education director, having tacitly accepted the conditions of inclusion, was forced into the paradoxical position of marginalizing the efforts of her own department as neither "critical" nor "necessary," but simply "helpful" (ED24). With little alternative, other than defending the curator's notions of education, the education director was unable to assist the viewer in understadning Face Value.

Coopted into the role of support staff, and conditioned to stifle objections about her department's continued marginalization, the education director led the Education Department down a modernist path that demonstrated little respect for the viewer and, as a result, gained her little respect from her colleagues. The curatorial editor did not believe they "question decisions" (CE14) often enough, and, perhaps because of this, they were often viewed by the staff as simply being a "cheerleader" (EX6) or a "committee of 'yes' men" (PR3) for the curator's decisions.

By restructuring its approach to Face Value to uncritically accept, support, and defend the curator's approach, the Education Department seemed to know no more about audience needs and how to meet them than the curators. Their educational role was reduced to being a public relations department via tours and lectures. In this respect, the Curatorial Editor saw that while "the work is not always entertaining...they have to make it seem that way" (CE13). Recognizing their lack of depth, the Curatorial Editor observed that the Education Department "has a tendency to make exhibitions too entertaining...like Disneyland" (CE14). To the curatorial editor it was obvious that the Education Department should not have sought to "use the work in the exhibition as a springboard for concerns outside of art" (CE14) such as to simply "attract large audiences" (CE13). To her and other staff members at the Wexner, the apparent abandonment or lack of awareness of the educational bent of the contemporary art center's mission came to be interpreted variously as incompetence, disinterest, or frivolity. Instead of attempting to convince the public that Face Value was a worthwhile activity by exposing some of art's
educative possibilities the Education Department was frequently more in tune with the curator's modernist leanings as they attempted to sway public perception in the exhibition's favor.

It was illuminating that the Education Department's perceived shortcomings centered around their failure to illuminate the exhibition's importance in terms of its relevance to our lives. This circumstance was not lost on all staff members as the Preparator concluded that they “were afraid to introduce or encourage...perspectives [which may be seen as] unfavorable” (PR5). In this respect the education director and the curator were both accountable for squandering the exhibition's power of praxis.

When the researcher asked a seemingly innocuous question about her decision to distill the information in text panels from a previous venue into the printed material of Face Value's incarnation at the contemporary art center, the curator seemed to wrongly assume that the Education Department was somehow involved in the interviewer's scrutiny of her methods. This offered her an opportunity to expound on her distaste and discomfort with the ideas of education. The Education Department, in particular, came to the surface as she tossed around rash generalizations about all education departments and vague accusations about the contemporary art center's, in particular. In doing so, she admitted that the business of Education Departments and the way in which they conduct it “always drives [her] a little crazy” (CU12). In assessing their effectiveness she concluded; “either you have Education Departments who are absolutely interfering or you have those who are afraid to tell you anything” (CU12).

The education director chose to interpret the desire to control the educational aspect of Face Value as over-enthusiasm and believed that it was just the curator's interest becoming piqued “because it's her first show here” (ED4). The education director seemed to suggest that the marginalization of education in the exhibition came about as a result of the curator's will to impress exceeding her aptitude and knowledge. At no time does the education director admit the possibility that the curator's ideological bias, nor that her own passivity and simplistic ideas had contributed to the marginalization of educative elements in Face Value.
The Educational Elements of the Exhibition

Gallery Guide

Description

Contemporary museum practice dictated that the design of Face Value include at least a token gesture of educative effort. To this end, the Gallery Guide and an introductory text panel were permitted to break the silence of its modernist exhibition design. However, the less than cordial relationship between the ideas of education and the design of Face Value dictated that any such elements would be largely ineffective. The educative materials in Face Value were included largely as an acknowledgement of expectations regarding the center's role as a part of an educational institution. The greatest part of the Education Department's activities were constrained to such secondary roles as tours and lectures, activities that were strictly transitory in regard to the exhibition space.

The curator allowed the inclusion of minimal amounts of textual and explanatory content into Face Value, in spite of her modernist leanings. However, her restriction of this content to the Gallery Guide and the tours greatly diminished its accessibility. Under this approach, the Gallery Guide became the graveyard for any proposed textual content, rapidly growing into a complex and impenetrable volume. The education director's reference to the text of the guide as being "enormous" indicates her lack of confidence in its final form as an educational device (ED13). Although the education director claimed that the curator intended for the Gallery Guide to be an "introduction to the show," the education director observed that its length and esotericism rendered it unsuitable for this purpose (ED13). In admitting that visitors "probably won't remember all of this information" and implying that it must be "read after your visit," she maintained the hope that the guide would be read by the majority of museum goers (ED13).

The poor utilization of the Gallery Guide as an educational tool was characteristic of the curator's approach as the Curatorial Editor speculated that she tried to "impress her peers" (CE6) with a command of nomenclature that would "play to the artworld" (CU19) while ignoring the exhibitions deficiencies
in facilitating a sense of understanding. This failure of purpose was reflected in
the overall ineffectiveness of all the educational material. The education
director recognized that the Gallery Guide had become superfluous to the
extent that it was an optional activity that was of little use during an interpretive
encounter and of marginal purpose in other contexts where the visitors might
choose “to do more with it if [they] want” (ED13). That the most prominent
educative measures of Face Value were observed to be destined as largely
overlooked by the visitors spoke of the dire consequences of the effectiveness
of the museum exhibition as a place of learning.

Interpretation

By accepting the relegation of the Gallery Guide to the role of an
elaborate catalog and allowing their other activities to become marginalized
and extraneous to the primary perception of the exhibition, the Education
Department appeared as though it were in a state of arrested development. Its
approach came to resemble that of an earlier generation of museums. In this
previous era guided tours had been sufficient concession to identify them as
learning centers (Muhlberger, 1985).

Tours

Description

Tours could certainly have helped people realize that there was more to
Face Value than its modernist exhibition design admitted, and perhaps sparked
a viewer’s personal interest about specific objects in the gallery. However, the
nature of the tours, as an amalgamation of educational activity and modernist
ideas, reflected the Education Department’s compromised position. Modernist
tenets informed the tour training sessions led, as usual by the curator, and not
by the education director. These were conducted in a lecture form which
inevitably influenced the posture of the docents. The curator presented an
approach to Face Value that seemed to contradict her own modernist leanings.
While she told the tour guides about the transcendental powers of the exhibit,
she frequently compromised this modernist position and alluded to the way in
which Face Value could have significance to our lives. It became inevitable that
some of the more lofty aspirations the curator had for **Face Value** would have to be addressed in more meaningful ways than by an aesthetically pure presentation of the art object. She often offered such current aspirations for art such as the hope that **Face Value** would empower “people to [become more] conscious of the way faces play out in culture” (CU5). That the curator did not respond to such a necessity in the design of **Face Value** was either indicative of her less-than-heartfelt sympathy for these issues, or her lack of awareness of the influence of the modernist exhibition design.

That the Education Department merely reflected the curator’s allusions to such issues during the training sessions in their tours, and failed to expound upon them during the tours the interviewees participated in, spoke of the conservatism and limitations of the Education Department. However, it should not be overlooked that even a facile mention of current artistic issues constituted an opportunity to salvage some contemporary significance from the exhibition. The tours, thus, became a small effort in **Face Value** to offer the visitor a grounding of the exhibition in reality. In using the curator’s own words as justification for their mission, the Education Department could approach **Face Value** that was marginally more appropriate to its content than the coolness of its modernist design. The curator’s comments about the ability of **Face Value** to allow the audience “to realize that identity is really a very complex and organic enterprise” proved to be a means for the education director and her department to redirect their efforts toward the viewer (CU5).

In introducing even the most rudimentary concepts of education, the tour addressed the basic relationship between art and life in a way which broke the spell of modernism. By aiding the viewer in overcoming a limited educational setting, tours seemed to alert people that **Face Value** could be more than a formal exercise. Kate, a visitor, initially found the artist Byron Kim’s works to be uninteresting because “they were just so plain” (VK16) (refer to appendix G for the Kate’s complete interview). Similarly, Ted, a visitor also, could only question “why the squares of color [in Kim’s work] were even considered portraits” (VT32) (refer to appendix J for the Ted’s complete interview). However, a tour led Kate, in spite of a low level of expertise in contemporary art, to find enough
significance in the Kims they became "interesting...after [the docent] explained them" in a way that suggested she may have wanted to further investigate the implications of his work (VK15).

Interpretation

The fact that a tour was able to make an unfamiliar object even remotely interesting in the context of *Face Value* demonstrates the strength of conducted tours. However, the fact that Kate could only say that the Kim's became more 'interesting' to her and could not pinpoint reasons, seemed to indicate that the limitations of the Education Department's tours in concert with *Face Value*'s modernist exhibition design made them essentially hostile to the center's educational mission. That Kate failed to realize that the art object could be connected to life also speaks to the ambivalence and hesitation of the docents when faced with the dilemma of assisting the viewer and, perhaps, contradicting the curator's intentions. Education's response to the needs of the viewer enriched the tours of *Face Value*. That it only did so to a limited extent, is a sad illustration of the challenges faced by contemporary art theorists and artists in their attempt to reclaim the museum environment from the influences of modernism.

Attendance

Description

As a relatively young arts institution, the struggle to establish a constituency and gain national recognition dominates the concerns of the contemporary art center. Increasing attendance and being acknowledged by local and national media are of critical importance to the staff and administration. The simplest path to such attention is through the contemporary art center's exhibitions. *Face Value*, an attractive collection of notable artists, fulfilled this need. The traditional portraits, in particular, were regarded as a guarantee of notoriety and increased attendance. As the curator speculated, "you're going to know who George Bellows is, or William Merritt Chase, or Henri, or Whistler" and presumably, you are going to come to the exhibition.
because of this recognition (CU17). The prominence of the art objects was effectively equated with the developing persona of the institution. By proclaiming exhibitions with 'high-profile' art objects the contemporary art center was able to inflate attendance figures and increase its media coverage. That Gretchen, a visitor, concluded that it "was a good show" because "it had a lot of famous works by famous people" was indicative of the emphasis on the object and the diminished concern for the art experience in *Face Value* (VG53) (refer to appendix H for the Gretchen’s complete interview). Attendance numbers were a prominent measure of those invested in the interests of the contemporary art center as the seduction of the public became a substitute for offering quality programming.

The obsession with attendance figures reinforces the modernist impulse to treat the art object as an autonomous entity. This necessarily leads to a marginalization of the needs of the viewer and a general disregard for the art experience. As the contemporary art center’s staff increasingly regarded attendance numbers as their raison d’être, they relieved themselves of the need to consider an art object’s real world implications and narrowed their activities to accommodating the art object in a strictly formalist manner.

**Interpretation**

Although the process of installing *Face Value* consumed the energies of a staff of approximately twenty people, the emphasis on the aesthetic presentation of the art object meant that when *Face Value* opened most of the staff’s responsibilities were over. This attitude of attractiveness and notoriety as the sole arbiters of value reduced the resources of *Face Value* after its installation from twenty to approximately four individuals, all from the Education Department. This was indicative of the modernist commodification of the art object, wherein the installation of the exhibition becomes the finished product. In this situation, staff members could not help but be unconcerned about the art experience because their responsibilities ostensibly stop before even a single visitor is permitted into the gallery. The forced attention to enticing large crowds
to enter the gallery and the modernistic bias of the curator in *Face Value* reinforced the effects of each other in marginalizing the needs of the viewer and excluding the education program from the exhibition space.

The Preparator's observation that the Education Department must be fulfilling its responsibilities since "they draw a lot of kids into the exhibition" is a perfect example of the subversive combination of an attendance-oriented approach, whereby museum practitioners who should know better succumb to the temptation of these facile measures of success (PR1) (refer to appendix E for the preparator's complete interview). The abdication of these professionals' responsibilities toward the public left a typical visitor, like Kate, without means to access her personal points of reference in order to assess the implications of the art objects in front of her. As a result, she was forced to accept notoriety as the only available means of grounding her experience in the real world. When she was pressed to identify with a particular object in *Face Value* she offered the work of Andy Warhol because she had not "seen any of his work in person before" (VK14). This assessment reflected the degree of media attention that Andy Warhol has generated without any reference to specific elements in the work. She sought a phenomenon with which she was familiar and had experienced previously in order to relate the art object to herself. This inclination to find elements associated with the art object that refer to real life is a result of our tendency to want to make sense of our environment (Graham, 1995). As an inexperienced arts viewer, Kate came to *Face Value* without a familiarity with related knowledge-seeking strategies. As such, she was not practiced in "the cognitive steps [an individual] takes to construct new understandings and to apply previously acquires knowledge" (Koroscik, 1993, p. 22). By not offering needed assistance, *Face Value* intentionally limited Kate's perceptions to notions of fame associated with the presence of the authentic and notable object. Instead of seeking to overcome this facile subversion of the museum experience, *Face Value*'s practitioners chose to consciously exploit it, seeing in the experience of many segments of the museum going public a means of quickly increasing their raw attendance figures.
By exploiting the notoriety of select art objects *Face Value* offered visitors a fleeting brush with fame, thereby providing as large a crowd as possible with the opportunity to gaze vacantly at an Andy Warhol or a Cindy Sherman. The ability to lure an audience into *Face Value* became the barometer of success for the staff; once counted, the viewer might as well have ceased to exist in terms of attentions to his or her needs. In reflecting this attitude the curator unabashedly admitted, “I’m always encouraged when I hear about big numbers as opposed to small numbers” (CU16). Powerful parties, such as the Board of Directors knew no better than to demand accountability in terms of attendance, and “the pressure...to bring in crowds” became overwhelming (CE14). This pressure to improve attendance figures spread to the point that the curatorial editor observed that “whenever there’s not a crowd of people [at an event] they [the staff] complain” (CE13). Trapped within the convolutions of misplaced expectations and redirected priorities, the staff of the Wexner became desensitized to the educational aspect of the exhibition. As a direct result of characterizing greater attendance as “a positive thing,” the staff of the contemporary art center were eventually moved to commodify not only the art object, but the audience as well (EX1).

As large attendance figures are amassed and museum coffers temporarily replenished, the mission of the art museum as a public institution is forgotten. Only when museum visitors realize that these overcrowded events have only limited personal appeal to them as spectacles of rarity and fame, will the museum be forced to rethink how it characterizes success. Perhaps, in that moment of clarity, the power of praxis of the art exhibition will be recognized and exhibitions will be designed around their ability to attract visitors as programs of enrichment instead of exercises in connoisseurship and elitism.
The Viewers

The eviscerate art experience of the viewer

Art museums have widely accepted the ideas of modernism as an aesthetic prescription for the presentation of art. In light of the fact that presentation affects our understanding of art, this acceptance has had far-reaching repercussions on the museum's perception of its responsibilities toward the public (Vergo, 1994). Modernist exhibition design, fundamentally hostile to the ideas of education and the needs of the viewer, continues to be standard despite the number of calls for an approach that is more responsive to its audience (O'Doherty, 1986). This same design was imposed on Face Value and typically failed to address either its visitors or its subject. In the purist program of Face Value, the universal approach to the art object was tantamount to taking a non-educational stance as the changeable nature of the real world were ignored. Consequently, the complex relationship between art and the viewer that informs the art experience was removed from consideration (Shusterman, 1989). The fragmentary notion of the artworld, to which modernism ascribed, prioritized the art object as a separate entity in a way which allowed its advocates to exclude the viewer. This adaptation of scientific inquiry to aesthetics subsumed the education of the public as the spiritual goals of truth and purity were pursued instead.

That it is much easier to dictate than to educate, led the creators of Face Value to choose the simplest path in responding to the visitor's thirst for culture. The curator aspired to recreate Face Value in the modernist image and demonstrate to viewers the correct way of considering art, and by doing so forced the viewer to become passive in regard to interpretation. By "really laying out certain ideas for the viewer" the curator cast herself as the arbiter of modernist dictums and required the viewer to have little alternative but to blindly consume her modernist vision (CU3). The implications of Face Value as an art exhibition of contemporary portraiture became largely irrelevant to such an approach. The primary goal of any modernist exhibition, regardless of its content, is to communicate the ideas of modernism through its presentation. Accordingly, Face Value was primarily about the ideology of modernism as it
excluded real world references in order to engage in aesthetic introspection. It only utilized contemporary portraiture as backdrop against which to present its manifesto, and the art object became the medium through which its modernist ideas were expressed. Face Value fulfilled its role as an arbiter of taste and style by coercing the viewer into passive appreciation.

It was crucial to the success of the modernist agenda in Face Value that the majority of its visitors be sufficiently inexperienced in looking at art that they would have neither the confidence nor the knowledge to arrive at conclusions without assistance. The exploitation of this inexperience was the basis of the excisunism of Face Value as all ideas contradictory to its formalist bias were discouraged. The majority of Face Value's audience was left little alternative, but to succumb to its persuasion, as the exhibition presented them with the residue of an already concluded interpretation from an over-idealized modernist perspective. Further interpretation was perceived as unnecessary and rendered, in any case, almost impossible because the relevancies of the art objects in regard to the viewer were preordained by the exhibition design. It was to this end that the curator made "the whole progress through the show...controllable" in terms of interpretation (CU2). This controlled exposition of a strict set of values led viewers to feel as though they were privileged by seeing art through the discerning eye, and lulled them into claiming as their own the recognition that what they were looking at was significant without reason.

As presentations become increasingly removed from the processes of life, they begin to be perceived as the dictums of some higher authority (Dewey, 1980; O'Doherty, 1986). While it is entirely possible that the art objects of Face Value did attain some degree of relevance for visitors, no real effort was made by the staff to establish meaningful connections necessary for the exhibition to have this effect. As Face Value denied the presence of viewers in its galleries, the meaning of art was lost and the art experiences became eviscerate.

The visitor's desire to complete a successful transaction during their visit left them with little alternative, but to accept Face Value's devalued modernist scrip in lieu of more enriching returns. It was only the modernist exhibition design's heavy reliance on its historical recognizability as the traditional
convention of exhibition that prevented it from being perceived as without purpose. By going no further than providing visitors with a superficially convenient way of expressing their interest in culture, all that could be expected from the exhibition would be a brief and facile experience in which the viewer simply accepted that their encounter had been important and had represented the correct way of considering art. The final result of all these subterfuges and manipulations was that the visitors lost their sense of personal purpose in the art experience as the modernist design forcibly mediated their experiences by replacing a stolen sense of identify with the neutral platitudes about truth in art.

The naive viewer

Description

Woven throughout the experiences of most of those who viewed Face Value was a common thread; a naivete of beliefs, expectations, and conclusions about art. The visitors to Face Value had very different, but similarly limited expectations about their experiences. Face Value appeared unusual for Kate because “it had so many similar artworks” (VK11). That the exhibition housed art objects that “were all portraits” seemed unusual to Kate (VK11). In contrast, Gretchen found Face Value to be different from other exhibitions she had seen because “it was not as monothematic” (VG16). While Kate and Gretchen had dissimilar conclusions about the character of Face Value, it can be said that, in either case, their surprise at the variety - or lack thereof - of art is representative of their relative inexperience in looking at art. This can be said to be the prevalent level of experience of Face Value’s visitors. Expectations associated with limited experience in looking at art abounded as visitors were startled to encounter much of the less orthodox forms of contemporary art. Ted admitted that he was “not used to seeing video things” (VT12) while Kate “thought everything would be stuff that would be hung on the wall” (VK35). This had serious implications for how Face Value was understood as the majority of the visitors proved to be easily manipulated by appearances of authority and in urgent need of educative assistance. The visitor’s naivete about the frequently unorthodox forms of contemporary portraiture made them easily confused by their art encounters in Face Value. Kate “at least figured to see a human face”
(VK35) in each of the portraits while Ted was surprised that "there were some with more than one figure in the picture [which] I don't think of...as being portraits" (VT30).

As a result of their modernist experiences in Face Value, the visitors were left little alternative but to conclude that the exhibition was a benign cultural experience rather than an educational one. Because of the modernist exhibition design's hostility toward the needs of the viewer, visitors were coerced into expressing oversimplified aesthetic attitudes that bore little resemblance to the concepts that were inscribed in the exhibition.

If the viewer could recognize that what they were looking at were important works of art, then the modernist exhibition design would be validated as a viable way of conditioning the inexperienced viewer to look at art in modernist terms. The less the visitors knew about art the more malleable they proved to be. In this sense Face Value was more seductive to the inexperienced viewer for whom the modernist exhibition design appeared authoritarian as an arbiter of taste. Losing their personal identity in Face Value's inscribed methods and fragmentary rendition of the art experience, the inexperienced viewer felt empowered in sharing Face Value's discriminations. The illusion of shared connoisseurship resulted in an art experience that was passive, benign and above all impersonal. Alienation is a necessary preface to the effectiveness of the modernist experience (O'Doherty, 1986). The success of Face Value's modernist program of disseminating ideas of taste and style was contingent to the effectiveness of its constraints on the reactions of the viewer. Too knowledgeable a viewer would not adequately respond to the pressure of these constraints and might not be provoked into unquestioning acceptance of the modernist dogma. In order for Face Value to be effective it had to prey upon the inexperience of the viewer to whom the museum exhibition appears beyond reproach.

For an inexperienced viewer, presence before an art object in Face Value required that he or she absent their own self in deference to the more discerning modernist eye. This heightened the curator's sense of authority; as the curator of Face Value, she saw herself as the supreme aesthetic arbiter of taste and style among the museum staff. In effect, the curator reported to the
viewers what she felt they might have seen had they been astute enough to arrive at their own interpretations via the exhibition. In this respect the modernist exhibition design assumes that its viewer are largely ignorant about contemporary art. Face Value was not about opening up interpretive possibilities but about modernist dictums. In Face Value the privileging of the curatorial vision over the experience of the viewer mandated that the exhibition largely ignore the character of art as a human activity.

Face Value played upon viewer expectations and limited alternatives in regard to interpretation, which made for a tentative and facile relationship between artist and viewer. Simple acts of recognition were quantified as successes in the convoluted modernist logic of Face Value. As the art experience was fragmented to the extent that most viewers had little hope of finding relationships among the art objects which would connect them to their own existence, attending to the formal elements of the art objects was the only means of quantifying viewer success. This inevitably denigrated the art experience as the viewer was coerced into formalist observations about particular art objects.

It is significant that when the visitors misconstrued an art object of Face Value as being within the realm of ordinary things, their perceptions remained surprisingly similar to those evoked by objects that they recognized as works of art. For example, Ted approved of the Felix Gonzalez-Torrez 'Word Portraits,' which were made entirely of vinyl text applied to surfaces in the galleries, on the grounds that "they were nicely printed" without realizing they were art (VT59). Gretchen used similar technical grounds to reject the value of Peter Campus' video as it "looked like it was poorly done" (VG19). These misdirected analyses are indicative of the gratuitousness and esotericism of the modernist art experience. Ted also seemed to give the magazine display equal weight as the art objects in surmising that "they were a kind of portrait too," when, in actuality, they were intended to make a simple point about the proliferation and exploitation of portraits in everyday objects (VT39).

When confronted with wholly unfamiliar work, Face Value's overbearing design radically limited the viewer's sense of understanding to acts of recognition and association through formalist observations. The uninitiated
viewers were left little alternative but to offer responses sympathetic to the apparent directness of formalist observations. Forced to attend exclusively to the formal attributes of the work, Kate could only comment that "...there are other ways a portrait can be done" (VK26). In this respect, she was left to scavenge for significance in her visit to Face Value by identifying the way the exhibition demonstrated "...the way different people can be portrayed in different styles and [in] different mediums by different artists" (VK37). By being limited to what she could think about the art object visually, Gretchen summarized Face Value with the conclusion "that a portrait could be many different things" (VG30), and "that was pretty much what the theme of the show was" (VG30). Such absence of concrete insight into the art works provides evidence that visitors to Face Value were denied opportunities to realize the deeper significance of art by the modernist exhibition design.

By resisting the ideas of education and reducing the interpretive implications of the art object, Face Value encouraged simplicity in the viewer's expectations about art. The exhibition design implied a sense of obviousness about the art object through its clinical and artificial separation from the processes of life. This discouraged the viewer from even beginning to anticipate a deeper art experience. Ted seemed genuinely surprised at the proposition that he could find a source of enrichment in Face Value, responding with, "should I be able to?" (VT29). A supposedly natural context for looking at art produced a sense of directness about the art experience to the point that it dictated how and what the viewer would look at in Face Value.

Kate speculated that Chuck Close's and Byron Kim's work were grouped together "because they're more abstract" (VK32). That her purely formalist assessment correctly identified the curator's intentions in grouping works under a "surface" category that included all art that "objectifies the surface of the canvas" speaks of the power of the modernist exhibition design to mutely suggest interpretations to a viewer (CU4). The apparent simplicity of presentation in Face Value lowered viewer expectations in regard to how much effort they should expend in trying to see beyond the highlighted formal aspects.

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of the artwork. The substitution of recognition for understanding paralleled the displacement of content by form, to the point that rote recitation of the formal attributes of the art objects were perceived as a satisfactory analysis.

Interpretation

In the modernist exhibition design of Face Value formalist observations obstructed the path to learning. Face Value invited visitors to observe what could be seen in the exhibition but discouraged them from making connections to their lives. Their limited formalist observations were the result of engaging a notion of purity in regard to the essence of art in Face Value. Dealing with inherently complex subjects such as art in such a simple and concrete manner is arbitrary and unfounded (Shusterman, 1989). As Face Value treated art as a realm to be considered separately from life, it inveighed the visitors into being satisfied with conclusions about art that were overly simplistic and made the art object seem alien to their lives. For Ted, the "Word Portraits" became just "things up on the beam" (VT57). Without any educational assistance from the blank walls of Face Value, Ted had to conclude that "they were nicely printed, but that's about all I can say about them" (VT59).

In this sense formalism, as an extension of modernism, forced the viewer into a facile misinterpretation of a piece of contemporary art. The modernist interpretations possible in Face Value were too narrow to sufficiently account for the content of the artwork and the context in which it was created. By forcing such work into the unnatural context of Face Value the viewer too, was coerced into a formalist position of radically limiting what they could consider when looking at art. Speculations that "because they were more abstract," some artworks were presented as a group, spoke of the way in which Face Value was able to divorce the formal elements of each art object from elements of meaning (VK27; VT32).

The emphasis on form in the modernist exhibition design encouraged viewers to evaluate art objects on solely physical characteristics. Ted spent the least amount of time considering Tony Oursler's work because he "just didn't find them appealing" (VT20). Face Value persuaded him to disregard the meaning of the art object by artificially concentrating his attention on its visual
appropriateness to such an extent that it prevented him from delving into the deeper significance of the work. The obsessive attention to form and arrangement in Face Value led the visitors to correctly assume that the intention of the exhibition was to identify formalist attributes such as "more abstract" (VS29) or "large" (VS31).

Unfortunately, the heightened state of visual attentiveness encouraged in the viewer was not accompanied by any motivation to continue their examination into a deeper assessment of the work. While Gretchen preferred the Carrie Mae Weems' installation, because it was "nice," and she found "the captions underneath to be interesting;" the fact that the work captured her attention still failed to spark her imagination, speaks of the noeducative bias of Face Value (VG18). Ted's interest in the work of Chuck Close reflected modernism's goal of aesthetic refinement based upon purely visual investigations. In saying about the work that, "from a distance it looked like the circles were just out of focus, but the image looked more realistic," he identified the degree to which observation of visual phenomena dominated his consideration of the piece (VT41).

Face Value's coercive stance was exclusionary and elitist as it kept all but one of the viewers in the research from arriving at thoughtful interpretations. The inexperienced visitors, excluded from the meanings of contemporary art, were the audience for whom Face Value was designed to be a purely visual exercise in attending to the formal elements of the art object. For such viewers, the curator believed, engaging in educational measures would detract from the visual treatments of the art object. As a result, Face Value's posture was noninterventionist in regard to interpretation, but interventionist in regard to overall experience. As Face Value obliged the viewer to either rely upon his or her own experience and knowledge of art or accept the curator's judgments, the inexperienced viewer was guaranteed an unsatisfactory educational experience from their visit.
The knowledgeable viewer

Description

Knowledge and conviction often allows people to overcome oppression. In spite of the curator's attempts to limit the viewers to a modernist conception of art, there were weaknesses in her ability to control the type of experience the exhibition offered. A viewer's knowledge of the concepts of art, familiarity with the process of looking at art, and access to outside educational materials constitute a bank of knowledge proof against a modernist approach. The more experienced visitor was keenly aware that artwork calls for interpretation. The more familiar the visitor was with the function of art, the more chance that such a viewer would feel comfortable apprehending Face Value in personal own terms. Experienced viewers were able to feel more comfortable about their own interpretive decisions and overcome the minimalist restrictions of the modernist design. In order to take advantage of the fullest conception of art, a viewer needs to arrive at thoughtful interpretations in the face of the aggressive techniques of modernism. This is achievable because such an informed viewer is likely to realize that "a work of art is an expressive object made by a person, and that...it is always about something" (Barrett, 1994).

Stephanie, as a visitor who was already initiated into the concepts of art, arrived at thoughtful interpretations after viewing Face Value. In conjunction with her own knowledge, she was able to take significant advantage of the sparse educational element in the exhibition to widen her grasp of the issues in Face Value. Taking part in one of the Education Department's tours and relying on her own experience in looking at art permitted her to consider works in Face Value in a more organized way. Stephanie was able to arrive at a deeper understanding of Face Value than would have been possible from just viewing the exhibition's formalist treatment of its contents. The informal combination of her experience, her studies in aesthetics, and the educational dialogue in her tour empowered her to utilize her imaginative faculties. This enabled her to go beyond the formalist limits of an unadulterated visit to Face Value. While inexperienced viewers were restrained to noting connections between visual elements in the artworks, Stephanie was able to think about the ideas of Face Value and relate it to the scale of her own experience in order to come to a
personal understanding of the exhibition. In a sense she was able to see the educational effectiveness of art. Accordingly, the viewer may view the world the way another sees it and yet relate it to their own lives (Blocker and Parsons, 1993).

For Stephanie, uncovering the theme of Face Value involved much more than simply identifying its subject matter. Instead of merely associating Face Value with a survey of portraits Stephanie delved into the differences that constituted the component objects as products and facilitators of human experiences. For her the theme of Face Value went beyond formalist inquiry as it presented “the contrast between a traditional portrait, which tries to give a persona of someone, and a contemporary portrait, which tries to give you an aspect of a person” (VS20) (refer to appendix I for the Stephanie’s complete interview). Her experience in looking at art that addresses non-modernist issues afforded her the opportunity to enliven her visit to Face Value with personal discovery, connecting her art experience to the real world.

As Stephanie associated Lyle Ashton Harris' work with “issues about slavery, gender, and family relationships,” she made the necessary connections in order to ground her observations in conclusions about real life (VS26). Her knowledge led her to formulate a conclusion that not only relied upon her observations, but, also drew upon information about the world and the artist. In this respect Stephanie was able to go beyond the modernist interpretations of art prescribed for viewers in Face Value. While still using them to assist her in accounting for the formal elements in the works, she recognized the narrowness of their approach and drew upon her own knowledge to understand the artwork as a product and facilitator of human experience.

In circumventing the intent of the modernist exhibition design of Face Value, to deny all perspectives which were not formalist, her education - formal and informal - allowed Stephanie to utilize her own perspective and broaden it by incorporating that of the artists. To the extent that Stephanie was knowledgeable enough to imagine the artist's intent and use it to form her conclusions, she realized the nature of the exhibition as a collection of artifacts.
The inherent humanness of art that the curator attempted to deny in her modernist program was reclaimed by Stephanie by virtue of her ability to apply her educational methods, which attests to the power of education when looking at art.

Kate, a less experienced viewer, also acknowledged that there was an instance in *Face Value* where she found an art object to be of sufficient personal interest that she felt compelled to seek out more of the artist’s work. However, she was reluctant to credit *Face Value* for this rare moment of involvement; she speculated that “I don’t know if that’s because of this show” (VK31). In this particular instance, the modernist exhibition design became less of an obstacle to her because she was already privy to some details and history associated with it. That Kate found personal relevance in the work of Cindy Sherman had less to do with the strength of a formal presentation than it did her previous knowledge of it. But Kate was admittedly inexperienced in contemporary art except for a select few artists including Cindy Sherman. She was able to realize the relevance of Sherman’s work to her own condition because she “knew a little bit more about her” (VK31). For Kate the only instance where the power of praxis of art was realized in *Face Value* was when her prior experience allowed her to consider the implications of the work in spite of its obstinate mode of presentation.

**Interpretation**

It was symptomatic of *Face Value’s* interpretive elitism that only an experienced viewer, with the added advantage of having participated in a tour, was able to make the necessary connections between art and life to arrive at an understanding of the exhibition. Stephanie’s experience in *Face Value* represented a rare instance where the exhibition became meaningful as a study of contemporary portraiture. While its design remained inconsequential, in regard to interpretation, it did not represent an insurmountable obstacle to an informed viewer. The exclusion of art education was less effective at restricting viewer appreciation to the standards of modernism if the visitor entered *Face Value* as an active member of the art world. Privy to the conventions of contemporary art, such a person was able to access the language of
contemporary art (Blocker and Parsons, 1993). Additionally, the tour provided her with more information unavailable to the majority of the visitors and allowed her more scope to examine the works. With the benefit of these resources Stephanie was able to go beyond the simplistic formalist interpretation offered by the designers and formulate personal conclusions about art. This made her experience in *Face Value* relevant in a way that was not realizable for most others. The previous knowledge of the visitor was an important prerequisite to overcoming the coercive abstinence of *Face Value*.

That viewer interpretation was generally disregarded in *Face Value* made its creators unconcerned about the elitism that followed from their design. They saw the understanding that was only available to experienced viewers as being detrimental to the essence of art. That Stephanie identified the curator's interpretation of the advertisements in *Face Value* as an avenue "to talk about constructing a persona as commodity" was inconsequential in alleviating the formalist attempts to radically limit the art experience (VS43). It mattered little that her analysis was grounded in her own experience in the real world because *Face Value* made it clear that its conception of art was separate from the business of life.

The way in which viewers oriented themselves and reasoned out their experience was less important than their recruitment to the formalist point of view. That Ted could not understand Byron Kim's work because he was "not sure why [they] were even considered portraits" (VT32) is not as revealing as the fact that Ted allowed, without any discernible reason, *Face Value* to "call them that" (VT31). That Ted was limited to formalist observations about the way in which the Byron Kims and the Chuck Closes represented "varying degrees of abstraction," was the ultimate justification for the curator's formalist motives in denying the viewers the opportunity to arrive at their own interpretations (VT32). The professionals of the contemporary art center were so concerned with coercing the viewer into a formalist perspective that denying interpretive opportunities became desirable. The interpretive limitations of *Face Value* were inevitably most effective in the case of the less experienced visitor for whom the exhibition's prefabricated conclusions took on an authoritarian air. *Face Value*'s
hostility toward the needs of the viewer produced an interpretive elitism whereby more experienced viewers were more able to obtain satisfaction from the exhibition.

**The Effects of Face Value**

Description

Those who display objects are really trying to re-establish the boundaries of our ideas about art (Blocker and Parsons, 1993). The ideas of modernism have dominated the museum exhibition for the better part of this century. Now in the twilight of its popularity, the modernist exhibition design has come under increased scrutiny due to its elitist approach and hostility toward the needs of the viewer. By claiming a universal applicability based upon modernist logic, exhibitions such as *Face Value* have proliferated in spite of their exclusionary tactics and lack of educational substance. The modernist exhibition design of *Face Value* reflected a tradition in museums as it misguidedly espoused the conception of art as not being in the process of continual and significant change. By segregating art from its natural roots, modernism separates "the continuity of esthetic experience with the normal processes of living" thereby relieving art of any responsibility to reflect the climate of our times (Dewey, 1980, p. 16). *Face Value*’s art objects gained a sense of otherworldliness as they were placed apart from and above the realm of real things.

Modernism dictates that art exhibitions should be passive or benign endeavors reflecting a fixed set of universally acceptable aesthetic properties (O’Doherty, 1986). Additionally, modernism embodies the belief that artists produce work that the audience understands and appreciates according to a fixed set of established truisms (O’Doherty, 1986). As a result of the conventions of modernism, interpretation was taken for granted in ways that made it seem unnecessary in *Face Value*. Non-educational approaches to art exhibition were dictated by the modernist belief that a fundamental definition of
art can be obtained through the systematic isolation of art from its possible meanings (Shusterman, 1989). From a modernist perspective, there is no art object which is not responsive to these established norms.

The conventions of the modernist exhibition design established an aura of timelessness about *Face Value* that led viewers to conclude that they were in the presence of great works of art. The modernist tradition delineates a fragmentary conception of art wherein the art object is freed from connections to the outside world (O'Doherty, 1986; Shusterman, 1989). The content of the art object is denied its purpose as a mediator of meaning to allow art objects to appear "untouched by time and its vicissitudes" (O'Doherty, 1986, p. 9). The sense of timelessness invoked by *Face Value* is associated with the prestige of modernist values and was intended to suggest that any work within its confines belongs to posterity.

Widely held perceptions about its superiority ensured that any art objects that entered the confines of the modernist exhibition design would be identified as worthy of admiration. The curator and those who aligned themselves with her modernist program utilized these traditions as a form of empowerment whereby the audience would automatically accept their modernist prescription, anticipating that "the fact that something is up on the wall suggests an increased amount of importance" (ED16). A sense of purposiveness is lost in modernism and, as a result, any concrete means of evaluating the purported greatness of an art object is obscured. In *Face Value*, the visitor was expected to passively witness the genius of the modernist analysis of the art object. By dictating the visitor's perception of worth of an art object, the exhibition design was elevated from being a particular conception of art to becoming a context in which things are defined as art. By virtue of its conformance to modernist ideas, all objects that entered the realm of *Face Value* were intended to be identified as great works of art.

*Face Value* had an exhibition design that exuded a minimalist aesthetic in every aspect. The bare stone and wooden floors, the walls coated with flat white paint, and the art objects floating in an informationless ocean were all designed to heighten the visual impact of *Face Value*. Every element of the exhibition referred modernism and its silent spaces (both literal and figurative).
Modernism, as the actual subject of *Face Value*, was intended to illustrate to the viewers the virtues of simplicity and unquestioning belief. Clean, cool, and uncluttered, *Face Value* was a meticulously described minimalist emporium extolling simplicity and directness. The minimalism of the exhibition's modernist exhibition design was intended to suggest that *Face Value* and its objects were a perfect distillation of an aesthetic ideal, so compelling that the visitor would be interested in it regardless of their content. In reality, it was only minimalist in its lack of attentiveness toward the needs of the viewer. The richness in *Face Value*’s design was defined not by filling every nook and cranny of the gallery with information, but by satisfying a highly complex mandate to reify formal elements. As a result, the curator’s creative decisions were as much about sensual choices as they were about ideology.

Even the educational resources of *Face Value* were diverted to formal contemplation. The education director singled out Felix Gonzalez-Torrez’ “Word Portraits” as being “wonderful” simply because they were “embedded in an architectural feature” (ED5). She found a sense of “weightiness” in this positioning that she readily admitted would probably only be valid “for me” and not necessarily relevant to the visitors (ED5). That images in the *Gallery Guide*, virtually the only educative material permitted in *Face Value*, were not selected on the basis of their educative implications, but rather on taste, legalities, or politics, illustrated that there was a wide range of considerations that were considered more important than the viewer’s needs. For example Leon Golub’s work, displayed in the *Gallery Guide* because “he was coming to take part in a lecture,” exemplified how the staff was steered away from a concern for the viewer by the slightest inclination to serve other purposes (CE20). Because the subject of *Face Value* was its modernist aesthetic there was little energy or motivation to attend to educational needs. In embracing aesthetic purity, *Face Value* chose to have the effect of coercion instead of exchange, dictating to the viewer instead of allowing them to understand the exhibition. *Face Value*, with its elaborate subterfuge in regard to its true content, was only superficially about simplicity.
Face Value combined an esoteric treatment of the art object and a hostility toward the needs of the viewer into an unfavorable learning environment. The impenetrability of modernist exhibition design was further exacerbated by the difficult contemporary subject matter of the exhibition. Face Value adopted a noninterventionist stance toward explaining contemporary art that comprised a multitudinous series of movements and styles that, when considered simultaneously, became difficult to understand as a whole. This attitude was particularly exasperating to an inexperienced viewer uninitiated in the tenets of modernist display and unfamiliar with the complexities of contemporary art. As the exhibition reflected the traditional modernist idiom of museums, it utilized foundationalist distinction and ahistorical positive essences which were inaccessible to such a viewer and unreceptive to alternative points of view. In maneuvering through a series of wholly unfamiliar and implicit aesthetic propositions, the visitors experience in Face Value often confounded attempts at interpretation. By adopting the ideas of modernist aesthetics, Face Value was inherently hostile to education’s task of attempting to explain the complexities of art through exercises in cognition. As a result of Face Value’s inflexibility, the exhibition assumed an aura of elitism about its modernist program insofar as an inexperienced viewer was excluded from the interpretative process.

Interpretation

Like all activities under the modernist umbrella, Face Value demonstrated a bitter impatience with the apparatus of cognition. Interpretation, as a vital human experience, was identified as the nemesis of aesthetic judgment in Face Value. The self-referential ideas of modernist aesthetics were extended into the realm of art exhibition, relieving the modernist design from any responsibility to the considerations and expectations of an audience. The sense of inwardness and interrogation about the art object that constitute the subjective and formal pursuits of Face Value left no accommodation for facilitating audience understanding. In this mode of presentation, the audience is blamed if it is not able to adequately appreciate the art objects in spite of, or because of the transcendent power of modernist treatments (Howe, 1970).
In *Face Value*, there was always a possibility that the contemporary art object would fall into the realm of ordinary things. The tendency in contemporary art to use both unorthodox materials and arrangements in its expression resulted in subtle incompatibilities with the modernist exhibition design of *Face Value*. Contemporary art generally works in a contrary direction from the modernist sense of urgency about appearing separate from and above the realm of ordinary things (Levin, 1981). In using ordinary things in unusual arrangements, it acknowledges the dual purposes objects can have as they travel to and from the realm of ordinary things and the realm of art. By proposing that objects can have meaning both as ordinary objects and as art, the contemporary aesthetic contradicts the modernist notion that an art object is essentially purposeless. When, in the context of a modernist exhibition such as *Face Value*, the viewer is asked to consider the contemporary art object within the limitations of the traditional conventions and expectations of modernism, the intent of the artist becomes subverted. The distinctions drawn by modernism between elevated art objects and real world objects make it easy for the viewer to mistake the contemporary art object as belonging to the realm of ordinary things. Under certain circumstances even the most rudimentary notions of art, such as recognizability, become unpredictable. If the sense of otherworldliness posited by modernism is circumvented, the object inevitably falls into the realm of ordinary things. Frequently, the visitors encountered extraordinary circumstances in *Face Value* that led them to assume that what they were looking at was an ordinary object. The fact that the artwork in question was perceived as having a sense of utility led viewers to conclude that they were actually not art. A particularly problematic piece was Eleanor Antin’s “Portrait of Lynne Tragier.” The seemingly ordinary components of the work - a door, a door mat, an empty milk bottle, and a set of keys - combined with its seemingly natural placement at the narrow end of Gallery B that resembles a hallway produced frequent misconceptions. The curator saw this naturalism as an enhancement of the art object as its installation “became a sort of stage set” (CU3). However, this became undesirable in the context of the modernist exhibition design where art is not associated with utility. Because the degree of artifactuality is predicated by the object’s perceived utility, viewers were led by
Face Value to misidentify all objects with a seemingly “natural” function, a reaction greatly exacerbated by the exclusion of educational assistance. As it appeared “normal to see a door in an area like that” (VS47) along with utilitarian objects which appeared to be “cleaning supplies left by the custodians” (VT55), the visitors concluded that this particular collection of objects had too many identifiable references to belong to the special realm of art objects.

The recognition of Felix Gonzalez-Torres’ word portraits as art objects proved as well to be too elusive for some viewers. The art objects, as simple text applied to horizontal beams of both galleries, provided confusing cues to the viewer leading to a complete misapprehension of their purpose. Kate speculated that the text was possibly there for educational reasons, to “let people know about certain things that you think about when you’re looking at portraits” (VK45). As modernist exhibition design separates the art object from its possible meanings, few clues were made available as to their artistic identity (only a small label distanced from the pieces by aesthetic considerations). Paradoxically, Gonzalez-Torres’ “Word Portraits” and Anitn’s “Portrait of Lynne Traiger” were treated as ordinary objects by visitors precisely because the exhibition design was unable to erase all of their meaning.

The traditional format of Face Value’s modernist exhibition design referred to common conventions and expectations which led viewers to identify often difficult work presented in traditional formats, such as Cindy Sherman’s photographs, with relative ease as works of art because they were made to appear irrelevant to the visitor’s lives. When the format of the work became less orthodox and it referred directly to the real world it subverted the modernist doctrine in a way that led the viewer to question whether they were art. That viewers were confused about the nature of Face Value’s art objects because of conflicts between the reference to tradition and the particularities of the actual objects in the exhibition was indicative of the hostility toward the needs of the viewer that permeates the modernist attitude. The way in which the perceived utilitarianism of the contemporary art object defeated the modernist notion of art indicates the flawed logic of referring to material things as autonomous or self-sufficient.
The inherent problem with asking the audience to suspend their imaginative faculties and forgo all access to their life experiences is that, as in the context of Face Value, they are frequently left adrift in a sea of unfamiliar styles and meanings of art without the lifeline of being able to utilize their imaginative or cognitive faculties. The curator fashioned Face Value in a deliberate modernist style in order to limit the viewer’s perceptions to what they could say about the art object after it had been separated from the business of life. As a result the visitors of Face Value failed to give adequate attention to those properties of the works that could have enabled them to find significance in their experiences. Ted found Tony Oursler’s art uninteresting and valueless because he “just didn’t find them [visually] appealing” (VT20). It would be ludicrous to similarly suggest that Picasso’s “Guernica” is of little value because the particular shades of green he chose were unattractive, and absurd to dissociate the elements in that painting from aspects of our life experience. Yet, Face Value demanded that the viewer use just such criteria in assessing contemporary art. The formalist mode of inquiry would have neutered widely acknowledged art historical interpretations of “Guernica,” such as Hughes’ (1991), to the point that its importance as a harsh indictment of violence would be lost.

In order to make the art experience interesting and valid for the viewers they cannot be prevented from applying their emotions and thoughts to the art object. In forcing the viewer to look through the lens of formalism Face Value did not allow a complete conception of the art work as it denied the power to actively account for the beings involved in the artistic process. As a result the viewer failed to realize art’s potential to sustain interesting interpretations in a way which does not readily emerge from attending solely to the formal attributes of the work. Those elements that held the greatest possibility of validating a museum visit to the contemporary art center as educational were obscured.

Ted empathized with the noneducational stance of Face Value because he was “not real concerned about other people’s opinions [about art]” (VT10). For him the art experience was “a personal thing...[because]...different people see different things” (VT10). This was indicative of the modernist exhibition design’s complete subversion of the concept of personal interpretation to its
own ends. In the modernist program of Face Value education is deemed an unnecessary mediator to the dialogue between art and visitor. That the curator's own intervention into this exchange goes unremarked by Ted says much about the covert nature of modernist coercion. When she claims to always try "to make the points visually," suggesting that her treatment of art eliminates the need for education, she is confessing to the attempt to camouflage from the viewer the underlying ideology of her presentation (CU14). The curator ostensibly relied upon the power of "the real thing" to sustain understanding in Face Value, the ideal interpretation being no more than a restatement of the preferred style and taste of modernism that eliminated the need for the viewer to engage in inquisitive thinking about art (CU14).

Face Value seemed readily understandable to the visitors because of the modernist deductions that Face Value presented to them as fact. The lack of educative engagement in the exhibition led visitors to conclude that visual attentiveness was all that was necessary to comprehend the exhibition. But, even art with an apparent obviousness "can and does sustain interesting interpretations that would not readily emerge from merely viewing the work" (Barrett, 1990, p. 71). This made the art experience offered to the uninitiated viewer seem alien. For most viewers, art could not be seen as important because its fullest conception, as an element of learning, was suppressed. Face Value denied the power of praxis in art and consequently failed to serve the needs of its public as a species dependent on learning.

As the curator established her control over Face Value the viewers became pawns in her justification of the power structure of modernism. In spite of its educational deficiencies, the curator relied upon the external pressures associated with our reverence for cultural products to compel the viewer to come. For her, Face Value was successful even if the inexperienced viewers were completely disoriented in its artificial environment because "at least they feel it is a place they should go to, even if they don't know why they are there" (CU6). That the curator found satisfaction in their mere attendance was symptomatic of the way in which Face Value commodified the inexperienced viewer. Viewer interpretation was not just ignored but discouraged as an activity that was essentially hostile to the modernist program of Face Value.
Face Value's doors were open to the public, but its conceptual biases made it a tool to manipulate to all but a privileged few to whom the art world is familiar enough to allow interpretation. The exhibition design of Face Value relied upon the expectations of the viewers and its own inscribed limitations in order to clearly establish what was important. Face Value was originally conceived with lofty aspirations of cultural awareness and overall viewer enrichment through the contemplation of selected contemporary art objects, but under the pressures of the modernist exhibition design imposed upon it at the contemporary art center these possibilities withered as it became yet another example of the propagation of the modernist status quo in museums.

Summation

What remains true about art through all its historical changes is its egalitarian role as a modifier of perspective which can accentuate and intensify our desire to learn about the world (Dewey, 1980). It is the mission of museums to not allow specialized ideologies to overshadow art’s fundamental educative possibilities. Unfortunately, in Face Value these fundamental concepts of art were obscured by the demands of a small but powerful segment of the artworld. The modernist bias of those in control dictated that the exhibition should eschew thoughtful interpretation and adopt an authoritarian posture toward style and taste. Exhibitions in the modernist idiom, the long-favored method of displaying art in our museums, have sequestered art as an esoteric endeavor. While the intellectual elite engage in clinical exercises of modernist rationality the continuity of the aesthetic experience is gradually lost (Shusterman, 1989). Ultimately, museums come to reflect the ideas of a specific segment of the artworld and do not concern themselves with elucidating the nature of art. Much in the way that art was used in the past to signify social status through formal portraiture, the expression of personal ideology in the design of Face Value served to affirm the dominance and status of its modernist creators.
Many segments of the public did not visit *Face Value* due to the traditional aura of elitism that modernist exhibitions communicate to the public. Equally disturbing, those who did come to *Face Value* found themselves discouraged by the intentional inaccessibility inherent in the design. Inevitably, the art experience of *Face Value* became a passive and benign endeavor for most. *Face Value* engaged in a process of catering to the special interests of those aligned with the modernist idiom that made the complexities of contemporary art meaningless to the greater part of its audience. *Face Value* ultimately affirmed the elite nature of the modernist conception by utilizing vocabularies and procedures that were unavailable to the general public. This implicit elitism undermined the fundamental purpose of the museum art exhibition as it failed to serve as a viable educative endeavor and made its subject inaccessible to people from a broad range of backgrounds.

By speculating that, in *Face Value*, "there's a lot to say and it presumes some level of knowledge," the curator revealed her awareness of the inaccessibility of her design as well as her willingness to sacrifice the well-being of the inexperienced viewer in favor of a sense of responsibility towards accommodating the art object (CU17). As modernism's fetishization of the object consumed more and more of the available resources, it became apparent that there would simply not be enough time or space to cater to the interpretive needs of the viewer. Those who were not already privy to the complexities of art were most affected as they required greatest assistance in this regard. The creative force of *Face Value* - the curator - made the education director believe that she "didn't want to have to worry about the educational impact [because] she really felt that they should just be thinking about the creative part of it" (ED22). This statement reflects an interpretive elitism whereby all who aspired to understand *Face Value* had to do so on their own accord. In *Face Value* widespread acquiescence of the modernist tradition served to subvert the educational potential of its subject matter for most. Consistently, abandoning their education responsibilities has made this elitism a tradition for museum practitioners. As our art museums turn a blind eye to the continuity that connects the aesthetic experience to the processes of living inexperienced viewers lose their only available path to learning. That the one
informed visitor of the research could make associations that extended beyond the scope of formalism, made it seem as though education was not a primary concern in creating *Face Value*. The elitism of the modernist installation caters only to its proponents and believers, excluding others from an easy entrance to the complexities of its content (O’Doherty, 1986). The effect of *Face Value’s* design was to impose limits on the understanding of all viewers.

As the treatment of the art object became the subject of the exhibition, problems of viewer displacement correspondingly grew until viewers found themselves in a clearly familiar setting without any similarly identifiable purpose. The conventions of the modernist exhibition design encouraged the visitors to assume that they were fulfilling a social obligation in seeking out culture. However, since no effort was made to ease the task of cognition, they most often only witnessed culture, instead of participating in its appreciation. The vulnerability of the inexperienced viewer, left adrift in the noneducational setting of *Face Value*, resulted in interpretational ambiguities that blurred the discourse of art to the point that the only cohesive conclusion available to the viewers was of a modernist agenda. *Face Value* took on the function of a snapshot insofar as the audience was kept from perceiving the real and unmediated content of the exhibition by being forced to consider the preconceived and concluded vision of the curator. Considering an art object in *Face Value* meant that the viewer absented his or her own presence in favor of a modernist authority.

The flaws, inherent in the modernist conception of art, raised serious questions regarding the suitability of continuing this tradition in our museum exhibitions. As the curator privileged the art object over the viewer, she expanded the influence of the power structure of modernism. Her repeated claims of the inherent power of *Face Value* referred to the authenticity of its art objects, which masked the inherent limitations of her approach: "Let’s look at the real thing" became the modernist epitaph under which the educational mission of *Face Value* was buried (CU14). The modernist exhibition design evoked a sense of artificiality, esotericism, elitism, and exclusionism about the
art experience that aligned *Face Value* against viewer interpretation, diametrically reversing the purpose of establishing a venue for interaction between museum and visitor.
CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This case study has focused on one exhibition in one institution in order to attempt to investigate an inconsistency between the methods employed by museum practitioners and their ability to fulfill their educative potential. Museums are often accessible only to the cultural elite who are familiar with the premises that underlie the presentation of artwork. The public - the diverse group roughly delineated by age, race, and gender - is left alienated from the artworld, often with little educational assistance from museum practitioners. The situation that institutions are currently in is a result of many factors such as: historical precedent, financial pressures, poor sociological training of staff, and, most pertinent to this study, the modernist leanings of those who control the design of the exhibition. Rather than attempting to understand the public which ideally they serve, the modern art institution merely recapitulates the theoretic bias of those in positions of power, such as the curator.

Due to the nature of their ideological role in society, as purveyors of contemporary aesthetic thought to the whole of society and venues for the exchange of ideas, American art museums should spare no effort to become these all-inclusive institutions (Ambach, 1986; Lowenthal, 1992; Pitman, 1992; Youtz, 1933). Art institutions like the contemporary art center for the Arts, featured in this study, must demonstrate an acceptance of their role as public institution, a role that demands museum practitioners attend to the needs of the whole of their constituency, not just a select few. Therefore, they must institute a
consistent program of self-evaluation and reform in order to provide a more accurate account of contemporary aesthetic theory and maintain their programs relevance to the general public.

Hypothesis

Modernism, as the underlying theory that is manifest in modernist exhibition design, has been commonplace for the better part of this century. In part, it has maintained its hold on the minds of museum practitioners by appealing to those in positions of power to such a degree that it encourages them to control all aspects of the exhibition that are relevant to modernist theory. The combined events surrounding the exhibition of *Face Value* serve as an individual instance of this type of appropriation in order to control its statement. The curator, by co-opting quasi-scientific methods in her approach to the exhibition space, treated the museum space as a venue to present aesthetic truth. Rather than addressing the practical issues raised by aesthetic experience, *Face Value* sought to expose the single truth of the art object. This aim towards truth was enacted through the clinical and artificial treatment of the art object as autonomous. The modernist conception of truth as single and unyielding thereby requires the adoption of a critically monist approach to the interpretation of art. Critical monist approaches to art herald a single, comprehensive, and above all true interpretation for each art object in the exhibition (Stecker, 1994). A true interpretation conjoins all acceptable interpretations of a given work, by comprehending the whole work (Stecker, 1994) and ultimately deferring to the artist's intentions (Stecker, 1994). The art object is viewed as "a product of intentional human action" that offers a corroboration to the factual assertions of the museum professional (Stecker, 1994, p. 205). In this respect, critical monism is obsequious, bowing to the scientific aspirations of modernism as a quest to uncover what can be said concretely and objectively about a work of art. Thereby, the curator, armed with a claim to science-like truth, is empowered to deny the existence of the individual as a potent factor in the aesthetic equation, implying that there could only be one accurate perspective for considering art.
Modernism as an aesthetic theory carries with it several suppositions that are important to understanding its effect on Face Value. For example, an individual work of art is assumed to be an autonomous object, that stands as an icon of pure aesthetic contemplation that transcend the contingencies of our everyday lives. Exhibitions should be designed so that the do not violate this autonomy. Because all distractions that could prevent the viewer from attending to the object should be avoided, modernist exhibitions tend to be designed according to minimalist aesthetics. Accordingly, the curator fashioned Face Value around this concept of unadulterated understanding. This minimalist conception of the aesthetics of exhibition design led to what was at the most an acute hostility toward the needs of the viewer and at the least an indifference to them. According to the minimalism embraced by the curator, educational tools are viewed as possible distractions from rather than as aids to understanding. Face Value's modernist leanings made the exhibition available to only the select few for whom its ideological roots were familiar and who therefore demanded little more than the presence of the objects.

Understanding always emerges from the perspective of the individual who understands (Wolff, 1981). The proper understanding of an art object can never be unadulterated, somehow placing the viewer in the past or in some direct act of empathy with the art object. H. G. Gadamer's hermeneutic theory argues that it is impossible to eliminate the individual from the act of interpretation (Wolff, 1981). From this point of view interpretation is always mediated from the viewer's present perspective. Gadamer establishes this condition as an essential component of human existence and communication. There can be no valid search for a better, or more 'objective' means of interpretation. In engaging studies that take up the task of debunking the modernist myth of value-free, ahistorical, pure means of presentation, we can begin to identify the "conditions of understanding" as they exist in the gallery space (Wolff, 1981, p. 100). Freed of the narrow vision of modernism and all its restrictions museum practitioners can begin to freely evaluate the appropriateness of various methods of exhibition.
Of particular concern, is the effect of the modernist exhibition design upon viewer experience. Based upon the four viewer participants in the study, it can be said that Face Value, as a modernist exhibition, was unable to maintain accessibility to diverse audiences and stimulate critical thinking. In order to cultivate a broader and more diverse audience the museum exhibition must reach beyond the theoretic underpinnings of modernism. By recognizing that all interpretive roads do not necessarily lead to a single unified truth, the museum space could open itself to recognize that individual interpretations are both possible and desireable. Thus, the role of the museum would be, not to dictate interpretation, but to utilize its educative resources to help individuals make more educated interpretations based on their own personal experiences with art. Pragmatist aesthetics, as advocated by Dewey (1980), must be embraced in order to deprivilege the art object and instill a responsiveness to the needs of the viewer.

It is often challenged that the acknowledgment of the viewer as an active participant in understanding art causes the museum exhibition to degenerate into unbridled interpretive relativism. However, as the viewer is interpreting art he or she must remain conscious of the language of the object and its relations to the past. Wolff's (1981) take on Gadamer's concept of interpretation takes on an essentially cyclical process of projection (of one's preconceptions) and modification (according to the nature of the object) as the viewer strives to arrive at a more satisfying interpretation.

A satisfactory understanding of art does not imply that the viewer should attempt to come as close as possible to the artist's intention, nor does it imply that the presentation of art should banish the artist altogether, rather it should strive to open up to viewer's interpretations by anchoring the audience in a certain range of possibilities offered by the art object (Vergo, 1994; Wolff, 1981). Thoughtful art interpretation is always a mediation between the poles of the artist and the viewer, and past and present that is based on the historical ideas and the preconceptions of the viewer (Wolff, 1981). Thus, art exhibitions are at their most useful when both the artist and the viewer are allowed to retain a
voice. The museum exhibition should reflect the idea that the viewer's interpretation is grounded in the object's material existence and it inevitably becomes permeated by contemporary meanings.

**Summary of Issues**

In conducting a case study of a contemporary art center's art exhibition entitled *Face Value: American Portraits* certain assumptions provided a framework in which to examine the hypothesis of the research. Each assumption was subject to confirmation or rejection based upon the case study and related literature.

Specific issues relating to modernist art exhibition design fell into three general categories: (1) enlisting the ideas of a single ideology, embodied in its exhibition practices, the museum underestimated the overt political dimension of its presentation; (2) the exhibition's esoteric treatment of art creates an air of exclusivity and elitism that is antithetical to the proper role of public museums; (3) modernist exhibition design restricts the viewer's ability to fully respond to and understand from a personal and informed perspective.

Each of these assumptions were confirmed based upon the collective data of the case study. Among these conclusions the most significant were that: the tradition in our museums is based upon, among other things, an exhibition style that reflected the tenets of modernism; the modernist exhibition design was fundamentally hostile to the needs of the viewer; the modernist exhibition design systematically undermined the museum's ability to fulfill its potential by virtue of modernism's elitism, exclusionism, and esotericism.

**Museums: past and present**

Many of the shortcomings of traditional museum exhibitions grew out of their modernist leanings. While the predecessor to the public museum is the private collection, museums continue to reflect their practices and goals. Yet the private collection and the public institution ideally serve different purposes. Private collections are held almost exclusively by the elite and are therefore
only available to this class of individuals. Modernist ideas have retarded the ideological growth of museums to the point that their acquisition and exhibition practices share the defining moments of self-interest of private collections.

The primary impetus behind the introduction of museums in the United States was to afford an emotional experience (Harris, 1991). Educational goals were not a consideration. Like many private collections of the past, museums were traditionally intended to bring about passions and sensibilities among its audience (Wittlin, 1970). Without educational resources, museum’s abilities to stir one’s emotions depended upon the viewer’s knowledge of the conventions of the artwork. From this pedigree, it is easier to see how museums have fallen into a routine of subscribing to a specialized form of presentation whose tenets are rooted in a conception of art accessible to only a select few. By only cultivating the Formalist experience of art and eschewing educational ideas modernist styled exhibitions, such as Face Value, have held to the longstanding esoteric and elitist pedigree of exhibiting art, that originated in the practices of private collections.

The economic hoard collector, whose primary purpose was to impress visitors by virtue of the quantity, variety, value, and rarity of its objects holds much in common with today’s museum practices. The advent of the ‘blockbuster’ exhibition was symptomatic of museums' increased distraction with inflating their raw attendance figures. As museums have been held more accountable for their methods they have looked toward exhibitions and objects that bring with them a sense of notoriety. In Face Value, artists such as Andy Warhol, Chuck Close, and Cindy Sherman are coveted in order to lure people into the galleries with the promise of a fleeting brush with fame. Hence, an inordinate amount of emphasis is placed on the authenticity and rarity of objects for reasons extraneous to the art experience.

Social prestige collections were primarily concerned with flaunting a city’s prosperity by displaying artifacts as a residue of wealth. Since wealth itself was incapable of being easily displayed, the perceived quality and uniqueness of a collection of objects was looked upon to garner respect for the controlling institution. As a relatively young institution, the contemporary art center had infrequent opportunities to procure the son of high-profile objects.
that get a museum noticed within the public arena and among their peers. Face Value was a means to gain an increased amount of respect because of the notoriety and rarity of its high profile artists. Facile numbers related to the raw figures of attendance were also linked to the presentation of famous objects. Additionally, the often complex themes contained in the difficult and dense writings about the exhibition were obviously intended to garner praise from peers based upon the perceived headiness of Face Value. The ambitions that shaped Face Value were related to select groups, such as others in museums and those in the artworld, in a way that had nothing to do with the public element of museums. Instead, the difficult level of discourse, frequently relying on the nomenclature of the artworld, made for obtuse presentations that only enhanced the power of the exhibition to dictate to the uninformed viewer about issues of style and taste. As a result, Face Value was so steeped in political ambitions that it severely compromised the accessibility of the contemporary art center.

Collections as an expression of group loyalty were founded as an identification of common belief, such as Catholicism or patriotism. Museums, as a willing participant in the modernist art movement, have always considered themselves to be a part of a significant time in the history of art. The embarkation of the modernist search for purely aesthetic ideals was thought to be a worthy quest warranting the dedication of the museum's considerable resources. Accordingly, art institutions have felt compelled to accommodate the demands of modernist thought in order to justify their existence. Unfortunately, modernism had complex ideological origins that made it difficult for most viewers to empathize with Face Value's modus operandi. Faithfully recording modernist progressions for posterity and exhibiting art in a way which reflected their conclusions was evidence of the powerful bond between modernism and the museum but, this approach did little to improve the contemporary art center's negative image as an institution of select membership. Face Value demonstrated an air of exclusivity and elitism that reflected the institution's dedication to group loyalty.
Even magic collections, long thought to be the product of an antiquated perspective, maintained a presence in *Face Value* (Wittlin, 1970). In promoting the power of unadulterated understanding, effects of transcendental art experiences, were based upon the notion of autonomous art objects. As quality art objects were believed to be self-sufficient there was little need to foster meaningful aesthetic experiences. While the mysticism of notions of transcendental understanding escaped concrete explanations it remained a dominant theme of the exhibition. For most, objects said to have supernatural properties lost their relevance as events were explained in scientific terms. However, within the modernist exhibition design of *Face Value*, a sense of mysticism prevailed as the quality and authenticity of the modernist art object was said to transcend all barriers to understanding. As opposed to engaging interpretive assistance in *Face Value*, the curator relied almost entirely on this mode of unadulterated presentation which, she claimed, enhanced the quality of the art object in a way that made that made contextual and other related educational references unnecessary. In this unexplainable way the power of the authenticity and quality of the art object, as they were allowed to become realized by the modernist exhibition design, relieved the art museum from enlisting ideas of education in order to realize their cultural potential. While *Face Value* was physically open to the public, ideologically it was careful to be of access only to those who shared its aesthetic vision.

**The modernist notion of the art object**

Works of art can raise aesthetic questions in a peculiarly acute form. Unlike a table, a coffee cup, or a building, objects such as paintings, photographs, or sculpture are often held to have no practical use. Under this view, art objects are created solely for the purposes of being considered as objects of aesthetic contemplation with an intended, inherent meaning that can be adequately communicated only in the appropriate situation; the modernist exhibition space. The notion that art is an autonomous object played a significant role in *Face Value* and this assumption was never challenged.
Aesthetic objects can look wonderful and even grandiose from one vantage point while insignificant or at least diminutive from another. However, regardless of the power of the object, it may look insignificant to the viewer who is distracted or prevented from engaging in the act of viewing. By delimiting the act of interpretation within a purely aesthetic context, the art object is said to be autonomous in a way that makes it equally understandable to most potential viewers. Museums point to this 'equitability' as a justification of their presentation of art in a manner that is systematically removed from the business of life. Similarly, the belief in the autonomous art object played a pivotal role in the creation and design of Face Value. While the exhibition's treatments of art may have been effective from a purely visual standpoint, its presentation effectively cut off interpretation within a practical or life perspective. Therefore, if the viewer did not come to Face Value with some knowledge of modernism, then they were generally unable to appreciate its aesthetically sensitive presentation.

Today's art exhibitions are often more appropriate for some viewers and less so for others. While their esotericism may be well-cloaked in the familiarity of modernist presentation styles, from an ideological standpoint they remain suitable to a select few. The exhibition spaces of Face Value were little more than storerooms that doubled as a meeting place for museum professional and select connoisseurs. The modernist style of presentation, with its minimalist aesthetic, made for a venue inherently hostile to the ideas of education and related cognitive needs of the viewer. Face Value's exhibition design was made of inscribed ideas and conventions that made the exhibition accessible to an elite, for whom the artworld was a familiar place. While knowledgeable aesthetes had little use for educative assistance, the exhibition's esoteric treatments and hidden ideology made populist deferences such as educative ideas all the more important. As Face Value's minimalist treatments of art denied the importance of education, while paradoxically being grounded in a highly complex constitution, it became clear that those who were not privy to the nomenclature of art were unwelcome in the closed membership of Face Value's intended audience.
Politics and the contemporary art center

The politicized nature of our museums aids the advancement of the aesthetic agenda of those in positions of power. Such persons can take advantage of their positions and, as a result, become deeply invested in catering to their own interests instead of those of their constituents. Their heightened sense of self-confidence springs from a ideologically fueled conviction in the truth of modernist dogma. Through the narrow lens of modernism, all alternative points of view are inevitably seen as flawed.

The curator was able to present her beliefs, in part, due to the institutional system of influence that guides the goings-on in the artworld and similarly in the contemporary art center. Throughout the preparation and presentation of Face Value, the system of influence was organized in a hierarchical structure based on aesthetic position. In this model, the curator had more decision making capability than the education director, even when it came to educational issues. This structure allowed the curator to become the solitary creative force of the exhibition. In large part, her pronouncements determined significant aspects of the exhibition. Because of her position, the curator was further able to enlist the support of the contemporary art center staff in order to effectively supervise the realization of her creative vision. In addition, modernist exhibition design appeals to those already familiar with the artworld, such as the contemporary art center staff, who often share common aesthetic interests with the related goals of the exhibition’s creator. The staff’s modernist ideas about art only further encouraged the curator to adopt an unyielding stance as an authoritative voice of art.

The curator envisioned Face Value as an opportunity to present her ideas about art in narrative form. The exhibition became her story to tell and any outside input was looked upon as a divergence from the main theme. She engaged the exhibition as a conduit for her vision of what is important about art. In doing so, the curator’s purposes seemed to be twofold: she was provided with a creative outlet for her own ideas about art and she was able to respond to the pressure of making a suitable initial impression upon her peers. Her conceptually bound ideas on the subject, focusing on the purely visual enterprise, relieved the curator of any concern for the needs or opinions of
others. Conveniently, her heralding of the art objects of *Face Value* as autonomous entities relieved her of any educative responsibility, thereby allowing her to express her own ideas about the progression of art without constraint.

**The imposition of the modernist exhibition design**

The curator’s claim of educational responsibility was a conduit for her modernist ideas. In espousing concern for the role of education in *Face Value*, she marginalized the educational responsibilities associated with the museum exhibition. By exiling the Education Department from the creative decisions of the exhibition, she was able to preserve the minimalist aesthetic that she felt was necessary for a successful Formalist treatment of art. Within the context of Formalist exhibition, educational tools are a distraction from the unadulterated experience of art. The curator, with little experience in the educational dimension of exhibition design, and limited educational ambitions, viewed the ideas of education as ancillary and those of the Education Department as a potential disruption. While the curator envisioned her role in *Face Value* as that of a missionary spreading the gospel that her chosen aesthetic - modernism - should be accepted as ultimate truth, the audience saw something quite different. As a whole the audience came away from their visit with little understanding of the aesthetic ‘truth’ presented by the curator, and instead perceived *Face Value* as an expression of contingent style and taste.

Modernist design elements filled the void of the contemporary art center’s galleries in a way that suggested atemporality and connoisseurship. The aesthetic statements contained within appeared to be beyond reproach for the inexperienced viewer. The venue maintained an association with the transcendental nature of a holy place; such as a church or a temple. *Face Value*’s treatment of art was limited to ‘truthful’ statements about the maker, his or her historical context, and the historical context of the work. This affixed the meaning to the art object in a way that suggested that the gallery space was a sort of time capsule. Hence the timelessness of the modernist gallery space was believed to empower its viewers to suspend their own assumptions, imagination, and experiences so that they may more readily empathize with the
true or historical reenactment of the significance of the work. In the end, the exhibition required that the viewer accept on faith that these were important works of art. By coercing visitors who found themselves in a groundless and otherworldly space into blindly accepting statements about art, the audience was left little alternative to empathizing with the modernist perspective.

**The influence of presentation**

Clearly, the belief that the museum space is capable of providing a neutral backdrop for the unadulterated appreciation of art is false. Every act of presentation involving an art object, far from being neutral, is in fact “part of a dialectical process...[whereby] a rhetorical act of persuasion is [engaged]” (Vergo, 1994, p. 150). Context is of paramount importance in any exhibition. In the case of museum exhibitions, the nature of our particular interest in specific objects is partly determined by the identity or value system of the venue (Vergo, 1994). This is true of the viewer reaction to Eleanor Antin’s “Portrait of Lynne Traiger.” This work is a collection of conventional objects that was presented in such a manner that even in the highly charged atmosphere of the museum setting often seemed to be just that; a collection of objects. Context has the potent ability to radically alter the meaning of an object without changing its constitution. The range of potential meanings that an art object could convey are either reinforced or suppressed depending in part upon the agenda embodied in the exhibition.

The pervasive influence of modernism, as it has been adapted to our art exhibitions, has come to light as we, as a society, have shifted our focus away from such narrow and exclusionary perspectives. Contemporary thinking has largely rejected the modernist idea of a singular metanarrative as the history of art and redirected its attention toward a new way of understanding and modeling reality (Blocker and Parsons, 1993). From this new vantage point, we have come to value multiple perspectives through the recognition of the existence and importance of divergent, often incompatible narratives of art (Stecker, 1994). Face Value’s modernist context made the visual aspects of art objects seem important as an end in themselves. By demanding that the viewer conform to the curator’s interpretation of the artwork, it is a clear example of our
art museums failing to respond sufficiently to the radical shifts in perspective acknowledged by contemporary thought. Indeed, much scholarship and research has concluded that society's rapidly changing needs demand a complete reconfiguration of the way our museums conceptualize the art object.

It is not evident that one can ever find all the relevant information for a true interpretation, even if the search is confined to internal evidence (Stecker, 1994). For the curator to approach Face Value as a supremely authoritative voice with a degree of interpretive insight that superseded all others was a misperception on her part. The truth, in cases of interpretation, is indeterminant (Walton, 1994). Interpretations cannot logically be claimed as being either true or false because they are underdetermined by all possible evidence capable of establishing their truth (Matthews, 1994). Under modernist guidelines of truth as the historical context of a work's making we could never hope to retrieve all possible evidence for truth. Therefore the modernist quest for truth in art as it manifests itself in the art institution only leads to the reinforcement of dictatorial desires and maintenance of the status quo of those in power and their individual aesthetic preferences. If art museums continue to resist the contemporary views and fail to rethink their mission, it is inevitable that they will continue to erode their relationship with the public, possibly leading to their extinction.

The valuation of tradition

In museology, it is not always possible to make smooth and gradual progress, with researchers and practitioners adding their bricks, one at a time, to the monument. Much like a library, the resistance to change is seen as a testament to an institution's mission. Change is often resisted by museum professionals for whom long-held traditions of modernist deference are perceived as a justification and inherent strength of the museum system. The consistency with which museum professionals have resisted significant changes is a reflection of their fundamental resistance to reevaluate the very core of their methods, their conception of art.
Much educational and sociological research has implied or made explicit the flaws of modernism (Karp and Lavine, 1990). Because this contemporary view contradicts what museum professionals have been proclaiming as truth for the better part of this century, they have a vested interest in clinging to the tenets of modernism. Contemporary notions such as multiculturalism and feminism have informed an increased respect for our differences and the plural nature of society that demand responses among our valued institutions (Barrett, 1994). Among the most important conclusions is the debunking of the myth that art interpretation must be considered a rational search for truth. Instead it should be considered an act of construction bound to social forces and constrained by habits and biases. Because of these revelations, notions of the autonomous nature of the art object, the authoritative and progressive stance of art history, and the uncompromising quest for truth and purity in art are now widely discounted (Blocker and Parsons, 1993).

**Recommendations**

**Revolution**

We must strive to reconceptualize the museum while paying particular attention to the role of education in order to abruptly break with past and traditions of the museum. We are at an important time for museums - so urgent that wholesale changes must be made. Their staid image and elitist practices have rendered them nearly obsolete in an era of rapid and significant shifts in attitude. The only alternative remaining is a sort of revolution of ideological grounding in order to radically reconceptualize the role of the museum in society.

One would think that uncovering new data about the relationship of art and society would have encouraged museum professionals to see the artworld differently and bring about gradual change from within. However, as museums have continually demonstrated that they neither have the resources nor the inclination to bring about significant change from within, it has become increasingly evident that the modernist edifice that has stood for the traditional
museum must be torn down and restructured. America's art museums must undergo a paradigm shift that is in stark contrast to their lethargic path of maintaining the status quo. The modernist paradigm must be discarded as it has been realized that there is no guaranteed path to ascertainment of truth. In this sense, the metaphysical notion of the modernist paradigm made it difficult to account for change either in theory or practice (Norris, 1990).

As Thomas Kuhn (1970) noted in "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions," crises leading to paradigm shifts often begin with new discoveries, the result of experimental discrepancies that cannot be squeezed into the established framework. While there is a general lack of clarity and agreement about what is meant by the term 'paradigm' - Masterman (1990), for example, listed approximately 21 senses in which Kuhn used the term - the notion of a social science mode of inquiry or a naturalistic paradigm may have widespread applicability and importance. The concept of paradigm, employed in a sociological sense, describes the "set of methodological habits" that become institutionalized (Norris, 1990, p. 118). In this sense, it refers to practice and represents a claim about the "processes of doing and accounting for evaluation" (Norris, 1990, p. 118). Thinking about evaluation in terms of a naturalistic paradigm suggests that methodological choice is principally a practical and political problem rather than an epistemological one (Norris, 1990). A new perspective should come about in museums that focuses on the existence of a number of competing paradigms that describe different methods for determining 'truth.' From this perspective, no one is intrinsically superior to others and an increased respect for cultural and educational diversity would be promoted. This suggests that we must take a pragmatic approach to the treatment of art in museums. In this light, new ways of thinking about evaluation can emerge in a paradigm shift toward a more naturalistic approach to art.

As museums face an unparalleled period of economic and ideological crisis, they must tear down the pieces and reassemble their institutions into something entirely new. If this is achieved, not only will museums take on a different more dynamic role in society, the art objects themselves will look different as well. Museums must demonstrate a newfound respect for the ideas of education and abandon their modernist inclinations in order to better equip
themselves to accurately respond to the needs of society. Only then can our art institutions become important as a means to assist the public in becoming aware of art's vitality as a reflection of our times. The public must be encouraged to undergo a transformation of perception in regard to museums much like people who stare at the optical illusion silhouette of a candlestick until they suddenly see it flip into a pair of human faces. In order to achieve that sort of radical change in perception our museums must undergo a wholesale reconceptualization. Then they may cease to be seen as a part of the luxury class and become an educative institution thereby becoming particularly valuable to society as an effective cultural agent opening the eyes of the populace to art's usefulness as a facilitator of human experience (Dewey, 1980).

Reform

Public art institutions, such as the contemporary art center in this study, must actively participate in the deprivilging of any one discourse so that they may display a more diverse and inclusive interest in their audience (Rice, 1993; Vergo, 1994). An important theme in this reconfiguration must involve the privileging of the aesthetic experience over the art object. As such the modernist notion of the autonomous art object - which fueled the critically monist stance of museums - must be abandoned so that the individual art object may be treated as an element of discourse with a variety of social, cultural, and political contexts (Silver, 1993).

In a radical revitalization program, we must reconceptualize art's purpose in museums. In doing so, they can promote interpretations that speak of the relationship of art to the needs and experiences of the visitor. As a result, the educational prowess of museums would be revitalized as it demonstrated a newly developed connectedness for the interests and demands of the public. Curators and other museum professionals must come to view themselves less as missionaries and more as ethnographers in order for this to take place (Rice, 1993). They must work to interpret two different, yet equally important cultures - that of art history and that of the audience - in order for new bridges to be built between the museum and the public.
By focusing on the relatively new field of visitor studies, compelling reasons for an increased educational responsibility in our museums can be made. In this light, it is urgent that we come to know more about museum visitor's experience of art in order to encourage a revision of their educational position according to these findings. The role of education should take a prominent position in the business of museums. By instilling museum professionals and their programs with an increased respect for the needs of the audience, they will find themselves with a more contemporary account of the work of art that actively accounts for the beings involved in the artistic process. In this sense, a more current conception of art will take hold, one allowing notions of interpretation that highlight the active relationship among the artist and the viewer.

An initial step in rethinking museum education is to recognize the teacher and learner (i.e., the artist and the visitor) as historically grounded subjects (Rice, 1993). As a result, meaning is no longer thought to be an objective entity contained within the art object, extractable only with special insight. When this is recognized the museum becomes a site of knowledge production rather than knowledge transmission. When this happens knowledge is considered as a form of discourse rather than an end in itself. As emphasis is shifted from the circumstances of the object to the effects of such circumstances aesthetic perceptions are, within reason, deprived.

Critical pluralism

In order to effectively eliminate the position of authority that our museums have enjoyed since their inception, the notion of what constitutes a valuable interpretive effort must be rethought to reflect the deprivedness of the notion of education in museums. In this vein, interpretations should be promoted in their fullest conception, reflective of art's complexities and contradictions as well as its indeterminacy. Specifically, they should promote the idea that they can be either acceptable or unacceptable, logical or illogical rather than true or false. In the most constructive sense, interpretations typically concern the implications within the language of the work (Peterson, 1986). The object of interpretation should be about discovering a coherent set of implications within the language.
of the work (Peterson, 1986). In this sense, it can be seen that interpretations are merely plausible or implausible. They cannot be fixed in a way that would make them seem true or false because the number of implications for a given object is open-ended or indefinable (Peterson, 1986).

Our art museums must aim at fostering a way of understanding which art relevant to the diversity of audiences which constitutes the public. Quality works of art have an existence relatively independent of the personality and intentions of their creators as well as the circumstances of the time of their creation (Stecker, 1994). Therefore, interpreting an art object - in the context of a museum exhibition - can be understood as an attempt to find past aspects of human experience that may shed light on the meaning of our existence. The critically pluralist notion of interpretation can be instrumental in reestablishing the connection between the aesthetic experience and the normal processes of living (Dewey, 1980).

Critical pluralism is the view that there are many acceptable interpretations of many art objects that cannot be conjoined into a single correct interpretation (Goldman, 1994). It is appropriate to bring a multiplicity of perspectives to art which produce many similarly good, similarly valid interpretations of the same work even though they cannot be synthesized into a single comprehensive interpretation (Dewey, 1980). Critical pluralism, as a philosophical doctrine, reformulates our common associations when looking at art in order to account for the diversities of the museum audience. In accordance with this view, the museum would embrace a diversity of interpretations as being valid. Critical pluralism would allow the museum to affirm the idea that it is appropriate and desirable to bring a multiplicity of perspective to the act of interpreting art. In this light, the museum would redirect its attentiveness from the notion of the autonomous art object in order to emphasize and maximize viewer experiences. Specifically, the museum conception of interpretations will be concerned with those understandings that are of the work and enhance appreciation.
The following are specific recommendations of how to reconstruct the museum notion of interpretation in order to illuminate it in a more full and constructive representation:

1) Recognize that when we interpret an object we interact with it.
2) Emphasize the character of the interpretation as it is directly related to the beliefs, assumptions, conventions and rules that the viewer brings to his or her understanding.
3.) Acknowledge that the appropriateness of interpretation is directly related to the soundness of the logic being used by the viewer.
4.) Realize that the work offers up to us relations produced by a particular individual in a particular context.
5.) Uncover the specific beliefs and assumptions that we come to the work with as we interpret it with certain conventions or rules.

Context - personal, social, and historical - and meaning are inextricably linked (Vergo, 1994). There are a multitude of potentialities, in regard to interpretation, within the various ways in which different possible contexts will determine the meaning of objects. Instead of attempting to provide an audience with the single correct context for considering art, our museums should strive to open up the multitudes of possibilities of meaning in art.

Summation

Face Value was the byproduct of an intense desire to present specific elements of style and taste. Under spurious claims of universal applicability the modernist exhibition design of Face Value engaged in a commodification and fetishization of the art object. Poor lines of communication, an apathy among staff and audience, and the oppressive political structure of the contemporary art center enabled the curator's vision to prevail. The curator's modernist ideas were treated as imperatives. Her failure to solicit the opinions of staff and her failure to consider the needs of the viewer were justified by her position of authority in the contemporary art center's political structure.
For the curator, the autonomy of the art object made art a realm to be considered as separate from real life. In aspiring to produce a sense of artificial clarity about art, she engaged in clear-cut disciplinary distinctions under the flag of the modernist mandate of the progression toward truth and purity in art.

Dealing with art in such a simple and concrete manner seemed forced and unrealistic. By utilizing a modernist conception of art, Face Value engaged in Formalist treatments that systematically separated the beings from the artifact. As an exhibition created expressly for purely aesthetic investigations of art, Face Value became a passive and benign endeavor in regard to its audience. It was taken for granted that the audience would find a way to understand the art object via modernist treatments by virtue of the inherent power of the quality art object. Only those who came to Face Value with sufficient previous knowledge of art found the exhibition accessible.

Face Value was intended to present entire art experiences to its audience. This could be achieved by maintaining the foundationalist distinctions and ahistorical positive essences of traditional museum exhibitions (Shusterman, 1989). Face Value's esoteric treatments of art made it exclusionary and elitist. Above all, its sense of artificiality and urgency about its modernist dictums rendered the exhibition of little value to the public as a whole.

In hindsight, it seems illogical to refer to material objects as autonomous and self-sufficient (Dewey, 1980). In order to address the fullest conception of art and restore the vitality of the art experience to the museum exhibition, the inherent complexities and contradictions must be illuminated instead of concealed. In counteracting the traditionally modernist exhibition design the art object must be deprivledged. In doing so, contexts, such as the personal, social, and historical, must become an integral part of presentation as they are an inextricable part of the meaning of the object (Vergo, 1994). By utilizing a conception of art that actively accounts for the beings involved in the artistic process (i.e. the artist and the viewer), the museum exhibition's inherent power of praxis may be highlighted.
Our art museums must engage in educational measures in order to ensure that each viewer is provided the opportunity to have a satisfactory art experience. Above all, they should concern themselves with assuming the responsibility of responding to the constantly changing condition of society. Fostering thoughtful interpretations among its audience should be of utmost concern. Dewey’s (1980) pragmatist aesthetics can be instrumental in evoking an increased sense of responsibility in museums toward the viewer as it challenges all concepts of art, including its own, by relegating them to an instrumental status to be constantly challenged and revised according to what provides the best art experience. In eschewing the modernist notion of the autonomous art object, the museum can cease to be an institution of passive and static values and instead become revitalized by a dynamism reflective of our changing interest and needs. Evaluation and reform are key in John Dewey’s (1980) Art as Experience as his aim was to provide an accurate account of our concept of art. If our museums are to adopt this stance, they will be able to treat aesthetic issues in a manner that reflects the needs of our time and aid them in better reflecting the changing needs of society. In this respect, museums may become better educated in the terms of our condition as they are encouraged to subject their modernist methods to constant criticism until they wither away. Only then will the typical art exhibition lose its sterility, its elitism, and its indifference toward the needs and interest of society.

In its newly found contemporary conception, as an agent of society, museum exhibitions should address our entire realm of experiences, the emotional as well as the sensory, should be highlighted in order to recognize art’s unique educative possibilities (Dewey, 1980). The beginnings of our artistic activities rest in our imaginative faculties. In this way, art cannot expand our intellectual faculties in concrete terms as much as it can spur us to expand our understanding and enrich our experience of nature through imaginative reflection (Dewey, 1980). This is where a significant part of art’s usefulness lies (Dewey, 1980). The museum should assume a position in the aesthetic experience that allows it to seek to reunite the art object with the processes of real life. In engaging pragmatist aesthetics the museum will attract a broader and more diverse audience by addressing contextual accounts, pluralist notions
of interpretation, and efforts toward reevaluation and reform. As a result, museums will become an important educational institution as it inevitably becomes an aesthetic agent in the process of life of which we all have a claim.
LIST OF REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A

CURATOR INTERVIEW (CU)

1. Q: When did the curatorial activities begin for Face Value?
1. A: About one and one half years prior to the opening, in an organizational and conceptualization capacity. The curatorial activity for Face Value began here when I began here, in October. I made contact with the [more traditional local arts institution] in order to inquire about possible loans and I had to rethink the installation. The space at the [the previous and original venue] is radically different than the space here.

2. Q: in what way?
2. A: The [original venue’s] building, its an Italian age structure built between 1897 and 1913, so it’s deeply classical, very symmetrical. Also Face Value was the only show on view, it took up the whole museum, so the whole progress through the show was much more controllable. The nature of the space [at the contemporary art center]; well, first of all, it interacts with other exhibitions, which creates a different context. What was more problematic was...it's very difficult to construct a son of narrative in these galleries. Gallery B, for instance, is a very problematic space. I mean what do you do? It's so idiosyncratic. So, I wanted to preserve some of the organizational categories that I had devised for the show. I wanted to keep those together. Some of them I was able to keep together and some of it I had to fudge a little bit. At the previous exhibition I had a sort of huge salon wall that had some of the Cindy Sherman's in dialogue with William Merritt Chase's work. I couldn't do that here because such a space didn't allow that to naturally occur. At the [previous venue] it sort of flowed out of the space itself. Here, there isn't anything quite like that. Also, here I wanted to use some of the existing walls from a budgetary perspective and play off of those. I just rethought...I mean the portrait hall which is here was, in a sense, what I wanted to do at the [previous venue] but the space there didn't allow it. So, its sort of odd. I like the installation here. It's different.
3. Q: In what way is Face Value a different exhibition as it moved to the [contemporary art center]?

3. A: Well, at the [previous venue] there's less room. So you had an intimate kind of feel. The symmetrical nature of those spaces and the classical nature of those spaces creates a shifting balance which keeps going back and forth. They're much more on a domestic scale. The rooms are of relatively normal proportions and there are windows on the sides of the museum, there are skylights throughout which allows natural light to come into play. Your relationships to the object were of a more intimate kind of feel. You sort of encountered, as you walked through, in nice layers, the way things laid out. [At the contemporary art center] its huge soaring ceilings, half walls. For instance, in gallery B its not so easy to feel surrounded by the work. Basically you only have one long wall, because the ramp-wall can only accommodate art at the very beginning of it. So its harder for people to feel their presence amongst these objects. Its just a different way of looking at it. I like the Eleanor Antin door from "Portrait of Lynne Traiger" at the end of gallery B. When I first saw the space I thought that it would look good there. When I first saw that space I thought I didn't want people walking through from that end. That's what I meant when I said it's hard to control the narrative. With a one-artist show it's a little bit different. With a thematic show you're really laying out certain ideas for your viewer. I don't necessarily want them to have the freedom to just come up that ramp [leading into gallery B]. Where's the beginning? Where's the end? I mean it's hard enough as it is when people go through an exhibition to have all sorts of choices [of direction] that may not have anything to do with the show. It's sort of imposed upon you by the architecture. So, I just said let's close it off. So, then you wonder what do you do with that end. It just sort of worked with the Antin. You have the forced perspective. It became sort of a stage set to some extent. I like how that worked.

4. Q: What sort of categories were you concerned with when you designed Face Value?

4. A: Well, I had seen different expressions of portraiture in contemporary work. Like the whole way a lot of performative strategies of the late sixties and seventies opened up to portraiture, like the Bruce Nauman. Someone like Cindy Sherman, who I think really captures the performance or makes performance a clear aspect of the work, I think that really informs portraiture as a sort of series of performances, ones that don't necessarily express some essential truth but are more about a series of moments, masks, personas. Sherman's work with its personas and masks serves as a sort of anti-portrait. I wanted to keep the fluidity of that going. The Golub falls into that as well. You see seven different faces of Nelson Rockefeller which casts that as a sort of series of performances. The fact that it is a kind of constantly shifting and
changing portrait makes it different from the kind of fixed image you will see in a William Merritt Chase; that is not a contemporary approach to portraiture. So, I wanted to sort of give that a varied face. The next category dealt with surface. That's Byron Kim and Chuck Close and Gary Schneider and the way in which they objectify the surface of the canvas or the surface of the subject, in the case of Schneider who actually puts flashlights onto the face of the subject and then photographs reflective light. He doesn't even see them so much as portraits, but more about the process of photography itself which is really, basically, the recording of reflective light. It reveals the process in a way which is very interesting. Byron Kim and the way he emphasizes the skin as a surface with a variety of different meanings. Tony Oursler has his own little category. He brings into play a lot of different ideas about performance as well as a sort of institutional categorizing. The last category is the kind of celebrity public/private idea that goes for the Warhol work that are commissioned portraits or the Ray Johnson's which really delve into an idea I call public face and private identity and enigmatic qualities of identity. And Felix Gonzalez-Torres whose word portrait really explores that fine line between public and private. The way in which image doesn't always convey the most information. In his approach he reveals more about the individual through those words than a face could actually tell you. Then there are sort of sideline people like Alex Katz and Alice Neel. At the [previous venue] I had Hannah Wilke and Alice Neel together and it was a very effective look at portraiture which doesn't always show the most idealized or beautiful images and they were sort of played off of somebody like Warhol. Where the Wilkes are hung I originally also had the Alice Neel paintings in that same area and it was just too tight visually. That's where I just ran out of room. So, I put them up at the top of the ramp where I think they're effective and they work, but it's not really what I wanted. I needed another room. The space just wouldn't allow it.

5. Q: What would you like a visitor to learn from Face Value?

5. A: I think I would like people to be conscious of the way faces play out in culture. The way in which they do have an impact. We do assess people based on their faces and what they look like. The way in which advertising propels us to think about ideals. The way in which images of youth and beauty in advertising create a sort of fiction. They create an image where the individual doesn't exist, first of all. They have a tremendous power within the culture. Or the political commercials where that idea of Face Value has real consequence. It's not even about someone who is wearing the most popular shade of lipstick, it's about who is going to run a country. I also want them to realize that identity is a very complex and organic enterprise. That we're always changing, always shifting. I suppose, on the most simplistic level, [Face Value is] about being critical about what you look at and about your own feelings.
of what you see. There are issues of racial stereotype and gender stereotype. All the different things we go through in our daily life that I frequently think we are unconscious about. It takes energy to suspend your bias and give people the benefit of the doubt. And also I want people to enjoy the different works in terms of the aesthetic issues they raise. I think the art makes clear the different issues that already exist in the culture. Which is not always easy to give form to. That is what's so compelling about a lot of this work. The work suggests things that are already familiar. Were always told not to prejudge people, it becomes almost biblical. I think the visual treatment makes it more palpable and it becomes debated in a different kind of way too.

6. Q: Do you think the success of *Face Value* can be measured in terms of attendance?
6. A: I'd be the first to say I'd like as many people as possible to see *Face Value*. I'm always encouraged when I hear about big numbers as opposed to small numbers. But there are a lot of people who go through a show and don't really see it anyway. Many times I run into someone who I have met through art circles or however and they see a show that I've organized and they remember it, they start telling me things about it. I'm more content to have a small group of people who appreciate it on that level than a large group of people for whom it was just a tourist attraction or it was just something you were expected to go and look at. As many people as come to a place means I'm always happy because it means people are looking at art. At least they feel that it is a place they should go to even if they don't know why they're there.

7. Q: What has the Education Department done well in *Face Value*?
7. A: I think they're really terrific in organizing the teacher's workshop that they did, they did a tour for them. Clearly their support in organizing the panel discussion. I think they saw a lot of opportunities with *Face Value*, probably because they saw portraiture as being fairly accessible to people and I think they've really taken that fact and run with it, with the schools in particular.

8. Q: Can you think of any way the Education Department could improve their program about *Face Value*?
8. A: I don't know what exactly they're doing with the kids now that I think about it. I know there are programs for family day. I hope that there's some, in dealing with kids anyway, that there's a kind of way in which...there's always a problem when you take a traveling show and you don't originate it because you have much less time to think about these issues as they develop over a period of time. One thing that we did at the [previous venue] that was really interesting was we worked with one of the Junior High School classes. The kids made a videotape
where they did a portrait of the community. They went out on the streets and interviewed people about the town. It was great, it gave them the chance to think about the question: If you had to say something about this place, what would you say? It was extremely well done, I was impressed by how it was done. They did soundtrack music and everything. That would have been interesting to see here, that sort of hands-on experience for kids where they would have access to video equipment and maybe deal with a sense of what [this city] is as a community or communities.

9. Q: Are the tours given by the Education Department necessary or supplemental for understanding Face Value?
9. A: I think it's necessary. For those people that don't want it they don't ask for it. There are some viewers who see a tour as an intrusion or a mediation that they don't want. I think, for most people who don't know where to begin or don't trust their own instincts enough, it's very useful. More often than not I hear people say "I learned so much on this tour" or "I never understood what this was really about." I think there is a benefit. Now it depends on how you do your tour. There are some lecturers who proceed to tell their audience what they are looking at instead of trying to elicit questions from an audience in terms of response. There are different methods and philosophies about how people conduct their tours.

10. Q: Have there been any instances where you met with the education staff about issues regarding Face Value?
10. A: We talked about how the show would be laid out and these categories. I explained to them what my intent was. They were very happy about that in terms of how they could talk about the show. We talked about text panels, whether the Gallery Guide would be sufficient.

11. Q: Do you consider the text panel and the Gallery Guide to be educational materials?
11. A: I think it's a collaboration between education and curatorial. I don't think of it as being about distinctly one department or the other. I do like education to have a role in it because I think the Education Department should know and usually does know the audience better than the curator does. You don't want to write by committee or dilute things down, I don't believe in that idea. I think it's elitist to assume that people just don't understand anything. But I do think that curators tend to use certain words that are part of the lingo and the nomenclature of what we do. For the general public, they may not even know what these terms mean. Minimalism is a term that some people don't know the meaning of. You can't assume people know what Pop Art means. That's where you get into the issue of who are we writing these for. For the most part, you're
not writing these labels for the informed art community because they’re going to know the stuff a bit more. If you are writing them then who is the audience for this stuff? If it is going to be the general public, for whom even terms like reductivist are problematic, then I think you have to talk about that. Otherwise what is the point of writing the wall label, you might as well have nothing. So, I think that these issues have to be from a dual perspective.

12. Q: There were five text panels at the [previous venue] and yet there is only one here [at the contemporary art center]; why the difference?
12. A: Well, what we did is incorporated those text panels into the Gallery Guide. Now that’s the kind of thing...and I should let the Education Department know that if they...this always drives me a little crazy, and it happens at many museums, either you have Education Departments who are absolutely interfering or you have those who are afraid to tell you anything. I’m always open. If they find that people need more explanation, that’s the kind of thing that I don’t know, and that’s the kind of thing that I’m willing to talk about. Do we need to put the text panels up? Is it enough to assume that people are reading the gallery guide? We made the call that it would be in the Gallery Guide and that would be enough.

13. Q: “We” meaning...?
13. A: The Curatorial Department. I’m hoping that’s the case, that people are really reading the Gallery Guide.

14. Q: Do you think it’s possible for a visitor to understand Face Value without consulting the Gallery Guide or the text panels?
14. A: Yes, absolutely, because there’s plenty to look at. I think that the work that’s there is fairly compelling, some of it is more accessible than other things, but I think it’s just visually very rich. Also, I think that’s why the historical work is so important. They say what a text panel can’t say. I always try to make the points visually. I’d much rather have the political commercials in there than write a text panel about the evolution of face value in political advertising. Let’s look at the real thing. I’d much rather have all of these magazines from the month of February that have faces on them than say “most magazines use faces to sell them.” I think there are enough visual points for people in order to absorb [the meaning of the show] in whatever way they absorb it. It may not be as a well constructed narrative, but I think people can see it and then do with it what they want to do with it.

15. Q: Do you think Cindy Sherman’s “Untitled Film Still, #48” can be understood simply by looking at it?
15. A: You probably would need to know something else about the piece.
16. Q: Do you think an additional text panel would be an appropriate solution?
16. A: That's probably true. I think that's one where a text panel would probably work. Now some of that is written in the Gallery Guide, but I agree with you because it's one of the more problematic pieces. Now at the [previous venue] I had that piece installed near the Eleanor Antin and I was really trying to say something about a stage set, a kind of constructed situation. With the Antin at the end of the gallery...we had the Sherman down there also but it looked goofy, it just didn't make it. So I figured I'd put it near the other Cindy Sherman ["Untitled, #218"]). But that's one where [a text panel] might have been needed in order to have a little something.

17. Q: Would it be appropriate then to have text panels placed next to all or most of the pieces for the same reason?
17. A: I hope not. My problem, my fear in having that done...there was a Whitney biennial where they had quotes from the artists on the labels, they did extended labels, some artists chose not to do it but most of them did. My problem with that is that it gets outside of them really having to work to get at something. It becomes too easy. It becomes a sort of caption and the visual experience is really subverted. It's a dicey issue about text panels, whether to use them or not. I could have easily written a text panel for every object in the show. One could have put a book on the wall with this exhibition. There's a lot to say and it presumes some level of knowledge. For instance that you're going to know who George Bellow is, or William Merritt Chase, or Henri, or Whistler. I really back away from the idea of text panels because it makes me nervous that people aren't going to be visually experiencing things.

18. Q: In hindsight, can you think of any improvements that could be made in the exhibition?
18. A: Yeah, a lot. I wish that I had explored the conceptual approaches to portraiture. That would have taken us into realms where the face would have really been lost. There are much more metaphorical ways of thinking about portraits. I tended to really focus on portraits of individuals [in Face Value]. I didn't cast the net too wide in terms of talking about more ideas about portraiture or using the portrait as a sort of vehicle. I really did think a lot about some sculpture. But, I was afraid of trivializing portraiture by getting too far away from its basic meanings. There's a lot of stuff that gets made that is called a portrait. But, I think I probably could have loosened [the exhibition] up a little bit. That's my regret. I think that would have made it a better show.
19. Q: Was there a particular type of visitor you envisioned when you designed the show?
19. A: Everybody. The [previous venue] is situated in New York which, in the summertime, has all the New York artworld. So, I had to think about a critic from the New York Times seeing [the exhibition] to people from the local arts community who are year rounders. They're nice older ladies in their seventies and school children. I'd like to think that one reason my shows are strong is that I really try to think about a very diverse audience. In a funny way I think the New York artworld doesn't need the shows, I don't gear my shows toward them in particular. The non-artworld public is a much bigger challenge. It's much easier to play to the artworld. The rules are much more inscribed.
1. Q: How are the educational programs created for Face Value similar to those offered in other exhibitions currently at the contemporary art center?

1. A: We're doing something for all of the exhibitions but we're doing more for Face Value. In part because the show is much larger. In Face Value we have a number of artists and consequently a number of possibilities for educational programing. We don't have the resources in terms of finances or manpower to thoroughly cover all of the exhibitions. We have to make a decision regarding what exhibition would be appropriate for kid's activities. What kinds of exhibitions would be interesting for adults. What kinds of lecture programs would draw people in. How can we involve the artists?

2. Q: Have you found instances where you have had to divide your resources because certain exhibitions seem attractive adults and others to children?

2. A: We have essentially one lecture program on each exhibition and then we relate it to five speakers in the spring who address all of the exhibitions. In these events we're trying to give, if not equal weight, at least we try to pull in something from all of the exhibitions. Having said that, I should also say that when we plan a family day, for example, we're really focusing much more on Face Value and the ideas in Face Value than the others. Basically, in our activities, we're going to focus on faces and portraits and the different kinds of portraits you can make; whether they be word portraits, collage portraits, stamp portraits, sculpture portraits, medallion portraits, photographic portraits, so [the family day is] really going to focus more on Face Value.

3. Q: When did you begin planning educational programs for Face Value?

3. A: A year ago. This is when it should happen; it shouldn't happen three months before [the show's opening]. Sometimes it has to begin three months before and if this is the case we find that there just isn't as much; that we just can't.... In the case of Face Value we knew that the exhibition
was coming and [the curator] came out to the [contemporary art center] and gave a slide presentation for all the staff on the show so we got to see twenty or so slides from the exhibition and here from her about it. So this was an exhibition already in progress at an earlier venue [the previous venue]. The catalog was already produced so we had access to the catalog essay well in advance and so at the time of the lecture we began thinking about what we would do with Face Value. We were already planning our children's activities and our tours before the curator even came here (The curator was hired by the contemporary art center three months prior to the opening of Face Value). Now we waited to plan the lecture programs until she came here. She was here three months prior to the opening to piece together the adult programs. She really wanted to shape the panel of the lecture that happened last week [About Face: a panel discussion with Face Value artists]. Here was a situation where the curator took the leadership role in developing the lecture. Often we do. It really depends on who is curating the show and how much they want to get into educational programs. This was a case where the curator was really passionate about shaping this lecture so we assisted her in that regard.

4. Q: Have you found that the curator is more involved in the educational aspects of the exhibition than is often the case?
4. A: Yes. I think its because this is her first show here. When she came to the the [contemporary art center] she reshaped the show and she drew upon a number of pieces from the [the more traditional local arts institution] and made those connections. You see a different show than the one at the [previous venue]. For example, that whole portrait gallery with the busts is representative of the [the more traditional local art institution's] collection. That was a nice touch. She did other things differently. The Felix Gonzalez-Torrez piece on our beam, that was different at the [previous venue]. It had more color and it was installed around the perimeter of the room. In our case we had this wonderful opportunity to install it on the beam.

5. Q: What is it about the beam location that makes the piece more significant?
5. A: I can't imagine any other museum offering that as a space. It's a space that is not usually noticed. It is embedded in an architectural feature that lends it a weightiness, for me; now I'm really interpreting. The artist knew of the plans and approved of them so it almost became site specific.

6 Q: Did the Education Department produce the Gallery Guide for Face Value?
6 A: No, we did not. I think it's a wonderful piece. Generally, the Exhibitions Department develops the Gallery Guide.
7. Q: Did the Exhibitions Department develop the text panels in Face Value?
7. A: No, you use the text panels that come with the show. They’re pretty much pulled from the content of the Gallery Guide. The Curatorial Editor does a wonderful job creating the Gallery Guide and making sure the text panels are well-suited for our audience. She is very well-qualified as she has an extensive background of formal education in Art History. In fact she was just a dissertation short of her Doctorate.

8. Q: Does the Curatorial Editor consult your department when creating the Gallery Guide?
8. A: Oh yes. We have a wonderful collaboration. In this case she wrote the text for the Gallery Guide. In some cases I write the text.

9. Q: What circumstances dictate who takes on this responsibility?
9. A: Quite simply who has the interest and the available time. In the case of a recent exhibition the curator was having trouble making the text accessible to an adult audience, it was so dense - it had so many symbolic and metaphoric references - that you couldn’t get it just by looking at it, that was the issue that bothered all of us; how do you get it without having somebody guide you through? Because it was difficult I wrote a pretty lengthy text for that because you just needed some information in order to understand what you were looking at.

10. Q: Is the Gallery Guide intended for adults, children, or both?
10. A: I think it is definitely for an adult visitor. Occasionally we do special Family Guides for children. That is always generated by the Education Department. This is the kind of thing we would love to do for every exhibition but we can’t. We just don’t have the time. We even had positive feedback from the adults because of the minimal amount of text. You can read this [the Family Guide] as you’re going through the galleries, you can’t read this [the Gallery Guide] as you’re going through the galleries.

11. Q: What role do you see the Gallery Guide of Face Value playing in the exhibition?
11. A: It is something that you would usually take home and read and reflect on after your visit.

12. Q: Is it supplemental to the goals of the exhibition?
13. Q: Why do you recommend reading the **Gallery Guide** after as opposed to before you visit the exhibition?

13. A: The introduction might be worth skimming in advance of your visit but the individual artist information is something that you probably don’t need to know while you’re going through the galleries. You probably won’t remember all of this information. There is a suggested reading list, which I think is just wonderful. This suggests that the guide is geared toward being read after your visit. It also gives you the freedom to do more with it if you want. So I would look at this as an enormous but very well-written introduction to the show.

14. Q: Who determines the content of the identification labels?

14. A: The Curatorial Editor. Some of the labels come with show. Some we adapt. For instance, there is a commemorative plaque next to Felix Gonzalez-Torres’ work reflecting the fact that he had died recently. The text may be adapted to suit the architectural placement; meaning the placement in the galleries.

15. Q: Why did Byron Kim’s work warrant additional text panels while no other artist’s work received this treatment?

15. A: Umm.

16. Q: For instance, Cindy Sherman’s work in **Face Value** seems to come with a lot of conceptual background to it, do you think it would be appropriate for her work to have an additional text panel as well?

16. A: I do, and I don’t know why that is the case; why it doesn’t have additional information. Now people are probably more likely to read those types of information on the wall than they are the text panels or the **Gallery Guide**. I think that when people go through an exhibition they pick up the **Gallery Guide** but the fact that something is up on the wall suggests an increased amount of importance that leads viewers to read it.

17. Q: Is there a lot of useful text which could be put up on the wall?

17. A: Oh yes, I think so.

18. Q: Is it not making it up on the wall because it would make the exhibition appear cumbersome or serve as a distraction from the the work?

18. A: I don’t know, you could be right about that. One of the things the Education Department has tried to do and talked about doing, but we just haven’t pulled it together, is to have something next to the wall labels specifically for kids and families. You’ve got that adult text there but maybe we need two or three questions oriented toward the children. Questions like: Look at the work why do you think these colors are used? How can a portrait not have a face? Questions that would get you and your group discussing and thinking and talking. It could be questions
that adults and children look at together so it really gives them something
to talk about. Let’s have some questions, similar to those in the Family
Guide that kids would enjoy talking about.

19. Q: You have stated that you consult with the curator from time-to-time, can
you reflect on any issue that the two have you have spoken about
regarding Face Value?
19. A: We don’t have anything to do with the way the exhibition is installed, or
laid-out, or designed. The people producing the materials about Face
Value are really not part of those decisions.

20. Q: You have spoken to the curator about the inclusion of specific works after
the exhibition has opened. If you would have been able to discuss these
issues before the installation do you think this wouldn’t have to be
addressed now?
20. A: I don’t think so. In spite of my objections it appears the piece in question
may stay up for the show and if it does that’s okay. There are some
negotiations that have taken place in the past where the curator will
come to us and say “I know this piece is going to be objectionable to
some people, I will try and place it somewhere so it doesn’t impede the
flow of the exhibition.” So there are some negotiations that can happen,
but not much.

21. Q: If you were included in the Exhibitions meetings would your job as an
educator be made easier?
21. A: Yes, I think that’s a problem. That happens at most museums. Education
is simply not a part of that planning process. In some museums, where
you have a team approach, you have representatives from all of the
departments involved from the beginning so you have all the areas
covered. In the case of the Exhibitions meetings, someone like [the
Curatorial Editor], who is also ultimately responsible for writing about
these shows [is excluded]. I need to be there, or at least someone from
my staff, maybe not always, but at least for some of these meetings. If
you had that kind of team effort it would be really helpful. We just don’t
have that here.

22. Q: Why do you think the systems of communication here do not reflect more
of a team sense of organization?
22. A: I would like to think that it’s not to keep information within a certain level
of command and then handing it out when it is a finished product. It may
be a matter of the curators being used to thinking through the issues on
their own and maybe feeling that they don’t want to have to worry about
the educational impact. They really feel that they should just be thinking
about the creative part of it. But, it still doesn’t make sense because you
really need to be there from the beginning. I need to know what the
content of the exhibition is going to be. I need to think about budgeting and how much money I'm going to devote to various exhibitions. Now, in the meeting you're talking about they don't decide what shows are going to happen, but how they are going to implement their plans.

23. Q: Can the success of Face Value be measured in terms of attendance?
23. A: On one level yes. That's what its all about, exposing the community to the work. On another level, though, I would have to say no. It's a tricky question. From my background as a teacher of English [at the neighboring university] for ten years I know that I wasn't able to reach all of those people. Some of my students just sat there. But, I knew that even if I was just reaching one or two I was still making a difference. So the answer to that question is I think it depends on the depth of the experience more than pure attendance. For our children's program we have a program called Art-ventures and in this program we bring in about 600 fourth grade students to have an in-depth experience. They return three times throughout the year. All of these students will come in to see Face Value. They will come in, see the show, they will have an activity, it will be a writing activity or a sketching activity. So it is not entirely numbers, but it is what you do with those numbers that counts.

24. Q: Would you characterize the tours the Education Department offers as necessary or supplemental to the exhibition?
24. A: It depends upon the viewer. Is it necessary? Is it critical? No, I think not. Is it helpful and is it educational? Yes, I think it is. The opportunity to have a guided experience in Face Value and to learn more within a group setting is what makes what [those in the Education Department] do so important. We tour approximately twenty percent of all of our visitors which is pretty high. Most museums tour between four and six percent.

25. Q: Why do you think that Chuck Close's work is grouped in one room or Andy Warhol's work is presented as a group even though they are individual pieces?
25. A: Well, I think it has to do with what makes sense in terms of consistency. You want to see the Warhol's side-by-side in order to draw connections between the differences in his work. It makes a nice contrast to Hannah Wilke's cancer patient pictures which speak about a very different sense of portrait.

26. Q: Do you think the fact that these two artist's work are displayed in different sections of the exhibition makes it difficult to see these connections?
26. A: No, not at all. I think the sense one gets from viewing a group [of an artist's work] enables them to understand his or her work better; then they
can move on to another artist and make the necessary comparisons. If an artist's work were separated I think it would look very confusing, visually you wouldn't have the sense of coherence that you do now.

27. Q: Do you think it is appropriate to have Carrie Mae Weems' work separate from all of the other work in Face Value?
27. A: Yes, very much so. The way her photographs are hung, on all four walls and in a rather condensed fashion, allows one to see it as the family portrait with all of its rich connections and familiarity.

28. Q: Do you believe there are too many or too few pieces in Face Value?
28. A: Oh, neither. I would say that there are definitely not too many. Also I don't think there are too few. I think we, perhaps, could've had more sculpture, in a contemporary sense, because we have the busts but really no contemporary sculpture. But that's just off the top of my head.

29. Q: Can you think of any particular challenges that this exhibit has presented to the Education Department?
29. A: Hmm, nothing that comes to mind immediately. We try and develop program formats which are applicable to many different situations. Since we were not involved in the early stages of Face Value or most other exhibitions we have to be prepared to take what is given to us in the sense that we have little control over the content or design of the exhibition. We must then use program formats which are easily adaptable to any exhibition.
APPENDIX C

CURATORIAL EDITOR (CE)

1. Q: How have your responsibilities at the [the contemporary art center] been involved with the exhibition Face Value?
   1. A: As the editor I serve as a sort of conduit between the curatorial staff and the final product in terms of the things written about the show.

2. Q: What sort of written materials are you specifically responsible for editing?
   2. A: I'm responsible for the Gallery Guide, the text panels posted throughout the exhibition, all press releases....

3. Q: Are the identification labels mounted beside each piece your responsibility as well?
   3. A: Yes, those too.

4. Q: What audience do you write for?
4. A: Well, I don't often have a lot of creative control in these matters if the curator is deeply invested in the exhibition. As I write I assume the position of an advocate for the reader, something the curator is most often not in a position to do. The written text is designed, in my mind, to provide an entree into the show, it is not intended to be a complete explication of the show.

5. Q: When you describe the curator as sometimes being "deeply invested" in the show, what does that imply?
5. A: Quite often it is determined by whether the show is a high profile show that has a chance of being noticed in certain art circles. If this is the case then the curator exercises more control over the content of the text. In the case of Face Value, which is a high profile exhibition, the text becomes a voice for the curator. "This is my statement for my peers." [Another contemporary exhibition], on the other hand, is a low profile show. The subject matter is of a later, less well-recognizable period of the artist's work. Consequently, I can exert more control over the finished text.
6. Q: How does this affect the nature of the text.
6. A: Well, I would like to think it becomes more accessible. I think we need to consider the intended audience more. The curator is most concerned about impressing her peers which, in my mind, is not the same as writing for our desired audience.

7. Q: Who is your intended audience?
7. A: That's a difficult question. I would like to think, in terms of our written material, that we're most concerned with the people who come to the contemporary art center with little or no background in the arts, because these are the people who need written explications the most. But, in practice, I've found that when I try and accomplish this inevitably my changes are deleted. The curator doesn't allow herself to think below her level when she is writing. The fundamental information about a show is not allowed to be in the text because it is deemed to be too rudimentary to be appropriate for a show of the caliber of Face Value.

8. Q: When did your activities surrounding Face Value begin?
8. A: One year ago. However the content was constantly changing up until the last minute. In some instances even after the last minute.

9. Q: Can you recall any of these instances.
9. A: Oh, sure. For instance, the Byron Kim piece “Emmet at Twelve Months”; it shows a complete lack of communication. The curator provided us with a text panel from the Parrish [the previous venue] without even considering the fact that the artist may have specific instructions about how to arrange the piece. It turns out that there were specific instructions about how to arrange it. They accompanied the piece. So, the artist had specific ideas about how the work was to be presented, the curator didn't spend the time to investigate what was the correct way to install the work. Instead she just dug up an old gallery label, which diagrammed a wrong way to arrange the piece, and told us to make a text panel just like it. At the same time the Exhibition Designers were installing the piece according to instructions of the artist which accompanied the piece, [the curator] was in the galleries. She saw them hanging the piece and she knew damn well they didn't have our text panel yet [the panels were not provided to the Exhibition Designers until the day before the opening]. What we ended up with was the piece arranged on the wall by the Exhibition Designers per the artist's instructions and a text panel which diagrammed a completely different arrangement. A security guard noticed the discrepancy a few days after the opening and then we replaced the panel with a correct one. It's just lazy and irresponsible. It reflects a total lack of respect for the integrity of the work. The images used in our Gallery Guide didn't even match the content of the exhibition. We were assured that these images would be in the show, but they weren't; not all
of them anyway. The Chuck Close ["Robert x 4"] was very similar to the ones which were included and yet it was deleted from the exhibition. There were two Fairfield Porter's; the one chosen for the Gallery Guide isn't even in the show. It's very similar to the one which is included. It just shows how little importance is placed on our work.

10. Q: Aside from the Kim text panel, did you use or consult any preexisting text from previous venues of Face Value?
10. A: We looked at the text panels from the [previous venue] as a draft for the Gallery Guide. The [previous venue] used five text panels but the curator didn't want all those panels cluttering up the exhibition, so she decided to use them as the Gallery Guide because of her concern for the aesthetics of the space.

11. Q: Why was Face Value created?
11. A: I think, contrary to the themes listed in the Gallery Guide, that it was conceived of primarily because the [previous venue] has a large cache of portraits. I think the premise of this show is to exhibit a bunch of contemporary portraits in an aesthetically pleasing way. The show is really without context. The theme of the show is forced, so that there is some strand of reasoning beyond just showing a bunch of portraits, but its really misleading and forced. The show is supposed to demonstrate how far removed traditional portraits are from contemporary ones. However, you could easily find traditional portraits that take on the forms of the contemporary examples in Face Value. Ray Johnson's collages, which are held up as the avant-garde in contemporary portraiture, are very similar to work Arthur Dove was doing with collages in the past. The conception of traditional portraiture [used in Face Value] is also very limited, trying to portray them as stodgy sort of commissioned works without stylistic interpretation. It's [the exhibition] all just supposed to be so cut and dried, so black and white when I think the show could have been much richer if we would have acknowledged the complexities of portraiture, then and today, instead of condensing the historical portraiture into this sort of faux historical hallway. It's main purpose, as far as the viewer is concerned, is to look good and provide a venue for people to look at some art, nothing more and nothing less.

12. Q: Were there occasions when you met with the curator or the education department to discuss issues regarding Face Value?
12. A: Not the Education Department. I was in contact with the curator regularly, of course. I would provide her with revisions of the Gallery Guide and she would return it to me with suggestions and ideas. There were plenty of things that needed to be brought up in the Gallery Guide that weren't. Transitions needed to be made between pieces. For example, I think we needed to explain how Tony Oursler's work is a portrait.
13. Q: What do you think the Education Department does well?
13. A: I think the Education Department has a very difficult balancing act which they perform very well. The work is not always entertaining; and they have to make it seem that way in order to attract large audiences and capture the attention of children. I think they're the best people on our staff but they aren't given the respect they deserve. Whenever there's not a crowd [those with a vested interest in the contemporary art center] complain. For instance, the lecture last night [discussion/artist's talk], all I heard from the staff was "Why weren't there more people there?" or "Why wasn't there more in the paper [about the lecture]?" It's easy to criticize but nobody [on the staff] looks at the quality of the content offered by the program. I was excited to hear [an artist featured in Face Value] speak so eloquently about the issues of portraiture. I think it's unfair to hold the Education Department solely responsible for attendance when there are so many factors which affect who comes. The work can sometimes be very difficult or simply not very good. The exhibition can also be arranged in unimaginative or illogical ways.

14. Q: What deficiencies do you see in the Education Department?
14. A: I think they have a tendency to make exhibitions too entertaining - don't just make it like Disneyland - open up dialogue. They too often use the work in the exhibition as a springboard for concerns outside of art. I think maybe this is because they don't have the historical or studio background in terms of their educational experience. That being said, the pressure is squarely on the Education Department to bring in crowds. I also think they don't question the decisions being made about the exhibition.

15. Q: Do you think the identification labels are an educational tool?
15. A: Yes, I suppose. I'm not sure how useful they are, but they do say how the works were made.

16. Q: How did you decide on that particular format and that content?

17. Q: Why are Byron Kim's pieces the only ones to receive additional explanation in the form of text panels placed next to the work?
17. A: Kim requested that the panels would be added.

18. Q: Do you think they would have been added otherwise?
19. Q: Would it be appropriate to mount expanded text panels next to work such as Cindy Sherman's “Untitled Film Still, #48”?

19. A: I think there would be a problem with aesthetic issues if that were done. The exhibition simply wouldn't look as good. Also, there is a very real concern that the viewer will be given the feeling that they need to be told what to think. It's possible that you could open-up questions with something like that. A big concern is the possibility that we will over explain something.

20. Q: On what criteria were the images selected for inclusion in the Gallery Guide?

20. A: We were given possibilities based upon what images were available and what ones we had permission to use. At that point some design consideration was given. [The curator] wanted a conventional portrait so we added the bust of Abraham Lincoln. The artist Leon Golub was coming to take part in the lecture so an image of his was used.

21. Q: Is the Gallery Guide a supplemental or necessary text to Face Value?

21. A: I think it's supplemental. The comparisons in the guide aren't evident in the arrangement of the exhibition so I would tend to think that they aren't necessary to enjoy the show. It doesn't matter people are really just coming to look at some art.
APPENDIX D

EXHIBITION DESIGNER (EX)

1. Q: What do you think the Education Department does particularly well?
   A: I'm not confident that they do anything particularly well. They bring in a lot of kids and I think that's probably a positive thing. Aside from that I'm not sure. I don't think that they have a particularly significant role here [at the contemporary art center].

2. Q: Why do you think that that is the case?
   A: I think there are a couple of reasons: I don't think anybody in power here takes them seriously, they're only given responsibilities people in curatorial don't want to deal with. I don't see many visitors here consulting the Gallery Guide or signing up for tours. They just don't want to be told what to think; it's not what art is about.

3. Q: How do you think the efforts of the Education Department effect the visitor to Face Value?
   A: Very little, if anything I think they limit what the visitor is going to think about as they go through the gallery. [The Education Department's] problem is that they attempt to speculate about what the artist meant when he created this artwork. If he could've done that he would've. But he didn't. He chose a particular medium because he felt that this is the way his message could be understood.

4. Q: You don't think that the Education Department's attempts to place the work in a context will help people understand the work?
   A: No, [the Education Department] can go on and on speculating about the work but, the bottom line is, if the artist would've wanted those issues to be a part of his work he would've been included them in the artwork. I don't think it helps to speculate about the meaning of a piece [and] then present that as the meaning when it may not have been what the artist meant at all. Frankly, I don't think knowing bits of information about the artist's life have any role in understanding his work. I think the type of approach the Education Department uses is this sort of academic
approach. I think academic learning is very overrated. I think, in order for art viewing to be a productive learning activity, it is something we must want to do ourselves. It is a very personal thing. For example, consider what goes on in a typical beginning Geography class at [a university]. Most of the students are probably there because they are fulfilling some sort of requirement in order to get there diploma or whatever they're working toward. You take the class, you work at it well enough to pass, maybe [you] even do very well and end up with an 'A'. Within the course of one year I'd be willing to bet that you will remember very little from that class. [Academic learning is] really just a matter of jumping through the prescribed hoops and attaining the certificate that enables you to get a certain job or pursue some other goal that requires that you have a formal education. The most effective way to teach somebody about something is to have them watch that activity and then do that activity. There are very few - probably five - teachers at [the university level] that I learned something from. This doesn't mean I didn't learn something while I was taking other classes but it was because I had the drive and I did the work; that allowed me to learn. I mean those five teachers; probably the most I ever learned from them is by watching them work and picking elements of their technique and their time management. [Effective] learning is about doing, not reading, or being lectured. And I think that goes for somebody who walks in here to look at art as well as any other area. You have to come here wanting to learn and you have to experience that sense of discovery that has to do with doing something for yourself.

5. Q: Could introducing information about the work spark an interest in somebody so that they may want to learn about it themselves?

5. A: It'll just clutter up the galleries with more of the dogma. You can't tell people what to think. It's condescending. I think what Scott [a Preparator] said has a lot of importance; "A picture used to be worth a thousand words but now it looks like it's only worth a few hundred." A lot of the artwork in Face Value simply requires too much explication to be considered good work. If you have to produce a written treatise about the work in order for it to be relevant, then I think you have to start questioning which is important - the artwork or the text.

6. Q: Let's move on to the first reason you think the Education Department is ineffective. Why do you think the Education Department isn't consulted when they are shaping an exhibition? Do you think it's because the curators share your view of education?

6. A: No, I think they take on the posture of a sort of cheerleader for the exhibitions. Their primary concern is with making the show seem good by promoting it in their tours and the things they write about. There's no sense that they're evaluating the quality or looking at the show critically. I
think that [taking a critical stance toward the exhibition] would really help
the viewer understand the art better. You know not all art is great and we
shouldn't be afraid to voice an opinion.

7. Q: Why isn't the Education Department included in the Exhibition
   Department's weekly meeting?
7. A: Because [those among the Exhibition's staff] don't want any objections to
   their plans. They would call it counterproductive to include Education.
   They would feel as though it was obtrusive since they don't want
   anybody to make waves. The instances when [the Exhibition Designer's]
   advice is solicited because it's an issue they don't want to deal with.

8. Q: Why do you think *Face Value* was created?
8. A: To attract the interest of some rich [people]. To provide them with another
   social setting to be seen. Also to attract the interest of people in their
   circles.

9. Q: What do you think the strength of *Face Value* is?
9. A: I think there's a lot of good work in the show.

10. Q: What do you see as the weaknesses of *Face Value*?
10. A: I think it's a very poor show. I don't see any logic to the way it's been
    arranged. Everything seems to be scattered throughout the galleries. I
    don't think there's any flow from one space to another.

11. Q: Why do you think the show was arranged the way it was?
11. A: Probably to be visually striking or just to be goofy, I don't know really.
APPENDIX E

PREPARATOR (PR)

1. Q: Do you think the Education Department has an effective program in place for *Face Value*?

1. A: I think that the Education Department has done a good job of developing children's programs. They draw a lot of kids into the exhibition. A lot of kids from inner-city schools who wouldn't otherwise be exposed to art museums. Often the kids get to go down to the [more traditional arts institution] but that's such a brief visit and it's done by those [docents] who aren't really in touch with what the art is about. There's plenty of room for improvement though. [The Education Department at the [the contemporary art center] didn't do a Family Guide for *Face Value*. I think that's the most effective tool they have for encouraging people to think about art. I don't know if they just haven't gotten it back from the printers yet or if they discontinued the program.

2. Q: Can you think of any deficiencies in the Education Department's treatment of *Face Value*?

2. A: I think the Education Department is relatively benign as far as being a participant in this exhibition goes. Unless you schedule a guided tour or attend the one lecture they are going to offer how are they helping the visitor? Sure there are Gallery Guides and text panels but that stuff is practically quoted verbatim from the catalog introduction that the Curator wrote and who really picks those things up anyway? I mean when we return in the spring [at the closing of *Face Value*] those boxes of guides will still be sitting down in [a storage area at the contemporary art center].

3. Q: Do you think a visitor can go through *Face Value* without consulting any of the informative media and get just as much out of the show?

3. A: Yes, and I think that's part of the problem with the Education Department's approach to *Face Value*. So much of their time is spent promoting the curator's thoughts that nothing ever gets accomplished in terms of assisting the visitor. Those themes that they're talking about in the Gallery Guide and their tours reflect what [the Curator] has told them,
not what is evident in the show. It just makes the show that much more
difficult to understand. In that respect I think the Education Department
has treated Face Value and all the other exhibitions too passively. They
become a committee of 'yes' men for the curator and the art. They just
assume that groupie mentality that only benefits themselves.

4. Q: In what way?
4. A: They don't make any waves. As an educational entity entrusted with the
responsibility of fostering interpretations of various works and of the show
as a whole they have the potential to encourage some critical thinking
about the show. Instead I see them as being very non-critical.

5. Q: Why do you think they chose this path?
5. A: It is probably because of a fear of reprisals. I think an inherent problem
with art educators is that they are not artists. They have never been
artists. In that sense they look at the work as being too far removed from
their world. To the Education Department every artwork is a product of
genius; a masterpiece, and I think it's [viewed this way] because they
can't imagine themselves creating artwork. Which is something that they
could very easily do. Since the work has that mystical quality for them it
inevitably comes across in their approach to their work. For instance, in
[a previous exhibition], I think one way of looking at it, at least the
way I saw it, the work begins to fall apart as you move closer toward the
end [the show was in chronological order]. Elements begin separating
and entire compositions become loose and scattered. Why is his work so
solid and cohesive in the '60's, technically and aesthetically, while it's
falling apart in the '90's? Is the interest gone? Are his assistants
assuming too much control? I think these are very real possibilities and
yet education would never think of questioning his work. The same could
be said of Face Value. The family portrait room in [gallery] C [an
ensemble of photographs and stories by Carrie Mae Weems entitled
"Family Pictures and Stories"]; where does that fit in the scheme of Face
Value? It's a Smithsonian kind of piece that really isn't very strong. Why
is that important to Face Value; or rather why isn't it important? If the
education people knew what the distinctions of art criticism were they
may not be as afraid to introduce or encourage unfavorable perspectives.
The Education Department needs to approach art in a more fundamental
way if they are truly going to try and help people think about art. What
they're doing now is just spoon-feeding them with a bunch of disjointed
facts about the artist, the work, and the curator's vision. They should
strive to teach people the basic parts of art criticism; description,
interpretation, and.... The way I approached it when I was an art teacher
at [the neighboring university] was to have people talk about an
innocuous subject, in order to avoid all of the unnecessary baggage
which accompanies our ideas about art, in terms that could be applied to
looking and talking about art. I would have them attempt to describe each other’s appearance. They would say “Mike’s got this wild hair” and I’d say “that’s not a description, that’s an interpretation.” And we’d go from there. I wanted them to learn to differentiate between description and interpretation so that they could feel more comfortable talking about art. And I think that is what really opened up our critiques.

6. Q: Is this what you would recommend as an introduction to Face Value?
6. A: Sure. First, the Education Department needs to realize that art criticism is not a bad thing. They need to give the visitors the tools to think about art and then [the Education Department] shouldn’t feel the need to spoon feed [the visitors] their interpretations, or the curator’s descriptions and interpretations of the work. The Education Department needs to help people realize that these are artworks by people just like them. There is not some detached genius [who makes these artworks] who is light years away from your existence.

7. Q: Why do you think Face Value was created?
7. A: To give people some art to look at and to keep people around here busy. Those themes and all of the lofty aspirations in the text are for their peers. They don’t help anybody understand what’s going on with this work. That writing is there to impress the few people who pay attention to that sort of thing.

8. Q: Do you think adding additional text panels to some of the more difficult work would help the visitor understand Face Value better?
8. A: I don’t think so. They [the visitors] won’t read the gallery material in the first place. Even if they did I’m not convinced that those materials are relevant to what the viewer needs. I think what’s most important is that there has to be an element of comfort in order to relax enough to actually think about what is going on [in Face Value].

9. Q: What do you think a visitor can learn from Face Value?
9. A: I think very little. Above all, I think people need to be exposed to art that fosters multiple meanings. I’m not sure much of this work does that. Even with the art [in Face Value] that would, Education doesn’t allow it to happen. Educationally speaking, I would say the most successful shows [at the contemporary art center] were the ones that opened up to reveal multiple meanings. I think the arrangement of this show is too contrived and regimented to allow this to happen. The Curator wants you to compare the Cindy Sherman to the historical portraits and so there they are side-by-side in an isolated area. What if you wanted to compare her work to another contemporary work; the thought probably wouldn’t even occur to you because of the heavy handedness with which the show was arranged.
APPENDIX F

REGISTRAR (RE)

1. Q: What do you think the Education Department has done effectively in regard to its programs for *Face Value*?
1. A: I think that their children’s programs are definitely their strength. Repeated exposure to the exhibition allows the children to take a more thoughtful approach to their experiences here [at the contemporary art center]. They don’t look at it as a field trip, which I think they often view [a trip to the museum] as free-time. If it’s a single, one-shot thing they have the tendency to not take it seriously. I think providing them with multiple experiences in the same art setting may enable them to envision a life with art playing a significant role. They can sort of live and grow around an art experience; it has a consistency that they need in order to give their experiences meaning.

2. Q: Why do you think the Education Department is particularly adept at developing children’s programs?
2. A: I think they’re afforded the opportunity to do so more than they are with the adult programs. Nobody upstairs [the curatorial staff or the Director] has an interest in the children’s programs; I’m not sure they have the slightest idea how to handle kids. I don’t think they can see how it affects them; how it reflects on their work, and so they don’t have an interest. The adult programs deal consistently with the galleries and so [members of the curatorial staff] are more restrictive about what education can do. I also think the education staff is more well-versed in children’s activities. I think they understand what it takes to set up a sound learning scenario for the kids more than they do for the adults. I think their children’s programs would work well for adults as well, but I don’t think that would be allowed to take place. When I took [my child] to [the Education Department’s] children’s workshop I could see adults getting really excited about the exhibition as well as the children. I think what makes their children’s programs so good is their art-making activities. This is where everybody really gets involved. I think, in general, an art-making activity opens up the urge to learn, no matter what the age [of the learner].

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3. Q: What deficiencies do you see in the Education Department's programs?
   A: The tours that I have seen go through [Face Value] spend too little time with one artwork. They have a tendency to breeze through the galleries in order to fit in as many pieces as possible. Because of that pacing they usually just describe the work and then provide [the visitors] with a pat answer.

4. Q: Meaning?
   A: They have one interpretation which makes sense to [the Education Department] and that's the one that they quickly introduce as sort of an authoritative voice. It's like being on Jeopardy [for the visitors on tour]; you only have a certain amount of time before they tell you the answer. [The Education Department's] problems in their approach remind me of my religious experiences. The single meaning closes off the path to learning. The path is as important as the meaning in terms of what you learn.

5. Q: Would you describe the text panels and the Gallery Guide as necessary or supplemental to a visit to Face Value?
   A: I would definitely characterize them as supplemental. I actually don't think either of them are very useful in terms of educating the visitor. Their writing style is geared for people who already have a thorough knowledge of art. You don't need to concentrate on academic writing in the museum setting because the people who can understand that sort of language, that art-academic style, do not have relatively urgent needs in regard to interpretation. I think the work that [those in the contemporary art center] often show is too difficult for the average man off the street. In Face Value there's a lot of difficult work, like the Cindy Sherman's or Leon Golub's work. I think little bits of information can help spark your interest. For the average person I think the work is often too difficult on its own. Another thing I think people are seriously lacking is the ability to talk about art. One of the reasons they want or at least accept the dictatorial style of education is that they aren't comfortable enough to talk about the art. They're not certain how to deal with it in a meaningful way.

6. Q: Why do you think the education staff is not invited to the exhibitions meetings?
   A: I think, in a lot of ways, the [contemporary art center] is like a second-run movie house. It's a space for prepackaged shows. [The contemporary art center] hasn't established themselves as an institution that has the resources to generate exhibitions of such a magnitude that they will make people take notice. As a result nobody has a clear sense of the mission. There isn't really a clear sense of purpose in what anybody is doing; certainly not a unified sense of purpose. They don't feel an urgency to get on the same page in any sort of philosophical sense.
because the main responsibility everybody has is to unpack [the show], hang it, and open the doors. So there is not that sense of communicative urgency that I've experienced at other museums. The concepts of success and security are human conventions that prevent people from expressing themselves. [The contemporary art center staff] wants to be successful so they look for prescribed ways to achieve this sort of identity. I think that is why our programming tends to favor traveling exhibitions. If they involve a well-known artist or originate from a well-known institution, such as the Guggenheim or MOMA, they feel these are guaranteed success.

7. Q: What type of visitor do you think Face Value is intended for?
7. A: I think primarily academics and those who are a part of the art scene. I think it's a fairly confusing show in terms of the way in which it is arranged and the things that are written about it are fairly lofty in academic terms. I think, in a strange sort of way, contemporary art can make people feel more uncomfortable than historical art. There isn't that sense of history built upon established critical opinion that lends people a comfort zone in which to fallback on. [Those who are a part of the contemporary art center] need to spend time helping people feel comfortable in forming interpretations of art.
APPENDIX G

VISITOR, KATE (VK)

1. Q: Where did you begin looking at Face Value?
   1. A: At the top where the hallway ends [the north end].

2. Q: Why did you begin there?
   2. A: That's where our tour started.

3. Q: What was the first work you looked at?
   3. A: The traditional portrait [of William Merritt Chase].

4. Q: Were there any areas that you skipped?
   4. A: The tour only stopped at two spots.

5. Q: If the tour hadn't mentioned it, do you think you would have noticed the “reading room”?
   5. A: No

6. Q: Why not?
   6. A: Because its in an area separate from the galleries. It didn't mention it on the walls or anything.

7. Q: Why did you take a tour of Face Value?
   7. A: It was an assigned activity for my art education class.

8. Q: Would you have taken a tour if it weren't required?
   8. A: No, I would have looked at [Face Value] on my own. If the opportunity was there, I might of taken a tour but only on the spur of the moment.

9. Q: After taking a tour do you view it as an important part of looking at Face Value?
   9. A: I think, in hearing someone else's opinion, I was able to think about things I wouldn't have thought about otherwise. But I don't think you have to take a tour.
10. Q: Did there appear to be a specific direction in which to walk through Face Value?
10. A: No.

11. Q: Is Face Value different from exhibits you've seen at other art museums?
11. A: Yes, just in the fact that it had so many similar artworks. They were all portraits. They had a similar theme or issue or something.

12. Q: What did you like most about Face Value?
12. A: I think it really grabbed your attention because all of the portraits are sort of looking at you from all of these different directions. I didn't really have a chance to look at it that much though since I was on the tour.

13. Q: Were there any particular pieces you spent a lot of time looking at?
13. A: I didn't get a chance to see many of them. I like the Andy Warhols. I think those were really neat.

14. Q: Why were you attracted to them?
14. A: I don't know. I haven't seen any of his work in person before. I like the bright colors and the size.

15. Q: Were there any pieces that you didn't particularly care for?
15. A: The ones that were the different flesh colors [the Byron Kim piece "Emmett at Twelve Months"]. I wouldn't have cared for it if I would have been on my own. After [the docent] explained them I thought they were interesting.

16. Q: How did her explanation help?
16. A: They were just so plain. I didn't think they were that interesting to look at. When she explained what they meant I liked them a lot more.

17. Q: What work did you spend the most amount of time looking at?
17. A: She spent the most time in the hallway [reserved for traditional portraiture].

18. Q: Why do you think the tour spent the most time in that area?
18. A: She was talking about the way the [traditional] portraits look like the Cindy Sherman. I think she thought that this was a good example of portraiture.

19. Q: What work did you spend the least amount of time looking at?
19. A: Of the ones she talked about, probably the Andy Warhol's.

20. Q: Why do you think that is?
20. A: Umm, I'm not sure. She just kind of made a reference to it real quick.
21. Q: Was there anything other than the artwork that you noticed about the exhibition?
21. A: She pointed out those words on the beam [the Felix Gonzales-Torres piece].

22. Q: Why do you think the artwork was arranged the way it was?
22. A: I don't know. I really didn't get to see [the exhibition]. In the portrait hall I think they were grouped chronologically, but I'm not sure.

23. Q: Why do you think the artworks were grouped by artist?
23. A: So you could compare and contrast them. I think they were grouped by styles too. Like in [the traditional portrait area] they were all realistic, whether they were photographs or paintings. Then in the area with the Andy Warhol's they [all of the works in that area] were more abstract. Then in the area where we entered there were non-objectives.

24. Q: Did you notice any portraits that looked like they were of celebrities?

25. Q: Why do you think they were celebrities.
25. A: Because of the tour. She was like "Who do you think they are?" I don't think there were any others, that I saw anyway.

26. Q: Do you feel that you know more about portraits now than before you took the tour?
26. A: I guess. Before I might have said a portrait was just like one of those traditional portraits. Now I can see how there are other ways a portrait can be done.

27. Q: Why do you think the Chuck Close's are in the same room as the Byron Kim's?
27. A: Because they're more abstract.

28. Q: Why do you think the Andy Warhol's are in a separate room from the Hannah Wilke's?
28. A: I don't know. Because they're different types of portraits.

29. Q: Did you see a video of political subject matter?

30. Q: Did you see any advertising?
30. A: No.
31. Q: Are there any artists whose work you would like to see more of?
31. A: I would like to see more of Cindy Sherman's work. But I don't know if that's because of this show. I just know a little bit more about her.

32. Q: Are you familiar with any of these artist's work:
   William Merritt Chase?
32a: No.
John Singer Sargent?
32b: No.
James McNeil Whistler?
32c: No.
George Beilows?
32d: No.

33. Q: Why were the traditional portraits in the exhibition?
33. A: So we can compare them to Cindy Sherman's work so we can see what the differences are.

34. Q: Was there anything that surprised you about Face Value?
34. A: I was surprised to see those flesh pictures [the Byron Kim's].

35. Q: What surprised you about them?
35. A: I just figured to at least see a human face. Those things with the dolls and the light, [the Tony Oursler's], surprised me because I thought everything would be stuff that would be hung on the wall. I thought it would be all two-dimensional things.

36. Q: Were there any artworks that you felt were difficult to understand?
36. A: Yes. The flesh thing [the Byron Kim]. If I just looked at it and I didn't have someone explaining it to me. Maybe not, though, if I would have seen [the expanded text panel] I would have understood.

37. Q: Why was Face Value created?
37. A: To show the way different people can be portrayed in different styles and [in] different mediums by different artists.

38. Q: Did you read the large text panel at the north end of the exhibition?
38. A: No, I didn't really have a chance since we were on the tour.

39. Q: Do you think you would have if you weren't on a tour?

40. Q: What is the purpose of the text panel?
40. A: So that people will know what the show is, what it's about, what the background is.
41. Q: Did you see any small identification labels next to individual works?
41. A: Yes.

42. Q: Did you read any of those?
42. A: Yes.

43. Q: Did they help you?
43. A: They let me know who did the work. I think those influence a lot of people's interpretations because when you the read the title it might change your mind about what the work is about.

44. Q: Did you notice any other labels in the galleries?
44. A: The words up above on the column.

45. Q: Why do you think those were there?
45. A: I don't know. Maybe to let people know about certain things that you think about when you're looking at portraits.

46. Q: The [contemporary art center] could have staged any number of exhibitions; why do you think they chose the portrait show?
46. A: I think the show could appeal to a lot of different people. There are a lot of different portraits.

47. Q: Did you notice areas where the Gallery Guides were offered?
47. A: No.

48. Q: Would you look at a guide like this?
48. A: Yes. I would probably look at it as I was going through the show. I might have questions I need to have answered.

49. Q: Did you know there was a reading room that dealt with subjects of Face Value?
49. A: Yes, the guide told us about it.

50. Q: Is it an area that interest you?
50. A: Probably not, unless there was an issue that I wanted to look up. I think most of the people that go through the museum are there for a sort of social activity. They're just running in and out. It's something to do. That's probably reserved for people who really want to learn about the art. There are plenty of times when I go to an art exhibition as a social setting.

51. Q: Would you be interested in a recorded tour of Face Value?
51. A: Yes, I think that would give me an opportunity to think about the artwork in a more meaningful way.
52. Q: If an art-making activity which related, in some way, to Face Value were offered would you be interested in participating.
52. A: Umm, I'm not sure. I probably wouldn't have enough time or be prepared to do something like that.

53. Q: If an introduction to art criticism were offered would you be interested in participating in it? Something that would talk about how we talk about art.
53. A: Yeah.

54. Q: Why?
54. A: I think it would help me talk about the art in a better way, I guess.

55. Q: Do you think it would help you in your visit to Face Value?
55. A: Yes. I might be able to decide what art in the show is most important and understand more about the artwork.
APPENDIX H

VISITOR, GRETCHEN (VG)

1. Q: Where did you begin looking at *Face Value*?
   1. A: At the Peter Campus video.

2. Q: How did you decide to start there?
   2. A: Because it was the first artwork I came upon.

3. Q: Were there any areas of *Face Value* that you skipped?

4. Q: Why did you skip them?
   4. A: I just didn't see them when I was walking around until I was on the way out.

5. Q: Does it look like there is supposed to be a specific direction in which you're supposed to walk through *Face Value*?
   5. A: No.

6. Q: Where did you finish looking at *Face Value*?
   6. A: The last thing I saw were [Alex Katz'] life-size figures in the hallway.

7. Q: How did you decide you were finished looking at *Face Value*?
   7. A: I thought I had seen all of the artwork.

8. Q: How long did you spend looking at *Face Value*?
   8. A: About 45 minutes.

9. Q: Were you aware that there is a reading room that contains books related to *Face Value*?
   9. A: I saw it but I didn't go there.
10. Q: Why did you decide not to go there?
10. A: I didn’t have time.

11. Q: Why did you come to Face Value?
11. A: I read about it and it sounded interesting.

12. Q: Why didn’t you take a tour (there were several tours available on this particular day)?
12. A: I like to look at the work by myself. I don’t appreciate people trying to tell me what to think about. I was listening to [the audience of the tour] and I don’t want to have to listen to what they are saying. Especially if you are just in a random tour with random people and then they just ask the most inane questions. When I was here last time and I was with my mom to see that Liechtenstein show. Oh, listening to [the docent] talk about this stuff. It was really annoying, she was talking loudly and she was talking down to the group and it was really annoying.

13. Q: Would you recommend that anybody take a tour?
13. A: I don’t like tours. My mother likes to take tours so she would probably like to have a tour. She likes to have somebody telling her “And this is here because....”

14. Q: I see you have a Gallery Guide with you. Have you looked at it yet?
14. A: No, I deliberately waited until I was done.

15. Q: Why?
15. A: For the same reason that I don’t take tours. I wanted to experience the show without other peoples opinions affecting how I think about the art.

16. Q: Is Face Value different from other museums exhibits you’ve seen?
16. A: It was more like, a little of this and a little of that. It was a piece-meal kind of show. It’s not as monothematic.

17. Q: What did you like about Face Value?
17. A: I liked the Carrie Mae Weems’ photographs a lot. When I was in there there wasn’t even any voice. As I was leaving I could hear somebody talking and I figured “Oh that was probably part of it.” It must have been rewinding during the time I was in there. So then I went back and listened to a little bit of that.

18. Q: What did you find to be attractive about the Carrie Mae Weems piece?
18. A: I thought the photographs were nice and I found the captions underneath to be interesting. I also liked the four at the start. There was the one with the leg and then the mental patient [Peter Hujar].
19. Q: What did you like least about Face Value?
19. A: [Peter Campus'] video presentation that I first saw. It looked like it was poorly done. It looked like a school project.

20. Q: Why were the works in the show grouped as the work of single artists?
20. A: How else would you do it?

21. Q: They could be intermixed.
21. A: Oh, I don't know. I wouldn't have liked it if it was all scattered about. It would have been too non-cohesive.

22. Q: What did you spend the most time looking at?
22. A: Probably the Carrie Mae Weems photographs.

23. Q: What did you spend the least amount of time looking at?

24. Q: Did you notice anything other than the artwork in Face Value?

25. Q: Why was Face Value arranged the way it was?
25. A: Certain things had to be arranged the way they were. Like that piece with the door at the end of the gallery [Eleanor Antin] was probably the best place for it. The hallway with all of the portraits was supposed like a regular gallery. The configuration as a hallway made it more like a natural setting for old portraits.

26. Q: Why do you think they put the Chuck Close's with the Byron Kim's?
26. A: It could be because they're all large formats. Also the Close's are all bits and pieces of little things and [the Kim's] are bits and pieces of little things.

27. Q: Can you think of any aspect of the show's arrangement that could be changed?
27. A: No.

28. Q: Why do you think the political video was in Face Value?
28. A: I don't know, I guess they're portraits of people as much as anything else is.

29. Q: Did you notice any portraits which you thought were of celebrities?
29. A: No, I suppose I thought the Warhol's were somebody I should know but I didn't. They looked vaguely familiar.
30. Q: What, if anything, could you say about portraits that you couldn't say before?
30. A: I was pretty much aware that a portrait could be many different things and that was pretty much what the theme of the show was.

31. Q: Are there any artists in Face Value who you would like to see more of their work?
31. A: [Peter Hujar], who did the photograph of the leg. The Lyle Ashton Harris' group interested me. The fact that they were large Polaroids, I thought, was nice.

32. Q: Why were the Hannah Wilke's set apart from other photographs?
32. A: I don't know.

33. Q: Did you see any advertising?
33. A: The framed ads.

34. Q: Why do you think they were in Face Value?
34. A: I don't know. They were all pictures of people.

35. Q: Did you see any magazines?
35. A: Yeah.

36. Q: Why were they in Face Value?
36. A: For the same reason [as the advertising]. To illustrate that portraiture can be everywhere.

37. Q: Are you familiar with any of these artist’s work: William Merritt Chase?
37a: Yes.

John Singer Sargent?
37b: Yes

James McNeil Whistler?
37c: Yes

George Bellows?
37d: Yes

38. Q: Why were there traditional portraits in the show?
38. A: Because they're portraits too. To lend an historical perspective. To provide a contrast to the Cindy Sherman.

39. Q: Was there anything that surprised you about Face Value?
39. A: No. Oh, I guess those Tony Oursler works surprised me, they weren't a sort of portrait that I had thought of.
40. Q: Were there any works that you felt were difficult to understand?
40. A: The Ray Johnson works. I couldn't get too deep into them.

41. Q: Were you concerned with finding some sort of theme to the show?
41. A: I thought the theme was fairly apparent.

42. Q: What sort of theme did you get out of Face Value?
42. A: Portraits. How they can take different forms.

43. Q: Did you find yourself looking at areas of Face Value as a group of work or did you see it more as individual work to be looked at separately?
43. A: I pretty much looked at each work individually.

44. Q: Did you read the large text panel at the north end of the exhibition?
44. A: I read it at the end.

45. Q: Can you envision what sort of audience this panel was intended for; did it suit your needs?
45. A: Yeah. It's probably intended for everybody. I usually read that stuff at the beginning but I didn't see it until the end.

46. Q: Why do you think the text panel is there?
46. A: To form a nice little introduction to the show.

47. Q: Did you consult the Gallery Guide when you were going through Face Value?
47. A: No.

48. Q: Did you read the identification labels that were placed next to each piece?
48. A: Yes. I read them for each piece.

49. Q: Would it interfere with your visit to Face Value if [the identification labels] weren't there?
49. A: Yes. I like to see what the works are made of.

50. Q: Did you notice any other labels in Face Value?
50. A: No.

51. Q: Did you notice the text on the columns in both galleries?
51. A: Yes. I thought that was a work of art.
52. Q: The [contemporary art center] could have staged any number of exhibitions during this time period, why do you think they chose Face Value?
52. A: It could have an appeal on many different levels and for many different people. I also thought it was a good show. It had a lot of famous works by famous people. It also gave exposure to lesser-known people who could then be looked at more closely.

53. Q: Will you return to see Face Value?
53. A: No.

54. Q: Would you be interested in a tape recorded/headset tour of Face Value?
54. A: No. Really for the same reasons I wouldn’t take a guided tour.

55. Q: Would you be interested in an art-making activity that related to Face Value?
55. A: No. I wouldn’t want to do an art-making activity. It’s simply not what I come to an art exhibition to do.

56. Q: Would you be interested in a lecture about how to sharpen your thinking about art in the form of a talk about how to talk about art?
56. A: Yes. I think it could help me understand what to look for in an artwork.
APPENDIX I

VISITOR, STEPHANIE (VS)

1. Q: Why did you decide to take a tour?
   1. A: I was studying in the cafe and I saw a sign that said there was going to be a tour at 1:00 PM. I hadn’t seen the show so I decided to go.

2. Q: How did you feel about the length of the tour?

3. Q: If you had gone on your own you would have spent less time?
   3. A: Yes. I probably would have gone and seen part of it and then come back to look at the rest. Also I think it isn’t as taxing when you go on your own. When you’re on a tour it’s like you’re being lectured to and it tends to wear me out.

4. Q: Did the tour help you understand Face Value?
   4. A: Yes, [the guide] told us about little bits of information that I wouldn’t have known otherwise. He was pretty exact in explaining the artwork to me and talking about the different kinds of portraiture.

5. Q: Where did you begin looking at Face Value?
   5. A: In the first gallery [Gallery B].

6. Q: Did you skip any areas of Face Value?
   6. A: No.

7. Q: Does it seem like there is a specific direction in which to travel in Face Value?
   7. A: Not that I could see.

8. Q: Where did you finish looking at Face Value?
9. Q: How did you decide that you were finished?

10. Q: Will you return to Face Value?
10. A: Yes. I'd like to spend more time with some of the work, the Chuck Close's.

11. Q: Did you know that there is a reading room which involves Face Value?
11. A: No.

12. Q: If you knew of such a thing would you go to it?
12. A: I'm not so sure I would spend very much time in there. When I'm at the show I want to spend my time looking at art.

13. Q: Why did you go to Face Value?
13. A: I like to support the arts community. I had spare time and I find it relaxing.

14. Q: Would you recommend the tour of Face Value to anyone else?
14. A: I'm not sure. I would rather spend time to myself in the galleries, but maybe somebody else would rather have a lecture to feel more comfortable.

15. Q: In hindsight, would you take a tour?
15. A: No, I felt like I could have understood just as much about the work on my own. [The guide] just kept raising questions about portraiture. You know, "What is it to be a portrait?" He didn't really add too much contextual information that I couldn't get from the image [myself]. You could already tell from [Hannah Wilke's] Venus image that the woman had cancer. Maybe he helped me understand what [Byron Kim's] skin color one was because I wouldn't have gotten that. He approached the tour too much like a lecture. I was surprised he was talking in that tone because I felt like I knew as much as he did. I think he was bringing up a lot of obvious points like "A portrait can be more than a face;" like I didn't already know that. It made the tour seem posed or sort of fake.

16. Q: Is Face Value different from exhibits you've seen at other museums?
16. A: Yes, because they mixed the two time periods. I'm not used to seeing that.

17. Q: What similarities did you see in Face Value?
17. A: They both involved portraiture. The artist's work was grouped by individual.
18. Q: Why do you think they grouped a single artist's work together?
18. A: I'd guess it's that way so you can compare and contrast a single artist's work.

19. Q: What did you like most about Face Value?
19. A: I liked the fact that they included historical portraiture.

20. Q: Why do you think they decided to include traditional forms of portraiture in the show?
20. A: I think it tried to bring up the contrast between a traditional portrait, which tries to give a persona of someone, and a contemporary portrait, which tries to give you an aspect of a person. When you see the French painting [traditional portrait] it was what someone wanted themselves to be presented as.

21. Q: Why were the Cindy Sherman's the only contemporary portraits in the traditional area?
21. A: I guess they were there to make a point about perception. It was there to draw you in, and to catch your attention when you think it's just another historical portrait.

22. Q: What did you like least about Face Value?
22. A: I can't really think of anything that stood out that I didn't like about it.

23. Q: What did you spend the least amount of time looking at?
23. A: The group of pictures by one artist with the tape recording [the Carrie Mae Weems piece]. We spent about fifteen seconds in there.

24. Q: Why do you think you spent so little time there?
24. A: Because there were so many pieces that it would have taken too much time to look at them all.

25. Q: What piece did you spend the most amount of time on?
25. A: Probably the three Polaroids that were [Lyle Ashton Harris'] "Alias Cleopatra..."

26. Q: Why do think the guide selected those particular works as the focal point of the tour?
26. A: I think because they dealt with more than one issue. He spent a lot of time bringing out issues about slavery and gender and family relationships.

27. Q: Was there anything other than the artwork which stood out about Face Value?
27. A: No.
28. Q: Why do you think *Face Value* was arranged the way it was?
28. A: I really couldn’t see any reason.

29. Q: Why do you think the decision was made to put the Chuck Close’s in the same room with the Byron Kim’s and the Gary Schneider’s?
29. A: Because they were more abstract.

30. Q: Why do you think that the Hannah Wilke’s are placed in an area without any other works of art?
30. A: Which one’s are the Hannah Wilke’s?

31. Q: The large color photographs of the artist as a cancer patient.
31. A: Probably because they are so large.

32. Q: Would you change anything about the way *Face Value* was arranged?
32. A: I thought the hallway was a strange arrangement. It was so enclosed. I mean it was like you weren’t really meant to look at anything in there. It was just so narrow. The guards kept scolding people about walking too close to the artwork.

33. Q: Did you notice any portraits which looked like they were of celebrities?
33. A: There were [Billy Sullivan’s] drawings.

34. Q: Why did you think they were of celebrities?
34. A: Because the guide told us. Also I recognized one person, Naomi Campbell.

35. Q: Is there anything you can say about portraits that you couldn’t say before?
35. A: The text portrait was interesting to me in that I had never thought about a portrait that you could do just by using words.

36. Q: Why are the Andy Warhol portraits separate from the Hannah Wilke photographs?
36. A: They don’t seem to have to much in common but I really don’t know.

37. Q: Did you find yourself thinking about more than one work in some sort of context or did you look at each work individually?
37. A: I think I did find myself looking at more than one work at a time.

38. Q: What were you thinking about?
38. A: For instance, when I would be looking at the Chuck Close’s…. Usually I was thinking about another work by the same artist though. When I was looking at the one Chuck Close ["Bill"] I was thinking about the differences and similarities of the style of the one behind me.
39. Q: Did you see a video of politically oriented subject matter?

40. Q: Why do you think that was in Face Value?
40. A: Just to point out that portraits aren’t just high art but that they also have an everyday common usage.

41. Q: Were there any artists you would like to see more work of?
41. A: [Peter Campus] who did the video who put the blue make-up on.

42. Q: Did you see any advertising in Face Value?
42. A: Yes.

43. Q: Why do you think it was in Face Value?
43. A: I assume for the same reason. To talk about constructing a persona as a commodity.

44. Q: Did you see any magazines in the show?
44. A: Yes.

45. Q: Why do you think those were used in the exhibit?
45. A: Well, the guide mentioned that they were all purchased for the show. They went out and found all of the magazines that had faces on them. I guess it was to show you how readily available portraits are. That’s the only thing I could think of.

46. Q: Are you familiar with any of these artist’s work: William Merritt Chase?
46a: Yes.

James McNeil Whistler?
46b: Yes.

John Singer Sargent?
46c: Yes.

George Bellows?
46d: Yes.

47. Q: Was their anything that surprised you about Face Value?
47. A: I was surprised that [Tony Oursler’s] dolls were there. They were just hard to take because they were so realistic. They were just eerie. I wouldn’t have even noticed [Eleanor Antin’s] door [ in “Portrait of Lynne Traiger”] if it weren’t for the tour. Because it was at the end of a narrow space. It was so normal to see a door in an area like that. I was surprised to see [the guide] going past the work on the wall and moving down that way. I was right on top of it and I didn’t even notice it.
48. Q: Were there any artworks that you felt were difficult to understand?
48. A: I thought there were some that weren't obvious. Like I thought that [Peter Campus'] video of the man putting on the blue make-up was sort of obscure. I couldn't readily think about what the artist was trying to say. I would want to read more to feel comfortable about that piece.

49. Q: Were you concerned with finding some sort of theme in the show?
49. A: I thought the theme was laid right out for me.

50. Q: The theme being?
50. A: Portraiture. Contemporary portraiture in America. Challenging your idea of what it is. That it is not just some face painted for the Oval Office to be put behind your desk.

51. Q: Did you notice any literature about the show?
51. A: No.

52. Q: If you would have had the opportunity to take a piece of literature about **Face Value**, would you?
52. A: If I wouldn't have taken a tour I would have. I probably wouldn't have gotten one if I would have gotten to the end [without seeing one].

53. Q: If you had this literature, when would you read it?
53. A: During my visit.

54. Q: Did you see a large text panel in the show?
54. A: Yes.

55. Q: Did you read that?
55. A: No.

56. Q: If you weren't on a tour do you think you would have read it?
56. A: Yes.

57. Q: Did you read any of the small identification labels?
57. A: Almost all of them.

58. Q: Why did you read them?
58. A: Because I think that titles are a part of the artwork. They can give you a cue as to what's going on. They can also let you know if the work is by the same artist or a different artist.
59. Q: Do you think you could have been satisfied with the show without the text panel and literature and the labels?
59. A: Without a tour? I think I would have been thrown off balance by some of it.

60. Q: Why were the word portraits placed on the beams of the galleries?
60. A: I don't know.

61. Q: The contemporary art center could have chosen any number of exhibitions during this period why do you think they chose to do Face Value?
61. A: I'm not sure. It seems like something they haven't normally done. It's so different from what they've done before.

62. Q: In what way?
62. A: I'm used to seeing shows by one artist. [The contemporary art center] doesn't usually have such traditional art in the galleries. I've never seen [the curator] putting his own two-cents worth in before [in some form other than writing]. The magazines and the advertisements, I mean those weren't artworks and that's something I haven't seen here before [in the galleries].

63. Q: Would you be interested in a tape-recorded tour?
63. A: Yes

64. Q: If you offered an art-making activity that related to Face Value would you do it?
64. A: No. I probably wouldn't have the time.

65. Q: Would you be interested in a talk about how to talk about art?
65. A: Yeah. It would depend on the topic.
APPENDIX J
VISITOR, TED (VT)

1. Q: Do you visit the [contemporary art center's] exhibitions regularly?
1. A: No, I've been down here once or twice. I was going to go down here to see the Lichtenstein exhibit but I didn't make it.

2. Q: Where did you start looking at Face Value?
2. A: When you walk in there's [Cindy Sherman's] big picture of the lady in the white dress ["Untitled # 218"]. That's where I started. Then I looked at the [Peter Campus] video a little bit and then I walked down the wall [in Gallery B].

3. Q: Did you skip any areas of Face Value?
3. A: No, I don't think so. I maybe didn't do them in all the right sequence. I saw the Nelson Rockefeller pictures last because on the way back I realized I'd missed that.

4. Q: Did it look like there was a specific direction in which to walk through Face Value?
4. A: I can't see that it made any difference what order you saw it in.

5. Q: Where did you finish looking at Face Value?
5. A: At the Nelson Rockefeller.

6. Q: How did you decide you were done?
6. A: I'd seen it all.

7. Q: How long did you spend looking at Face Value?
7. A: I have no idea. Maybe forty minutes.

8. Q: Did you know that there is a reading room which contains books related to Face Value?
8. A: I saw the reading room. I wasn't sure there was anything related to Face Value [in it].

9. Q: If you knew that there were books related to Face Value would you look at them?

10. Q: If a tour would have been available when you arrived at the [contemporary art center] would you have taken it?
A: I would be more likely to go on my own. I'm not real concerned about other people's opinions [about art]. I think art is for...you know is a personal thing. Different people see different things.

11. Q: Is Face Value different from other exhibits you've seen at other museums?
A: Yes.

12. Q: In what ways?
A: Well, I'm not used to seeing the video things for one thing. I don't know it's just different. Of course the exhibits I'm used to going to see are more traditional. The works of art are more traditional. I usually take in the Watercolor Society's shows and they're usually landscapes and vases of flowers. They're sort of more traditional things. I saw the Monet show in Chicago, but that's also much more traditional than this. A lot of this had some sort of social message or something that it was trying to give. I'm not sure I got it, but....

13. Q: Would have gotten more of those sort of messages from the tour then?
A: Well, yes probably.

14. Q: But that's not something you're concerned about?
A: Yeah.

15. Q: What did you like most about Face Value?
A: I thought some of the traditional oil portraits were nice.

16. Q: What did you like least about Face Value?
A: [Tony Oursler's] talking dolls. They were weird. I didn't find them enjoyable. Creepy.

17. Q: What did you spend the most amount of time looking at?
A: I gave it all equal time I think. Well, probably because of the small print, [Carrie Mae Weem's] pictures of the black families. I probably spent more time there just trying to understand it.

18. Q: What did you spend the least amount of time looking at?
A: [Tony Oursler's] talking dolls. I got turned off pretty fast from that.

19. Q: Now, do you think if somebody or something was able to explain a part of the doll's significance that you'd feel more positively about them?

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19. A: Probably not. In fact I'm sure of it. I just didn't find them to be particularly appealing.

20. Q: Was there anything other than the artwork that stood out about the exhibition?
20. A: Anything other than the artwork?

21. A: What else would there be?

22. Q: Nothing in particular.
22. A: I guess, no, then.

23. Q: Did you notice the green walls in the traditional portrait area of Face Value?
23. A: No, I didn't pay any attention to that. I was thinking the walls were all white.

24. Q: Why do you think Face Value was arranged the way it was?
24. A: I wondered that as I went through it. I have no idea. It didn't seem chronological. It didn't seem like it progressed as you went or built up. It was just kind of seemed scattered. It was kind of like; well they had room for this here so let's put it there.

25. Q: Would you change anything about the arrangement of Face Value?
25. A: I probably would. I'd probably have tended to go chronologically or put the oils together and the photographs together. Maybe that's not good I don't know.

26. Q: Why do you think Face Value was primarily grouped by single artist?
26. A: The only thing I can think of is if you're interested in a particular artist's work you don't have to look through everything to find it.

27. Q: Did you notice any portraits which you felt were of celebrities?
27. A: Well, there was Nelson Rockefeller, the pictures of the presidents, the busts of Napoleon and Lincoln. Oh, there was the photograph of Muhamed Ali.

28. Q: Can you say anything about portraits that you couldn't say before?
28. A: I don't think so. Should I be able to?

29. Q: Well, some people felt that there were some forms of portraiture that they didn't expect.
29. A: Well, yeah I guess that’s true. There were some with more than one figure in the picture. I don’t think of those kind of things as being portraits.

30. Q: Which ones are you referring to?
30. A: [Carrie Mae Weems'] photographs of the black family. A lot of the work [in Face Value] wasn’t what I would consider portraits but I guess they could call them that.

31. Q: Why do you think the Chuck Close’s were in the same room as the Byron Kim’s? The Chuck Close’s are the two large head and shoulders portraits in the northern most area and the Kim’s are the two areas of squares of flesh colored panels.
31. A: Well, they’re varying degrees of abstraction maybe. That’s the only thing I can think of. I’m not sure why the squares of color were even considered portraits.

32. Q: Did you notice the additional text panel next to the Kim’s?
32. A: Yeah, I did. It was lost on me, I guess.

33. Q: Why do you think the Hannah Wilke’s were in a relatively isolated area?
33. A: Which ones are they?

34. Q: Those are the two large color photographs of the cancer patient.
34. A: Probably to make them more striking.

35. Q: Did you see the video of the politically-oriented subjects?
35. A: Yeah, but I didn’t stop there long.

36. Q: Why do you think that was in Face Value?
36. A: Darned if I know. I didn’t think it belonged.

37. Q: Did you see the framed advertisements?
37. A: I saw the magazines in that display case.

38. Q: Why do you think those were there?
38. A: Well those were a kind of portrait too.

39. Q: Did you see any advertisements in single frames?
39. A: No, where are they?

40. Q: They were in the area with the presidential portraits.
40. A: I guess I looked at the presidents and the video and just didn’t even see that.

41. Q: Are there artists in Face Value that you would like to see more work of?
41. A: I like Whistler and some of George Bellows. Actually, I would be
interested in seeing more work of [Chuck Close] who did the picture made out of the circles ["Bill"]). From a distance it looked like the circles were just out of focus but the image looked more realistic, you know. Does this artist do a lot of that sort of thing?

42. Q: Yeah. That's a primary style of his. His name is Chuck Close. Did you notice the fingerprint piece he did. (pause) The smaller portrait of an older woman that was made out of his fingerprints.

42. A: How did I miss that? I'll have to go back and look at that. I missed that entirely. I thought I saw everything.

43. Q: Are familiar with these artist's work:
   William Merritt Chase?
43a: No.
   John Singer Sargent?
43b: Yes.
   James McNeil Whistler?
43c: Yes.
   George Bellows?
43d: Yes.

44. Q: Why do you think there were traditional portraits in the show?

44. A: The show must have been intended to run the gamut of portraiture and those are examples of portraiture. They needed those to make [Face Value] complete.

45. Q: Did you notice that two of the portraits in the traditional hallway were contemporary artworks?

45. A: I'm not sure...which ones?

46. Q: They were two large color photographs by Cindy Sherman.

46. A: There was one...yeah, okay, this was probably one of them. There was one I almost couldn't decide whether it was a painting or a photograph. It was a big piece.

47. Q: Why do you think it would be the only contemporary work placed there?

47. A: Because they look sort of like historical pieces. They're reminiscent of that era.

48. Q: Was there anything that surprised you about Face Value?


49. Q: When you came to the show did you know it was going to be a portraiture show?
49. A: No, I had no idea.

50. Q: Did you realize that that's what it was when you entered the galleries?
50. A: I think I went back and looked at the title. I saw a little bit and then went back and looked at the title [on the wall outside of Gallery B].

51. Q: Were there any artworks that you felt were difficult to understand?
51. A: Yes. Well, [Byron Kims'] colored blocks. I don’t know if [Tony Oursler’s] talking dolls were difficult to understand. They were just kind of weird. I'm not sure what [the Peter Campus] video thing was all about.

52. Q: Did you notice the artwork with the door at the southern end of [Gallery] B?
52. A: The door piece?

53. Q: There is a door and a doormat and a bottle of milk.
53. A: I missed that too. Where is it?

54. Q: It's in the first gallery you entered at the far end.
54. A: I must have just thought it was a door and not considered it a work of art. [note: We walked back to this piece and he realized that he had seen it but, not being familiar with the galleries, didn’t realize that there isn’t always a door there. When asked about the mat, the milk bottle, and the newspaper he said he thought those were cleaning supplies left by the custodians].

55. Q: When you were going through Face Value were you concerned with finding some sort of theme or were you more concerned with understanding the individual works of art?
55. A: I was more concerned about looking at each work.

56. Q: Did you read the large text panel at the north end of the show?
56. A: Not those things up on the beam [the Felix Gonzales-Torres' work]?

57. Q: No.
57. A: Umm.

58. Q: Well, what about those words on the beam, did you notice those?
58. A: Yeah, it didn’t seem to have anything to do with anything else. They were nicely printed but that’s about all I can say about them.

59. Q: Why do you think they were there?
59. A: I’m really not sure.

60. Q: Let’s go back to the large text panel at the north end. Do you think you missed it? It talked about the show.
60. A: I think I did see it but I forgot to go back and read it. I was looking at the pictures in that room and I just...I wasn’t too worried about reading it.

61. Q: Did you see any stations where Gallery Guides were available?
61. A: No. I noticed some people had them, but, I wasn’t sure where they got them.

62. Q: Did you find yourself reading the small identification labels as you looked at the art?

63. Q: Why did you read those?
63. A: Well, I was just curious as to who had done them and what they had titled these works.

64. Q: Would it change Face Value for you if identification labels weren’t there?
64. A: It would a little because I usually look at those for information.

65. Q: The [contemporary art center] could have chosen any number of exhibitions to stage during this time period, why do you think they chose Face Value?
65. A: I have no idea. I really don’t. Cheaper? Easier?

66. Q: Will you return to Face Value?
66. A: Probably not. I mean, I wasn’t that taken by it.

67. Q: Did you go to the other exhibitions?
67. A: Yes, I didn’t spend much time in them.

68. Q: Would you have been interested in a tape recorded tour of Face Value?
68. A: Probably not. It depends upon the cost and how much interest I have in the show. For this particular show, no. I rarely go for those sort of things.

69. Q: If an art-making activity were offered that related to Face Value would you be interested?
69. A: Probably not.

70. Q: Would you be interested in a talk about how to sharpen your skills in talking and thinking about art?
70. A: Probably not. I’m not.... I’m mildly interested.

71. Q: Did you like the show?
71. A: Oh, I had a lukewarm sort of feeling about it. This is probably the wrong
way to look at it, but, I always consider whether I could live with this in my home or not. There weren’t a lot of things there that I would want to live with in my home.

72. Q: Were there any contemporary works from the show that you could live with in your home?
72. A: Probably not. Well I might want one of [Alex Katz'] free-standing metal figures cut in my garden.