

The Art Museum

David Gordon

Former Director, Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, U.S.A.

Abstract

The urge to collect things of beauty and significance goes deep into history. Art museums safeguard art for future generations. Works of art have power, and that power has been coopted throughout history by those who wish to assert authority, position, and wealth. The evolution of the display of art for the public reflects social, economic, and political developments, and can best be understood historically. This entry traces that history from ancient times on to the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the nineteenth century and on to modern times. Art museums provide an opportunity for civic pride, and for an architectural statement. The past three decades have seen a boom in new museum building. They are popular gathering places, and in catering (literally) for their growing audiences with cafés, special events, functions, and stores, they have to keep a proper balance between commercial activities and their core mission. Good governance is essential. Success should be measured in ways other than just by number of visitors. Temporary exhibitions should be worthwhile and not just crowd-pleasers. An issue of concern in collection management is ensuring that works of art have not been looted or expropriated. The popularity of art museums in a digital age is likely to continue as screen captives escape to look at real objects.

INTRODUCTION

An art museum is an institution that collects, preserves, and presents art for the public run by a professional staff driven by a mission to encourage a love and appreciation of art and working according to considered standards and procedures. While other museums show objects to explain, art museums show objects to inspire, nourish, and transport: explanation is an aid rather than the point. The spiritual aspect of art museums, and their often imposing buildings, gives them a kind of standing as secular cathedrals. As such they define the values, aspirations, and civilization of their cities, communities, and countries.

Not all art museums have “museum” in their title; sometimes they are called “gallery” or “institute” or “collection.” Art museums come in all sorts of sizes and can be categorized in different ways. In the United States there are over 4000 of them, mostly small, with around 200 of the leading ones with budgets of over \$2 million qualifying their directors for membership in the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD). A few art museums are encyclopedic, covering wide swathes of visual culture in depth. Some are general, with several substantial collections. Many specialize in, for example, sculpture, portraits, photography, textiles, decorative arts, Asian art, arts and crafts, and regional art; or in one artist. There are museums that are completely or predominantly the collection of one collector. There are museums that are parts of universities or other institutions. Most museums collect, but some simply mount exhibitions: the German word *Kunsthalle* (literally art hall) is apt but does not have an English

equivalent. One thinks of a museum as a building, but there are also open-air sculpture parks. Museums that are not art museums but historical or ethnographic or house museums have art works and objects in them, but in order to tell a story or provide context rather than to focus on aesthetics. Museums can also be classified by ownership: government, municipality, trustee, private individual.

Art museums with their cafés and stores are visitor attractions in the exploding area of cultural tourism. Some have become icons of economic regeneration and urban renaissance. Architecturally ambitious new museums and new additions have been springing up all over the world. As they have become larger, more complicated and more expensive to run, museums have confronted issues surrounding their collecting policies, focus, governance and management, and the potentially competing claims of increasing admissions and deepening scholarship. As not-for-profit organizations, relying increasingly on donations, they need to retain the high measure of public trust that has been reposed in them.

Museums can best be understood in a historical context. The word stems from the Greek word *mouseion*, meaning “temple of the Muses.” The range of what is considered collectible art has widened over time, usually following controversy about what is in the canon. The history of the art museum and its antecedents mirrors the history of culture. It illustrates the urge to collect things of beauty, significance, and interest made by imaginative and skillful humans; to use objects to seek affinity with other beings, human or supernatural; to share them with other connoisseurs and people of taste; to

demonstrate the “superiority” of western culture against the mere artifacts of native peoples—and latterly to celebrate those artifacts as works of art in their own right and manifesting a culture equal to that of the West; to show off works of art as evidence of wealth; and to make them available to the general public as part of a mission to improve, set standards and educate that public.

HISTORY

There has been considerable debate about whether the history of museums is linear and evolutionary or discontinuous. In the preface to the book they edited, Impey and Macgregor^[1] state:

With due allowance for the passage of years, no difficulty will be found in recognizing that, in terms of function, *little has changed*; along with libraries, botanical and zoological gardens, and research laboratories, museums are still in the business of ‘keeping and sorting’ the products of Man and Nature and in promoting understanding of their significance.

The emphasis was added by Berelowitz,^[2] who takes a contrary view, influenced by Michel Foucault, that each period should be considered within its world view; there are huge disjunctions between them; and historians should avoid the temptation of presenting a story of continuous betterment from primitive to civilized. The brief account of the history of museums that follows takes a middle view: some things have remained constant, like keeping and sorting, but the meaning and context in which this has taken place has varied enormously.

Museums in Antiquity

While there is archaeological evidence of ancient peoples collecting things without obvious practical use, it was in the Hellenistic period that a taste for art and for the collecting of art developed. Greek temples, or *mouseions*, were dedicated to the various Muses of the arts and sciences. Votive offerings, often war booty, were stored in *thesauroi*, or treasuries, and were a visible display of power and influence. The temples became places of learning as well as offering. Whereas Plato’s lyceum taught through argument and induction, Aristotle’s drew deductions from an observation of things that were collected and categorized and stored. The lyceum needed a *mouseion*. Ptolomy I Soter (ca. 367–283 B.C.E.) incorporated objects as well as texts in his great library of Alexandria.

In 212 B.C.E., General Marcus Claudius Marcellus brought back treasures from Syracuse and the Romans discovered the wonders of Greek art and became avid collectors. Generals put their booty on display to the

public to demonstrate their successes and as a show of power. The collecting habit spread to the rich. Roman artists copied Greek originals and adopted their style, increasing supply. The statesman and General Marcus Agrippa (63 BC–12 BC) urged that statues and pictures should be viewable by the public instead of being stashed away in villas. “This was the first explicit declaration of the value of an art collection as a cultural heritage and of the right of the public to share in its enjoyment.”^[3]

Christianity understood the iconic power of art and attacked pagan art. Many ancient collections were destroyed, although in the Eastern Empire Constantine brought antique statues to his new capital.

Art Museums in the Middle Ages

In the Middle Ages churches were also museums—the only places where the public could see art. Art was no longer votive, or to celebrate victory in battle, or to flaunt individual wealth, but primarily devotional. Cathedral workshops and monasteries became centers of artistic production and recipients of gifts. Soaring Gothic arches and the glitter of gold objects emphasized to worshippers where authority resided. As society developed under the influence of trade and prosperity, courts and the bourgeoisie started collecting as well as the church, and works of art again became appreciated for themselves rather than for their symbolic value; artists gradually began to be valued as creators and not just artisans.

Art Museums in the Renaissance

Fittingly it was in Florence, heart of the Renaissance, the explosion of creativity in literature, sculpture, painting and architecture, and during its “High” phase in the sixteenth century, that the first art museum was constructed. Known as the *Uffizi* because state offices were on the ground floor, the palace was designed in 1560 by Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574) with the second floor *galleria* (hence probably “gallery” as a place for a collection of paintings) purpose-built for the display of art. The Medici installed their art collection and it was opened to the public (at first by appointment only) in 1591. Vasari, the first art historian and author of the *Lives of the Artists*, stressed the importance of the antique as an inspiration to modern artists and gave credit to the idea of genius and to historical development. He was a founder of the first official academy of art, the Accademia del Disegno, incorporated in 1563. While in the modern age art is associated with museums, art of a level rarely exceeded since had already been on public display in the form of Ghiberti’s bronze doors in the Florence baptistery (completed in 1452), Brunelleschi’s dome for the cathedral (1436), and Michelangelo’s *David*, put on display to widespread awe in 1504. Renaissance man witnessed the “rebirth” in the streets.

Art Museums in the Enlightenment

How did the idea of a place of contemplation and study open to the public develop? From several roots.

Art museums developed originally from what we would now classify more as science museums. Private collections of objects from the natural world, science collections, antiquities, manuscripts, and books put together in a spirit of inquisitiveness, go back to the Middle Ages, but spread from the Renaissance onward. Various known as *Wunderkammer*, or as “cabinets of curiosity,” they were open not to the general public but to like-minded seekers of a universal pattern in what to today’s eyes would seem a jumble. In 1683 Elias Ashmole presented his collection to the University of Oxford and the Ashmolean Museum became the first private collection to enter the public domain. The “use of the term “Museum” was a novelty in English: a few years later the *“New World of Words”* (1706) defined it as “a Study, or Library; also a College, or Publick Place for the Resort of Learned Men.”^[4] The physician, naturalist, and collector Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753) bequeathed his large collection to the nation and the British Museum was created by Act of Parliament in 1753. It was a new type of institution in that it was governed by a body of trustees responsible to Parliament; its collections belonged to the nation, with free admission for all. Entry was given to “all studious and curious Persons,” linking public enjoyment with education.^[5]

Art museums also developed from the spread of art collecting around Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Art dealers and auction houses sprang up. Rome was the artistic capital of Europe until the Popes decided that art was too much of a distraction, and collections moved elsewhere. Rubens advised Duke Vincenzo I Gonzaga of Mantua about collecting. After the Duke’s death a large part of his collection was sold in 1627 to Charles I of England, an avid collector. The Spanish collected the more Catholic art of Flanders, and Philip IV sent Velázquez to Italy in 1649 to buy Italian art. The Dutch collected from around Europe as well as their home-grown artists enjoying a golden age. The French saw collecting as an expression of royal authority. The British nobility returned from their Grand Tours laden with art and artifacts to fill their country houses. Lord Burlington brought back the drawings of Palladio and changed the style of architecture of those houses. Art emerged from the cabinet into the long gallery, was arranged, and labeled.

Third, with the Enlightenment came the establishment of art academies (after Florence’s, came France in 1648, Venice in 1750, and London in 1768), with their collections to inspire and teach students, and their exhibitions. The annual shows of works by Academicians at the Royal Academy of Arts were selling exhibitions open to the public for a fee and were hugely popular. Appreciation of art became more widespread. Collectors who did not

want their collections broken up gave to the growing number of art and archaeology academies.

A fourth factor in the development of art museums was egalitarianism. While several art collections were opened to the public voluntarily by rulers (the Gemäldegalerie in Kassel by William VIII of Hesse in 1760, the Schloss Belvedere gallery in Vienna by Joseph II ca. 1781) it was the French Revolution that decisively put art into the public domain. With the fall of Louis XVI on August 10, 1792, the royal collection was declared the property of the nation, and the National Assembly moved fast to assemble choice works from the royal and church collections together in the Louvre, where Louis had been constructing a Grand Gallery until the Revolution broke out in 1789. The Louvre was also home to the Academy. A year later, to celebrate the anniversary, the Louvre was opened as part of a Festival of National Unity, and those who visited the Museum “would have come away with a . . . sense of Revolutionary triumph over despotism.”^[6] The Museum was for education; it was also for propaganda. The two were linked. The Academy’s master-pupil relationship was deemed elitist and it was crushed. The eclectic display of 1793 was deemed to hark back to the *Ancien Régime* and was replaced by 1801 by the more rational, enlightened arrangement by school and period. What mattered was that the “Louvre contained the greatest collection of Western art ever assembled under one roof, and nothing was to prevent that fact from being self-evident to the beholder.”^[6] In the same year the government decreed the establishment of 15 other museums around France.

Art Museums in the Nineteenth Century

The nineteenth century saw a boom in museum building in Europe and later in the United States. Monarchs wanted to appear more democratic by opening up their collections to the public. Nation-states and cities within them emphasized their power and prestige by establishing important collections in impressive buildings. The rising middle classes wanted to enjoy the polite arts as well as the useful arts of manufacturing and transportation. Educational reformers wanted to improve the lot of the working classes and saw art as a civilizing influence.

At the beginning of the century Napoleon brought vast quantities of art back from his conquests for the Louvre (renamed Musée Napoléon) and the provincial museums, but he also established museums in the lands that he conquered, for example, the Galleria dell’Accademia in 1807 in Venice as part of the art school established 17 years earlier, and the Museo del Prado in 1809. After his defeat in 1815, the art was seized back. In Berlin the returned art was put on display by Frederick William III, King of Prussia, who called for a national museum, the Altes Museum, possibly inspired by visits to the Louvre during the peace negotiations. Karl Friedrich Schinkel, professor of architecture and Berlin’s city planner, designed the

purpose-built museum and worked with an art historian, Gustav Friedrich Waagen, on the display of only original works of art and only of masterpieces. They argued that the state's provision of aesthetic reverence would promote social unity and defuse the fervor for dissent. The Altes Museum opened in 1830.

Royal collections were in one way or another opened up in most of Europe. Not so in Britain. For one thing, the magnificent collection of Charles I had been auctioned off by Oliver Cromwell in 1649 to no popular protest other than about the poor prices realized. Subsequent monarchs, particularly George III, rebuilt it to some extent but had no intention of letting the public have access. In 1777 John Wilkes, a member of Parliament, argued for the purchase by the nation of Robert Walpole's superb Houghton Collection, but to no avail. When Catherine the Great moved it to Russia, a commentator on this occasion protested: "The riches of a nation have generally been estimated according to as it abounds in works of art. . . ."^[7] In 1811 the Dulwich Picture Gallery opened as the first public art gallery in Britain. The collection was given to Dulwich College in the absence of a national gallery. Arguments for a national collection grew, although the Royal Academy of Arts wanted national to be defined as British art only. In 1824 the connoisseur George Beaumont donated his collection to the nation, Parliament voted funds and the National Gallery was born. In competition with schools and sewers, it remained underfunded in spite of the arguments of Radical thinkers that access to works by Old Masters would improve the level of taste and thus make British textiles more competitive with the high-end products of France and Germany and that free entry would wean the working class off drink.^[7] In the second half of the century, municipal museums spread around the country. In response to the demands to show British art, and as a condition of Sir Henry Tate's gift of his collection, the Tate Gallery was spun out of the National Gallery in 1894 (but had its remit expanded to international modern art in 1917).

Art Museums in the United States

While some museums in the United States were established in the first half of the century (Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT, 1842), most were formed in the economic boom that followed the Civil War, in the great growing cities of the North and in many of the smaller cities as well. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York was founded in 1870, the Museum of Fine Art in Boston in the same year, the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1876, the Art Institute of Chicago in 1879, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1910, and the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1916. These museums were established by wealthy donors who wanted prestige for their cities and for themselves. Whereas in Europe access to museums was symptomatic of the bourgeois struggles to end aristocratic

privilege, in the United States museums were overt displays of privilege.^[8] The titans of industry and commerce collected on a grand scale, often aided by the great dealer Sir Joseph Duveen: Altman, Frick, Johnson, Kress, Morgan, Mellon, Walters, and Widener gave their works away to existing museums or to new ones that preserved their heritage and gave prominence to their names. When the Metropolitan Museum expanded in 1925, the *New York Times* commented that the Met was "not so much an institution for the instruction and pleasure of the people as a sort of joint mausoleum to enshrine the fame of American collectors."^[8] In a salute to them, the Met organized in 2007 an exhibition of all its seventeenth-century Dutch art, *Rembrandt and his Time*. The art was presented neither chronologically nor by artist but by the date when the works were acquired. Andrew Mellon, more self-effacing than most, donated his collection to create the National, rather than Mellon, Gallery of Art in 1937.

The art museum was to serve many purposes, besides the obvious ones of providing enlightenment, education, and pleasure: first, to prove that the dynamic American economy knew the value of higher things. At a dedication in Chicago in 1913, the sculptor Loreda Taft said "art and culture had arrived to crown commercial life as was crowned commercial life of Athens and Florence and Venice."^[8] Since Europe was the model, it was predominantly European art that was collected in preference to American art which was often considered inferior. "During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, history's largest transfer of cultural wealth from one hemisphere to another took place."^[9] Second, since the church, separated from the state, could not provide homogeneity of values for the disparate immigrant hordes, impressive museums were to be organs of acculturation, providing a set of core values. Third, galleries with displays of decorative arts modeled on those in the influential Victoria and Albert Museum in London (founded in 1857 as the South Kensington Museum and renamed in 1899) would provide the lower middle classes with aspirational models for their households and inspire manufacturers to produce goods of superior design.

Art Museums in the Modern Period

Two world wars and dire economic conditions put a damper on museum building until the 1950s. But from then on the momentum of building new museums and museum extensions gathered pace. Collections grow and need to be shown to the public rather than being kept in storage. Funding shifted from almost complete reliance on a few wealthy patrons, who, while still very much in evidence in the United States, were joined by corporations, foundations, and museum members, with agendas of broadening audiences and enhancing access. Art museums have become less stuffy and are gathering places for the community, with gourmet restaurants, high-end stores,

and sought-after venues for weddings and receptions. They have become more popular—too popular for some who fear the spread of commercialism.

Notable new museums or extensions of the second half of the twentieth century that were architecturally adventurous included the extension to the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterloo, Holland, designed by Henry van de Velde (1953); the Milwaukee County War Memorial, Wisconsin, United States, by Eero Saarinen (1957) containing the Milwaukee Art Center; the Louisiana Museum of Art, Humlebaek, near Copenhagen, Denmark, by Jorgen Bo and Vilhelm Wohlert (1958); the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, by Marcel Breuer (1966); the Hayward Gallery, London, by London County Council architects, part of a cultural center on London's South Bank (1968); the Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, West Germany, by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1968); the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, TX, by Louis Kahn (1972); the Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts, Norwich, England, by Norman Foster (1977); the East Wing of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., by I.M. Pei (1978), and Pei's pyramid for the Louvre (1989); Neue Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart, West Germany, by James Stirling and Michael Wilford (1984) and their Clore Gallery extension to London's Tate Gallery (1986); the Menil Collection, Houston, TX, by Renzo Piano (1987); the Museum of Contemporary Art, Barcelona, by Richard Meier (1995) and his Getty Center in Los Angeles (1997); the Quadracci Pavilion extension to the Milwaukee Art Museum by Santiago Calatrava (2001) (Fig. 1), the de Young Museum, San Francisco, by Herzog and de Meuron (2005); the Bloch Pavilion at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO, by Stephen Holl (2007); the Hamilton Building at the Denver Art Museum, Colorado, by Daniel Libeskind (2007); the Broad Contemporary Art Museum at the Los

Angeles County Museum of Art, by Renzo Piano (2008), and his extension for the Art Institute of Chicago (2009). Museums provide rare opportunities for architects to show talents not sought in commercial real estate development.

The explosion of modern art from the early part of the twentieth century onward presented art museums with a dilemma: to collect only art that had stood the test of time or to collect challenging contemporary art. The solution most commonly adopted was to lag well behind the times, thus creating a gap for new museums for new art in new buildings.

The unrivalled pioneer and a model for others, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York was set up under its formidable director Alfred H. Barr in 1929 and moved into its first purpose-built structure on West 53rd Street, designed by Philip Goodwin and Edward Stone, in 1939. The Museum embraced all aspects of visual culture with departments of architecture and design, film (and later video and digital), and photography. The latest and largest of several expansions, by Yoshio Taniguchi, opened in 2004, and has made MoMA a must-visit attraction.

The industrialist Solomon R. Guggenheim began to show his extensive collection of "nonobjective art" from the 1930s and, advised by Hilla Rebay, he continued to collect until his death in 1949. Ten years later (and six months after the death of the architect, Frank Lloyd Wright), the museum bearing his name opened on Fifth Avenue. The startling round shape and spiral gallery of the Guggenheim signaled the new adventurousness in architecture, and set off a continuing debate on whether dramatic new museum buildings outshine the art inside them.

In France, discussions were held about creating a modern art museum in Paris in the 1930s, but the war intervened. Making up for lost time, the Pompidou Center



Fig. 1 Milwaukee's santiago Calatrava – designed Quadracci Pavillion extension: The museum as art object.
Source: Photograph by Fritz Jusak, courtesy of the Milwaukee Art Museum.

in the Palais Beaubourg was opened in 1977, housing a library and contemporary music center as well as a huge collection of modern art. The young architects who won an international competition, Richard Rogers (English) and Renzo Piano (Italian), introduced new concepts: large spaces unimpeded by columns, services on colorful display instead of being hidden, a feeling of openness and transparency. It was and has remained a huge popular success.

In 1997 the Guggenheim Bilbao, an asymmetrical sculpture clad in titanium designed by American architect Frank Gehry, opened to international notice and visits. The museum was paid for by the Basque government as part of a comprehensive economic development plan to reinvigorate a failing industrial area. Since the opening of Guggenheim Bilbao, other cities have been opening new museums and museum additions hoping for a “Bilbao effect,” but without the accompanying investment in subways, airports, and infrastructure. The art came from the extensive collection of the Guggenheim Foundation, and other Guggenheim branches were opened in Las Vegas (with Russia’s Hermitage in 2001; it closed in 2008), Berlin (with Deutsche Bank, 1997) and another vast one also designed by Frank Gehry is planned for Abu Dhabi. The Peggy Guggenheim Collection opened in Venice in 1951 and is part of the international family.

In 2000 the international modern and contemporary art collections of Tate (in rebranding having lost “the” and “Gallery”) were split off into Tate Modern and installed in a disused power station remodeled by the Swiss architects Herzog and de Meuron who had won an international competition. The cavernous Turbine Hall is transformed each year with an installation by a contemporary artist. The combination of the drama of the building, an enticing art program, the site on a revived stretch of river, and, importantly, free general admission (with payment for special exhibitions) has made Tate Modern one of the most popular art museums in the world, with an annual attendance of some 5 million.

Museums focusing variously on modern or contemporary art sprung up in San Francisco (1935), Chicago (1967), and Los Angeles (1979). The Boston Institute of Contemporary Art opened a bold building by Diller and Scofidio in 2006, and the New Museum of Contemporary Art opened a subtle and complex building by the Japanese practice SANAA on New York’s Bowery in 2007. Some institutions such as the Institute of Contemporary Art in London (1947) and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis (originally 1927; focus on contemporary in the 1940s) have spaces for dance, theater, and film.

Many traditional museums like the Metropolitan Museum have long collected modern art as the passage of time venerates it into art history, but in recent years, seeing the popularity of contemporary art, they have been less and less willing to cede a monopoly of the new to specialist museums. The large and elegant extension to

the Art Institute of Chicago, is called the Modern Wing and will contain modern art, contemporary art, photography, design, and architecture, and sets a challenge to Chicago’s forbidding Museum of Contemporary Art, designed by Josef Paul Kleihues (1996).

Some of the underlying reasons for the building boom mirror those of the nineteenth century: pride in city, economic prosperity, a cause and consequence of higher education. A new driving force is the wish to stimulate the creative economy as the manufacturing economy moves to low-wage countries and attract those industries whose workers are looking for quality of life and not just quantity of salary.

The spate of museum building has fostered criticism that the star architect or “starchitect” usually commissioned often create grandiose structures that deflect attention from the art to their own creations. Victoria Newhouse, in *Towards a New Museum* is the most influential of such critics.^[10]

ETHICS AND GOVERNANCE

Museums are repositories of values as well as of objects. Those who control the museum should regard themselves as stewards and trustees, not owners: they have to act unselfishly for the long-term good of the institution. The museum should safeguard and protect the art it collects for future generations, and that includes cataloging and documentation. The museum should be run by the museum’s director and staff with integrity and in accordance with the highest ethical principles and with professional standards. Written policies should cover key areas such as acquisition, deaccessioning, and loans. The museum should have a mission statement and a long-range strategy or plan that ensures long-term financial stability. While overseeing management, trustees should not become involved in it. Trustees should avoid conflicts of interest.

Museums should be run in a businesslike way, but they are not businesses. They often do things that puzzle the business mind, like putting on an expensive exhibition that is artistically worthwhile even though it will not draw in a large audience. Of course such a course of action is only sensible provided the resources are available to pursue it, but the very notion can raise the business eyebrow.

In the United States, the usual pattern is to have a large board to encompass wealthy individuals, collectors, captains of local industry and commerce, civic leaders, ethnic minorities, and local politicians. Much work is typically done in committees. Museums can readily tap local expertise to create strong committees of finance, audit, investment, remuneration and human resources, and fund-raising. Committees for acquisition, exhibitions, and education have mixed motives: oversight and advice, but also to engage members so that they are more likely to be generous to the museum.

Museums are porous. They are influenced by trustees, by members, by support and special interest groups, by donors, by local politicians, by community groups, and of course by the public, who have access to each other and to the director and to the staff. It is up to the director to ensure that the museum is led rather than being led. It is up to the chairman of the board of trustees to ensure that the director is supported in leading. It is up to the trustees to ask the tough questions to ensure that the direction in which the director is leading is sensible and fiscally responsible.

In Britain, boards are smaller, and at Tate and the National Portrait Gallery their members include artists. In the rest of Europe, museums are typically under the control of the state or of a local municipality with perhaps an advisory board of lay people.

MONEY AND OTHER MEASUREMENTS

Broadly, art museums in the United States are financed by the private sector, in Europe by the state, and in England by both. It must be remembered that in the United States the federal government is a “silent partner.” As part of a long-standing policy of encouraging the not-for-profit sector, charitable donations of money and of art can be deducted by individuals from their taxable incomes, and so their giving is subsidized. Britain under a Labour government has moved towards the American practice of making it attractive to give money to museums and other charities.

This is an age of measurement and evaluation. What are the “outputs” and “deliverables” by which a board can judge its management and a community its museum?

The annual operating statement of a museum should demonstrate that revenues and expenses are in balance. There are three categories of operating revenue: contributed (donations, grants from foundations, sponsorship, government support); earned (admission fees, typically 5–10% of revenues), membership (sometimes categorized as contributed), store, café, rental, exhibition fees); and transfer from endowment funds (usually set at between 4% and 6% of the value of endowment assets). The higher the endowment in relation to the other sources of revenue, the greater the likelihood of fiscal stability; the smaller it is, the more the museum has to depend on courting donors or earning more. Expenses are usually categorized by function—curatorial, education, development, marketing, administration—and by type—of which salaries and benefits is the largest, typically about half of operating costs. A persistent operating deficit indicates a mismatch between ambition and means and should send out a warning to the board to take action.

The number of people who come to visit a museum is clearly an important indicator of how it is connecting to the community. If a museum is heavily dependent on

admission revenue and store and café revenue that goes up and down with foot traffic, then the number of tickets sold is obviously of great concern. However, if a museum is tempted to put on exhibitions intended purely to draw a crowd, then it is substituting for the high-minded mission of bringing art to the people the less noble one of bringing people to the museum any way it can. There is a possible cost in credibility and integrity. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum put on an exhibition on the *Art of the Motorcycle* in 1998, sponsored by the car and motorcycle manufacturer BMW, that was criticized on just those grounds.

A better way of making museums more accessible is to abolish admission fees. During the Thatcher government of the 1980s, the major British museums were set free of control by the Treasury (ministry of finance) and encouraged to raise more money from the private sector and charge for entry if they wished. Many did. In 2001 the Labour government abolished admission fees: the result has been a dramatic increase in visitorship. The profile of visitors did not change, but since there were many more of them, the number of less-affluent visitors did go up in absolute terms. The Walters Museum of Art in Baltimore and the Baltimore Museum of Art were both given extra money by the city to allow free admission in 2006, and the Indianapolis Museum of Art, which has a large endowment, went back to free admission in 2007.

In an influential paper entitled “Metrics of Success for Museums,”^[11] Maxwell Anderson, now director at the Indianapolis Museum of Art, argues for looking at measures of quality such as the number of scholarly publications, the size of the library, and loans made to other museums in an attempt to free museums from chasing numbers of bodies. It remains true that the most important function of a museum—the experience of being moved by or challenged by or uplifted by a work of art—is problematic to measure.

EXHIBITIONS

Most museums put on exhibitions of works of art brought especially together from one or many lenders. While not a new phenomenon, the size and frequency of exhibitions grew from the 1970s and museums carved out space devoted specifically to them. Some of these exhibitions are labeled “blockbusters,” a term of praise in the cinema but of mild abuse in museums. Exhibitions such as *Monet in the Twentieth Century*, mounted by the Royal Academy of Arts in London and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 1998, and *Picasso/Matisse*, mounted by Tate and MoMA in 2000, brought huge crowds. The Royal Academy set a trend for such exhibitions by being open all night on the last Saturday of the run. The Monet exhibition drew attention to the twentieth century art of a great artist considered as a nineteenth century figure and the

Picasso and Matisse exhibition explored the creative rivalry between two great twentieth century artists. They were great visual experiences but the exhibitions added to scholarship and understanding. Popularity was the by-product. However, given the appeal of Impressionist and Postimpressionist artists, for example, there have been exhibitions of them where popularity was the goal, and this has generated debate about the role of all temporary exhibitions, blockbuster or otherwise.

The case against blockbuster shows begins with the argument that exhibitions detract attention and curatorial and other resources away from the museum's own collection. The public is led to expect a linear progression of art and argument and then finds the collection dull by comparison. Fragile works of art traveling to the several venues of a tour have to endure the hazards of transportation. Marketing departments are let loose in ways that undermine the mission of the museum. Museums follow the false gods of money and attendances. On a proper allocation of expenses, including overhead, they do not really make a profit. The attendant exhibition store and special merchandise bring commercialism into the museum.

The case for blockbusters is that such exhibitions bring a focus on an artist or theme that would be impossible in any other way. They enable scholarship that would otherwise not get done. They do bring a sense of event and excitement to the museum that does, indeed, usually bring in a higher audience—an audience for whose time and attention museums are in competition with a plethora of other activities. The appropriate exhibition can bring in minorities that do not usually come to museums: *The Quilts of Gee's Bend*, an exhibition of quilts by African-American women, attracted the local black population wherever it was shown. Exhibitions are exciting for the public and for curators. They foster international collaborations.

Museums have reacted to the criticism by making more of an exhibition of the "permanent" collection. Tate Britain rotates the display of its collection annually. The Metropolitan Museum's exhibition of Dutch art referred to above came entirely from the Met's own collection. However, it remains a true criticism of many museums that scholarship and publication of the collection have taken second place to exhibition-making.

GLOBALIZATION

The Guggenheim Foundation, rich in collection and poor in endowment, has a strategy of international expansion on the Guggenheim Bilbao model: to lend its curatorial and architectural expertise, traveling exhibitions, and collection in return for a fee. Lest this be seen as the exclusive preserve of American institutions following the profit-maximizing strategies of global corporations, the government-financed Louvre has agreed to do exactly the same thing with a rich Gulf oil state. In March 2007, France and Abu Dhabi

agreed to the Abu Dhabi Louvre, with the Louvre benefiting to the tune of approximately \$1 billion. The architect is Jean Nouvel, thus providing France an opportunity for one of its star architects. Protesters argued that the Louvre was selling its soul, exporting culture for cash and contributing to the Disneyfication of artistic experience. The full meaning of these international exploits has yet to sink in. Since museums are busy digitizing images of their works of art to make them internationally available, why not follow up by making some of the real works themselves viewable in conditions set by museum professionals? Is it not better to have the works on display than in storage? But if the works are from storage, is the museum sending its best works out? The director of the Louvre, Henri Loyrette, is keen on enhancing the international brand of the Louvre, and has sent part of the collection on long-term loan for a fee to the High Museum in Atlanta. Is it too commercial to use the consumer-goods concept of branding for a museum—or is he simply being realistic about the way the world now works? The Louvre is a national museum, financed by the state, and should one argue if the state wishes to add a cultural dimension to its diplomacy?

OWNERSHIP OF ART

In late 2007 the Russian authorities threatened to cancel a blockbuster exhibition of art from four Russian collections at the Royal Academy of Art in London. The exhibition was already installed in Dusseldorf, Germany. Germany has a law that prevents the filing of legal claims for the restitution of art in loan exhibitions; Britain had delayed the implementation of such a law. The Russians, fearing a suit from an heir of the Shchukin family, whose art has been confiscated after the Russian Revolution, said they were too worried to lend (the deterioration in relations between Britain and Russia also played a role: art is a weapon of diplomacy). The law was brought forward in Britain, and the crisis defused. The United States has a similar law in place, though with loopholes. While sensible to protect cross-country traveling exhibitions in this way, the incident did highlight one of the major issues facing museums in recent years: giving back art to its rightful owners. This issue has four main strands.

The first is confiscation under totalitarian regimes in the twentieth century. Russia's current government does not accept that confiscation during the revolution is an act for which restitution needs to be made. During the Nazi era, art owned by Jews was either confiscated, or fleeing Jews were forced to sell for low prices. After several decades of prevarication, and under pressure from the American Department of State, the German museums and their municipal owners have been cooperating in giving back to heirs art where there is good evidence of ownership. The Austrians have been less helpful. Museums in Europe and the

United States are under pressure to research the provenance of Nazi-era acquisitions. In 1998 the AAMD issued guidelines encouraging American museums to research their collections and if they suspect they have such works to try and trace the heirs, and if they cannot find them, to publish any details known about the work.

The second strand is antiquities that might have been looted. The Italian and Greek authorities have since the early part of the twenty-first century been active in pursuit and in 2007 the Getty Museum and the Met were obliged to give back important objects once they were confronted with good evidence that these objects had been looted. Art museums are under pressure not to acquire objects whose provenance back to 1970—the date of a UNESCO resolution—is not clear. Some feel that the imposition of this arbitrary date will mean the disappearance of such objects on the market into the hands of private collectors and that it would be better to acquire them for the public realms and display them and publish what is known on the Web.

The third strand concerns objects collected by museums during their ethnographic phases that turn out to be sacred to the peoples that once owned them. The American government passed the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990 to provide a process to return certain Native American cultural items to living descendants and affiliated Indian tribes. Australia and New Zealand have similar policies.

The fourth is what might turn out not to be the special case of the Elgin Marbles, bought for the British Museum by Lord Elgin from the Ottoman Empire, the then occupying power of Greece. The Elgin Marbles (also known as the Parthenon Marbles) are ever more actively being sought by the now sovereign Greek government that in 2007 opened a museum to house them on their return. The British Museum, the Metropolitan Museum, and the Louvre, the three great encyclopedic museums of the world, argue that it is in the interests of everyone for antiquities marking the birth of Western civilization to be dispersed rather than given back to governments who happen now to govern the territories from which they once derived.

CONCLUSION

This entry has concentrated on art museums as institutions rather than on the art within their walls.

We are in an age that values imagination and creativity. We are also in the digital age. We are in an age of a profusion of visual images. Art sparks the imagination. In a screen-based society, people increasingly appreciate the single, authentic object. Contemplation of art in museums provides a welcome respite from the rush of imagery. The boom in art museum expansion is likely to continue after the 2009 recession is over, provided that museums remain true to themselves.

In an influential book of essays by leading museum directors entitled *Whose Muse*,^[12] James Wood, then director of the Art Institute of Chicago and now president of the J. Paul Getty Trust eloquently sums up the implicit contract of museums with the public:

Ultimately the American art museum's authority must flow from its ability to be one of the most tangible and accessible forums for the experience of excellence, the affirmation of tolerance, the appreciation of personal expression, and the pursuit of the individual happiness embodied in our Constitution. Guaranteeing the integrity of this forum has never been more important, and to the degree that we succeed, our museums will indeed be worthy of the public trust.

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