On the Spatial Dialectics of Authenticity

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I.

Assuming that every building type, secular or ecclesiastical, is a purposed cultural construct, from its inception and through every stage of its permutation, and that each type serves, among other cultural mechanisms, to turn our assumptions about the world into an objective experience of it, what I wish to explore in this paper are the ideational, and metaphysical imperatives that have seen to the formation, proliferation, and perpetuation of the art museum as an institution and a building type. In particular, I will outline the ways in which the specifics of the design and the particular experience of the museum objectify and sustain our assumptions about the nature of the relationship between reality and representation.

II.

Museums are, as one contemporary account has it, ''really last-ditch solutions to the problem of knowing what to do with artworks when they have been moved from their original homes for any number of reasons'' (Bossaglia 1990: 287). It is, we are told, ''really as desperate as that. Our civilization has come up with no better solution than to pigeon-hole artworks and lock them safely away'' (Ibid.).

Curious as this determination may be, it speaks to the same logic as the following account ascribing the inception of the museum to two causes: ''a level of physical wealth which allows an abundant production of art,'' and ''a form of culture in which this art is seen as a kind of surplus not immediately wanted in any everyday secular or religious activity'' (Brawne 1965:8). The museum is, both accounts assume, a response to a spatial displacement. Presuming that those works of art that fall outside ''everyday secular or religious activity'' or ''their original homes'' present a ''*problem*,'' both see the museum as a solution, desperate or otherwise, to arts' want of a place, i.e., of having to have a designated place. This assumption is relatively recent and western in origin.

Unlike the library and the theater with their long history of development, the art museum is barely over 200 years old. It dates back to the Decree issued by the Revolutionary Convention in Paris on July 27, 1793 for the creation of the ''Museum of the Republic'' at the Louvre. It opened on November 9, 1793. The spatial and formal consequences of this act were not to be fully realized at the Louvre palace for another 190 years. Elsewhere, the spatial and formal development of the museum as a building type had to await the heated debates and final codification of the type in Germany and to a lesser extent England, in the decades of 1810's to 1830's.

The formation the museum at the Louvre palace marked a first in the appropriation of art by a then newly construed entity — the ''public.'' The practice of collecting art was, however, well precedented in Europe. The ''public'' merely assumed, then re-defined, and thoroughly re-organized a private practice that traces its history back to the onset of the Renaissance. The practice of collecting art objects, public or private, presupposes, of course, their designation as *collectibles*. The history of this classification, recent as it is, is not patently different in duration from the history of art itself and it is not all too clear which classification came first.

The ''Middle Ages,'' Malraux reminded us long ago, ''were as unaware of what we mean by the word ''art'' as were Greece and Egypt, who had no word for it'' (Malraux 1953, p.53). What we understand by ''art'' was the invention of the Renaissance, or rather of a people who, over time, begun to see in the ''Virgin'' a statue

and in the ''classical statue'' not a ''heathen idol or a mere puppet,'' (Ibid.) but the embodiment of a universal ideal: the beautiful. The invention and the ensuing re-classification of Paintings and statues as art required them to relinquish, in Benjamin's terms, their ''cult value'' to assume in its place ''exhibition value'' (Benjamin 1969: 224). In the process of (re)classification as art, paintings and statues had to eschew their cult referents in favor of a *subject* and submit themselves as objects to aesthetic valuation for the measure of ''exhibition value.''

The designation of art objects as *collectibles* did not exclusively depend, however, on their newly acquired aesthetic value. The transformation of the cult referent into a subject had distinct spatial ramifications and these as well bore directly on the classification of art objects as *collectibles*. The first spatial ramification had to do with the recognition of two and three-dimensional graphic representations as autonomous objects. As cult objects, paintings and statues were meant to establish a visual link between the viewer and the cult referent. They were meant to be seen, not looked at. They functioned as intended — making the absent referent present — so long as they remained invisible as objects. As works of art, on the other hand, paintings and statues held their newly acquired status so long as they retained a distance from both the viewer and the place they happened to occupy. Taking note of the object and not the referent entailed taking note of the distance and the space between the observer and the observed. As cult objects paintings and statues collapsed space, as art objects they imposed it.

The spacing that constituted an insular frame all around the art object, in effect, displaced paintings and statues from their former allocated place at home, in the palace, the church, etc. The price of autonomy was the loss of place. Once dispossessed of their place, paintings and statues were collected, re-classified, and re-located to a new and specific place, i.e., the ''repositories'' that in various forms were popular among European ruling elite in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The logic that saw to the reclassification and re-placement of these placeless *representations* in various repositories is fundamentally the same logic that had seen to their initial placement as cult objects and in time would see to their re-placement in the museum. Deciphering it will be our focus for the remainder of this work.

Beginning in the sixteenth century, where we find dislodged paintings and statues reposited are in places that over the course of the succeeding two centuries would develop into two distinct realms: the ''cabinet'' and the ''gallery,'' or else the Wunderkammer and the Kunstkammer. The gallery, often a long rectangular room, served as a repository for paintings and statues gathered there for their aesthetic and iconographic value. These works were often tightly integrated with the decoration of the room.

The cabinet, on the other hand, was a designated *place* wherein, as Francis Bacon put it, ''whatsoever the hand of man by exquisite art or engine has made rare in stuff, form or motion; whatsoever singularity, chance, and the shuffle of things hath produced; whatsoever nature has wrought in things that want life and may be kept; shall be sorted and included.'' (Bacon, 1594, in Impey and MacGregor 1985: 1)

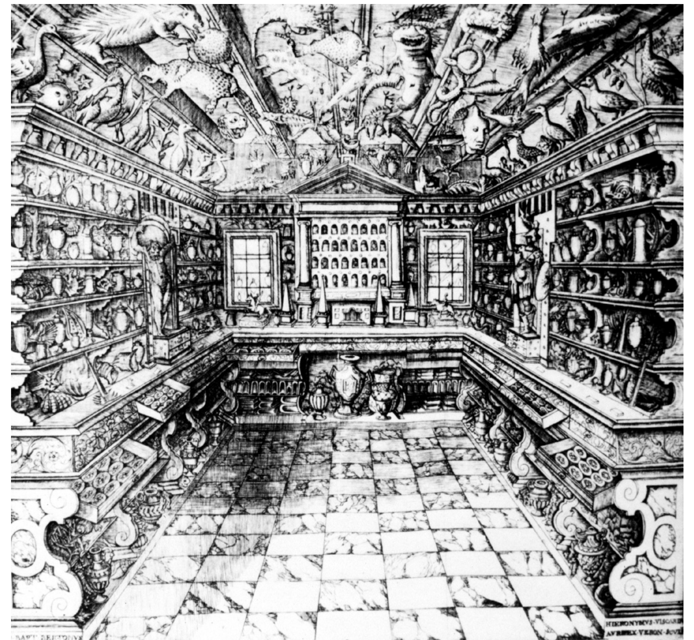

Fig. 1. The Cabinet of Curiosities of Francesco Calceolari, Verona, Italy, 1622.

The bafflingly heterogeneous body of objects encountered in these cabinets appears to have one thing in common. Rare, singular, or wanting of life, the objects of the cabinet eschewed reproduction. They fell outside the normal cycle of (re)production where they were deemed collectible. Most had their origin in *other* times and *other* places. They were unique productions, not necessarily in origin, but where they were collected in the one place outside of which they had no immediate place.

Unlike the gallery, the cabinet was not meant as a place of exhibition or public display. The impetus behind the collection was not to make oddities, rarities, and singularities visible, but to render them invisible. What the cabinet accomplished was not only the preservation of the rare and the singular, but also the institution of a

distinct domain that kept the rare and the singular out of circulation and the places to which it did not belong.

Among other oddities, rarities, and singularities, paintings and statues were included in the cabinets of curiosities on account of neither their aesthetic value nor monetary value. What made paintings and statues fit for inclusion in the cabinet and the company of other oddities, rarities, and singularities was their singularity where they happened to be, i.e., their authenticity and historicity, or what Walter Benjamin was to term ''aura,'' that which ''even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking … its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.'' (Benjamin, 1978: 220)

Although the authortic and auratic objects collected in the cabinet eschewed reproduction, this is not to say they were not reproduced. An entire industry was formed in Italy and elsewhere to feed with fake originals and forged singularities the appetite of the European ruling elite for rare and singular collectibles. In response, another industry was formed to identify, authenticate, and certify the collectibles as such. A branch of this industry would be consolidated in time into the field of art history. It is important to note, however, that both industries owe their development to the European ruling elite's search for the singular and the authentic, instigated by the desire to collect them in one place. The desire to open-up and set aside a space for authenticity and singularity appears to be independent of the presence of collectibles as evidenced by the active search for collectibles.

The desire to collect curiosities in one place raises, of course, the question of motive. Why this preoccupation with the spatial control of the singular and the authentic? To postulate an answer we need to follow the development of the cabinet into the museum. For now, it is important to note that inasmuch as the aesthetic and iconographic concerns of the gallery were impertinent to the cabinet, the latter's preoccupation with authenticity was irreverent to the gallery. Unlike the cabinet, the space of the gallery was inclusive of copies and reproductions. Charles de Brosses, Germain Bazin recounts, did not ''fret over acquiring originals by the great masters'' (Bazin 1967: 116). Confessedly, he preferred ''beautiful copies of famous paintings,'' to ''having originals by minor masters'' (Ibid.). Mr. de Brosses' preference was not the exception. An entire industry dedicated to the commissioned replication of famous works of art, produced endless copies of old masters for the galleries of the European elite throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The gallery and the cabinet had, in other words, two distinct purposes, reflecting two different, though not mutually exclusive, criteria for valuating art. The gallery, conceived more or less as a *path* for viewing, housed aesthetics, the Cabinet housed authenticity. In time, the two practices would coalesce into the museum, though the logic of the cabinet would prevail over the gallery.

The questions of how to house art and how to shape its place once it entered the public realm were first addressed in France in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Museum was assigned as a speculative design problem for the Prix de Rome competition in the Académie d'Architecture on a number of occasions between 1778 and 1810. Boullée and later his student Durand offered designs for an ideal museum. Conceptually and experientially, the library appears to be what the designers of these early prototypes had in mind as the generative model for the museum, i.e., a place to gather, organize, and study art with all that this act spatially and ritually entails. Durand, for instance, in comparing the museum to a library, distinguished it from the latter only on account of having a number of different works to display as compared to only one in the library.

The initial modeling of the museum on the library stems in part from a valuation of art that was deeply rooted in the cabinet, i.e., viewing art as a rare and unique document and not necessarily or primarily as an aesthetic object. Christian von Mechel, who was put in charge of re-arranging and cataloguing the Imperial collection in Vienna in 1779, summed up this sentiment well in his introduction to the collection's catalogue. ''Such a large, public collection,'' he wrote, ''intended for instruction more than for fleeting pleasure, is like a rich library in which those eager to learn are glad to find works of all kinds and all periods'' (Pevsner 1976:121). The antiquarian Alois Hirt was to echo Mechel's sentiment in his faithful appeal to Friedrich Wilhelm II in 1797 for a public art museum attached to the academy of art as a research and instructional resource. In the final count, however, the design of the museum would follow a different trajectory. The decisive period was the second decade of the nineteenth century. Mechel's distinction between ''instruction'' and ''fleeting pleasure'' was to form the bases of the heated debates between the artist/archeologist Johan Martin Wagner and the architect Leo von Klenz in Munich and later between Alois Hirt on one side and the architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel and the art historian Gustav Friedrich Waagen, on the other.

Klenz's counter argument to Wagner's was summorized in a 1816 memo, noting: ''museum is not a place for artists' training, but a place in which to show a number of treasures of art to all kinds of visitors in a manner to

be worthy of the objects and to create pleasure in them'' (Ibid.:126). This sentiment was later echoed in the catch phrase of Schinkel and Waagen, ''first delight, then instruct.'' ''The principal and essential purpose'' of the museum is, they argued, ''to awaken in the public the sense of fine art as one of the most important branches of human civilization ... All other purposes, concerning individual classes of the population, must be subdued to this.'' (Pevsner, 128)

All parties to these early debates over the museum's purpose, it is important to note, assumed that the place of art is instrumental to its perception. The contention was whether to spatially construe and render art an object of study or an aesthetic object primarily. The former presumes penetration and analysis, the latter, distance and reflection. The question at the outset was which should be the spatial and architectural experience of the museum: enclosure and penetration, or separation and distance, an emphasis on arrival or an emphasis on departure. Nonetheless, what all parties realized was that any given perception of art is, to a good measure, spatially construed.

All parties also agreed on the chronological organization of art works in place of iconographic organization which as Frieherr von Rumohr put it, meant ''to seek art outside the field of art'' (Ibid.). However, the chronological organization presented a unique dilemma to both parties. Every chronologically organized collection is bound to have ''true and significant gaps'' as Wilhelm von Humboldt, chair of the court appointed museum commission in Berlin, noted with regret in 1829. To alleviate the problem, Hirt had hoped to use casts to complete the historic sequence in the Berlin collection and later Humboldt suggested the purchase of copies to fill the gaps in the painting collection. Rumohr was quick to remind Humboldt, however, that ''all the value of a painting turns around the idea of originality.'' The purchase of copies was out of the question and Hirt's casts were exiled from the collection.

Ever since, the art museum has been, like the cabinet before it, a place adamantly exclusive of the copy. This is to say that to the hierarchy of missions outlined by Schinkel and Waagen, we must add one that superseded all others and was so obvious as to require no elaboration: a sanctuary to the original, the singular, and the unique around which idea purportedly turns ''all the value of a painting.'' No painting, regardless of its aesthetic value, can be assigned a domicile in the art museum, if it is not authentic. The copy that had a place in the gallery and even the museum that aimed to educate, has had no place in the museum that has aimed to ''delight.''

Of the two initial executed designs for the museum, Klenz's sculpture museum in Munich of 1815-30 and Schinkel's Altes museum in Berlin of 1823-30, the latter, having the advantage of hindsight, played the more decisive role in shaping the space that was to render authentic art the object of aesthetic appreciation. We should briefly follow its development, as it would hitherto set the criteria by which the success of an art museum design is judged.

Alois Hirt's initial appeal for a public museum in 1797 was unheeded until 1822 when, first Friedrich Rabe, and latter Karl Friedrich Schinkel were asked to submit designs for an art museum attached to the Berlin Academy. Schinkel's initial design of four enveloping arms around a central courtyard was in the spirit of Hirt's vision and earlier French speculative museum designs. In the subsequent three years, a number of significant changes to the initial plan were to radically alter the shape of the museum and along with it the experience of art in the public realm.

The first departure occurred on January 7, 1823 when Schinkel made the unsolicited proposal to separate the museum from the Academy building and move it away from Unter den Linden in the center of town to a new site opposite the royal palace on an island in the Spree river (Spreeinsel). This was the first of a series of spatial and formal manipulations that were to create a highly ritualized path to the resting place of art.

Schinkel's vision for the place where delight was to come before instruction consisted of a free standing rectangular building, raised on a high podium above the Lustgarten. Reaching the art works put on display for public ''enjoyment and appreciation'' required venture on a journey that was, if not deliberately arduous, meticulously elaborate. The ritual procession out to the new place for art, approached from the initial proposed site on Unter den Linden, required one to leave the dense city fabric behind, cross the Spree river on a bridge near the palace, to enter the large open plaza of the island bordered by a church opposite the bridge and to the sides by the palace and the museum. One had to then turn left and on transverse axis cross the immense void of the plaza, terminated by the ceremonial staircase and the long monumental colonnade behind which the main body of the museum was carefully withdrawn. Ascending the staircase in front of the columnar screen, one was led past this monumental threshold and through the depth of the colonnade to the central recessed vestibule and from there, on axis, through a constricted passageway under the pyramidal mass of the vestibule staircase to the expansive space of the rotunda that put a dramatic end to the first leg of the

journey. Much as the colonnade marks the beginning of a new territory, the rotunda is, in a manner, the gateway to this *other* world. To reach it from the rotunda, one in turn had to continue on axis past another constricted passageway to enter, having now traversed the width of the building, the galleries branching out in transverse and opposite directions.

What Schinkel in effect instituted in the name of "enjoyment and appreciation" of art is a distinct and separate domain for art that is disjoined from the city by a deep and elaborate threshold. This was to be the legacy of Altes Museum. It transformed the conceptual distinction between art and non-art on the one hand and the authentic and the inauthentic on the other, into a spatial experience of separation and disjointment played out at the conceptual edge of the city. It created a place for and located the aesthetic and the authentic on the outside, separated from the city by a deliberate journey. The art that was withdrawn from circulation and made invisible inside the city before, now became visible outside the fabric that characterized the city. This outside, it is important to note, was neither literal nor a given, but construed and fabricated by the journey and the experience of disjointment that would become the distinguishing marks of the art museum as a building type.

The carefully orchestrated experience of disjointment from the city, as the place of habitation, to the museum, as the place of visitation, was significantly enhanced by four major modifications to the initial design proposal between 1825 and 1828. The last and the most elaborate modification was to the design of the plaza bordered by the palace and the museum. Schinkel had initially conceived of the plaza as a unified space connecting the palace, the church, and the museum together into one integrated composition or what he called a "regulated whole." Crossing the bridge from the city, one would have had the distinct impression of entering a different realm encompassing in its totality the palace, the church and the museum. Wilhelm III rejected the proposal in favor of a scheme that disjoined the museum from the palace and turned the plaza that was before conceived as a distinct place into a ceremonial path across layers of space to the museum. Following Wilhelm's instruction, Schinkel divided the plaza in two and turned the area bordered by the palace and the bridge into an open space whose experiential role is similar to the rotunda of the museum. It too is placed at the nexus of two paths, here at the terminus of the access line from the city across the bridge and the point of initiation for the path that journeys to the museum through cross-axial layers of space.

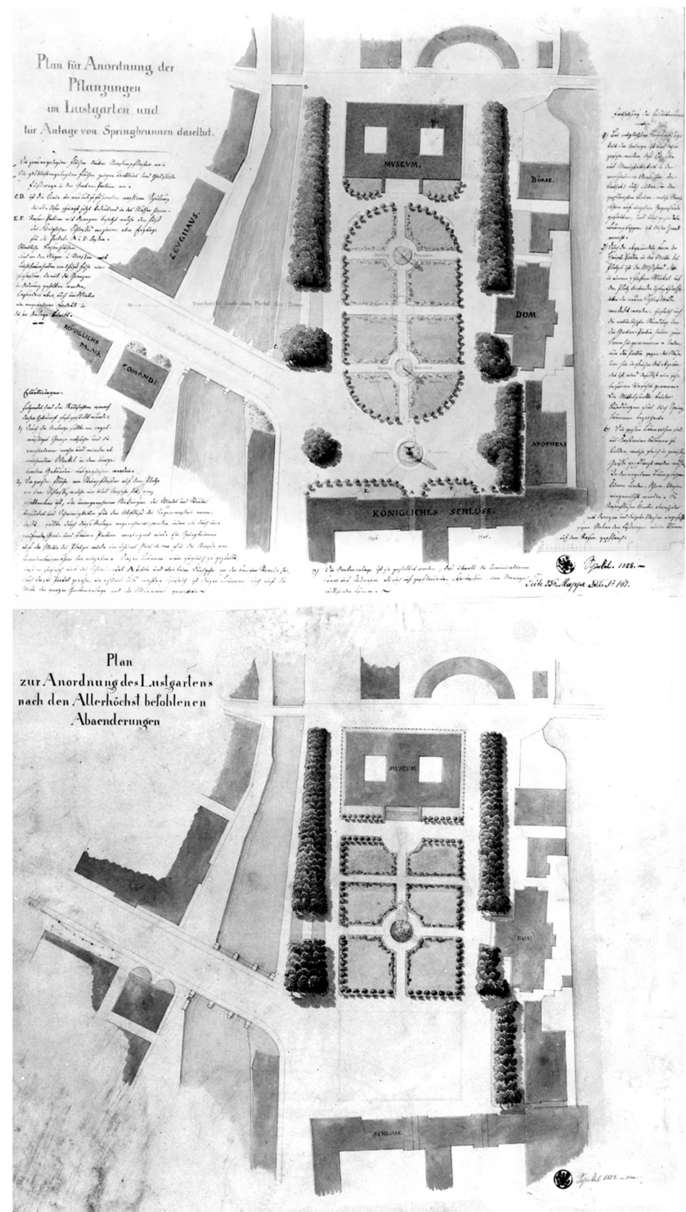

Fig. 2. K. F. Schinkel, Lustgarten, Berlin, First and Second Landscaping Proposals, 1828.

As the modifications to the plaza further disjoined the museum from its broader context, the other three modifications further disjoined the place of "enjoyment and appreciation" from its immediate context. The rotunda dome that was visible in the initial proposal acted as a central visual terminus to the path that leads through the center of the building to the gallery spaces. It's visible presence placed greater emphasis on the destiny of the path than the journey along the way. The suppression of the dome in the final proposal shifted the visual focus of the visitor in the plaza from a focal point in the background to the foreground colonnade and the backward layering of the compositional elements along the path. The visitor in the plaza no longer

had a destination in sight, but was focused instead on the spatial layers and the thresholds that had to be crossed along the way.

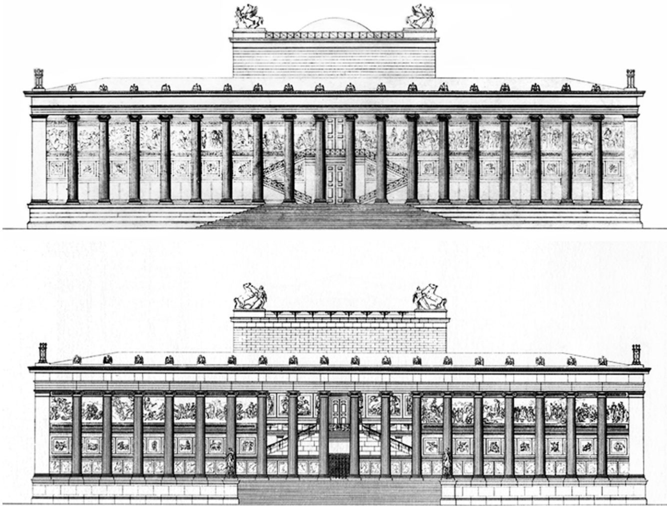

Fig. 3. K. F. Schinkel, Altes Museum, Berlin, first and final elevation design, 1823-25.

In the same vein, turning the vestibule staircase behind the colonnade 180 degrees, to no advantage other than its visual impact, radically changed the perception of the vestibule from a multidirectional space to a unidirectional path through the imposing mass of the staircase.

The changes to the ceremonial staircase in front of the Colonnade had much the same impact on the colonnade. Schinkel had initially conceived of the staircase in front of the museum as a multi-directional pyramidal mass gathering up to a landing that lined up with the recessed vestibule behind the colonnade. The strong and funneled visual connection between the two stairs had a negative impact on the perception of the colonnade's depth. Changing the staircase to a unidirectional path that forcefully cuts through a mass projected from the podium and extending the stairs in both directions past the vestibule space behind, severed the visual tie between them, had the staircase confront the colonnade directly, and reinforced the latter's depth as the imposing threshold that it was meant to be.

What these changes, minute as some may be, clearly indicate is that the journey of disjointment past the multiplicity of thresholds imposed in front of the galleries was carefully contemplated and deliberate in the minute. It was also a collective consideration that had its opponents along the way. The most vocal opponent was, of course, Alois Hirt who submitted a lengthy dissenting opinion to the museum commission. Hirt's objections to Schinkel's design are telling and predictable given their differences over the purpose of the art museum. Hirt objected to the new site, the staircase and the podium, to the monumental colonnade in front, and to the rotunda that he regarded, along with the other elements, as unnecessary luxuries. Hirt objected, in other words, to every major element in Schinkel's proposal that served to locate and place art at a distance in a distinct and disjoined domain, i.e., every element that distinguished the art museum from a library. This is not to say that Hirt objected to the delegation of art to a distinct and separate domain. Rather, he had a different form and experience of separation in mind, i.e., one internally focused on the experience of penetration and arrival as opposed to Schinkel's external focus on the experience of departure and disjointment.

Schinkel, of course, dismissed Hirt's criticism and emphatically defended the elements in question as essential to preparing the visitor for the proper "enjoyment and appreciation" of art. Hirt were to subsequently resign from the commission whose members were by and large in agreement with Schinkel.

Deferring for the moment the question of why the enjoyment and appreciation of authentic art should have the ritual of spacing as a precondition, it is important to note that the logic of the spacing that saw its first expression in Altes museum has since informed and characterized the art museum as a new and unique building type. The manifestations of this logic have been diverse and particular to each context. They have been as dramatic and elaborate as the Philadelphia art museum (Traumbauer, Borie, and Zatzinger, 1911-28) or as minimal and subtle as the Whitney museum (Marcel Breuer, New York, 1966). Another vivid example is the recent corrective renovations and additions to the Louvre palace (I.M. Pei, 1989) where our museum history begun. The changes, in effect, have belatedly turned the Louvre that was not designed as a museum into a *proper* museum. Lacking at the Louvre were the requisite spacing and the ensuing journey out. Although clearly defined and well marked off from the city, the Louvre was a palatial realm to be penetrated rather than journeyed to. The alterations that remedied the problem are as telling as they are compelling. The least conspicuous change, that is all the more effective for it, is the alteration to the exterior walls of the palace. Through its exterior walls and monumental doorways and portals, one can no longer enter the palace, because they have been sealed off and turned into an impenetrable limit that inconsolably separates the worlds instituted on its sides. To reach the world within the impenetrable shell of the old palace, one

must now make one's way to and through the forecourt, to the pyramidal glass entry in the middle that marks the nexus point of the world below the ground plane and the one above. The ritual of disjointment and the journey out continues through the pyramidal glass, past the imposing threshold of the ground plane, down twisting stairs beneath the court to the Louvre's equivalent of the rotunda at Altes

museum and from there through a sequence of mediating thresholds up into the meandering maze of the gallery spaces.

Much as compliance with the museum's ground rules is expected, deviations from the norm are severely criticized and condemned. The failures are, in this respect, as instructive as the success stories. Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim museum (New York, 1959) is a case in point. Criticized from inception as an unsuitable *place* for art, Guggenheim fails on crucial counts. It fails to distance itself from the fabric of the city and thereafter it fails to simulate the experience of an other, distinct, and separate world for art behind its facade.

Although, as Ada Louis Huxtable notes, Guggenheim is successful in divorcing itself from its context by the novelty of form, what it lacks as an art museum is the requisite distance and the ritual disjointment from that context. The unceremonious entry sequence is abrupt and fails to simulate the requisite departure across sequentially layered thresholds to an *other* space. In compensation for the missing distance, Guggenheim's critics wished it had been moved ''out of the city,'' or ''relocated'' across the street in central park where the Metropolitan museum is located at a visible distance from the city fabric (Huxtable 1959: 16).

The lack of sufficient separation in Guggenheim has had no simple solution and it bears on the interior. ''Once inside,'' Huxtable tells us, ''you understand an art critic's anger. The interior is not really a museum, but a place for merchandising art, and it oversells'' (Ibid.: 336).

The elements here are familiar. Their juxtaposition is not. As opposed to being sequentially layered into a chain of discreet experiences, they form a single or ''total space.'' Art here is placed not past the nexus point, but at the nexus point.

> Unlike the labyrinth common to many temporary shows, the path (ramp) exists in a comprehensible total space. Although the spectator continually moves he is never lost and can see where he has been and where he is going. The entire area has a single, unifying character that is never lost sight of (Lee, 1975: 50).

From the ''story told in the spiral,'' according to another critic, there is ''virtually no escape.'' Guggenheim is not ''really a museum'' because in it there is no *other* space, only a ''comprehensible'' space that one can never leave behind to enter a world proper to art. ''Spreading all the merchandise before the eye,'' Mumford tells us, ''is a ruinous one for a museum.'' (Mumford, 1959: 115) This is not because one can see everything in a glance. One cannot. Rather the ruin is brought about by everything being in an inescapable, comprehensible space, where movement produces no alterity.

Fig. 4. Frank Lloyd Wright, Guggenheim Museum*, New York, 1959.*

Guggenheim is not ''really a museum,'' because in what is ''really a museum,'' there is a sequential unfolding of discrete spaces through which one travels as though on a journey through a seemingly infinite land. Where there is no sense of continuity, when the space is comprehensible and total, there is a crisis and the space

ceases to be "really a museum," e.g., Guggenheim museum. The ideal art museum is a space whose boundaries escape comprehension. It is, to a measure, an unfamiliar, ulterior space to the extent that in it one stands the chance of getting lost. It is a space that leaves something to incomprehension. It is a place where everyone is, by design, a tourist away from home in search of the authentic in an *other* space. Guggenheim does not and is not.

III.

Thus far I have tried to point out that there has been a deliberate and persistent logic to the design of the art museum from inception. Between the public and the artwork, the art museum has insinuated, by design, an elaborate and deep threshold that mediates and oversees the passage to and from the seemingly infinite world that it fabricates to contain art and the "real" world from which it is sequestered. This spacing, deliberate as it has been, constitutes the criterion by which the successes and the failures are persistently measured in the critical dialogues that have played an indispensable role in the development of the type. The lingering question is, of course, why the persistent spacing and the disjointment of art over the course of the art museum's short history. What exactly is at stake in the spacing of art?

Over the course of its history, the relationship of Western culture to painting, alongside writing and other forms of graphic representation, has been, in the least, an ambivalent relationship. Conceived at the advent of an unwanted absence, according to a pervasive myth that ascribes the invention of painting to the Corinthian youth, Butades, the site of painting from its presumed inception has been the site of a desired presence that it cannot judiciously fill. As such, painting has been, Derrida reminds us, the subject of simultaneous condemnation and praise for its ability to duplicate and perpetually conjure an absent or else invisible referent (Jacques Derrida, 1981). Prescribed and/or proscribed as a mimetic device that substitutes memory for perception, painting has been persistently deemed to follow and fall short of the presence it conjures in absence. This was not to change with the transformation of painting into art. The referent merely gave way to a subject that retained all the privileges of the former vis a vis the painted image. Whether painting is seen as the representation of an absolute ideal, as it was by the theoreticians of the Renaissance, or as a mode of expression that renders painting in particular and art in general, as Ruskin put it, "nothing but a noble and expressive language, invaluable as the vehicle of thought, but by itself nothing" (Ruskin, Modern Painters, V.1, P.8), up to and including the conception of painting as the "revelation" of the "concealed truth" of the subject or the "reproduction of a thing's general essence" as Heidegger, for instance, defined it, (Heidegger 37) the priority and radical alterity of what is painted as compared to the painted image has not been a question.

The above determination has been maintained and perpetuated, in turn, with a host of distinct ritual practices and institutions. Of these, the art museum, invented as it was at a particular point in time, is an indispensable element. Of these, the art museum, invented as it was at a particular point in time, is an indispensable element. The art museum as an institution and a building type, along with the institutions and practices it supplanted, are indispensable to "Platonism" and its "logocentric" determination, in part because the intermingling of reality and representation in the West, is a fatal affair. John Ruskin offers us a pertinent example.

Discussing the "utterly base and inadmissible" practice of "painting of surfaces to represent some other material," Ruskin (1849: 51) writes:

> I have made it a rule in the present work not to blame specifically; but I may, perhaps, be permitted, while I express my sincere admiration of the very noble entrance and general architecture of the British Museum, to express also my regret that the noble granite foundation of the staircase should be mocked at its landing by an imitation, the more blameable because tolerably successful. The only effect of it is to cast suspicion upon the true stones below, and upon every bit of granite afterwards encountered (Ibid.)

What forces Ruskin to voice an uncharacteristic blame is the undemarcated presence of the real and the copy, or the self-referential and the representational in the same space. He directs his blame at the imitative representation not for being a bad representation, but for being "tolerably successful." He condemns it not because it deceives or hides anything from him, but because it reveals too much of itself and in effect too much about its *other*. The successful mock loosens Ruskin's grip on the reality of the real. It casts suspicion on the authenticity of the original. What distinguishes for Ruskin the reality of the real from its mere representation is an original and causal link between the appearance and the substance of the real, e.g., between, as he puts it, "glitter" and "gold." What Ruskin loses in the company

of the mock is this link. What he loses is the presumed dependence in "real presence" of appearance on being.

If the "real" stone could become suspect in the company of its mock, if its stone appearance could be taken for an imitation in this company, then this appearance must necessarily have nothing to do with the "real presence" of stone or else suspicion as much as imitation would not be possible. What the "effect" of the successful mock indicates, what in effect is the condition of its possibility and at that the possibility of repetition, imitation, or representation, is the independence of representation from the presence or absence of the signified referent in "reality" as it is in representation. What it indicates is that "real presence" is itself a *representation*, that only as a representation can "real presence" ever be subject to suspicion. Reality offers no greater hold on its appearance and no greater link to its substance than the mock.

Considering that it is the cohabitation of the real and the mock and not the individual appearance of either that loosens our grip over appearance, Ruskin recommends we contain the "effect" of the mock by framing and separating it from the real. The framing can be either conceptual or literal. What is imperative, Ruskin tells us, is to either conceptually distance the copy by making its appearance fall noticeably short of the real and as such inexchangeable with it or else to literally distance the copy by framing it.

Ruskin's recommended spacing is not, of course, unique. It follows a widespread and time-honored practice. Our encounters with graphic representation in the wider cultural realm are highly mediated, carefully controlled, and spatially segregated. We find the logic of spacing and a multi-layered demarcation of the place of representation not only in the picture frames and book covers that mediate our experience and condition our access to their representational content, but of greater supplemental force in institutional building-types that serve as exclusive domiciles to various forms of representation. Of these, the art museum is a prime example. If the question of art's place and placement has loomed large since the inception of painting and sculpture as art, it is, in no small measure, a reflection of the problematically undifferentiated and undifferentiable space of graphic representation. It is because art has no decidable place in as much as every place assumes boundaries and outer limits, i.e., an outside. Art at once exceeds and defies any sense of place or any act of placement, predicated upon, in the simplest terms, a clear boundary separating two opposite terms, e.g., here and there, inside and outside. Art has no outside, since outside every presumed or presumable place for representation, one finds only more representation. This is precisely what Ruskin's successful mock forcefully and problematically brings to surface.

To curtail the ever-looming danger of exposure and displacement in the company of art, it is essential, as Ruskin suggests, to put in place, institutionally and literally, what art defies and denies conceptually: a sense of place. The fabrication of the museum as an *other* space is, persistent, as it has been, a cultural substitute for what is missing and missed: an outside to representation. Within the confines of the picture frame provisionally and within the confines of the museum permanently, art assumes an outside. The logic of spacing at work in the making of the museum puts the relationship between art and all that is to escape its grip in the proper cultural perspective.

From the ever-present picture frame to the cabinet and the museum, the preoccupation with a place for art is primarily a preoccupation with a place from which all that is to escape its "effect" can be safely withdrawn. It is a preoccupation with preserving the presumed alterity of art as measured against the real. Opening up a place for art is tantamount to opening up a place for its presumed other and for otherness as such to representation. At stake is authoritative control over the determined superiority and anteriority of reality over representation, the imitated over the imitator, the original over the copy. At stake in placing art is, in other words, the presumed order of appearance in the world, which is, in a manner, order itself. If our construed cultural reality is to assume the authoritative guise of inevitability and truth, then the decisive exorcise of representation is not a choice that can be readily avoided. If, from the princely and monarchial courts to the *public* realm authoritative control over representation and its potentially destructive effect is entrusted to the state and delegated to specific institutions, it is precisely because of what is at stake. The institution of the museum is an instituted resistance to representation. No claim to power can go without evidential control over the alterity of representation as measured against the real. To control representation is to control not necessarily what is real, but the possibility of its authoritative being and presence as a non-representational, self-referential entity.

As an institution and a building type, the museum effectively differentiates the undifferentiated space of graphic representation into two distinct realms separated by an elaborate journey. Between the seemingly infinite world that contains art and the "real" world from which it is sequestered, the museum insinuates an elaborate and deep threshold that mediates and over-

sees the passage to and from the worlds it fabricates as such. It thereby offers the visitor — by design — a spatial experience that is profoundly alien to art as the space of a non-place. The logic that shapes the museum is fundamentally a totemic logic. Past the careful delineation, separation, and processional transitions that are the hallmarks of a successful museum, art is given to stand in the same relationship to its presumed other, as inside stands to outside, here to there, and as do all other binary spatial and formal terms that are called on to shape the museum into an *other* space. Should one even wish to conceive of the relationship between art and the world from which it is sequestered, in any terms other than in binary terms, one must confront and contradict the immediate experience of the museum. Much as art resists a sense of place, the museum successfully resists its defiance of a sense of place, to the point of invisibility.

The exorcise the art museum implements architecturally is a two fold practice. On the one hand, the art museum, as an institution and a building type, exiles the inherent representational characteristic of the real in the name of mimesis and art to the museum. In turn, it curtails the inherent reproducibility that is art in the name of authenticity through the exclusion of the mock. In the world outside the museum, the copy may thereby proliferate without undermining the alterity of the real, because its face is turned toward the authentic in that other place where the copy has no place by design. What makes room for the docile cohabitation of the real and the reproduction is the designated and exclusive place for the authentic on the outside. The copy poses no apparent threat so long as it is in reference to another reality, at the end of a journey, in an other place, i.e., so long as its origin is on the outside. The museum is, in other words, the indispensable *reserve* to the economy that regulates the widespread and free circulation of images outside the museum.

The sequestering, and placement of the authentic in an other world is not, of course, a practice that is unique to the art museum. The entire tourist industry with which the museum has a historic affinity is predicated on the assumption, MacCannell points out, that the authentic is outside the sphere of everyday life. An extent of tourism is the rite of locating the authentic on the outside, be this measured in spatial or temporal terms. Authenticity is, in a sense, intimately tied to distance. The authentic mandates a journey. It is, to an extent, everything that is inside from the vantage point of the tourist visiting from the outside. The authentic is, in this context, inside a place to which the visitor does not belong by design and by force of label: a visitor.

Whereas from the outside the museum as a site for tourism provides the assurance of a place and a receptacle into which we may, in a manner, project our trepidations about language and representations, from the inside it is the place where we face them only to locate representation within the bounds of its culturally designated place. The place varies, but the placement does not.

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