4

The Spatial Dialectics of Authenticity

> *The use of objects which have properties is usually prescribed by ritual. There are rules about the way they should be collected. … There are regulations regarding their use, the time, place, quantities involved, without going into the sometimes vast array of accessory rites which accompany them and which allow the utilization of their properties and the application of their sympathetic mechanisms.*
>
> *(Mauss 102)*

THE COLLECTION

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" (Bertelli, Bossaglia, and Irace 287). It is, we are told, "really as desperate as that. Our civilization has come up with no better solution than to pigeonhole artworks and lock them safely away" (287).

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, one, "a level of physical wealth which allows an abundant production of art," and two, "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, *The New Museum* 8). What both accounts assume, and theirs is a pervasive assumption, is that the museum is 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, that is, of having to have a designated place.

Once displaced, works of art have to be, both accounts assume, re-placed and at that not in any place but in a place that, according to another account, "must surely be set apart in the sense of being a special place, where life takes on a different dimension and there is time and space to think and feel, and room for … silence"

(Powell, *New Museums* x). Not knowing what to do with two and three-dimensional graphic representations that fall outside "everyday secular or religious activity" or "their original homes," other than re-locating them to "a special place" is a concept that is peculiarly Western and not very old.[1]

Unlike the library and the theater with their long history of development, the art museum is barely over 200 years old. This is assuming, of course, that the art museum is a building type serving a public institution that sees to the collection, preservation, and public display of art. As a public institution, the art museum's history dates back to the July 27, 1793—the date of the Decree issued by the Revolutionary Convention in Paris for the creation of the "Museum of the Republic" at the Louvre which subsequently 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 1810s to 1830s.

The constitution of the "Musée Central des Arts," as the museum at the Louvre palace was renamed in 1796, is significant insofar as it marks a first in the appropriation of art by a then newly construed entity—the "public." In its sphere the museum would remain heretofore. This is to say that the history of the museum is thoroughly implicated in the history of the public and its self-constitution as a sovereign entity. Taking charge and exercising control over art as a body of objects delegated to a "special" place was assumed and continues to be one expression of this sovereignty.

Significant and peculiar as the public's initial and continuing preoccupation with gathering and administering art is, and we will have to return to this subject later, it is important to note that the practice of collecting art was well precedented in Europe. The public 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" (53). What we understand by "art" was the invention of the Renaissance, or rather of a people who, over time, began to see in the "Virgin" a statue and in the "classical statue" not a "heathen idol or a mere puppet," but the embodiment of a universal ideal: the beautiful (53). 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" ("The Work of Art" 224). To be (re) classified as art, paintings and statues had to eschew their cult referents in favor of a subject and submit themselves as objects to an aesthetic test for a measure of their "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 allocated place at home, in the palace, the church, and so on. The price of autonomy was the loss of place.[2] This is the loss Valéry was to deplore at the end of his essay "the problem with museums" to which we will turn later. For now, we should note that the autonomy that set paintings and statues adrift as autarchic self-referential objects transposed them into *collectibles* at the same time.

Once without a place and subject to collection, paintings and statues were collected, re-classified, and re-located to a new and specific place: the "repositories" that in various forms were popular among European ruling elite in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[3] The logic that saw to the re-classification 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 chapter.

Beginning in the sixteenth century, we find dislodged paintings and statues reposited 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.[4] The collections' titles vary overtime and there were considerable overlaps in the holdings. What distinguished one collection from another was not so much its label, as its distinct collection practice. The distinction between the "cabinet" and the "gallery" is useful, in other words, only insofar as it serves to distinguish not two specific repositories, but two distinct practices that were often accompanied by two correspondingly distinct spatial formulations. 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, forming a path with a multiplicity of views along the way.

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" (qtd. in IImpey and MacGregor 1).[5]

The bafflingly heterogeneous body of objects encountered in these cabinets appears to have one thing in common (Figure 4.1). 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. Divided, as Caspar Neickel suggests in his 1727 treatise, *Museographia*, into the two categories *naturalia* and *curiosa artificialia*, the collectibles in the cabinet were, by nature or design, out of place in the domain of the ordinary. Most had their origin in *other* times and *other* places. Whether, a horn of a unicorn, a nautilus shell, cameos and intaglios, Egyptian and Roman antiquities, American featherworks, or oriental calligraphy, the objects in the continental cabinet were unique productions, not necessarily in origin, but where they were collected in the one place outside of which they had no immediate place.

Fig 4.1 Engraving of the Francesco Calzolari's Cabinet of Curiosities, Musaeum Calceolarium, Verona, 1622

For all its ambition to "behold and collect into one place," as Peter Munday noted in 1634, more oddities, rarities, and singularities than "a man … should see if hee spent all his life in Travel," the cabinet was not meant as a place of exhibition or public display (qtd. in IImpey and MacGregor 150). The objects in the cabinet were not meant to be seen. On occasion foreign dignitaries may have been taken there to impress upon them the sovereign reach of the ruler.[6] The cognoscenti were also given permission to examine and study the cabinet's content. For the most part, however, the cabinet was a secluded, and to the public, an inaccessible place. The impetus behind the collection was not to make oddities, rarities, and singularities visible, but to render them invisible. The goal was to gather and hold them in one

place and, in effect, exert spatial control over these otherwise placeless objects. 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. The spatial control exerted over these authortic objects may well be what made the cabinet suitable for the occasional display of sovereignty to foreign dignitaries. What was put on display was not so much the objects in the cabinet, as the spatial control exerted over them—the collection.

There was a further distinction between collecting and viewing within the cabinet. The occasional contact with the objects in the cabinet was often subject to a divisive spatial dialogue between the center and the edges of what was generally a simple rectangular room. As Caspar Neickel suggests, the objects in the cabinet were to be variously kept on the periphery of the cabinet and moved to a table placed in the center of the room for examination. The requisite spatial ritual of retrieval and return from periphery to center and back, in effect, further distanced the resting place of the curious and its point of contact with the outside world on the examination table.

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. Paintings and statues accounted for little as compared to such prized collectibles as the horn of a unicorn.[7] However, neither was placed in the cabinet on account of price. Had the monetary value outweighed an object's value as a unique and rare object, it was more likely to be placed in the treasury than the cabinet of curiosities. Objects in the cabinet had additional properties: their singularity where they happened to be. What made paintings and statues fit for inclusion in the cabinet and the company of other oddities, rarities, and singularities was their authenticity and historicity—what Walter Benjamin was to term their "aura" or 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" (220).

Although the authortic and auratic objects collected in the cabinet eschewed reproduction, this is not to say that they were not reproduced. An entire industry was formed in Italy and elsewhere to feed with fake reproductions and forged singularities the appetite of the European ruling elite for rare and singular collectibles.[8] What was valued above else for resisting reproduction fast became the subject of it. In response another industry was formed to safeguard against the first. It had the task of identifying, authenticating, and certifying 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. Even if it meant having to search, locate, and import authentic and singular objects, no seat of power in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it seems, could be without a cabinet and no claim to power could go without instigating a realm

from which the inauthentic and the ordinary were to be carefully and meticulously excluded.

The idiosyncrasy of 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 and why is it linked to questions of sovereignty and power? Why were the European ruling elite interested in collecting these peculiar objects with such diligence and concern for authenticity and passing this concern on to the public when it declared its own sovereignty? To postulate an answer we need to follow the development of the cabinet into the museum. For the time being, it is important to note that the emphasis on the authentic in the cabinet is, as a salient feature of its collection practice, what sets this practice apart from the prevalent collection practice in the gallery.

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 (Figure 4.2). The space of the gallery was, unlike the cabinet, inclusive of the copy and the reproduction. Where and when aesthetic and iconographical concerns figured paramount, as they did in the gallery, the question of authenticity did not. Charles de Brosses, Germain Bazin recounts, did not "fret over acquiring originals by the great masters" (116). Confessedly, he preferred "beautiful copies of famous paintings," to "having originals by minor masters" (116). President 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, conceived as a *place* predicated on the spatial dialectics of center and edge, housed authenticity. In time, the two practices would coalesce into the museum, though the logic of the cabinet would prevail over the gallery.

The transformation of the cabinet and the gallery into the art museum were to go by way of the gradual division of the cabinet of curiosities into specialized cabinets in the eighteenth century, including the formation of cabinets devoted exclusively to art. This was, of course, in keeping with the greater divisional and organizational tendencies of the enlightenment and its distinct worldview. The institution of cabinets devoted exclusively to works of art (Kunstkammer) was, in a manner, an initial step toward consolidating the cabinet and the gallery into one homogeneous and exclusive space for art. However, the question of authenticity was to remain a divisive criterion in keeping separate the two modes of collecting and administering art for a time to come.

The transformation of the place of art from the exclusive cabinets and the galleries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the public museums of nineteenth and twentieth centuries was to closely follow the trajectory of the two major parallel political developments of the late eighteenth century. It went in tandem with the development of nation-states, and the fashioning of a new social identity for state citizens, on the one hand, and on the other, with the

Fig. 4.2 Giovanni Paolo Pannini, *Interior of a Picture Gallery with the Collection of Cardinal Silvio Valenti Gonzaga*, 195 x 264 cm, oil on canvas, 1740, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT *Photo* Credit: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art/Art Resource, NY

gradual emergence of a new mode of organizing and exercising power centered on exposure and visibility as a new strategy of control, the modalities of which Michel Foucault has extensively traced in various contexts.[9]

Art was to the emerging nation-states an effective instrument for public education and the forging of a new national identity and state citizenry. The charter of virtually every major art museum, since the museum's inception, identifies education of the public as a primary mission.[10] Works of art did and continue to validate and substantiate the historical claims and the distinct mythos of the new state, that is, to synthesize aspects of its worldview and ethos, in terms discussed earlier. The concerns here are thematic and focused on works of art and their instrumental exhibition. In this respect, the state took over the function of the gallery and continued its thematic and aesthetic concerns with a new agenda.

The evolving exhibition practices in museums and the motivations behind these practices over time have been the subject of a number of studies on museums in the past two decades.[11] The architecture and the distinct spatial experience of the art museum itself have been tangential to these studies, given the focus on the museum's subject. Admittedly, the exposure and public visibility afforded art in the museums of nineteenth and twentieth centuries is an indispensable part of its instrumentality to the state and can readily be taken for granted. However, this exposure took place in a new space and a distinct place whose development

was as instrumental and influential in the public reception of art as the exhibition practices within.

THE DEBATE

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. The inquiries coincided with Comte d'Angiviller's plans for a public art museum at the Louvre and led to the assignment of the museum 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.[12] Boullée and later his student Durand, both affiliated with the Académie, offered designs for an ideal museum in their influential theoretical works of the period. These and related proposals offer elaborate concentric plans that ritualistically proceed from a distinct outer enveloping frame, along penetrative bisecting cross-arms, to a ceremonial space at the central core of the building (Figure 4.3). 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—a place to gather, organize, and study art with all that this act spatially and ritualistically entails (as discussed in the previous chapter). 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 (215).

The initial modeling of the museum on the library stems in part from a valuation of art that was deeply rooted in the cabinet, that is, 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" (qtd. in Pevsner, *Building Types* 121). The antiquarian Alois Hirt was to echo Mechel's sentiment in his 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 latter between Alois Hirt on one side and the architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel and the art historian Gustav Friedrich Waagen, on the other. The debates were over the conception of the art museum as an experiential variation on the theme of the library or as something entirely different, if not new. The outcome of these debates, to which the heads of the respective states and a host of other concerned officials were party, determined the ground rules for the design of the art museum as a building type.

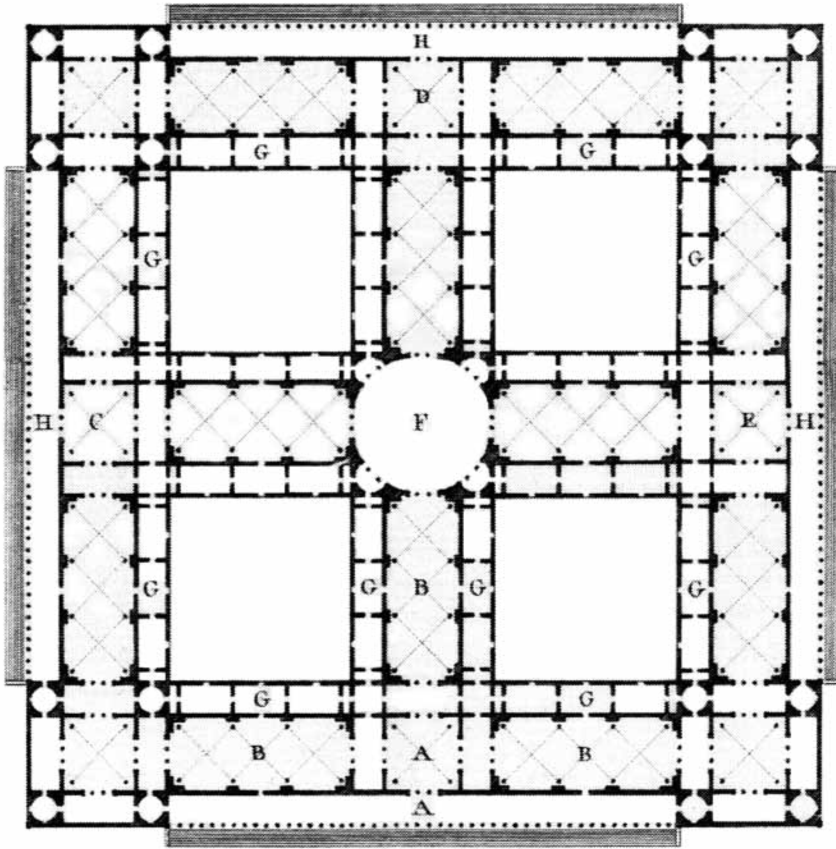


Fig. 4.3 Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand, *Design for a Museum*, Précis des leçons d'architecture données à l'École royale polytechnique, 1809

The counter argument to the conception of the art museum as a "public collection intended for instruction" and the point of view that was to ultimately shape the art museum, was summarized by Leo von Klenz in a 1816 memo written in response to Wagner's objections to his proposed design for a sculpture museum in Munich: the Glyptothek. A "museum," he wrote, "is not a place for artists' training, an '*akademisher Kunstzwinger*,' 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" (126). Klenz's sentiment and guiding principle in art museum design was later echoed in the catch phrase of Schinkel and Waagen, "first delight, then instruct." This was formulated in response to objections raised by Hirt to Schinkel's design for the Berlin museum. "The principal and essential purpose" of the museum in the opinions of Schinkel and Waagen was "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. Among these the first is to give an opportunity to artists to manifold study; only after that comes the interest of the scholar, and finally and lastly the museum will facilitate the acquisition of information on the history of art among all and sundry" (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 in its appreciation as an aesthetic object or an object of study. All parties presumed that the space where delight comes first has to be different from the space where instruction comes first. The disagreement between the two camps was not, it is also important to note, over functional requirements per se, as the arguments were centered on what should come first and where the accent was to be placed. Rather, as we shall see, the debate was over experiential differences between the place meant primarily for aesthetic appreciation of art as opposed to one meant for its study. It was a debate over how the spatial and architectural experience of the museum as a building should prepare the viewer for a particular reception of art. It was a debate over how 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.

The perception of art that found its spatial realization in Altes Museum, among others then and since, may appear to have its emphasis on aesthetics in common with the perception of art prevalent in the galleries of the previous generation. However, there are fundamental differences between the two points of view. In the same vein, the differences between the parties to the debate over the purpose of the museum are over-stated by the parties. Both parties, for instance, rejected iconography in favor of chronology for the organization of the works of art in their proposed museums. Iconography, a prevalent organizational principle in the gallery, was unacceptable to the new generation in part because its external focus on the subject degraded the autonomy of the art object. Frieherr von Rumohr, the art historian who was, along with Waagen and Schinkel, responsible for the arrangement of art works in Altes Museum condemned the practice because to organize art iconographically, he asserted, is "to seek art outside the field of art" (128). Looking at art, one was not to take note of the subject that was "outside" it, but of what was inherent and internal to the object and what gained it a unique place in the historic chronology of art.

The chronological organization, agreed upon as it was, 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. Whether the purpose of an art collection is defined as the elevation of national character through exposure to high art as Schinkel and Waagen did or the education of artists who contributed to the elevation of national manufacture and industrial products, as Hirt did, the "true and significant gaps" of any collection inevitably detract it from fully accomplishing its mission. The gaps are counter-productive to the instrumentality of the work of art. To alleviate the problem and enhance the museum's efficacy, 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 (Bergdoll 86).

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." This is a fundamental difference. The two different collection practices of the cabinet and the gallery, with their respective emphasis on authenticity and aesthetics, are interfused into one practice in the new art museum. The trajectory of this interfusion is the constitution of the aesthetic object as a self-referential entity, that is, an object that has been systematically striped of external reference: be this reference to a subject or to an original. To the list of potential external references we may add the problem of labels. They too speak to external dependence in the art object, which is why they were altogether excluded from the Glyptothek at Klenz's behest, along with seats. The art museum was not conceived, from the outset, as a place to rest or linger.

Of the two initial executed designs for the museum, Klenz's Glyptothek or 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). The new freestanding building was to occupy the site of an existing canal at the end of the Lustgarten opposite the palace and away from the urban fabric. 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 (Figure 4.4a).

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

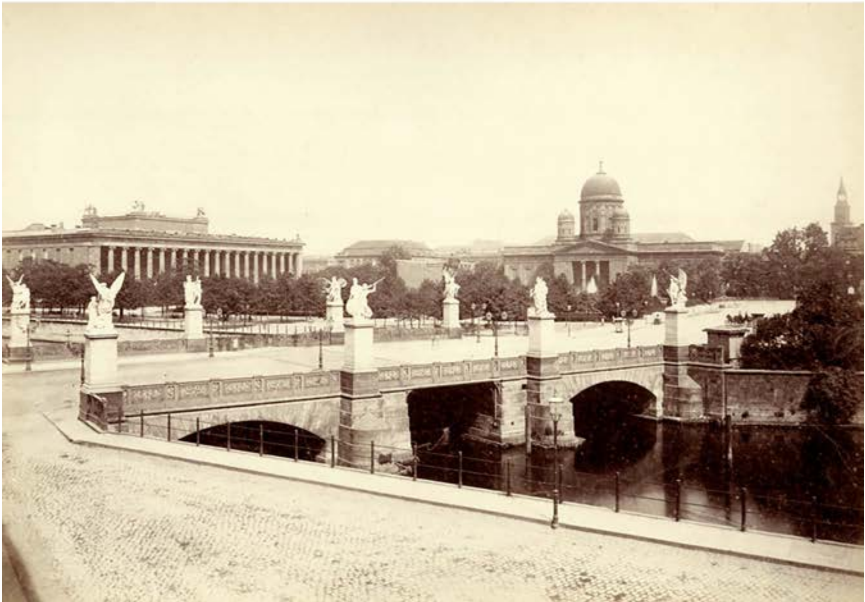


Fig. 4.4 Karl Friedrich Schinkel, *Altes Museum*, Berlin, 1828 *Photo* Credit: from top, Figure 4.4a Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC—DIG—ppmsca—00338, Figure 4.4b Photographische Gesellschaft Berlin am Dönhoffplatz

the Lustgarten. Mediating the garden and the space atop the podium was a central, monumental staircase above which, facing the garden and the palace, Schinkel raised a two storey Ionic colonnade that spans the entire length of the building. Together, the columnar screen in front and the mural wall behind it form a transparent, but largely impenetrative, transverse corridor in front of the building. What would otherwise have been the solid line of a facade, here assumes spatial depth and visual distance. The colonnade institutes two separate domains in its front and back, much as the podium does with the levels above

and below. In the space behind the colonnade, disjoined from the plaza both horizontally and vertically, Schinkel located the C-shaped galleries in two floors. Despite their physical proximity, the galleries are not directly accessible from the colonnade (Figure 4.5).[13] Connecting them is an open recessed staired vestibule in the center of the colonnade, followed by a large rotunda, leading through the width of the building to the back where entries to the lower and upper gallery spaces are located.

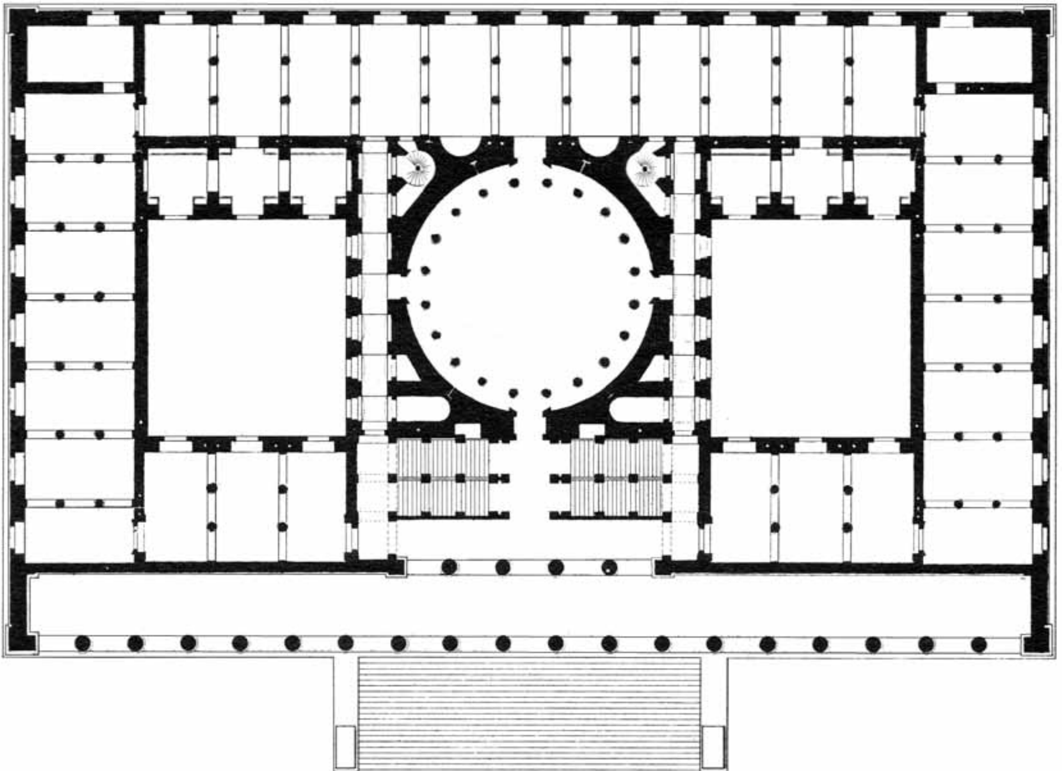


Fig. 4.5 Karl Friedrich Schinkel, *Ground Floor Plan*, *Altes Museum*, Berlin, 1828 *Photo* Credit: bpk/Berlin/ Kupferstichkabinett/ Staatliche Museen zu Berlin/Art Resource, NY

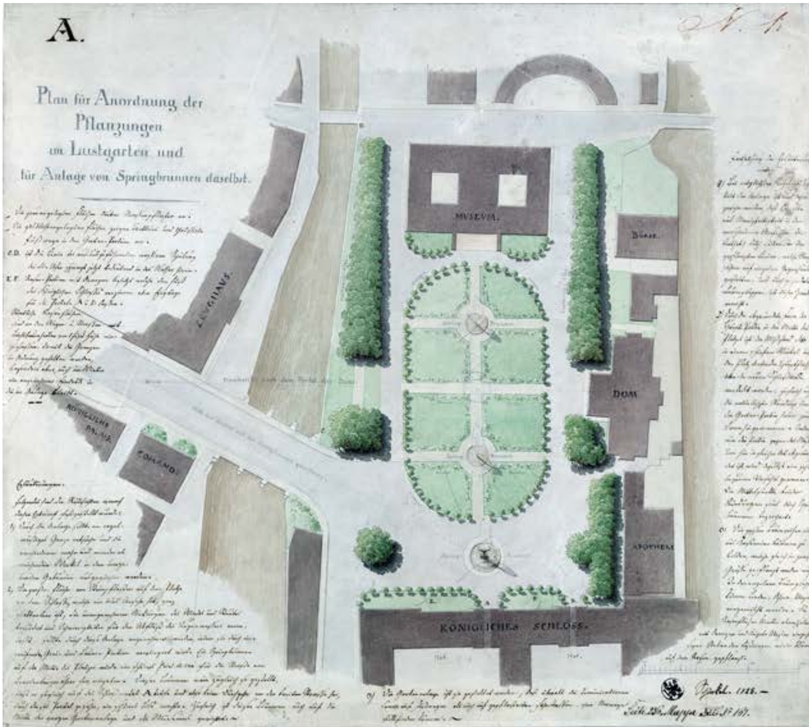
Reaching the art works put on display for public "enjoyment and appreciation" (Genuß und die Erkenntnis) thus required venture on a journey that was, if not deliberately arduous, meticulously elaborate. The ritual procession out to the new place for art, approached from the initial proposed site on Unter 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 (Figure 4.4b). Having reached the island and entered the plaza in front of the palace, 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" (Genuß und die Erkenntnis) of art is a distinct and separate domain for art that is disjoined from the city by a deep and elaborate borderline. The indivisible boundary that he conceived and executed as a journey out through a succession of thresholds to another realm or space for art, would heretofore separate those works of art that owed the sum of their value to originality from those that were bereft of value by virtue of simulation, duplication, and/or imitation. 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 disjointing 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. It was brought to sight on the outside. To see it, that is, for it to become visible, one had to journey out. This outside, it is important to note, was neither literal nor a given, but construed and fabricated by the journey and the experience of disjointing that would become the distinguishing marks of the art museum as a building type.

The carefully orchestrated experience of disjoining 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 (Figure 4.6). 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" (regelmässiges Ganes) (Pundt 152). 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 initially 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.

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



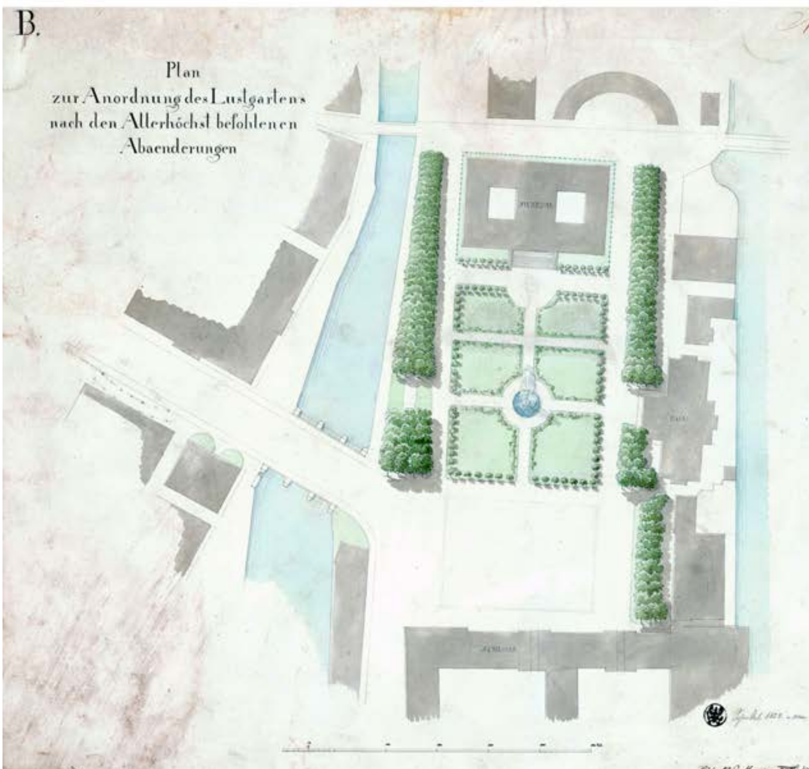


Fig. 4.6 Karl Friedrich Schinkel, *Plaza Studies*, *Altes Museum*, Berlin, 1828 *Photo* Credit: bpk/Berlin/Kupferstichkabinett/Staatliche Museen zu Berlin/Art Resource, NY

the center of the building to the gallery spaces (Figure 4.7). 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. The museum and palace thus assume their disjoined and divided positions in a space whose boundaries do not relate and connect to define its outer edges. The latter sit independently as objects within the space.

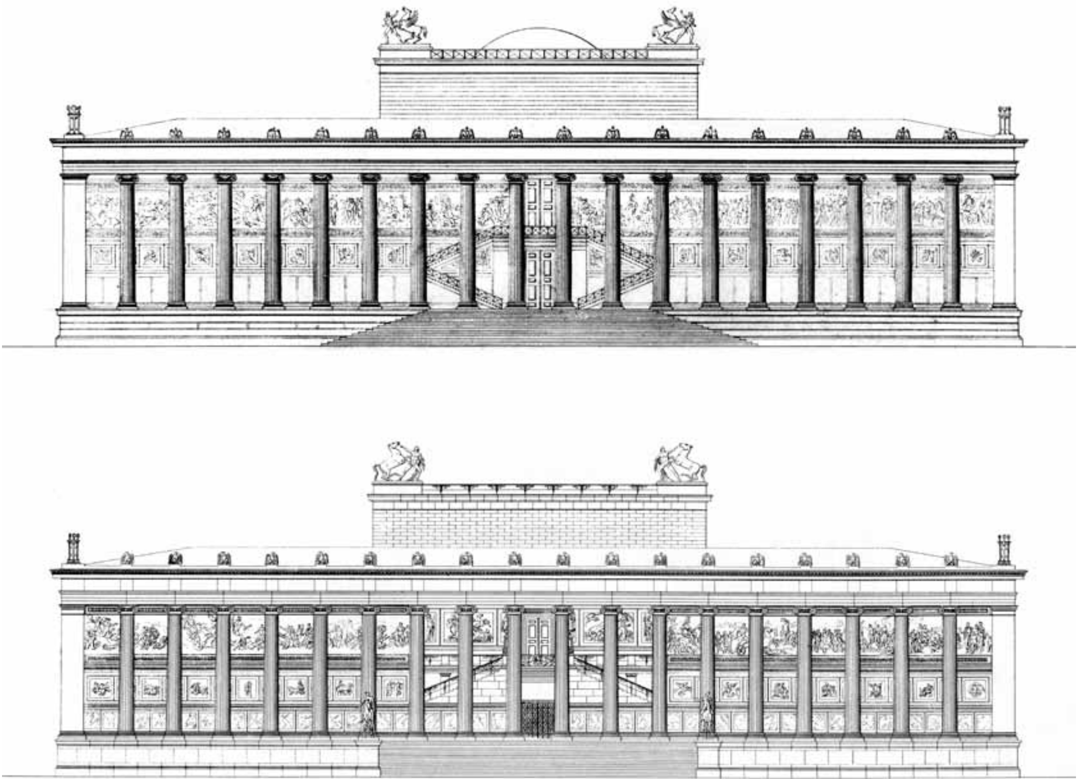


Fig. 4.7 Karl Friedrich Schinkel, *Elevation Studies*, *Altes Museum*, Berlin, 1828 *Photo* Credit: bpk/Berlin/ Kupferstichkabinett/ Staatliche Museen zu Berlin/Art Resource, NY

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 vestibule that was a bi-directional point of connection, vertically and horizontally, became a massive and deep threshold to be traversed unidirectionaly.

The changes to the ceremonial staircase in front of the Colonnade had much the same impact on the colonnade as the changes to the staircase in the vestibule had on the latter. Schinkel had initially conceived of the staircase in front of the museum as a multidirectional 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. It 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 disjointing journey past the multiplicity of thresholds imposed in front of the galleries that were to house authentic works of art 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 for the art museum, to the staircase and the podium over which the museum was raised, to the monumental colonnade in front, and to the rotunda that he regarded, along with the other elements, as unnecessary luxuries (pracht). 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, that is, 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—one internally focused on the experience of penetration and arrival as opposed to Schinkel's external focus on the experience of departure and disjointing.

Schinkel, of course, dismissed Hirt's criticism and emphatically defended the elements in question and the rotunda in particular as being essential to preparing the visitor for the proper "enjoyment and appreciation" (Genuß und die Erkenntnis) of art. For Schinkel the spacing that sums up the experience of the art museum was directly linked to the "enjoyment and appreciation" of authentic works of art. However, he did not elaborate on this essential link as though it was patently apparent to anyone who saw the museum as an instrument for the "enjoyment and appreciation" of authentic art. Subsequently, Hirt resigned from the commission whose members were by and large in agreement with Schinkel. The consensus has since been that the art museum is the place proper to the "enjoyment and appreciation" of authentic art, for which the ritual of spacing is an indispensable requisite.

THE DISPERSION

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 Museum of Art (Traumbauer, Borie, and Zatzinger, 1911–28) or as minimal and subtle as the Whitney Museum (Marcel Breuer, New York, 1966). Nevertheless, the modalities of the implementation and the realization of the requisite spacing have been the measure of each museum's success or failure. We may begin with the success stories, before addressing the failures, of which Guggenheim Museum in New York is a notorious example.

As one of the last in a line of monumental art museums that stylistically trace their roots to the Altes Museum, the Philadelphia Museum of Art was given its place, after much deliberation, and careful examination, on top of a hill (a former reservoir), outside the city fabric, at the borderline of the city and the Fairmont Park.[14] The disjointing and the spacing of the Philadelphia Museum of Art begins at City Hall in the center of the city and traces a path that leads out to the city's edge on a diagonal axis, along a ceremonial parkway that was dramatically and forcefully cut through the city's grid to reach the park at its edge (Figure 4.8a). Rarely has the connection between the seat of state and the seat of art in an urban context been as overtly stated as they are in Philadelphia. The connection, dramatic as it is in Philadelphia, is the least of the many similarities between Altes Museum and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. More substantial are the experiential similarities between the two.

The parkway that leads out from the city center terminates in an oval at the foot of the hill that forcefully lifts the museum above its immediate context. The role of the oval in this drama is similar to that played by the plaza in front of the palace in the Spreeinsel. It too marks the termination of the line of access from one domain and the beginning of the other. In Zantzinger's words, his partner, Trumbauer, imagined that the plaza which would eventually take the form of the oval would "while creating a proper foreground for the museum on the height, at the same time serve as a physical terminus for the Parkway and other radiating avenues" (qtd. in Brownlee 24). To reach the museum, one must leave the axis of the parkway, trace the edge of the oval and approach the museum diagonally, if only to heed the termination of the axis and further acknowledge the detachment of the museum's immediate surrounding from the city and the axis that could otherwise read as a line of connection. One cannot approach the museum on the axis of the parkway, less one twice dares a six lane thoroughfare with no pedestrian crossing.

To reach the museum from the foot of the hill, one must cross a succession of carefully orchestrated thresholds that begin with an open plaza at the base of the stairs and reach up through a wide and segmented staircase to a landing on top that is, in turn, separated and distanced from the forecourt in front of the museum by a vehicular passageway that encircles the building. Approaching the museum by car is no less dramatic. One must cross the oval and from the side of the museum drive up the hill to the back of the museum. From there, one can enter the museum on foot from either the back or the front. From the back one has to go underneath a monumental portal, enter a large, multi-storey vestibule, traverse its length to reach the staircase in the back and from there lead up on transverse axis to the stair hall that connects to the galleries in front.

Fig. 4.8
Traumbauer, Borie, and Zatzinger, *Philadelphia Museum of Art*, 1911–28
Photo Credit: from top, Figure 4.8a Library of Congress, The Historic American Buildings Survey, HAER PA,51—PHILA,328—5, Figure 4.8b United States Geological Survey

Like Altes Museum, the design of the Philadelphia Museum of Art underwent numerous modifications between 1911 and 1915. Here too, with every modification the designers experimented and in the end further consolidated the disjointing and the perceptual spacing of the museum before settling on the final solution.

The Museum was initially conceived as a rectangular, horizontal block, placed perpendicular to the axes of the parkway, on top of the hill. The stairs led directly

up to a podium in the center of the block. In this format, the museum read more as a termination to the axis of the parkway than a distinct and separate realm. In the ensuing studies, the architects experimented, to their dissatisfaction, with the form and the direction of the staircase and the shape of the central and end pavilions, before introducing, first a wide landing in the middle of the hill, as if to properly distance the museum from the city, and then transforming this spatial layer into a forecourt in front of the museum by 1914. The faithful and radical turn came in the summer of 1914 when the building was pushed back and the gallery wings were turned to surround the forecourt and together form a self-enclosing U-shape building block organized around three points: a central pedimented portico and two end pavilions. The latter were deliberately tuned 180 degrees to face one another and thereby establish a visual terminal line in front of the forecourt. The windows in the outer wall of the end pavilions were removed in subsequent studies, thereby reinforcing their role as the outer boundary of the place fitted to house authentic art. The staircase was, in turn, decidedly separated from the forecourt and located at a distance in front of the terminal bounding line of the museum defined by the end pavilions (Figure 4.8b).

Much as the sequence of thresholds in front of the Philadelphia Museum of Art is a dramatic expression of the logic of spacing at work in front of the Altes Museum, the museum building offers, in turn, its own unique interpretation of the key sequestering components in the Altes Museum. The role of the colonnade of the Berlin museum is played in the Philadelphia Museum of Art by the end pavilions and the forecourt that institute a deep, layered, translucent threshold, past the landing of the front stairs and the encircling passageway, all of which has to be ceremoniously crossed before reaching the base of the staircase in front of the central pedimented portico of the back wing. One must then continue the ascent, cross the columnar screen of the portico and go past two tall vestibules, to arrive at the central staired hall or the Philadelphia equivalent of the nexus point in the Altes Museum: the rotunda. Here as well, to reach the galleries, one must traverse the depth of yet another threshold: a well-sequestered passageway on either side of the hall, leading to the galleries on each floor.

What is particularly instructive about the Philadelphia Museum of Art, is not only the exaggerated expression it gives the logic of spacing in the forging of a distinct and separate place for art in Philadelphia, but also the fact that the institution of this place took precedent over what, only in due time, was to be housed in it. The architects of the museum, Charles Borie noted sometime after the completion of the design, "were a bit handicapped in their works as we had but little idea as to the use to which the building would be put—after all the City owned damned little art" (qtd. in Brownlee 48). Also, after the completion of the museum and for quite sometime to come, the city had no money to purchase art. Regardless, the actual "use" of the building was clearly secondary to instituting and having it as an Other place. This was not unique to Philadelphia. Alexander reminds us that, "Usually communities and patrons have been more than willing to raise funds for impressive buildings, but securing worthwhile collections becomes ever more difficult as the

price of old masters and modern art zoom upward" (37). The impression is echoed in the following observations:

> *Every town today seems to need its own museum and Japan, for example, has museums springing up everywhere with very little in them. (Reichardt 35)*
>
> *It is distressing how little money has yet been spent on displaying the historic collections, which are, after all, the raison d'être of the museum. There is the new eye-catching pyramid, the smart new gallery shops, and the excavated fortress now revealed, while most of the permanent collection galleries look as dejected as they have since any of us can remember. (Clifford 20)*
>
> *Museums in the United States are growing at an almost frightening rate. If we count the smallest ones with only one person on the staff and he or she without professional training, about five thousand of them exist today, and recently a new one has appeared every 3.3 days. (Alexander 5)*
>
> *Just as Medieval France has gone down in history as the Age of Cathedrals, this past decade in America may someday be known as the Age of Museums. Indeed, more museum space has been designed and built throughout North America during the late 1970s and 1980s than ever before in the continent's history. (Dornberg 26)*

Like the cabinet of curiosities before, the spacing and the space of the authentic, instituted as such, has a use-value all its own, and to a measure independent of its overt value as display space.

In contrast to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Whitney Museum offers an abridged, though equally effective expression of the logic of spacing (Figure 4.9). Having a corner site within the dense urban fabric of New York city, the building forcefully disjoins itself from its context with an economy of expression, all the more remarkable for its effectiveness. To its right, where the building would have had to confront the city fabric, the introjection of a tall concrete retaining wall effectively frames and separates the site from its immediate context. Pulling the cubical core of the building away from this wall and leaving a visible void to frame and separate the building from the wall relieves the core of visual attachment to the city fabric. A similar sequence of frames, in turn, divorces the building from the sidewalk. Here, the disjointing frames are a low retaining wall and a deep moat, over which hovers the cascading and recessing facade of the museum. The moat whose perceptual depth is made manifold by the weight of the cascading facade on top is as effective in disjointing and placing the museum at a distance from its context as the monumental sequence of the island and the plazas in Berlin or the prolonged sequence of the parkway and the hill in Philadelphia.

At Whitney, the disjointing journey begins at the low retaining wall that literally holds the sidewalk back to form the first threshold. Behind it is the canopied gateway that is carefully divorced and slightly set back from the retaining wall. The divorce is essential to the sequential layering of thresholds on what is meant to be perceived as a journey out to an Other place. The gateway, in its literality,

Fig. 4.9 Marcel Breuer, *Whitney Museum*, New York, 1966 *Photo* credit: author

merely underscores the message, while the canopy's shape and weight add to the momentum of the movement through the gate. With the weight of the building cascading down overhead, urging one's movement forward, the journey past the gate continues precariously over the moat on the ensuing drawbridge and across the translucent glass curtain wall in front—the Whitney Museum's equivalent of the columnar screen in Altes Museum. The drawbridge eventually lands at some distance past the glass wall at the lobby platform and from there one must cross the vertical threshold of the elevators that lead to the gallery floors, now worlds apart from the point of departure.

Should there be any doubt about the distance and the alterity of the world outside, there are seven windows that cut through the outer frame of the building from the various galleries and offer views that are meant to transform, in Marcel Breuer's words, "the vitality of the street into the sincerity and profundity of art" (qtd. in G. Bazin 261). Transforming the world into a picture of itself from within the museum looking back is not unique to the Whitney. It is a well precedented gesture, of which telling examples are the framed view of the city from the second floor of the staired vestibule of Altes Museum, well documented by the architect, and the much noted distance view of the city from the portico of the Philadelphia Museum of Art through the framing outline of the end pavilions. Among others, the transformation stabilizes and finalizes the distance. I'll return to this crucial transformation latter.

Whitney's condensed disjointing strategy has, we may note in passing, a counterpart in the reflective pool of the Barnes Foundation building (Tod Williams & Billie Tsien Architects, 2012), located not far from the Philadelphia Museum of Art. To enter this museum one must arrive at a path running parallel to the building's long façade, delineated and separated from it by a row of trees and a long reflective pool adjoining the building. Having followed the path for half the building's length, one must turn and cross the row of trees, traverse over a bridge spanning the reflective pool, to enter a recessed vestibule, from where a circuitous path leads to the requisite central court of a museum building that is, on the whole, well isolated from its context by landscaped gardens, open plazas and parking spaces (Figure 4.10).

Another vivid and far more monumental example of the logic of spacing at work in the fabrication of the art museum is the corrective renovations and additions to the Louvre palace (I.M. Pei, 1989) where our museum history begun.[15] The changes have, in effect, 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 (Figure 4.11a). 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. The facade has become a tableau to

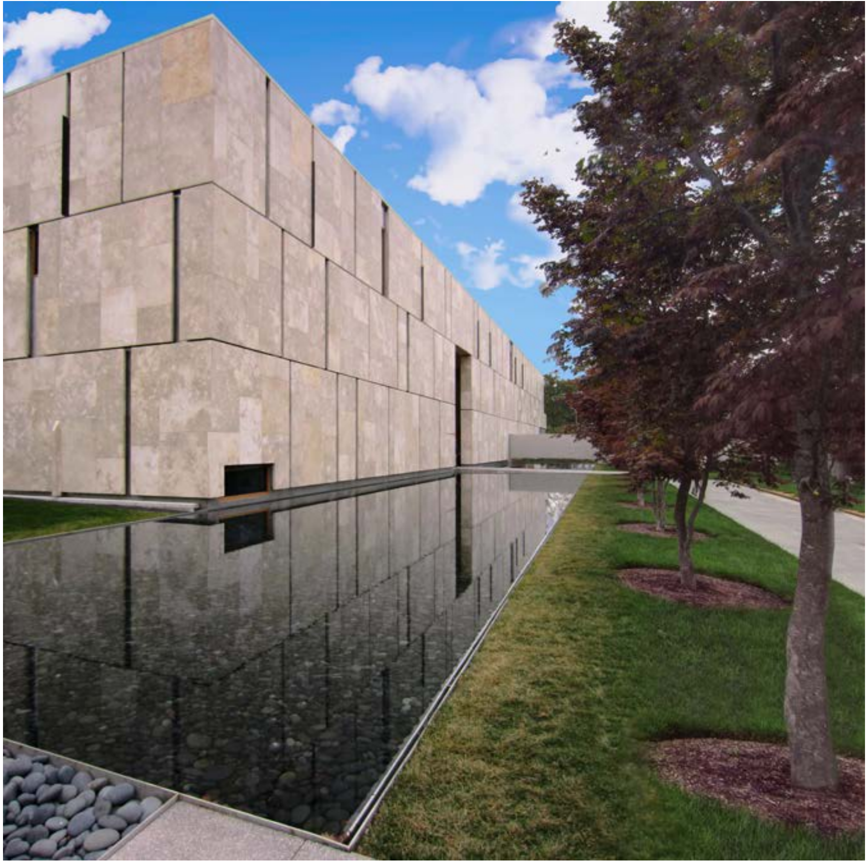


Fig. 4.10 Tod Williams & Billie Tsien Architects, *The Barnes Foundation*, Philadelphia, 2012 *Photo* credit: Robert Rife

be contemplatively looked at from a distance; no matter how close one gets to it. Devoid of its function as the point of entry and exit, the facade has assumed the role of an imposing and monumental limit that inconsolably separates the worlds instituted on its sides. The protracted discussions over the removal of the Ministry of Finance from the north wing (Rue do Rivoli) are indicative of the importance of the total delimitation of the realm. I.M. Pei went so far as comparing the museum to a man without an arm, should the north wing not be procured and sealed off (Biasini, Lebrat and Bezombes 31). Having restored the arm, 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, marking the nexus point of the world below the ground plane and the one above. The disjointing ritual and the journey out continue 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.

One could, of course, cite numerous other examples in which the logic of spacing finds a new and different expression pending the unique circumstances

Fig. 4.11 Clockwise from top, Figure 4.11a I.M. Pei, *The Louvre*, Paris, 1989; Fig. 4.11b James Stirling, *Neue Staatsgalerie*, Stuttgart, 1984; Fig. 4.11c Richard Meier, *High Museum of Art*, Atlanta, 1981; Fig. 4.11d Frank Gehry, *Guggenheim Museum*, Bilbao, 1997; Fig. 4.11e Richard Meier, *Getty Museum*, Los Angeles, 1997 *Photo* credit: from top clockwise 4.11a author; 4.11b Rob Deutscher; 4.11c Susan Poague; 4.11d Mario Roberto Duran Ortiz; 4.11e United States Geological Survey

of the context. Among the more celebrated examples from the past few decades one that readily comes to mind is Neue Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, Germany (James Stirling, 1984) with its elaborate entry sequence of stairs and ramps that lead up the slopes over which the museum is carefully lifted, and connect on an oblique path

through a terrace plaza to and eventually through the entry hall of the museum to the galleries on top (Figure 4.11b).[16] Another example is the High Museum of Art in Atlanta (Richard Meier, 1981) where the disjointing journey follows the literal path of a long, ceremonial ramp that leads up on a diagonal axis to a terrace on the second floor of the building and from there on a twisting and meandering path through the entrance lobby to the Atlanta's equivalent of the Berlin rotunda (Figure 4.11c). In words that readily bring Schinkel to mind the architect tells us: "the entry ramp reaches out to the city so that initiation into the realm of art begins at the street. It becomes a low, almost ceremonial promenade in preparation for the experience of viewing the art within" (Searing 110—11). It is not explained, of course, why the preparation is necessary or desired. We find, however, an even more exaggerated expression of the Atlanta journey in the later Getty Museum in Los Angeles (Richard Meier, 1997) where to reach the museum that is located far away from the city, on top of a hill, the visitor must traverse the distance from the bottom to the top of the hill on a monorail train (Figure 4.11d). And there is the much-celebrated Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (Frank Gehry, 1997) that despite its formal differences is remarkably similar to Altes Museum in the manner, among others, it dramatically withdraws from the city fabric, both formally and literally, to occupy its own version of the *Spreeinsel* flanked by roads, a river, and a bridge. To reach the museum, one has to leave the city fabric behind, enter and traverse through an open plaza, journey down a monumental staircase, to arrive at the equivalent of the Berlin rotunda from where the galleries extend in various directions (Figure 4.11e).

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.[17] 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 façade (Figure 4.12).

The novelty of Guggenheim's form effectively divorces it from its context and it has been commended for it. The "buildings around it," Ada Louis Huxtable noted at the time, "are not big enough to be overbearing; instead the Guggenheim cheerfully dominates their discreetness … In a civic sense, it is a brilliant success" (336). Lewis Mumford writes "Despite its dull color … this great monolith stands out boldly from the flat, anonymous apartment houses in the neighborhood, the positiveness of the form offsetting the all too congenial mediocrity of tone. The building is so definitely a thing apart, so different from every other one in Fifth Avenue" (110).

Although successful in divorcing itself from its context, what Guggenheim lacks as an art museum is the requisite distance and the ritual disjointing from that context. Guggenheim's is a journey *in* as distinct from the requisite journey *out*. The unceremonious entry sequence is abrupt and fails to simulate the requisite departure across sequentially layered thresholds to an Other place. In compensation for the missing distance, Guggenheim's critics wished it had been

Fig. 4.12 Frank Lloyd Wright, *Guggenheim Museum*, New York, 1959 *Photo* credit: author

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 16).

We may note here, in passing, a related *problem* at Brooklyn Museum (McKim, Mead and White, 1893—1907) that was partially rectified in the mid-1930s and again in 2004 (Figure 4.13). Although Brooklyn Museum is located away from the city fabric in Prospect Park, it was initially linked to the avenue in front by a grand staircase that led directly from the sidewalk to the main entrance on the third level. The problem with the staircase was its appearance as a connector rather than a separator. Without the intermediate voids and spatial thresholds found, for instance in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the staircase here appeared to link rather than disjoin the world inside from the world outside the museum. The official explanation for the staircase’s removal was to create “a more direct and ‘democratic’ entrance” to the museum (Brooklyn Museum). In other words, the perceived problem was the mode of entry and not the staircase per se. Staircases that disjoined, rather than connect the museum to its context in similar museums did not raise concerns or trepidations about the mode of entry, much less lead to the dramatic removal of any staircase. At Brooklyn, it was removed at considerable expense in 1934, to leave in its place a void that though patently more effective in separating the museum from its context, did so unceremoniously and devoid of the transitional complexities of, among others, the Philadelphia counterpart. This latter problem was rectified in 2004 with the addition of the Rubin Pavilion and a public plaza (Polshek Partnership Architects and WET Design) together occupying the site of the razed staircase. Between the city fabric and the museum building, now visually appearing in the background, the pavilion that is formally reminiscent of the lost staircase, in conjunction with the multilayered plaza in the foreground act effectively to divide and disjoin the museum from its context.

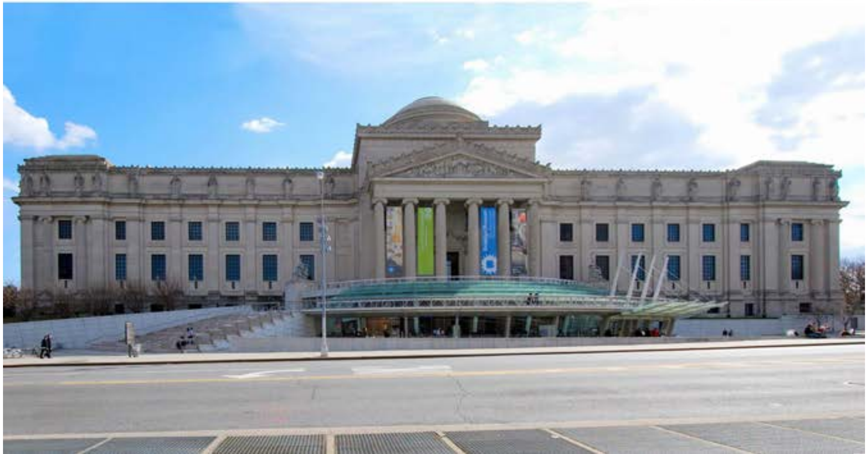


Fig. 4.13 McKim, Mead and White, *Brooklyn Museum*, Brooklyn, 1893–1907
Photo credit: 4.13a Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC—DIG—det—4a23706; 4.13b Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC—DIG—det—4a18164; 4.13c Patricia Badolato

Although the appearance of connection at the Brooklyn Museum proved redeemable, the lack of sufficient separation that translates in compensation into a wish for Guggenheim's relocation 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" (336).

The elements here are familiar. Their juxtaposition is not. The circular glass entrance vestibule of the museum opens onto the familiar and here aggrandized rotunda space circumscribed by an outwardly cascading spiral ramp that marches past the gallery alcoves on a downward spiral. Present as the familiar elements are, they do not produce the desired effect. 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 (Figure 4.14).

> *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 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* place, 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" (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. What is in perpetual sight in this space is not the artworks per se, but where one has been and where one is going: the one and the same space. In this space art cannot be at home. The merchandising analogy that is all too prevalent in critiques of Guggenheim has a temporal implication. It speaks to the transitory nature of the merchandise as such, that is, a commodity in transit rather than at home, a commodity for external consumption rather than internal preservation. The measure of home is, of course, what is "really a museum" which as Fisher observes:

> *… is made up of rooms and paths. Once the pictures face us in a line on the wall we can convert rooms to paths by moving sideways from the entrance around the room, flattening it out, in effect, onto the wall. Viewing the pictures sequentially as we move from room to room, we follow the room numbers, the centuries, the schools. In so far as the museum becomes pure path, … it becomes a more perfect image of history, or rather of the single linear motion of history preferred since Winckelman. (Fisher 9)*

In what is "really a museum," there are, past the requisite nexus point, rooms and paths, that is, a sequential unfolding of discrete spaces through which one travels as though on a journey through a seemingly infinite land. The rooms are not there to be occupied, but crossed, flattened out, and converted into a "pure path." The sequential continuity of the space along the path is essential. In praise of the Walker

Fig. 4.14 Frank Lloyd Wright, *Guggenheim Museum*, New York, 1959
Photo credit: author

galleries, Goldberger notes "most galleries offer a view of the neighboring rooms, one-third level up or one-third level down, providing a degree of spatial interest that, rather than detracting from the experience of viewing art, enhances it" (34). The experience of viewing art is enhanced when there is no sense of termination to the space, that is, when one has in view its continuation. When 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," for example, Guggenheim museum. Also, the "linear pattern" of movement found in most museums as opposed to the "circular pattern," we are told, "has the following advantages: entrance and exit do not coincide, the amount of effort needed is unknown, and the goal may be unconsciously considered as genuine 'progress.' It should also be emphasized that for reasons of psychological economy, the visitor should never pass the same way twice" (Lehmbruck 63). The circuit should never appear closed. To close it is

to create a comprehensible container for art. This takes us back, of course, to the debate waged and settled at the museum's inception as to whether to contain art or to distance it. The decision was made long ago. Art is not to be contained within but spaced out. To contain art is to deny its space its requisite alterity. 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. The ideal art museum unfolds as a path through a seemingly infinite world, that is, a seemingly boundless space of intertwining rooms ad infinitum—a limitless resource. It is a place where everyone is, by design, a tourist away from home in search of the authentic in an Other place.[18] Guggenheim does not and is not. It is, in Huxtable's words, "not really a museum."

To compensate for Wright's glaring blunders, the museum director, Huxtable tells us, "pulled the canvases from the shell of the building by suspending them inward from the walls on horizontal rods. They now seem to float in free space like sculpture, entirely remote from the building" (337). Then, we are told, "Sweeney poured torrents of light … both in front of and behind the paintings, further nullifying the structure, making it just a vessel" (337). Since the museum does not divorce itself from its wider context as it should, the only corrective course of action is, it seems, to divorce the work from this place in compensation.

THE CATHARSIS

Thus far I have tried to point out that between the public and the artwork, the art museum has insinuated, from inception and 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 perpetuation of the type. The lingering question is, of course, why the persistent spacing and the disjointing of art over the course of the art museum's short history. Overtly, there is nothing about paintings and statues that would remotely suggest the elaborate ritual of visitation that is the art museum. Much less is there anything about the enjoyment and the appreciation of art that mandates a disjointing journey. Much of our contact with art is in fact delimited to replicas and copies that are adamantly excluded from the space made proper to art. What then sees to this fabrication? What exactly is at stake in the spacing of art? What logic sees to the persistent spacing and the exclusive space of the authentic?

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,[19] the site of painting from its presumed inception has been the site of a desired presence that it cannot judiciously fill (Figure 4.15).

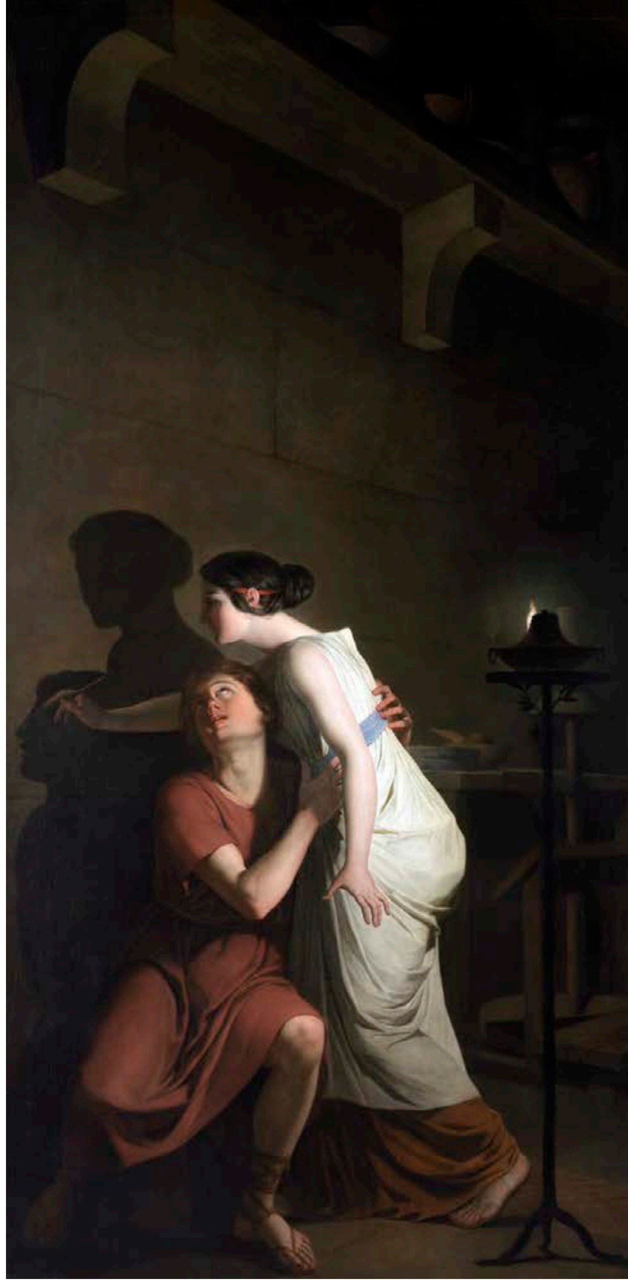


Fig. 4.15 Benoît Suvée Joseph, *Invention of the Art of Drawing*, 267 x 131.5 cm, oil on canvas, 1791, Groeningemuseum, Bruges
Photo credit: Hugo Maertens, Lukas—Art in Flanders VZW

As such, painting has been the subject of simultaneous condemnation and praise for its ability to duplicate and perpetually conjure an absent or else invisible referent. It has been at once prescribed and proscribed as a mimetic device that substitutes memory for perception. Plato, for instance, Jacques Derrida reminds us, condemned painting as a mimetic art, much as Aristotle interrogated it in the name of mimesis.

"The painter's products," Plato purported, "stand before us as though they were alive, but if you question them, they maintain a most majestic silence" (qtd. in Derrida, *Dissemination* 136). The painted images are, in other words, neither simply living, nor simply dead. They have the appearance of the living and speak with the voice of death: silence. Painting can bring merely to sight what is rightfully out of sight. It can displace and collapse space. Its space is neither the immediate space of the present nor the distant space of the absent. Painting, in a sense, fits into no space and belongs to no one place. The ambivalence toward painting has as much to do with its irreducibility to either presence or absence, life or death, as it does to the cause of the confoundment: mimesis. Plato, Derrida tells us, "is obliged sometimes to condemn mimesis in itself as a process of duplication, whatever its model might be, and sometimes to disqualify mimesis only in function of the model that is 'imitated,' the mimetic operation in itself remaining neutral, or even advisable. But in both cases, mimesis is lined up alongside truth: either it hinders the unveiling of the thing itself by substituting a copy or double for what is; or else it works in the service of truth through the double's resemblance" (*Dissemination* 187).

The lining up of painting alongside truth 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 in relation to 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," 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, the priority and radical alterity of what is painted as compared to the painted image has not been a question (*Modern Painters* 8; *Poetry, Language, Thought* 37).

What "Platonism" which stands "more or less immediately for the whole history of Western philosophy, including the anti-Platonisms that regularly feed into it," Derrida notes, has "decided and maintained" in the face of the confoundment and the displacement that is painting, is "the presumed possibility of a discourse about what is."

> *That which is, the being-present (the matrix-form of substance, of reality, of the opposition between matter and form, essence and existence, objectivity and subjectivity, etc.) is distinguished from the appearance, the image, the phenomenon, etc., that is from anything that, presenting it as being-present, doubles it, re-presents it, and can therefore replace and de-present it. There is thus the 1 and the 2, the simple and the double. The double comes after the simple; it multiplies it as a follow-up. … The image supervenes upon reality, the representation upon the present in presentation, the imitation upon the thing, the imitator upon the imitated. First there is what is "reality," the thing itself, in flesh and blood as the phenomenologist say; then there is, imitating these, the painting, the portrait, the zographeme, the inscription or transcription of the thing itself. Discernability, at least numerical discernability, between the imitator*

> *and the imitated is what constitutes order. And obviously, according to "logic" itself, according to a profound synonymy, what is imitated is more real, more essential, more true, etc., than what imitates. It is anterior and superior to it. (Dissemination 191)*

"Doubtless," Derrida continues, "this order will appear to be contested, even inverted, in the course of history, and on several occasions. But never have the absolute distinguishability between imitated and imitator, and the anteriority of the first over the second, been displaced by any metaphysical system" (*Dissemination* 192).

What "Platonism" has decided about the order of appearance in the world, it has maintained 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. 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, because the determination is, as any, a fragile and volatile determination. Its greatest challenge does not come, however, from other worldviews or competing determinations. The greatest challenge that this reality faces is not, in other words, to its shape or content, but to its authority and its ability to assume the guise of inevitability. The challenge where it is faced is to the reality of the real. Construed as it is in the West to appear as the non-contingent *other* of representation, this virtual or cultural reality faces a constant challenge to its authority as a self-referential or non-representational inevitability from its representational *other*. The greatest challenge comes from that which is placed in a secondary, subservient position with respect to the present, or the real, that is, among other modes of representation, painting itself.

The intermingling of reality and representation in the West is a fatal affair. John Ruskin offers us a pertinent example. His is particularly noteworthy in this context as his views on art belong to the first museum age.[20] Ruskin's encounter with the fatal co-habitation of the real and the copy takes place, interestingly enough, on the steps of the old British Museum.

Discussing the "utterly base and inadmissible" practice of "painting of surfaces to represent some other material," Ruskin 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 (Seven Lamps 51).*

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, for example, 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 suggests that we take recourse to spacing to (re)establish control. He recommends that 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.

In the Campo Santo at Pisa, Ruskin writes, "each fresco is surrounded with a border composed of flat colored patterns of great elegance—no part of it in attempted relief." Having "secured" the "certainty of flat surface" with a border, the framed "figures," Ruskin tells us, "though the size of life, do not deceive" (*Seven Lamps* 49). Segregated, and placed within a secured domain, representation ceases to "effect" our hold on the appearance of the real and the mock as two diametrically opposed appearances. In fact, the spacing, literal or conceptual, constitutes our only hold over these appearances.

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 left no more to chance than they are at Campo Santo in Pisa. These encounters are equally mediated, carefully controlled, and spatially segregated. We find the logic of spacing and a multilayered 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 one example.

The specifics of the design and the particular experience of this building-type, from inception and through every stage of its permutation, play a vital role in rendering the modalities of our assumptions about the nature of the relationship

between reality and art into an objective experience of it. As a vital cultural mechanism, this building-type sees to the proper dispensation and consumption of art as representation in a world of its own making where the reality outside as self-presentation retains its privileges and remains impervious to the challenge of representation, in no small measure because of this spatial construct.

Ideally, of course, there would be no representation to "effect" our hold over the reality of the real and the truth of the true. "I sometimes wish," Ruskin, the great advocate of art, tells us, "that truth should so far literally prevail as that all should be gold that glittered, or rather that nothing should glitter that was not gold" (*Seven Lamps* 53). "Nevertheless," he contends, "nature herself does not dispense with such resemblances" and he is left having to confront and do his best to overcome its "effect," that is, to harness the benefits of art and avoid its destructive or deconstructive "effect."

What Ruskin sometimes wishes is for truth to prevail over all that appear what they are not. What he at times wishes is not simply for things to show themselves for what they are, "real" or "apparent" but for a *literal* link between what is and what appears, between glitter and gold, *always*. What Ruskin sometimes wishes for is no less than the impossibility of representation, that is, the impossibility of a gap between being and appearing that marks for him, despite what he sometimes wishes, the beginning and the end of two opposite domains: the domain of the "real" and the domain of the "apparent."

Faced with the inevitability of representation, what Ruskin assumes and what "Platonism" has consistently assumed is that there is an outside to representation or conversely that representation falls outside of a norm that is characterized by the presumed attributes of the real. This outside is construed variously, though consistently both conceptually and literally.

Conceptually, on the trail of a much-traversed path, Ruskin first demotes representation as compared to the "real," only then to elevate and idealize a version of it as a second order reality. Ruskin asks us to consider how "there is not a cluster of weeds growing in any cranny of ruin which has not a beauty in all respect *nearly* equal, and, in some, immeasurably superior, to that of the most elaborate sculpture of its stones" (*Seven Lamps* 56). Yet we take interest in the carved work and "all our interest in this carved work," Ruskin professes, "our sense of its richness, though it is tenfold less rich than the knots of grass beside it; of its delicacy, though it is a thousandfold less delicate; of its admirableness, though a millionfold less admirable; results from our consciousness of its being the work of poor, clumsy, toilsome man" (56). The "true delightfulness" of the carved work, Ruskin asserts, "depends on our discovery in it the record of thoughts, and intents, and trials, and heart-breakings—of recoveries and joyfulness of success" (56). This is "the worth of the thing, just as the worth of anything else we call precious" (56).

The "worth" of art has not to do with the forms that it inevitably re-produces, in that nature is, as Ruskin believes it to be, the origin of all "conceivable" forms and as such superior to any reproduction.[21] Rather art assumes a "worth" and becomes delightful in the same manner that "sea sands are made beautiful by their bearing the seal of the motion of the waters," that is, by bearing the direct "seal" or "impress"

of the creator's "thoughts" and "intents," through the agency of the creator's hands. Works of art assume their "worth," in other words, "in proportion to the amount of the energy of that mind which has visibly been employed upon them" (*Seven Lamps* 142). This visible "record," this original and causal "seal" or "impress" of mind by hand turn the inevitable re-production of form into an original production.

Ruskin, of course, would have had no difficulty with von Rumohr's assertion that "all the value of a painting turns around the idea of originality." Only the original bears the decisive seal or impress. This presumably irreproducible seal may be variously conceived. Benjamin, for instance put it in broader temporal terms. "The authenticity of a thing is," he noted, "the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced" ("The Work of Art" 221). This "all that is transmissible" is inclusive, of course, of the testimonial impress left by hand, as it were, in the "beginning." Regardless of the scope of the definition, the irreproducibility, and the causality that the seal stands for is the constant decisive criteria in the incessant distinction between the original and the reproduction, or the authentic and the duplicate. It is precisely in the name of this irreproducible seal that an outside to the sphere of reproduction and/or representation is presumed and in turn fabricated.

The sealed and impressed original plays the same role with respect to painting as speech has traditionally played with respect to writing. Both designate a logocentric appropriation of representation in the name of a seemingly unmediated, direct translation of thought into form. Both designate an outside to the absence and delay that is presumed to characterize writing on the one hand and the reproduction on the other. The privileging of the original in the name of an irreproducible seal is, as well, a form of resistance to representation over which there is no hold.

The absence that is exorcised from the original in the name of an irreproducible seal incessantly returns, however, to haunt it. Much as the "successful" imitation of the real threatens its reality, the "successful" duplication of the original threatens its originality. Even though originality is a concept that inevitably presumes the possibility of reproduction, the latter takes away the privileges of the original as it grounds them. This construct is, much as the "real" with which it has much in common, fragile and tenuous. What threatens it with collapse, that is, what fractures the seal that gives the original all its accorded privileges is the possibility of production in the absence of engraving thoughts and intents. The original painting is no more immune to the "effect" of the reproduction than the real stones of the British museum.

The "successful" reproduction as Ruskin would have it—the one that does not fall "noticeably" short of the original—fractures the seal of the original always already, in as much it re-produces the seal without the engraving thoughts or, as it were, the sea sands without the motion of the waters. The threat of the "successful" mock lies in its ability to take the place of the original and supplant it. The condition of this possibility is the impossibility of an impressed and sealed original, that is, of a direct and causal link between thoughts and forms on the one hand and the subjection of the latter to the presence of the former, on the other. The certainty of

the original, and the certainty that is desired in the name of the original are lost to the "successful" reproduction. There can be no substitute for the original, because what would be irretrievably lost in the transaction is the original. This is precisely why the art museum has been, like the cabinet before it, a domain adamantly exclusive of the "successful" reproduction from inception.

The myth of the original is particularly vulnerable, it is important to note, to mechanical reproduction in the broader sense of the term. Ruskin vehemently condemned the "substitution of cast or machine work for that of hand," as an "imposition, a vulgarity, an impertinence, and a sin" not on account of form, but on account of reproducing the seal without the engraving thought. The only "effect" of "cast or machine works" is, he noted, "to cast shame and suspicion" over every "work of hand" in their company (*Seven Lamps* 58). Mechanical reproduction, as Benjamin was to point out later, not only renders the question of originality impertinent to its production, but in the process, it also and critically challenges the viability and consequently the authority of the original as a sealed production. It is not coincidental, therefore, that the proliferation of the museum has gone in tandem with the proliferation of mechanical and now digital reproduction. Both add a critical dimension to the preservation of the sanctity and the authority of the original. If, on the other hand, the aura of the work of art, that is, its authenticity and historicity, has not withered in the age of mechanical and no less digital reproduction, contrary to Benjamin's prediction, this is in part because the "effect" of the latter is successfully curtailed by the museum ("The Work of Art" 221).

The history of our preoccupation with painting and sculpture as *art* is, I tried to point out earlier, inseparable from the history of our preoccupation with the question of art's place and placement. The museum is merely one historic response to the question that has loomed large since the inception of painting and sculpture as art. This preoccupation is, of course, in no small measure, a reflection of the undifferentiated and undifferentiable space of graphic representation. Art has no decidable place in as much as every place assumes boundaries and outer limits, that is, 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, for example, 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 the 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 place 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. The customary and celebrated view out from the museum—the one that transforms the world outside into a picture—is the consummation of this withdrawal. What is at stake is the preservation of 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.

Writing, problematic as it is from a certain vantage point, retains a polite formal distance from the speech it is said to duplicate. The relationship between the signifier and the signified in writing is, at the denotative level, blatantly conventional. In art, it is not. The materiality of the work of art cannot be readily idealized as a mere means to an end in the way that writing is, without having to attribute the same to the real. The segregation and containment of this other mode of representation requires a different strategy. Unlike the library that forms a defensive outpost and offers us an inward journey to a clear and secure inside, the art museum fabricates an outside and offers us an outbound journey to an Other, parallel space or universe to which art is exiled on the condition of authenticity. This space or rather this spacing of art is predicated, not on the experience of penetration as the library is, but on the experience of disjointing and distance, of leaving one world behind and entering another.

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, that is, so long as its origin is on the outside.[22] 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.[23] 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. The virtual debate over the rite of visitation to the museum between Adorno and Valéry is a case in point.

Confessing to be "not over fond of museums," Valéry begins his reflections on the museum by characteristically marking the point of transition from the world outside into the world inside. The memory of the former would remain with him throughout the visit as a point of contrast and a place of conceptual refuge. He marks the borderline by making note of the hand that relieves him of his stick and the notice that forbids him to smoke at the entrance. "Chilled at once by this act of authority and by the sense of constraint," he nevertheless makes his way toward "things of beauty" only to enter a place where, as he puts it, "cold confusion reigns" and the "total impression is something quite intolerable." Moving from the sculpture gallery to the painting gallery changes nothing. As "a strangely organized disorder opens up before" him "in silence," Valéry tells us:

> *I am smitten with a sacred horror. My pace grows reverent. My voice alters, to a pitch slightly higher than in church, to a tone rather less strong than that of every day. Presently I lose all sense of why I have intruded into this wax-floored solitude, savoring of temple and drawing room, of cemetery and school … did I come for instruction, for my own beguilement, or simply as a duty and out of convention? Or is it perhaps some exercise peculiar to itself, … (203)*

The rite of visitation is indeed an exercise peculiar to itself in as much as it puts the visitor in the grip of language over which he or she has no hold. What Valéry is made to confront at the Louvre is what late nineteenth century museum visitors were designed to confront: a profusion of art works and walls covered with paintings *en tappiserie* (Figure 4.16). By sheer force of number, the total impression simply exceeds comprehension. "Only an irrational civilization," Valéry protests, "could devise such a domain of incoherence. This juxtaposition of dead visions has something insane about it, with each thing jealously competing for the glance that will give it life" (203).

Fig. 4.16 Giuseppe Castiglione, *View of the Grand Salon Carré in the Louvre*, 69 x 103 cm, oil on canvas, Louvre Museum *Photo* Credit: Erich Lessing, Art Resource, NY

The works of art call from all directions for Valéry's attention, that is, for the glance that transforms dead vision into living idea, form into thought, writing into speech. For the generation that conceived Valéry's museum, art was, to use Ruskin's words, "nothing but a noble and expressive language, invaluable as the vehicle of thought, but by itself nothing" (*Seven Lamps* 208). Valéry presently finds the mind inadequate to the demands of this language. "The mind," he tells us, "can neither follow nor perform several distinct operations at once" (204). The voices that call from all directions cannot be turned into thoughts in this "domain of incoherence." "All alone against so much art," Valéry finds himself incapable of conceiving each work as an individual expression, that is, as "rarities whose creators wanted each one to be unique" (204). The uniqueness of each expression is lost to the repetition that purportedly "kills" all. The art works are "most inimical to each other when they are most alike." Once again, repetition proves fatal, as it did, in a manner, on the steps of the British Museum. In defense, Valéry's thoughts take refuge outside the museum in other places and distant civilizations. The uniqueness that he feels lost inside the museum, he re-locates outside it through an act of virtual tourism. "I feel sure," he tells us, "that Egypt, China, Greece, in their wisdom and refinement, never dreamed of this system of putting together works which simply destroy each other" (204).

The "Modern man," on the other hand, is "impoverished by the sheer excess of his riches" (Valéry 204). Having located what is lost inside the museum at a safe distance, Valéry conceptualizes the loss itself as an attribute of modernity and its characteristic accumulation of "a necessarily unusable excess of capital." The art works in the museum are conceptualized as excess riches, that is, images in excess of what is consumable. The slippage between image and thought and the inability of images to do what they are meant to do, that is, merely and readily transport thought, are thus conceptualized as not endemic to language and the

consumption of images, but in excess of it. The slippage is conceptualized as being not permanent, but temporal, and within the bounds of the museum also spatial.

Valéry's reflections on the museum become at this point both comforting and stupefying. The museum, we are told, "exerts a constant pull on everything that men can make. … All things end up on the wall or in a glass case" (204–5). Since "our capacity to use" the "ever-increasing resources" of the Modern age is "far from growing with them," the museum's constant pull on all that cannot be consumed is comforting. It responds to "the need to concentrate it all in one place" (205). Having collected the excess outside the place of consumption, the collection is, essential as it is, also "stupefying."

> *However vast the palace, however suitable and well-arranged, we always feel a little lost, a little desolate in its galleries, all alone against so much art. The product of thousands of hours' work consumed in painting and drawing by so many masters, each hour charged with years of research, experiment, concentration, genius, acts upon our senses and minds in a few minutes! … We cannot stand up to it. So what do we do? (205)*

Not being able to stand up to the task, not being able to exert a clear hold over language and bridge the gap between form and content, we "grow superficial" or else we "grow erudite." We either acquiesce our inability to control language, resign ourselves to not getting beyond form, and "grow superficial," or we play the language game and *substitute* for what is not adequately and authoritatively expressed. We substitute "theories" for "direct feeling," and "encyclopedic memory" for "marvelous actuality." In either case, the direct and the actual slip away or rather, out.

The solution to being in the grip of language is, as Valéry sees it, to stagger out of the museum, which he does, taking refuge and solace in the domain of the direct and the actual. The "glorious chaos of the museum" follows him out, however, "and blends with the living activities of the street." It threatens to infect the outside, less Valéry's "uneasiness, groping for its cause" is put to rest. What remains is to explain the cause of the slippage and the "obsessive feeling of confusion" within the bounds of the museum. What remains is to explain away the slippage as being not endemic to language and art, but peculiar to the museum and as such safely contained within its bounds. What remains is to close the doors behind.

Once safely outside the museum:

> *Suddenly I glimpse a vague ray of light. An answer begins to form itself, separating out from my feelings, insisting on expression. Painting and sculpture, says my Demon of Analysis, are both foundlings. Their mother, Architecture, is dead. So long as she lived, she gave them their place, their function and discipline. They had no freedom to stray. They had their exact allotted space and given light, their subjects and their relationship … While Architecture was alive, they knew their function … (206)*

What is not had in confrontation with art inside the museum is thus merely the loss of what was readily had in another time and another place. In its place art speaks

vividly. The hold that is never had over language is thus localized safely within the bounds of the museum at a distance, there. It is symptomatic of that place and of being out of place.

If Proust's and in turn Adorno's reactions are any indication, returning art works to their presumed place, for example, to exhibit paintings in "their original surroundings or in ones similar, in baroque or rococo castles," is even more distressing than leaving them within the confines of the museum (175). Both, in fact, advocate leaving art works in the museum, albeit a reformed museum. This is "a museum, where the rooms, in their sober abstinence from all decorative detail, symbolize the inner spaces into which the artist withdraws to create the work" (179). Theirs is a museum, in other words, that returns the art works not to the space of consumption, but further back to the space of creation. Theirs is a display practice that is far more familiar to the twentieth-century visitor than Valéry's Louvre. Both practices, however, represent, legitimize, and, to an extent, impose a particular interpretation of art and language in response to one and the same dilemma.

For Adorno, speaking also on Proust's behalf, the work of art is "neither a reflection of the soul nor the embodiment of a Platonic Idea" (184). It is not, as Ruskin had it, a "vehicle of thought." Rather, and this is precisely what Adorno accuses Valéry of not seeing, "even in the very moment of its conception the work confronts its author and its audience as something objective, something which makes demands in terms of its own inner structure and its own logic." (184). The work of art is a representation that refers only to itself. To appear as "a 'force field' between subject and object," however, works of art have to be "uprooted from their native soil and have been set out along the path to their own destruction" (185). All external references, pressures, and potential distortions, all traces of prior consumption must be stripped from them, if they are to appear as self-referential representations. They have to be estranged from "human ends," allowed to die in the museum, in order to return to "life" by the attentive glance of the visitor "who leaves his naïveté outside along with his cane and his umbrella" (185). This is a visitor who does not "stroll through museums letting" him or herself "be delighted here and there" (185). Rather, this is a visitor who "picks out two or three paintings, and concentrates on them as fixedly as if they really were idols" (185). However, only some museums at the time were "helpful in this respect" (185). There were only some in which the rite of resurrection could be performed effectively. These were, common as they are now, museums where the works of art were hung "in discrete separation," completing their cycle of isolation and decontextualization (185). Valéry's museum was neither conducive to the rite of resurrection, nor was it meant to be. It had its sights on the past, and not the future. Both museums are, however, engrossed by a precarious present.

Despite their considerable differences, Valéry and Adorno agree on one thing. For both the museum withholds death. Valéry likens it to a "cemetery," Adorno to a "mausoleum." For both, the museum marks off and removes from within the order of the living what has to be removed by a fatal necessity. This much is voicefully pronounced by both. They part ways locating the life that is presumed absent in the museum. One locates the life of the artwork in the past, the other in the future.

One laments its passing and mourns away its felt absence from within the museum, the other celebrates its passing in the hope of resurrecting it. Each responds to a display practice that turns his assumptions about the work into an evidential experience of it. One practice induces and reinforces the dream of a consumption that has been, the other of one perpetually commencing. What neither worldview can consume and digest, however, is what both confront presently.

What both worldviews confine to the museum and what each confronts at the museum is, at the risk of repetition, neither life nor death. The confined defies life, much as it defies death conceived as its absolute Other. For this confoundment neither worldview has or could have a place. It erases the very sense of place. If, in turn, both Valéry and Adorno take recourse to supplemental spatial and temporal boundaries, it is only to overcome the confoundment and re-establish order. First, there are the spatial boundaries imposed by the museum to incise the confoundment, then there are the temporal boundaries that serve to deny the confoundment by its conceptual transformation into a life that has been or one that will be. In the meantime, the life that is exorcised from the museum is given to reside safely outside it, in a reality that is thus untouched by the confounding effect of representation. Both operate with assurance of life's safety on the outside from the vantage point of the museum as a mausoleum: the place that keeps death in place, at a safe distance.

If, as Malraux notes, "all art is a revolt against man's fate," the art museum is a revolt against reality's fate in the company of art.

NOTES

1 For a discussion of the Western roots of the museum see Malraux and G. Bazin.

2 Whether they served a religious cult or the cult of remembrance, what had thus far given paintings and statues a place in the world of things, and what had also kept them in that place was their specific cult referent. Once they eschewed their referent, they surrendered their place.

3 For a discussion of subject see Pomian; IImpey and MacGregor; and Weil.

4 See G. Bazin 129; IImpey and MacGregor 3. Also the Kunstkammer is not, it is important to note, the exact equivalent of the gallery as it was often used to designate a specialized version of the Wunderkammer.

5 Quotation from Francis Bacon's *Gesta Grayorum*, 1594.

6 See Kaufmann 145.

7 According to Germain Bazin, a collector at the time was likely to pay 30 florins for a van Eyck or 3 florins for a work by the sculptor Desiderio da Settignano against 6,000 florins for the horn of a unicorn.

8 See Jones for a detailed discussion of the subject.

9 See Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*; *Discipline and Punish*.

10 For a detailed discussion of the subject see Lee 106–7 and Alexander 31–6.

11 See Bennett; Elsner and Cardinal; Luke; and Sherman and Rogoff.

12 See Mcclellan 8–9 and Pevsner, *Building Types* 118.

13 There are doors on each floor and each side connecting the gallery spaces to the central vestibule. They were, however, designed and used for transportation of art to and from the galleries and not for public access.

14 For complete account of the museum's design history, see Brownlee.

15 For a complete description of the project see Biasini, Lebrat and Bezombes.

16 For a detailed description of the museum see Davey.

17 See Huxtable.

18 See MacCannell.

19 See Rosenblum.

20 Ruskin's own art museum, Walkely, was located on "a hill, in the midst of green fields, and in command of a fine view" (The Guild xlii). He reasoned: "the Climb to knowledge and truth is ever steep, and the gems found at the top are small, but precious and beautiful" (xlii).

21 "I suppose," Ruskin wrote, "there is no conceivable form or grouping of forms but in some part of the universe an example of it may not be found" (Ruskin, *Seven Lamps* 102).

22 The allocation of an exclusive place to the authentic, in effect displaces the copy from every place. It dispossesses the copy of a place because inside the museum it has no place and outside it, it is out of place: an outsider. In the company of the real, the copy is an import, that is, a substitute for what is at a safe distance elsewhere.

23 See Culler; MacCannell 3–14, 121–58 and Urry 11–13.