

THE EXHIBITED REDISTRIBUTED

A case for reassessing space

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Most discussions of the meanings of exhibitions of contemporary art minimize the importance of the location and type of architectural space in which the exhibition is held. It is assumed that listing the venue at the top of an article or review as part of a title or header or referring briefly to location as an aside in initial or closing paragraphs is sufficient to convey the significance of the space and its relation to what is being shown. With the exception of Brian O'Doherty's *The White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*,¹ extended discussions of the architectural spaces in which exhibitions of contemporary art are located occur in books or articles on museums, galleries, collectors, architects and exhibition design or when the exhibition venue is sufficiently different from the norm to merit extensive description and analysis. Unless the exhibition is site-specific,² these architectural portraits tend to separate container from contained.

The following sketch of some of the changes in exhibition spaces for contemporary art in the last decades of the twentieth century is an attempt to widen the range of variables in the examination of where such exhibitions take place. The inclusion of considerations of gender, class and race and the position—geographic, hierarchic, typologic—of a given space within a constellation of exhibition sites suggests that the meanings of all exhibitions are more site-specific than is generally acknowledged.³

“HOMES” FOR ART

Between the sixties and the nineties, there has been a paradigm shift in the types of spaces used for exhibitions of contemporary art which can be characterized as a move away from domestic-like structures to buildings associated with commerce and industry. The preferred place for exhibitions of contemporary art is no longer the house or apartment turned into a gallery but a former factory or warehouse, a change announced by Andy Warhol's designation of his 1963 production and semi-public viewing space as *the Factory* and epitomized in 1994 with the location of the Andy Warhol Museum in a former warehouse “built in 1911 as a distribution center for products sold to mills and mines.”⁴ This shift in desired exhibition space corresponds to the emphasis placed on process rather than product in the making of art in the sixties and seventies when, increasingly, art was defined and described as work.⁵ A major factor in communicating this new attitude is the relocation of the first public encounter with the art object. The shift in exhibition venue is symbolic of a need on the part of some artists to query a mode of exhibiting art that presents the art object as a potential possession. By changing the terms of display, there is the possibility of indicating that art exists in a wider variety of social contexts and has meanings other than the purely monetary. As with so many of the alterations of exhibition practices in this and other periods, changes in the location and type of exhibition space were initiated by artists, then commercial galleries and lastly institutionalized by art museums.

The migration from the domestic-like interior as the setting for displaying art to a factory-like space can be seen in gendered terms for, since the late nineteenth century, the home has been designated feminine space and the workplace masculine. That the timing of such a volte-face should occur at the moment feminism was asserting itself in the United States is not coincidental. Many artists, realizing that their double careers as artists and homemakers left them at a disadvantage when compared to their male colleagues, were making demands on the system for more exposure and claiming more space in museums and gallery exhibitions. The move to factory exhibition spaces can be seen as a reclaiming of the spaces of and for work as masculine—even if the particular workplaces chosen had been sweatshops primarily employing women. This process of reclamation occurs despite the assertion on the part of the first North American feminist galleries, A.I.R. in New York and Powerhouse in Montreal, located in similar types of spaces, that work was also something women made. When Judy Chicago and her students staged the provocative, temporary, 1971–2 exhibition, *Womanhouse*, in a house on Mariposa Street in Los Angeles, there was a double transgression which included the appropriateness of the domestic architectural site they chose for the display of art.

The use of houses for art exhibitions by the avant-garde has become atypical and tactical. When artists such as Betty Goodwin, David Ireland, Ann Hamilton, Kate Ericson and Mel Zeigler, David Hammons, or Rachel Whiteread use the home as exhibition site, they do so not to make a visible connection with the possible future ownership of what is on display but to indicate that the home as a setting for art or as art relates to lived experience. When Jan Hoet situated his 1986 exhibition, *Chambres d'Amis*, in homes throughout Ghent, the tension between the public display of art and its private setting became the theme of the exhibition.⁶ In these instances, the house or the home has ceased to be backdrop and is consciously foregrounded as a different kind of alternative to what was and would become the norm.

The gradual disappearance of seating from the commercial and artist-run gallery is one small but telling change in the interiors of the new spaces. This absence of seating is an index of changed attitudes towards the gallery as a temporary “home” for art and its transformation into a place of and for work. Chairs or sofas in which one could contemplate art connote the comfort of a living-room and a leisurely aesthetic experience. Standing to look, especially when reading extensive text, is more physically demanding, more work. The type of work a spectator does may be different from that of the artist but the process of reception is constructed so that it is labor rather than pleasure that is emphasized. Granted, furniture had to go in order to have an unobstructed view of the wall-size paintings of the sixties or to be able to circumnavigate large-scale floor sculpture occupying the place where there once was seating. Eliminating seating, however, speaks of more than merely a changed spatial relationship between viewer and art. The absence of a place to sit transforms the gallery experience from one in which there is always a surrogate in situ for the viewer and the viewer’s relationship to what is on display to one where the viewer is absented entirely unless actually there. Without the invitation extended by seating to linger in an assignation with art, the encounter becomes pedestrian. Seating is conducive to the prolonged gaze, its absence encourages a passing glance.⁷ Working one’s way through galleries where there are a number in close proximity allows little time for more than this. Seating also disappeared from museum galleries but has reappeared in the nineties. It is arranged so that its focus is not the art. A catalogue and other, varied reading materials are placed beside, on or in front of the usually hard chairs or benches. The pleasure of sitting and looking at art has been replaced by the task of reading about it. The work ethic prevails.⁸

Exhibitions in the sixties and seventies in raw or unfinished industrial spaces with traces of previous occupants and occupations made strong visual and geographic claims for being different. Unlike established galleries in converted houses with their smaller rooms, the industrial spaces lacked the decorative detailing of baseboards or ceiling mouldings. The new spaces were larger, usually a single room not a series of rooms

en filade or off a central hall, and could accommodate, if not promote, the making of the increasingly large-scale work being produced. Iwona Blazwick describes them as “a metaphoric space of pioneering, new frontiers and rugged individualism.... Converted industrial buildings come to emblematised opposition, ‘real’ experience and the heroic ethos of American culture.”⁹ These are all terms associated in the West with masculine experience. In the early days, the unrenovated buildings with their dark stairwells seemed abandoned and uninitiated visitors felt like trespassers or explorers. Even today, many of the new exhibition spaces are distinguished by their being “off the beaten track,” either within a given city or in the artworld circuit, with visits involving a special effort on the part of potential viewers.

Other traits of the new gallery spaces such as their sterility also can be identified with what is considered masculine in the cultures in which these establishments are found.

The ideal gallery subtracts from the artwork all clues that interfere with the fact that it is art.... The outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling becomes the source of light. The wooden floor is polished so that you click along clinically, or carpeted so that you pad soundlessly, resting the feet while the eyes have [sic] at the wall. The art is free, as the saying used to go, “to take on its own life.”¹⁰

Brian O’Doherty identified this hermeticism in 1976 as the “white cube” phenomenon. He admits that no gallery, then or now, was actually the white cube that he described.¹¹ The spaces were not cubic, a point made by Wide White Space’s name; the interiors were broken by the almost de rigeur presence of structural columns from an earlier era; the ceilings were cluttered with track lighting and, with a few exceptions such as MUKHA in Antwerp, floors were not white. Yet, the “white cube” persists as an ideal. Christoph Grunenberg comments: “The so-called ‘white cube’ liberated modern art from its common association with decadence, insanity, sensuality and feminine frivolity; simultaneously, it revealed the inherent masculinity and authoritarian character of formalist aesthetics.”¹²

O’Doherty’s metaphoric description captures the isolation, brightness and concentration associated with that moment’s ideal display aesthetic and viewing experience. It also corresponds to the image of the research laboratory, as a number of galleries in the sixties, such as SIGNALS (1964, first called Centre for Advanced Creative Study), and Arts Lab (1967), both in London, and Park Place (1963) in New York, whose subtitle was *Gallery of Art Research, Inc.*, used to describe themselves. As dealer John Kasmin stated about his gallery: “I believed that any work of art that was really good should be tested, should stand up to scrutiny. It was more like a laboratory. It was a place for testing works of art.”¹³ By painting the interior of an industrial space white, stripping it down and cleaning it up, as, for example, when SIGNALS converted four floors of an optical-instrument workshop, the laboratory and the factory image combined in the same space to double its masculine references. Science, research and laboratories, particularly in the sixties, were considered work and places that were the purview of men. Many would argue they still are.

A different but related hybrid occurs with both the 1962–4 Phillip Johnson and late eighties Cesar Pelli additions to the 1939 Goodwin-Stone Museum of Modern Art in New York where the low-ceilinged, smallish interior spaces have been likened repeatedly to apartment-size rooms, notably by William Rubin, former Curator of Painting. But as Alan Wallach points out: “The Museum interior was turned into antiseptic, laboratory-like spaces—enclosed, isolated, artificially illuminated, and apparently neutral environments in which viewers could study works of art displayed as so many isolated specimens.”¹⁴ Here, the realm of the domestic and the feminine associated with the nearby uptown and upscale commercial galleries coexisted with the domain of the experimental and the masculine of the newly forming downtown galleries in what always was, and remains, a conflicted merger.

UPSTAIRS/DOWNSTAIRS

The desire, particularly on the part of artists, to produce a different space,¹⁵ which was the impetus for the “downtown” move, also corresponds to attempts, at times well-intentioned, at times misguided, at times ludicrous, to situate art in a working-class rather than bourgeois realm. The geographic location of exhibition spaces for contemporary art moves away from the city center with its close proximity to established museums to poorer areas not usually associated with high culture. The trend for dealer galleries to move “down” began in New York in the early sixties with the opening of artist-run spaces in SoHo. Paula Cooper, who had worked at an artist’s co-operative which moved from Park Place, the street from which it derived its name, to West Broadway, was the first to open a commercial gallery in the area, on Prince Street, in 1968.¹⁶ In Cooper’s words: “I wanted to get away from the old patterns of uptown galleries.... I didn’t want to be bothered with all the social trimmings, things that often counted more than the art itself.”¹⁷ Other galleries, less committed to alternative programming soon followed Cooper’s SoHo initiative because rents were low, more space was available¹⁸ and there were tax advantages for businesses in the area. Also more artists were living and working there and, by analogy, this made the contemporary art shown there “alive.”

By the eighties, younger, lesser-known artists began moving out of SoHo, opening commercial galleries in the East Village (for example, *Nature Morte*, *Civilian Warfare*, *Gracie Mansion*, all in 1982) or alternate spaces (*Fashion Moda*, 1978, *Group Material*, 1980). These spaces were very much smaller and often cramped in comparison to those in SoHo, more like shops than factories. There were no backrooms or storage areas. Exhibiting large-scale work in any quantity was impossible and group shows tended to be tightly hung. An aesthetics of poverty, at times genteel, at times barely concealed, was deliberately juxtaposed to renovated and renovating SoHo. Lucy Lippard described getting to ABC No Rio: “You have to walk there too, past the bodegas and druggies and playground and local lawyers, hairdressers, discount clothing stores. You have to read the Spanglish signs and hear the salsa music and smell the *cuchifritos* and watch the occasional pink-haired persons from New Jersey make themselves at home.”¹⁹ The irony is that most attempts by artists to relocate in less expensive area of the city, including SoHo, and to align themselves and their art with the working poor and racial or ethnic other usually resulted in gentrification and the relocation of the former residents. This is as true of other cities as it is of New York, though elsewhere the rise in property values, the social upheavals and the bitterness of the displaced have not been as great.

In some cities, geographic moves by artists and exhibition spaces away from the center to working-class areas can take on other meanings. In Montreal, for example, this type of geographic shift symbolizes the alignment of fine-art culture with the working class and the Francophone majority. There, the artist-run galleries were first begun and staffed by people from the English-speaking art milieu who, in the seventies, located their activities in or near Old Montréal, the former Anglo-Scottish banking center of the city. Gradually, these artist-run centers began moving up the hill and locating on Boulevard Saint Laurent, or as it is nicknamed, The Main. Historically, Boulevard Saint Laurent, a major artery of primarily European immigrant populations and countless sweatshops, is considered the beginning of the vast expanse of French-speaking working-class housing to the East. In the eighties, thanks to greater numbers of graduates from art departments in French-speaking universities and more vociferous calls from Québec nationalists for control of cultural matters in the province, the balance of power in Montréal’s artist-run spaces shifted from English to French, resulting in this symbolic and gentrifying avenue becoming a contested site in Québec’s language wars. In the early nineties, a number of now French-run artist centers moved to a low-rise, fifties office building on Sherbrooke Street East, located a couple of blocks north of the new site of the nondescript Musée d’art contemporain on Sainte Catherine Street and in relatively close proximity to the city’s best commercial contemporary-art galleries located in former sweatshops on two floors of a building still



22.1 Optica, un centre d'art contemporain/a center for contemporary art, Montréal. Photograph by Denis Farley, courtesy of Optica.

associated primarily with industry.²⁰ The choices of these locations for the three most prevalent types of exhibition spaces for contemporary art, and the non-spectacular nature of their architecture when seen in relation to the elegant enlarging of the McCord Museum in 1992 and Moishe Safdie's 1991 addition to the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts, two English-based institutions located on Sherbrooke St West, are strong political statements of racial realignment and class. A consolidation of institutions associated with contemporary art in the Eastern segment of the city is the most recent manifestation, here played out in time and space, in the gradual process of Francocizing the visual culture of contemporary Quebec and linking it to the *peuple*.²¹

UPTOWN/DOWNTOWN

There came to be marked similarities in the interior aesthetics of commercial galleries, regardless of location. Even if there were differences in the size and configuration of spaces, a masking rather than blocking of windows, and a less finished floor treatment, many of the interiors of downtown galleries, particularly in the eighties, also were designed to let art "take on its own life." Eventually, contemporary art galleries in midtown New York, a gallery zone that occupies a different position from either the uptown residential galleries or the downtown factory lofts because of its location in the business and commercial heart of New York, began to modify their spaces as well. If the eighties "white cube" interiors in Marion Goodman or Pace, both in 57th Street office buildings, correspond to the general aesthetics of other

commercial galleries of contemporary art in New York regardless of location, their concrete floors indicate a downtown allegiance. As Douglas Davies put it: “The non-style of the alternative space rapidly became an official unofficial style, repeated over and over.”²²

It can be argued that what got lost in this uniformity of architectural setting is the tension between traditional art spaces and new art forms. In Ronald Feldman’s words: “The art did jar with the space uptown for a lot of the audience but I thought that was kind of good.”²³ For instance, viewers encountering Robert Morris’s large-scale sixties work in the smallish rooms of uptown galleries where there was comparatively little space to manoeuvre were confronted with the work in a much more immediate, visceral and aggressive way than when the same pieces were shown in larger spaces and viewers could distance themselves.²⁴ The tensions between traditional spaces and the new work of the sixties, with its then unusual placement directly on the floor or shoved into corners or arranged non-geometrically, its industrial materials and unconventional imagery, was more pronounced in Europe where the architecture of the Kunsthallen and Kunstvereins in which it was exhibited was often Neo-classical. It was the contrast between what that architectural vocabulary implied and the unexpected character of the art that was so dramatic. Even if interiors were remodeled, the exteriors remained the same so that, for example, the schism between the temple front of the Bern Kunsthalle with all of its connotations about the sacredness of art compared with the seeming chaos of Harald Szeemann’s 1969 exhibition *When Attitudes become Form* inside can be read as an integral component of the meaning of the exhibition, establishing at the outset a statement about then and now communicated primarily through the architectural surround.

Divisions between “uptown” and “downtown” are not always clearly demarcated. Even in SoHo’s early days, ties to uptown were maintained, initially perhaps because some dealers were not entirely convinced that downtown would prove profitable or long-lasting. Leo Castelli, for example, in 1968, first rented a warehouse on 108th Street for a season in which he held exhibitions of Serra and Morris, perhaps as a test before deciding to open a full-fledged gallery on Greene Street. Castelli retained his 1957 gallery on East 77th Street, hedging his bets with an uptown/downtown “branch-planting” designed to appeal to a wider range of clients.²⁵ This multiple-location gallery pattern within a single city was adopted by other galleries and continued into the nineties with O.K.Harris, Blum Helman, Gagolian and Pace being some of its more prominent adherents. In some instances, the different locations exhibit different kinds of work. Castelli Graphics has its own gallery, and Pace divides its primitive and contemporary outlets. Affiliate identification is guaranteed through the repetition of the gallery’s name and, in the case of Castelli, corporate identity is promoted through the ingenious introduction in the seventies of a gallery credit on all published installation photographs. A similar diversification and brand-name pattern was also used by the Whitney Museum of American Art with branches in office buildings showing either exhibitions of work from the permanent collection or specially curated temporary exhibitions. The DIA Center for the Arts, with sites in SoHo in addition to its four-story warehouse gallery in Chelsea, reversed the pattern by establishing its satellites first.²⁶ A more recent institutional example is the Guggenheim which, as of 1992, opened a downtown branch on the main artery of SoHo in the late eighties and nineties, and Broadway.²⁷

Spreading art around in this fashion can be seen as niche-marketing, bringing it to wider, more varied and targeted audiences or offering different conditions in which art can be examined. Until the eighties, experiencing contemporary art in SoHo and, later, the East Village or the South Bronx, required a mind set and, often, a set of clothes, different from that required to “see” art uptown. The less formal circumstances of the new art zones were simultaneously associated with an avant-garde and a so-called democratizing impulse. A key indicator of the seemingly more relaxed approach to the public is the absence of overt surveillance. If there is a front desk, often it is empty or the attendant hidden, or, as in the galleries at 420 West Broadway, there is more than one entrance.



22.2 Interior of Leo Castelli Gallery, New York: Andy Warhol, *Clouds*, 1966, helium-filled vinyl. Photograph courtesy of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, New York.

Historically, what differentiates the postmodern desire to produce a new geographic and ideological zone for exhibiting contemporary art as it is played out in the capital of the art world is a reluctance on the part of many of the key commercial players to relinquish entirely an uptown connection or visible ties to what is perceived to be the center. This splitting of a gallery's space within a city connotes a different kind of power than occupying one, single, consolidated space like the mansion site of Knoedler. Instead, the model is one of rhizome networks of ever expanding growth, if not takeover, and ever changing focus rather than central authority and entrenched, monolithic views. Not all cities, though, have a market capable of supporting local offshoots.

The rhizome phenomenon can occur between cities as in the 1962 Castelli/Sonnabend linking of New York and Paris, or the later numerous Castelli affiliates in North America, or, in the early eighties, the Mary Boone/Michael Werner marriage of New York and Cologne, or the late-eighties opening of a partnership space in Los Angeles by Luhring Augustine of New York and Max Hetzler of Cologne. By the nineties, buy-ins such as Wildenstein's arrangement with Pace allow a gallery to diversify through a takeover of existing assets. Usually exhibitions of contemporary art, regardless of whether or not they are generated by or occur in a conglomerate's operations, are positioned in relation to what is happening in financially unrelated galleries. When assessing just how much risk, monetary and otherwise, is being taken with an exhibition of contemporary art at a multi-branch commercial gallery, it is telling to position the event in terms of the totality of the gallery's activities, contemporary or not. This mode of assessment is equally



22.3 Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh: *Silver Clouds*, 1966, installed 1994, metalized polyester film with helium. Photograph courtesy of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, New York.

applicable to public institutions with outposts. The Liverpool branch of the Tate Gallery, for example, has been far more contemporary in its choice of media and topics for exhibitions than its parent, a situation that may or may not change when the Tate's new gallery for modern art opens in London.

Another manifestation of the reluctance to renounce uptown is the subtle retention of an upscale decor. Despite their generic SoHo plain look, in the nineties particularly, many dealer galleries have taken to embellishing their spaces with more expensive materials and a more polished appearance. Mary Boone's West Broadway gallery may maintain a storefront appearance with its metal rolldown screen but the frosted-glass entrance wall, the translucent skylight and white French limestone floor that was laid twice so as to get it "right" are the refinements of costly renovation and cosmetic surgery. Generic SoHo spaces are not usually architect-associated but Richard Gluckman is responsible for the new interior of Mary Boone and Gagosian's SoHo gallery. Gluckman also renovated the contemporary galleries at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the DIA and Andy Warhol Museum warehouse spaces. Despite Gluckman's renowned, prize-winning "light touch" and "subtle interventions," his emphasis on the "quality of light" and concealing all mechanical equipment connotes an aesthetic of privilege where all surfaces are polished and the simplicity is deceptive.²⁸

That two SoHo galleries identified with the marketing of the most expensive contemporary art hired an architect with this approach is not coincidental. An upscale, industrial, "working" aesthetic, most evident in the refined lines of exposed beam ceiling structures or superbly refinished skylights, becomes radical chic. The exquisiteness of these gallery spaces is far removed from the ordinariness of what was there before.

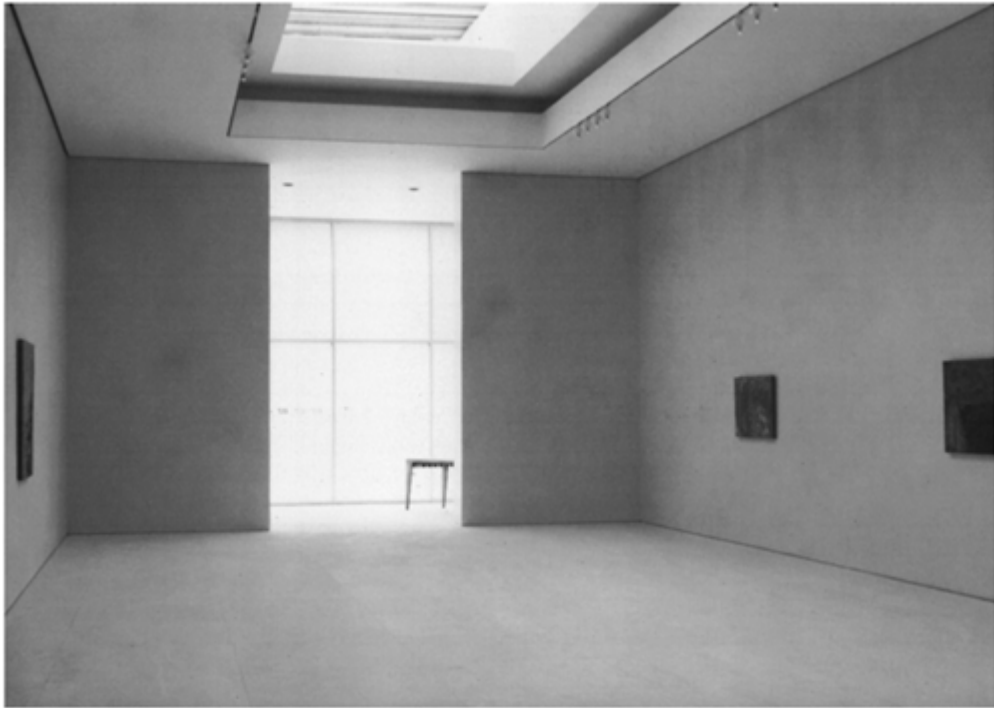
These are potential collector spaces, not artist spaces, as Max Gordon's ingenious and elegant 1985 refurbishment of a former industrial space, 98a Boundary Road,²⁹ for the display of the Saatchi collection as a series of temporary exhibitions makes clear. The link between the similarity of dealer and collector spaces is epitomized by the Ydessa Hendeles Foundation on King Street West in Toronto housed in an expensively remodeled factory building not far from her former, rougher, loft-like gallery.

Similar comments can be made about the multi-storied, Tony Fretton-redesigned Lisson Gallery in London (1990). Unlike Mary Boone's large, single viewing hall, Lisson's interior became, in the words of its director, Nicholas Logsdail, "a series of intimate rooms, stacked on top of each other, with a connecting staircase [which] seemed a logical, serviceable, hopefully intelligent solution to making a different kind of statement and linking that to an old history."³⁰ Invoking the domestic space of earlier galleries is only one of the historic allusions in the new Lisson space. Compared to Boone's closed facade, the Lisson space opens wide to the street on two stories, echoing the large, plate-glass, street-level windows of New York's Museum of Modern Art. This tripartite referencing, conscious and unconscious, of domestic, industrial and museum architecture in spaces which exhibit contemporary art throughout the period demonstrates how intertwined exhibition sites are and, unless the specifics of time and place are considered, how permeable the meanings of much of what is exhibited can be.

MANUFACTURING MUSEUMS

The employment of architects and the substitution of a more refined or luxury look in dealer galleries of the nineties can be seen in relation to the new museums of contemporary art built in the previous decade. If, in the sixties and seventies, the dialectics of "uptown"/"downtown" were instrumental in the interplay of architectural differentiation and the socio-economic signification of galleries and museums, by the late eighties, another ethos was operative. For example, when the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York, founded by Marcia Tucker in 1977 in opposition to uptown museum practices, moved to the Astor Building on Broadway in 1983, it modeled its space on an alternative aesthetic, converting rather than building anew, leaving the tell-tale columns of its interior as a tangible marker of an alignment with its downtown neighbours.³¹ By the mid-eighties new museums of contemporary art were being purpose-built in uptown locations by famous architects who eschewed the "downtown" aesthetic. The phenomenon is part of the general museum-mania of the postmodern period with art museums of every kind refurbishing, adding wings, converting non-museum buildings, or building anew in styles that were spectacular in their massiveness or extensive use of glass.³² As the era's prestige building type, the new art museum became so allied to the name of the designing "starchitect" that the structure became identified by possessive nomenclature—Kahn's Kimball, Sterling's Stuttgart, Pei's Pyramid. Hans Hollein actually signs his museum buildings.

Hollein's Städtisches Museum Abteiberg at Mönchengladbach, opened in 1985, exemplifies some of the distinctive traits of the new museums of contemporary art. Architect-designed to display the Marx collection which was on extended loan,³³ its spaces are constructed specifically for individual or particular configurations of artworks as well as temporary exhibitions. Unlike most art museums, these "rooms" vary tremendously in shape and size. Corners are chopped or rounded. Walls are curved and opened up. The arrangement of spaces is eccentric with galleries aligned on their corner axes or placed on different levels. Often, areas flow into each other in an open, almost organic pattern that permits views into spaces to come or spaces just passed through. Rosalind Krauss has characterized this particular type of architectural configuration as a museum without walls, identifies it as postmodern, and defines the spatial arrangement as one which encourages comparative and ensemble, rather than individualized, looking.³⁴ According to Krauss, it was first employed by Frank Lloyd Wright at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York



22.4 Mary Boone Gallery, installation view of Bill Jensen exhibition, New York, November 1993. Photograph by Dorothy Zeidman, courtesy of the Mary Boone Gallery, New York.

in 1959 but was not incorporated into standard art-museum design until much later. As at Mönchengladbach and Hollein's Frankfurt Museum of Modern Art (1991), in Richard Meier's High Museum of Art in Atlanta (1983) wall cut-outs or interior windows are some of the devices which permit the linking views but Meier has incorporated these with updated versions of the Guggenheim ramp. In all its manifestations, this postmodern viewing experience is linked to a museum architecture based on a spectacle where not just the art is on view but those who view the art as well.³⁵

Like so many of the new museum structures, the exterior of Hollein's Mönchengladbach belies its interior. If the interior, however variable, is calm, cool and elegant in overall feel, mood, materials and white-walled/gray-floor colour scheme, its exterior silhouettes, massing and extensive use of metal, glass, brick and concrete are jagged, irregular and industrial. This splitting of the external and internal personalities of art museums and galleries is typical of postmodern architecture. In "downtown" galleries, the nondescript, un- or minimally renovated facades of an earlier era often contain a stripped-down but very contemporary, and increasingly elegant, interior. In the new art museums, the split can be stylistic as in the highly personalized, postmodern facades of James Stirling's addition to the Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart (1984), compared to its very classical new galleries, or it can be thematic as in the gray-wood, verandaed, vernacular-inspired exterior/standard gallery interior of Renzo Piano's Menil Collection, Houston (1987), where a concerted effort was made to blend the museum with the surrounding neighborhood's small-scale, single-story, wood houses, also owned by the foundation.³⁶ The Menil Collection is an anomaly, though, for today rarely do private museums of modern or contemporary art refer, even indirectly, to the house model used by

patrons of the past going public with their collections and usually their homes. Instead, most collectors of contemporary art with foundations, in Europe and North America, prefer “downtown,” no-name, cleaned-up, recycled, industrial buildings with more or less similar but “spiffier” conditions to those in which much of the work on display was made and first exhibited. Exhibiting private collections, such as the Crex’s at Schaffhausen, in abandoned factory or warehouse spaces validates the dominant forms of production and display of the period and, by extension, the collection. The “downtown” aesthetic masks the split between the seemingly open, democratic character of the spaces and the private nature of the endeavor, in the same way that it obscures the reasons why so many empty industrial buildings can be converted to the display of private wealth by the moneyed classes.

If many museums and galleries of contemporary art have an architecturally split personality corresponding to a deep ambivalence about the relationship of art to social class, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (MOCA) has an identity crisis bordering on schizophrenia. Unlike museums and galleries elsewhere where the alienation takes place within a single building, at MOCA the ruptures take place between buildings. The Temporary Contemporary was a police garage and warehouse at the edge of Little Tokyo, renovated, but left quite raw, by Frank Gehry in 1983 as a building in which exhibitions could be held until the museum proper was built. When Arata Isozaki’s very proper museum opened in 1987 on Bunker Hill,³⁷ it was decided that the Temporary would be kept, thereby giving the museum different architectural and geographic options in which to display art. Although not originally planned as such, MOCA’s divided architectural self echoes the trajectory from artist-producer to museum-collector and the schism this can entail when work passes from one domain to another. MOCA is more than a museum of contemporary art objects. It is a museum of the two types of spaces most often identified with the display of contemporary art, divided by gendered connotations into the masculine, non-spectacular, industrial site and the feminine, spectacular, curvilinear, sprawling, site of exhibitionism and voyeurism identified by Jo-Anne Berlowitz as the postmodern museum.³⁸ By the eighties, the locus and focus of the feminine had shifted from the domestic intimacy of earlier gallery spaces to a more flamboyant interpretation, demonstrating, once again, that traits ascribed to gender are never fixed.

Both Isozaki’s MOCA and Hollein’s Mönchengladbach share an unusual but telling architectural approach to site. Both are located on a hill but rather than building the site up as massive temple museums of the past like the Philadelphia Museum of Art did to spectacular effect, these museums are broken up into several different architectural zones which draw attention to and respect the contours of the site. Passage into or through these buildings involves a going down or into the hill, suggesting an actual archeological dig for the precious and rare, or, in Freudian terms, an archeological metaphor for a deep search for meaning.³⁹ When Chris Burden dug out the earth at one of the corners of the Temporary Contemporary in 1986, literally “Exposing the Foundations of the Museum,” he constructed a metaphoric revelation of the unconscious of the museum and an acknowledgement of MOCA’s other half through deconstruction. Other postmodern artists from Daniel Buren and Christo to Louise Lawler and Andrea Fraser have been equally aware of the importance of architectural considerations and site in the construction of meaning in exhibitions. The question is why so many art historians and critics have preferred to bury this knowledge.

NOTES

- 1 Santa Monica, The Lapis Press, 1986. First published as a series of three articles in *Artforum*, in 1976.
- 2 “Site-specific” is a term used to describe individual art projects where the location of the work is an integral component of its meaning. Since the eighties, “site-specific” also has been applied to exhibitions including a number of artists whose works reference or are inspired by the site where they are shown. Preferred venues include

- buildings not associated with art or locations out of doors. With both individual projects and exhibitions, site-specificity connotes the inseparability of location in relation to signification.
- 3 The research for this essay was undertaken in 1992–3 while holding a Getty Foundation Senior Research Fellowship with Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne for the project *Values on Display: Exhibitions of Contemporary Art*. The present version of this text is indebted to their insights as well those of Barbara Steinman and Kitty Scott. Kristina Huneault provided invaluable research assistance. An earlier version was published in *Exhibited*, Annadale on Hudson, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, 1994.
 - 4 For a survey of the conversion phenomenon see Helen Searing, “The Brillo box in the warehouse: museums of contemporary art and industrial conversions,” Pittsburgh, Andy Warhol Museum, 1994, pp. 39–65.
 - 5 Although Lynne Cooke links the shift with the growing importance of process in art, she refers to the change in preferred exhibition site as “ideologically neutral.” See her “The Mattress Factory: installation and performance,” Pittsburgh, The Mattress Factory, 1989, p. 19. Victor Burgin has elucidated the concept of art as work at length. See his “Modernism in the work of art,” in *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity*, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey, Humanities Press International, 1986, pp. 1–28.
 - 6 Other exhibitions in domestic space in the West such as *Apartment Number*, Toronto, 1981, predated Hoet’s concept but his is the best known. In the former Soviet Union, exhibitions in apartments in the sixties, seventies and eighties were alternatives of very different kind. In the nineties, some dealers, forced for economic reasons to close their factory-space galleries, have reverted to mounting exhibitions in their apartments.
 - 7 See Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1983, for an extended and more directed discussion of the gaze and the glance.
 - 8 A popular trend in museums is to create separate reading-rooms within temporary exhibition spaces or to include them in the plans for new or renovated buildings. When there is seating in front of artwork, it is usually backless and most uncomfortable, more a temporary perch than a place of long repose. See “Comments on seating,” *Tate Gallery Visitor Audit Mini Survey Report*, prepared by Lord Cultural Resources Planning and Management Inc., 1994.
 - 9 “Psychogeographies,” in *On taking a normal situation and retranslating it into overlapping and multiple readings of conditions past and present*, Antwerp, 1993, p. 127.
 - 10 O’Doherty, *The White Cube*, pp. 14–15.
 - 11 Interview with Sandy Nairne, New York, 21 May 1993.
 - 12 “The politics of presentation: the Museum of Modern Art, New York,” in *Art Apart: Art Institutions and Ideology Across England and North America*, ed. Marcia Pointon, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1994, p. 205.
 - 13 Interview with Sandy Nairne, London, 11 Dec. 1992.
 - 14 “The Museum of Modern Art: the past’s future,” *Journal of Design History*, 5:3 (1992), p. 209. Kitty Scott, in conversation, suggests that the mythic lab described by Wallach may correspond to the mythic white cube.
 - 15 The concept is Henri Lefebvre’s. See his *The Production of Space*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1991.
 - 16 The first exhibition was curated by Lucy Lippard who describes it as “a ‘piece’ oriented show... it was a stunning minimal art show but it was meant to be an anti-Vietnam War thing.” Interview with Sandy Nairne, Maine, 13 July 1993.
 - 17 Interview in *The Art Dealers*, New York, Clarkson N. Potter, 1984, p. 190. Of all the first-generation commercial galleries to open in SoHo, Paula Cooper’s is the one which retained the character of an artist-run space the longest, with its penchant for group as opposed to solo exhibitions at various moments in its history and varied night-life programming of performance, dance, poetry and film events. It is one of the few commercial galleries to show video work which was not a particularly commercially viable art form.
 - 18 Ronald Feldman describes his move: “I came downtown because I needed more space: I needed more space for my library and more space for my artists. And I needed storage space, so that if someone came to see me I wasn’t showing them slides or saying if you come back tomorrow we can get it out of the warehouse. I had totally outgrown my space in all ways. The space uptown we had wonderful shows in but it wasn’t as flexible as the space downtown.” Interview with Sandy Nairne and Bruce Ferguson, 19 May 1993.

- 19 Lucy Lippard in Alan Moore and Marc Miller, *ABC No Rio Dinero*, New York, 1985, p. v.
- 20 The building was first used as an art site by artists Tim Clark and David Tomas for an installation on 1973.
- 21 The discussion of Montreal gallery and museum spaces is part of “Museum conceits: late additions and complex stories,” presented at “Architecture, Technology, Ethics,” Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal, 16 Nov. 1991, unpublished.
- 22 *The Museum Transformed*, New York, Abbeville Press, 1993, p. 177.
- 23 Interview with Sandy Nairne and Bruce Ferguson, 19 May 1993.
- 24 Anna Chave has discussed the threatening qualities of this art at length. See “Minimalism and the rhetoric of power,” *Arts Magazine*, Jan. 1990, pp. 44–63.
- 25 According to Miani Johnson, of the former Willard Gallery, because of city by-laws prohibiting the conversion of certain buildings to retail businesses, some galleries in SoHo had to maintain a second, usually, uptown sales outlet. In conversation, 28 Nov. 1993.
- 26 The DIA Foundation also owns Walter de Maria’s *Lightning Field*, 1971–7, near Quemado, New Mexico and the Fred Sandback Museum in Winchendon, Massachusetts as well as nine works by Dan Flavin on exhibit in Bridgehampton, New York.
- 27 See Rosalind Krauss, “The cultural logic of the late capitalist museum,” *October*, 54, pp. 3–17, for a discussion of other, non-New York manifestations of the Guggenheim’s branch-planting.
- 28 Christine Pittel, “Architect of Light,” *Bazaar*, Jan. 1993, pp. 140–2.
- 29 See Adrian Forty, “98a Boundary Road,” *Artscribe*, 54 (Sept.–Oct. 1985), pp. 49–50 for a detailed description and analysis.
- 30 Interview with Reesa Greenberg and Sandy Nairne, London, 17 April 1993. Logsdail went on to say: “What really counts for something is the ability to be able to present work with a lot of flexibility and with some intimacy and with a sense of spatial poetry.”
- 31 In its previous space in the Graduate Centre of the New School for Social Research, the New Museum had demonstrated its commitment to the “downtown” perspective with exhibitions such as *Hallwalls*, *5 Years*, 1980, and *Alternatives in Retrospect*, curated by Jacki Apple in 1981, commemorating seven now defunct spaces operating in New York prior to 1975.
- 32 Helen Searing has classified the two modes most typical of the postwar era as bunker or greenhouse. See her *New American Art Museums*, New York, 1982.
- 33 The Marx collection was removed in the early nineties to form the nucleus of the Hamburger Bahnhof project.
- 34 “Le Musée sans murs du postmodernisme,” *Cahiers du Musée nationale d’art moderne*, 17/18 (1986), pp. 152–8, translated as [chapter 21](#) above.
- 35 Tony Bennett has identified this double meaning of exhibitionism in “The exhibitionary complex,” *New Formations*, 43 (Spring 1988), pp. 73–102; reprinted as [Chapter 5](#) above.
- 36 Rayner Banham, “In the neighborhood of art,” *Art in America*, June 1987, pp. 124–9.
- 37 The 98,000-square-foot complex was built to act as a magnet for urban redevelopment on land given by the city, financed by the 1.5% fine-arts levy on all new downtown construction projects. For a detailed discussion including the displacement of poor, non-whites to make room for a White, bourgeois, non-resident class see Mike Davis, “The infinite game: redeveloping downtown L.A.,” in *Out of Site: A Social Criticism of Architecture*, ed. Diane Ghirardo, Seattle, Bay Press, 1991, pp. 77–113.
- 38 “From the body of the Prince to Mickey Mouse,” *Oxford Art Journal*, 13:2 (1990), pp. 73–7.
- 39 I.M.Pei’s use of a staircase below ground level in the Pyramid as the only pedestrian access to the Louvre has other connotations—the going deep down becomes equated with a going far back. Many of the ideas about the architecture of postwar museums discussed in this paper derive from my *The Edifice Complex*, unpublished.