

"Museums, in this sense, map out geographies of taste and values, which is an especially difficult and controversial task when it is necessary radically to redraw the maps in response to major social change."

Robert Lumley, *The Museum Time Machine*

According to Lumley, in the 21st century, the museum will become a potent social metaphor and a means for societies to represent their relationship to their own history and to that of other cultures. In this sense, therefore, there is no international standard for the museum, and every museum should be different.

As we attempt to re-map what lies the inside the museum, the biggest difference here would be in the element of "time". This is because a two-dimensional map is no longer appropriate for the museum. Another axis has become necessary, and this is the fourth dimension of time.

Multiple "time frames" - the museum on the periphery

Since Malraux's "Museum without Walls", the white cube has continued to be seen as a neutral space disconnected from the context in which the work of art was created. This, at the same time, is also a disconnection from "time". Moving a work of art to a different place will lead to misunderstandings and naturally, this will have an affect on the work as well. However, if the works are located somewhere far away, or if the location to which the work is moved to lies on the periphery, that is, away from the "center", this would result in either discord or new dialogue between the new peripheral location and the work that has been moved there. Arguably, it is only since the 1970s that people have begun to challenge the existing restrictions to the combinations of such encounters.

When we examine the world, there is no region where an absolutely pure culture has been maintained. Every region is undergoing the perpetual process of inter-mingling and blending. It is simply that there is a time lag in how fast this

process takes and when new cultures emerge. And, the process of restoration and the duality that takes place by being placed within a different context that results from being located inside the white cube is connected to statement. This, too, is related to the issue of memory and its accumulation.

"Time" is experiential and is not something that can be expressed in a statement. A criticism of an exhibition like Jean-Hubert Martin's "Magician de la Terre" of 1989 would be that Martin attempted to convey the time lag within each work through a single statement, that is, to place the works together into a single and neutralized time frame. If these works were exhibited within the context of the existence of different time frames, then the memories contained in the works, the exhibits, wouldn't have ended up canceling each other. The sand painting of Tibet wouldn't have been presented as something special, that is, either as a tourist attraction or as a mysterious technique. Instead the sand painting would have effortlessly conveyed time as it exists within the Tibetans' everyday lives.

When something that lies within a different context is regarded as art (that is, brought into a museum), this can be seen as an idealization of the art as representing a plurality of observation. However, in actual fact, there is not much difference between this view and cultural imperialism. The reason for this is that in both cases, the works are restricted to a collection of samples of diversity. The title of the exhibition held by Martin in 1999, "Sharing Exoticisms", is nothing more than an extension of this view. This is because exoticism is an attitude in which no attempt is made to understand the original context of what one is seeing and to view it from the same "horizon", instead treating the subject as something alien that defies comprehension.

What is interesting is that since the 1990s, that is, since the advent of post-colonialism and multi-culturalism, the existence of multiple time frames within different cultural situations is starting to

become apparent. In other words, the framework of time which, until now had been neglected, has been made apparent through the phenomenon of "nostalgia" that appears, like smoke, as a result of the discord caused by encounters amongst different cultures, that is, different "time frames". This time lag is not so much moving from Era A to Era B via a time machine, but is more like a phenomenon of mass nostalgia in response to the continuing time lag, like a fugue. This is not the same as the huge time warp experienced in the 18th century by Captain Cook when he encountered the aborigines, survivors of the Stone Age. There is a sense of nostalgia because there is just enough of a time lag to shake the memories of the past that lie in the memories of people of the previous generation.

In contrast to the past, the unique creation of a modernism that involved separate processes of modernization resulting from the time lag in modernization or peripheral modernism and the synergistic effect of local cultural environments created a phenomenon in which the fringe began to have an affect on the "center". This feedback phenomenon is related to the similarity between this nostalgia and the time lag. Modernization took place in almost every corner of the world, and the time lag caused by historical, geographical, political and many other reasons had made its appearance, by the 1990s, in the general cultural map. Theorists and critics were drawn to this exciting phenomenon, and a trend emerged whereby the majority of theories on art works seemed to begin and end with an explanation and analysis of the reason behind this phenomenon.

We see a heroic quality in the work of Eastern European artists who, having grown up without knowing the Coca Cola vending machines or McDonald's, don't accept the visual information of consumer culture with sentiment and as a homogeneous media environment, instead relating this visual information in a different way. We view, with envy, Chinese artists who, despite their increasing sense of a loss of identity within

THE MUSEUM - A THERMOSTAT OF MEMORY

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the sudden growth of capitalism, continue to produce art, their only motivation the continuing censorship of expression, and we regard them as models of existentialism. Despite constant political upheavals and turbulent economies, Central American artists continue to absorb politics as a source of nutrition, applying politics into their natural formative language without losing the raw energy of the tropics that is their environment. The intensity of the modernism expressed by the work of these artists continues to overwhelm the "center".

The formation of a unique local visual language resulting from the presence of multiple time frames and the process of acceptance of diverse forms of modernism is a phenomenon arising from the dynamics of the long history of colonization and trade and, since the 1990s, immigration and the penetration of the global economy. However, it is not those that lie within the time frame of the "center", in an advanced time frame, who are able to fully convey this phenomenon. It can only be expressed by those living in a time lag, or different, "time", those that live in a place that lies between the developed countries and a different time frame, those who are living in this very time lag. In this place, the plurality of observation is not merely a collection of samples but signifies a tolerance and acceptance of diverse time frames. And, the significance of museums located in regions where the modernization process has resulted in the creation of something unique will begin to attract attention. These museums lie in their own time frames, at first glance strange and incomplete white cubes that have been "casually created". They are the centers of hybrid statement, laying its roots in their respective locations to carry out an ongoing exchange.

Sliding open the Japanese-style walls of stretched fabric - the fusuma (Japanese sliding door)-like movable and fragile walls which are a feature of Japanese art museums - reveals a glass display case for exhibiting byobu

(Japanese standing screens) and ceramics. This sense of economy and duality can be interpreted as a freely transformed version, or a sibling, of the white cube.

Mosaics penetrate the rough walls of the art museums of Mexico, while in China, in terms of being a display of cultural artifacts there is very little difference between the art museum and the museum...

Several global and local standards co-exist in these museums and we can see a haphazard mix of elements that have been discarded from modernism and from the definition of the arts. Since the 1990s, the radical expression of sophisticated art has pursued, as its last resort, "involvement in everyday life" and "the aesthetics of relationships" and these have been brought into the chaos and energy of this nostalgia and time lag. The art museum on periphery, as a potential center for this phenomenon, has been at the other extreme of the art museum found in the cities of the "center".

The museum - a place for memories, a device for forgetting

The art museum is a place for "memories". This differs from the memories as dealt with in the "history" as written and discussed to date. It is not a history woven from incidents and major and minor tragedies. It is another history, a history of the mind that can not be expressed in words but is a raw "history of joy". One may ask, then, what memory is. Memory is not something that exists externally. An interaction takes place in the network of subsystems that lie in the nervous tissue, and as a result of this interaction, one element appear on the stage known as consciousness. Memory and perception of the present are both "things" that stand on the conscious stage. In one sense, the white cube functions effectively to "stamp" something into the mind as a memory. This is because a selection is made from amongst the many works

in a museum, locating a limited number of works within the space to enable a focused perceptive experience on the part of the observer.

As we continue to discuss the ever-changing present, we have to resist the loss of memory, or forgetting, that takes place when so many images continue to be created and in turn consumed. The art museum that once functioned as a place of storage can no longer keep up with the accelerating creation of images, and this storage function is now being carried out by the archive and the even more functional digital archive. It is our obsession with forgetting that creates the growth in both archives and theories on museums. However, what we have neglected to do is to carry out a verification of both our minds and bodies in an attempt to understand the mechanism of forgetting and remembering.

A transformation has taken place in the body as something ontological that reacts to the existence of things and to material existence within space. The body has become something that communicates in an environment that is increasingly information-based and increasingly immaterial, something that lies in the point of transit, that could even be described as functioning as 'inter-media', or a medium between media. If anything, works of moving images that have been created from this type of awareness do not possess a strong concept or content so much as functioning as a catalyst for generating some sort of relationship with the world. If the body and the memory were a major theme in terms of the ontological body, then the body in relationship accelerates the transfer to the type of moving image that breaks away from memory, and if anything, is moving towards oblivion and termination. Memory as a subject is not one's own memory, but exists within the medium itself. The subject of memory is media. The familiar images and comfortable sentiments that are disseminated by reproduction media are not restricted to the internal memory of individuals or personal space, but have penetrated the entire territory that is our everyday

life including social spaces and have undergone a transformation to create an environment in itself.

In addition to our obsession with memory, we have an equally strong desire for oblivion, that is, to forget. Forgetting takes place as a result of the process of first passing through the transit points of "the here and now", experiencing the moments of pleasure and experience, after which these moments are once again returned to and absorbed by the environment.

The imbalance between the material and the immaterial in an information-based environment has created a barrier during the formative process of the way one sees the world amongst the younger generation. This is the estrangement between the reality of things and of the body and one's own awareness, and is a schizophrenic and fragmented sense of perception. The video installation of multiple screens is a typical example of art that has emerged as a response to this type of perception. There is a certain pleasure in following the relationship that emerges from the delayed images, the delayed sound, the progression of multiple and different time frames. The pleasure of having the flow forced on you as sensation is chopped up into pieces, as the formation of a story-like time is then fragmented. Doug Aitken's installation has been dedicated to the sensibility of "the here and now" and if anything, he hopes that the installation is forgotten once the observer leaves the space. This is because the mechanism of forgetting is an element of a new aesthetics. It is another strategy for resisting the consumption of images.

This is when the museum is seen as part of a media environment in which memory continues to be "repatriated".

This museum is an organic media environment that functions as a thermostat that adjusts the capacity and quality of the memories of individual visitors. There is a limit to our capacity for storing memories. The thermostat begins to function

when the limits of the memories remaining from the time and experience inside the art museum and the limits of our intellectual and emotional memories have been reached. The exhibits carry out an adjustment of our memories and accelerate the mapping process based on context and theories, ridding us of any unnecessary memories. The works which contain their own "forgetting" program then function as the thermostat's cooling mechanism.

The art museum as chaotic (strange) attractor

"Thought does not converge in truth but converges in the complexity of the object. One must not trust the subject if one is to avoid the truth. One must give oneself completely to the object and its strange attractor, to the world and its definitive uncertainty."

Jean Baudrillard, *L'Echange Impossible*

What kind of art museum is it where multiple time frames exist simultaneously, where a balance of memory and of forgetting are enabled?

The Museum Insel Hombroich in Germany, for example, comprises multiple cube-shaped buildings that dot the lake and marshland like islands. The radical nature of this museum lies in a feature whereby the doors of each wing can be opened to enable animals and birds to enter the buildings during the museum's opening hours. Inside the museum, works from different ages and styles are combined in random and displayed together, such as a classical sculpture next to a work by Yves Klein. Here, the memory of seeing a sketch by Rembrandt is shared with the birds.

Let us, for example, imagine that the following art museum were to exist in the near future.

As we walk around the exterior, we find ourselves inside the building. There may be several entrances, but as the building has no front or rear, we are unable to determine which is

the entrance and we have simply found ourselves inside. And, because the materials that divide the space are transparent, the surrounding view is not that different from what we saw as we were walking outside. Different sized, light-filled areas seem to float in space like different time frames or like islands in an archipelago, so that one moment we find ourselves outside but a moment later, we realize that we're inside once again. Because there are no shadows, we don't know where the light is coming from. Because of the sense of lightness of the materials used in the building, the volume of the rooms are conveyed not by its boundaries such as the floor and walls, but by the volume of light in the room. Because any route can be taken to visit the islands (rooms), each visitor forms his very own time frame. The rooms don't cut off the exterior like a semi-permeable membrane but is continuous. The exterior is circular, and once the visitor finishes following the circular shape, he/she realizes that all time is actually a loop. The future and the present and the past all converge and we find ourselves at the beginning.

Even when we enter the same entrance at the same time, we experience a completely different time and "see" something different before eventually going home. This type of museum can be seen as a certain type of order or system wherein lies an element of the strange attractor. If there is even a small difference in the initial conditions, then that difference is rapidly amplified with the passing of time, so that, after a certain time, there is an unpredictable and strange disparity. This is the strange attractor as discussed in chaos theory. It is a deterministic thread, but what will happen is totally unpredictable.

The membrane (walls) will at times open and close in response to the visitors that walk inside the museum, and the thermostat functions in response to memories.

The museum is a "system" similar to the ecosystem, with works of art and artists as its

"elements". These elements are constantly on the move. The "object" that the visitor sees is nothing more than a "shadow" that has been created by the entirety of this movement. The visitor's nerves are newly formed through observation and although the object might remain the same, the experience is always different. This is because it is constantly undergoing change. Works of art and visits to museums that induce a

formative experience, together with the act of "true" observation, arguably represent the contemporary art museum that lives in "the moment".

In such a museum, the exhibit rooms are exhibit rooms and yet aren't. When discovered in 1000 years time, it won't even be recognized as being a museum because it transcends conventional

architectural programming language. Like a fossilized insect where the inside has dissolved and only the exoskeleton remains, this museum will be shrouded in mystery, its internal construction unable to be read nor explained.

(Translated by Fontaine Limited)

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