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Universality and its Discontents: the Louvre and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi as a Case Study in the Future of Museums

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Acknowledgments

This honors thesis, and project in politics and culture of not only Europe and the Middle East, is for my cheerleaders. My adviser, Winston Kyan of the Art and Art History department, brought me out of the dark last fall. His suggestions and enthusiasm allowed me to explore a highly interdisciplinary topic that perfectly matched my interests. I think the only thing that he couldn't do was to get me a personal invitation to Abu Dhabi. We can still work on that though. I would also like to thank my reviewers, Amanda Ciafone of the International Studies department and Kristin Lanzoni from the Art and Art History department. Their comments and suggestions truly helped polish my paper and made it ready for submission.

My cheerleaders outside of the faculty are equally responsible for helping me finish my project. Even though they didn't know about it immediately, my parents took it in stride that I was turning my capstone into an honors project, forgiving the frantic phone calls and high stress of fall semester. Then I have my Board. MacMUN Board, that is (listed in first-name alphabetical order): Elias, Helena, Joanna, and Kaitlin – you made my year great. Cheers to late-night runs to the Uptowner, writing parties at the ICU, and every Thursday and Sunday from here to eternity. DH and ABW, you know who you are. Your collective passion for Honors inspired me to keep going.

Finally, a special thanks to Miss Joanna Baldwin Clark for her technological savvy and willingness to share it until three in the morning on the day this was due. I had no idea how long it took to change fonts, re-format the table of contents, and find URL locations for images that had seemingly disappeared from the interwebs. Miss Helena Ruth Swanson-Nystrom, the chocolate cake we shared earlier that evening is what kept me awake during this grueling process and you missed us in our glory. Please note that I am permanently speaking tongue-in-cheek. ♥

Introduction: Imagining the Possibilities of the Universal

> Imagine a natural island… Home to seven distinct districts 500 meters off Abu Dhabi's coast. Imagine Saadiyat Island Cultural District. See, hear, feel. A pulsing cultural hub. And beacon of art and culture. Embracing a bond of creativity. And fueling the imagination. "For the visitor it will also be enlightening, informing, enjoyable." "I want the building to engage people emotionally." "I want to create this feeling of discovery in something." [1]

Continue to imagine partnerships between architectural firms, museum institutions who brand themselves like multinational corporations, and developing local governments who are capitalizing on their natural resources. As this vision becomes reality, fantasy is brought to life in sensational design projects that attract visitors from all over the world who come to discover … the future of the museum. The frontier of innovation in the museological community currently resides in the development program being executed in Abu Dhabi, the capital city of the United Arab Emirates.[2]

President of the UAE, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, has assembled some of the world's finest architects to design museum structures for the city's Cultural District, a key feature in Abu Dhabi's urban renewal plan.[3] These structures will house the fruits of the collaboration between the government of Abu Dhabi and two premier arts institutions: France's Musée du Louvre and New York's Guggenheim. The Louvre Abu Dhabi and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, as they are known respectively, are the first branches of their parent museums to be built in the Middle East. As self-designated "universal museums,"

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[1] Quotes from Lord Norman Foster, Frank Gehry, and Jean Nouvel, respectively, in a video distributed by Abu Dhabi's Tourism Development and Investment Company (TDIC). TDIC is the government-owned master developer of major tourism sites in the emirate of Abu Dhabi. Transcript of *Saadiyat Island Brand Film English*. [Video]. (2009). Retrieved April 23, 2010 <http://www.youtube.com/user/saadiyatisland>.
[2] Abu Dhabi is both the capital city and an emirate within the United Arab Emirates.
[3] "Urban renewal" in the case of Abu Dhabi suggests that the city is updating its image as an attractive destination for many kinds of visitors - business and pleasure alike. Traditionally, renewal is associated with a city's departure from a defunct industry.

the Louvre and Guggenheim's expansion has given new meaning to the controversial practices shaping the future of the museum.

Being a relatively new invention, the "universal museum" prompts many more questions than it can seek to answer as the current trend in the museological community. The concepts of "universal" and "museum," separately, are so vast that it is perhaps easier to define them by what they are *not* rather than to risk misrepresenting their nature. By "universal," one can only be referring to that which is not site-specific or unique. Similarly, a "museum" houses objects (a decidedly vague term) that are revered for not being ordinary. In this context, it is difficult to intuitively describe what function a universal museum serves and what kind of objects it contains. Yet at least 18 museum directors are willing to stake their institution's reputation on the assertion that there is indeed importance and value to such a designation.

In 2002, the aforementioned directors of some of the world's leading museums published a documented entitled, *Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums* [Appendix A].[4] From this document, the museological community and the publics served by these museums mainly gathered one thing: a universal collection contains objects from many different cultures and those objects should stay where they are. As one may guess, this declaration was a response to the increasingly vocal calls for the repatriation of objects from cultures suppressed under colonialism and victims of "public collecting." Directors who became signatories, possibly fearing a run on their collections that would leave their galleries empty, assured readers that their institutions provided a context that was equally valuable to the objects' original sources. To conclude, the directors reminded

[4] Please find an electronic copy posted here: International Council of Museums. "Declaration on the Value and Importance of Universal Museums." ICOM. 1 December 2009 <http://icom.museumuniversal.html>.

their peers that, "We should acknowledge that museums serve not just the citizens of one nation but the people of every nation." These sentiments, while egregious to the citizens of places like Greece, allude to greater forces that have fundamentally altered how cultures interact both within and outside the museum.[5] I refer to the omnipresent forces of globalization that challenge the museum's claims of social relevance and offer solutions for a model to sustain the institution into the future.

Previously, the "universal museum" was understood to be a well-established Western institution whose vast collection contained artifacts representing many cultures, time periods, genres, and artists. In contrast, the universal museum that is setting the institution's trajectory into the future retains a limited resemble to this original conception.[6] Instead of justifying a collection that has incorporated objects with dubitable provenance, the "new" universal museum is far more concerned with its public that hails from every nation. This transition to focusing on the public was partially motivated by increasing economic pressures in the global marketplace, thus making the museum's public into consumers of its product.[7] The universal museum, used here to encompass both the Louvre and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi projects, is the result of a progressive campaign to find a

[5] The Declaration specifically cites Greek artifacts, particularly sculpture, as examples of objects that have benefitted from public collecting. According to the signatories, these objects enjoy greater attention and appreciation scattered throughout public museums and have been assimilated into the heritage of the nations that house them.

[6] Here, it is necessary to distinguish the universal museum from the encyclopedic museum on the basis of cultural interaction versus essentialism. In an encyclopedic museum that perpetuates cultural essentialism, art from marginalized cultures is a minimal aspect that serves mostly to reinforce the notion of the West's superiority in defining taste and achievement in all artistic traditions, genres, and periods.

[7] "Products" of a museum include its collections, administrative expertise, and the overall visitor experience that the staff is able to cultivate in the institution's physical space. By considering the museum's social service as a product, it is easier to comprehend the possibility of branding institutional functions and replicating them in franchises.

sustainable model of growth for the museological community.[8] Implicit in this new form of a "universal museum" are several critical developments.

First, it is essential to recognize that the Abu Dhabi branches of the Louvre and Guggenheim will bear no visible resemblance to their parent institutions [Figures 1, 2]. Architects Jean Nouvel and Frank Gehry have provided visually spectacular designs, which set the forthcoming museums apart from any structures that have come before them [Figures 3, 4]. Second, the Musée du Louvre and Guggenheim have cultivated an image for themselves that has been branded to represent the "best practices" implemented in the museological community. Third, museums' reputations have successfully attracted developing local governments who wish to harness the power of these brands to elevate their own cities' images.[9] These three factors combined have given way to what is now known as the expansionary model.

The "expansionary model" is the most succinct description of the current trend in museological practice, which also produced the notion of the "universal museum" that will be used here. This model was born in response to decidedly practical concerns that plague the museological community in its efforts to justify the social relevance of the museum institution. Globalization, a phenomenon characterized by increased immigrant and capital flows through cultures around the world, has created an economic environment ripe for the expansion of museum institutions. Introducing financial concerns into the non-profit world has polarized the museological community into theoretical idealists and pragmatic

[8] Though both museums will feature a broad representation of cultures, genres, and artists, the Louvre Abu Dhabi is the only one of the two institutions that is being recognized as a "universal museum." The Guggenheim Abu Dhabi may still be considered part of this designation as an accurate portrayal of the practices that led museums to adopt the designation of the universal museum as it was originally conceived.
[9] Here, I refer to Spain's partnership with the Guggenheim to create a branch in Bilbao. Other examples include "blockbuster exhibitions" that feature objects of a certain genre or from a specific museum's collection, such as the Louvre's collaboration with the High Museum in Atlanta, GA.

capitalists. Initially, the Musée du Louvre criticized the expansionary model for corrupting the social contract between museums and their publics.[10] Now, however, administrators of the Louvre are following the example of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, who established the expansionary model and departed from traditional museological practices.[11]

These museums still justify their relevance by serving as vaults for their national and cultural heritages. Some museums do this by providing a space in which to celebrate and preserve the unique identity of a nation's citizens and ideas. The (new) universal museum, however, recognizes the increasingly diverse publics that the institution must serve. This is mainly a result of accelerated globalization, with generations of people experiencing increased autonomy to live, travel, and work across national boundaries. National identity now reflects more than a single geographic territory and the increasingly frequent instances of cultural interaction and exchange between nations. Museums, as they are now being constructed, reflect this multifaceted narrative of assimilation and seek to provide a space of social inclusion for the citizens, nationals, and visitors of their host countries.

For a developing local economy like the one in Abu Dhabi, the expansionary model is an attractive tool to reach its goal of participating in the open, highly competitive global economy. Through the model, Abu Dhabi can invest its vast wealth in partnerships with leading museum institutions that promote an image of sophistication, which lends itself to attracting visitors to the city. The museums, in turn, receive significant financial benefits from these partnerships that allow them to pursue other projects and build their brand

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[10] For further reading on this topic, please refer to: James B. Cuno and Neil MacGregor. *Whose Muse?: Art Museums and the Public Trust*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004. This book compiles the opinions of five (American and British) museum directors about how to maintain the public's trust in a time of increasingly economically based decisions within the museological community.

[11] The greatest oversight of traditional museological practices (those preceding the universal museum) was that the museum was largely dependent on outside sources of funding to maintain even basic operations. Administrators of universal museums contend that this trend is how they will develop self-sustaining institutions.

name based on best practices. Considering the current state of the global economy, and particularly the situation for many developed players, it is no wonder that one of the defining features of the expansionary model is its appeal to developing nations.

Yet as the expansionary model and its subsequent universal museum grow in popularity, persistent critics question the precedents that allowed this trend to become the future of the museum. The following discussion will address the political maneuvers that situated the museum as an agent for social change, how the museum's architecture has assisted this role, the opportunities and challenges presented to the museum by the emerging forces of globalization, and the changing power dynamics between developed and developing countries as a result. Museums, and their curators and directors, situate themselves at the heart of these issues by reflecting civic agendas. These topics will be presented in the order of their specificity with regards to the progression of the museological community toward realizing the (new) universal museum. A brief history of the museum institution will ground the commentary on the sustainability of the expansionary model, which is being carried out for the first time in Abu Dhabi. As the world adapts to the forces of globalization, and grapples with the universal, the question then becomes: will universal museums like the Louvre and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, who depend on the forces of globalization, be the most appropriate institutions to celebrate and educate the public about artifacts of the diverse cultures they exhibit? I will argue that, at this time, the universal museum is the best museological trend to reflect the economic pressures that increasingly define cultural interactions across national borders.

(Re)contextualizing: From Private Delectation to the Museum of the Future

The universal museum trend, while alarming to many members of the museological community, has its roots in the history of both the developed and developing world. Indeed, the year 1791 arguably marked the end of an era and the beginning of the future of the museum. In this year, the Assemblée Nationale decreed that the "Louvre and the Tuileries together will be a national palace to house the king and for gathering together all the monuments of the sciences and the arts."[12] For 700 years prior, the Palais du Louvre had served exclusively as a residence for the king of France. King Louis XVI's palace, however, became a monument to democracy in the post-revolutionary nation when it was transformed from a royal collection into a national treasure open for public visitation. That same year, several thousand miles away across, land, sea, and sand, the Bani Yas Bedouin tribe settled around a freshwater spring on the coast of the Persian Gulf that later became the emirate of Abu Dhabi. These two events, seemingly disparate in any other context, take on new meaning in the discourse on the future of the museological world.[13] Over 200 years later, the forces of globalization and industrialization have fostered the unlikely alliance between the Republic of France and the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Cooperation between the nations originally developed through trading channels. Now, under the auspices of the expansionary model, their partnership extends to the cultural sector as Abu Dhabi wishes to create a world-class destination for business, culture, and leisure.

To appreciate the results of the expansionary model as the current trend in the museological community, it is imperative to understand the broader context of how the

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[12] The Assemblée Nationale is the lower house of the French Parliament. The Louvre Museum. "The History of the Louvre: From Château to Museum." Musée du Louvre. Available from 15 December 2009 <http://www.museedulouvre.fr>.

[13] This coincidence of dates was originally discovered by Heiko Klaas in his 2007 article "Abu Dhabi Museum Project: a Desert Louvre?"

museum became a public institution. Defining that progression are the practices that fostered the image of the museum institution in all of its various incarnations. Be aware that the "museum" has taken many different forms at any given time in its history. Therefore, any discussion of the context of museums necessitates consideration of the nature of the institution as an easily digestible definition simply does not exist.

In the broadest sense, the museum began, and continues to some extent, as an organizational system and repository of knowledge. The objects kept in a museum's collection are tools. Already though, one begs the question (an enduring one in the museological community): to what end are the objects being used? Posing this critical question marks a shift into the discipline Peter Vergo calls "the new museology."[14] Juxtaposing the "new" and the "old" in museum studies, Vergo contends that the new museology is concerned with the *purpose* of museums as a way to define the institution. Previously, studies focused on the operational methods employed by a museum to define the idea that form follows function. 'Old' museologists focused on the museum's administration, financial well-being, and ability to attract visitors. These methods were critical to achieving the primary objectives of the museum: collecting, conservation, research, and exhibitions. Arguably, the collecting and exhibitionary functions of the museum are the primary driving forces behind the evolution of the institution into the discussion of new museological study.

The exhibitionary function in particular underscores the importance of spectators or visitors, as they are more commonly known in a museum. Contemporary museums survive at least in part by their usage statistics, the sheer volume of visitors they attract each year,

[14] Peter Vergo, at the time of publication, was Reader in the History and Theory of Art at the University of Essex. Peter Vergo. *The New Museology*. London: Reaktion Books, 1989.

to justify their cultural relevance and compete for funding. It is then vital to note that the earliest collections were far more selective in allowing people to view their contents. Take, for example, the *studiolo*, or small cabinet room found in many Italian Renaissance homes [Figure 5]. These were rooms in the homes of royals, nobility, and occasionally wealthy businessmen. They were filled with any kind of object that was relevant to study, such as manuscripts, fossils, scientific and musical instruments, as well as art objects. Art in particular demonstrated the patron's good taste and demonstrated an understanding of Classical subjects and human phenomena. Individuals composed these collections on the whim of their own curiosity, making collecting methods largely unscientific. The purpose of building these collections was for mostly selfish purposes, acquiring objects that provided personal pleasure and enhanced their family's image when shared with privileged guests to the home.[15] Built primarily for the purpose of study, these early collections reached the heights of sophistication in the private contests of collecting, a tradition that continued in the practices of the earliest public museums.

The first public museums, places for study and the display of precious objects, also inherited the tradition of using their displays to show wealth, power, and privilege. This tradition, however, was put to a fresh end in response to the growing concern for general public welfare.[16] Beyond the Louvre as the first national public art museum, Paris's Royal Academy exhibitions and Luxembourg Gardens were some of the first institutions to serve this function.[17] This transition marked an institutional shift from glorification of the individual to showcasing civic pride and edification. To do this, the Louvre refashioned the

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[15] Peter Vergo. *The New Museology*. London: Reaktion Books, 1989: Introduction.
[16] John Cotton Dana. "The Gloom of the Museum," Anderson, Gail. *Reinventing the Museum: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift*. Walnut Creek, Calif: AltaMira Press, 2004.
[17] Bette Wyn Oliver. *From Royal to National: The Louvre Museum and the Bibliothèque Nationale*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007.

king's impressive collection into a display of national treasures for Napoleon's pan-European empire. Still today, the collection in the Musée du Louvre represents the highest achievements from each period.[18] Its challenge was to celebrate not aristocratic superiority, but the democratic principles of liberty, equality, and brotherhood.

In the new *décade*, a ten-day week that replaced the seven-day unit of time in post-Revolution France, access to the Louvre was permitted to individuals according to their constituent group: five days were reserved for artists and copyists, two days for cleaning, and three were open to the general public. When this open access was granted it was, however, proscribed with the caveat of elevating the visiting public to an appropriate level of decorum.[19] As Kenneth Hudson points out in *A Social History of Museums*, visitors of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries were admitted to museum institutions as a privilege, not a right. Therefore, exhibitions demanded gratitude and admiration from their visitors while discouraging criticism.[20]

To avoid inciting any such criticism from their newly acquired publics, museums adopted the additional goal, beyond serving knowledge seekers, academics, and artists, of engaging in mass education. Museums continued to attract visitors by becoming places of public diversion and entertainment. Such a goal is at once a natural extension of the museum's survival strategy: to incorporate the general public, while also having to maintain

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[18] Former Louvre curator of paintings, René Huyghe, also of the French Academy, contends that this challenge still faces the museum though its implication reflect modern concerns. Today, the Louvre is still committed to exhibiting art that has withstood the test of time and does not seek to speculate in uncertainties. However, this complicates the notion that the Louvre can use its resources to acquire the "best" objects. One must wonder why the Louvre is qualified to make these judgments. Gigetta Dalli Regoli. *Louvre, Paris*. New York: Newsweek, 1967.

[19] It has been documented that the first public visitors to Versailles were required to rent a plumed hat and sword from the caretaker to be able to walk the grounds. Edward P. Alexander. *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1979: 22.

[20] Kenneth Hudson. *A Social History of Museums: What the Visitors Thought*. Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1975.

a sacred treasury of knowledge.[21] One way in which this disparity was resolved was to incorporate the very structure of the museum into its appeal. By looking at the Musée du Louvre, for example, one sees how architecture functions as a signaling device for the institution [Figure 6]. In a building such as the Palais du Louvre, where the complex literally envelops the visitor, the approach conveys awesome grandeur and intrigues the visitor as to what the famed halls contain. It may not even be too bold to say that the facade originally sought, and continues to engender, gratitude from visitors that they are even being allowed inside.

Betwixt-and-Between: Liminal Spaces Signal a Museum's Values

Throughout history one finds evidence of how the physical museum structure reflects a museum's social intent. Honoring the invaluable nature of the masterpieces that made up collections, the first public museum structures took cues from the palatial architecture of the royal residencies where they were first kept. In "The Art Museum as Ritual," Carol Duncan further asserts that a museum's design echoed temples and churches as the symbol and container of civic authority, and the preserver of secular truth.[22] An earlier architectural study of the British Museum by J. Mordaunt Crook imagines the museum as a mirror for "Renaissance humanism, eighteenth-century enlightenment and nineteenth-century democracy."[23] This follows the Enlightenment project, when secular truth supplanted religious authority, and scientific methods and catalogues that ordered nature

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[21] Another author who addresses this idea is Andrea Fraser. In her analogy, the public wandered the streets as unruly crowds and admission to the museum constituted (and required of them) an orderly audience that could enjoy orderly displays. Fraser, Andrea. "Isn't this a wonderful place? (A tour of a tour of the Guggenheim Bilbao)". In *Museum Frictions*, edited by Ivan Karp, 138. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.
[22] Duncan, Carol. *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*. Re visions (London, England). London: Routledge, 1995.
[23] Alexander, Edward P. *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1979: 8.

found a home in the museum. As collecting and classifying processes became more refined, the exhibition of natural specimens and artistic production reflected the advancing idea of human perfection. Thereafter, museums were the sites of scientific and humanistic inquiry, that protected society's collective values and memories.

Just as a place of worship narrates beliefs about the natural order of people, objects, and events, so too does the museum. Once inside, the viewer feels reverence for the cosmic organization these spaces describe. To prepare visitors for this experience, the aesthetic of the entrance prescribed expectations and behaviors conducive to digesting the works of art within. Grand stairways leading up to doorways flanked by sculpted lions and towering columns set at the edge of novel green spaces were all design cues to the visitor that what you find here is important, extraordinary, and even sacred.

The intended effect of such architecture would naturally arouse the concept of liminality, invoking what anthropologist Victor Turner described as a consciousness "betwixt-and-between the normal, day-to-day cultural and social states."[24] Although liminality is often associated with ritual or religious practices and spaces, Turner also characterizes aesthetic experiences, such as visiting an art exhibition, with the same power to motivate viewers into thinking or feeling in a different way about themselves and the world. However, after more than two centuries of classical architecture, these canonical edifices have lost their potency. Facing an increasingly competitive global market, the museum structure as temple or palace no longer signals an extraordinary experience to its visitors. Spectacular design schemes with fantastical silhouettes now mark the liminal break that transports visitors from the mundane details of their lives into the transcendent world of the museum. Visitors will enter

[24] Carol Duncan. "The Art Museum as Ritual." *The Art of Art History*. Ed. Donald Preziosi. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009: 427.

a space where art objects present a cross-section of not just one culture, but the entire universe.

This leads modern museum-goers to wonder: what do you find inside a building with few square angles or one that is united with the landscape? Considering these references to Gehry and Nouvel's projects, architecture's role is essential to the new trend of expansion and the creation of "universal museums." As it is currently the most tangible asset of the project, designs for the Saadiyat Island Cultural District illuminate the social, political, and cultural ramifications of such developments. Architects and patrons realize the enormous potential of the museum's exterior to mediate visitors' first and last impressions, which provides a visual summation of their experience. Thus, with an accumulated team of today's greatest architects, TDIC is capitalizing on the physical museum structure to successfully execute "Plan Abu Dhabi 2030."[25] Moreover, to be truly successful the designs of Nouvel and Gehry must trigger the "Bilbao Effect," when the structure elicits a magnetic visual and emotional response from visitors as the centerpiece of urban renewal. Within this liminal break, museums walk a fine line between entertainment and education. Innovative architecture signals a departure from the traditional, intimidating arts institution experience. Abandoning the sculpted lions and columns, twenty-first century museum projects transport visitors from the ordinary into the fantastical experience inside. Museum architecture has become a critical element in the institution's campaign to legitimize its existence to its public as a unique social space by heightening its spectacular image.

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[25] TDIC is a public joint stock company whose sole shareholder is the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority. After "Plan Abu Dhabi 2030" was released in 2006, a government entity known as the Tourism Development and Investment Company (TDIC) became the developer of Saadiyat Island. Please also refer to a video summary of the government document put forth by the Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council: Squint/Opera. (2008). *Abu Dhabi 2030* □□□ □□□□□□ □□□□ [Video] Retrieved April 27, 2010, from <http://www.youtube.com>.

The Museum's Public: Anticipating and Responding to Visitors' Demands

In understanding a museum's audience, unless one is in marketing, it is far less important to identify the public's demographics than to synthesize the visitors' desires and needs with institutional practices. At this time, however, there exists no formula to prescribe how a museum handily conveys a message of authenticity and magnificence.

Instead, museums have been distracted by overcoming the public's prevailing distrust of the institution's role and usefulness. Jean Chatelain, former Director of the Museums of France, believes that ignorance and the fear of appearing ignorant motivates this uneasiness.[26]

A recent study of history museums established a useful position of the museum, whose purpose is to educate and entertain, on a spectrum relative to other social institutions. This spectrum, though it references to a specific genre of museums, is increasingly relevant to the entire museological community as art museums evolve in the quest to attract visitors and define their function.[27] Renowned anthropologist and former director of the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, Michael Ames, justifies the museum's unique position on this spectrum in his 2005 article, "Museology Interrupted." On one end, Ames places theme parks, from which museums differentiate themselves by claiming to exhibit the '*real* thing'. The spectacle and beauty of the display derives from lived history - not an extrapolation of history onto a fictional world. Unlike adventures in a magical kingdom, museum visitors can, for example, see and experience artifacts of the life that royals once led. At the other end of the spectrum are universities or

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[26] Gigetta Dalli Regoli. *Louvre, Paris*. New York: Newsweek, 1967: 9.

[27] Previously, the "history" museum has differentiated itself from other specialized museums (art, science, etc.) by presenting a strong, informational narrative of historical events. Contrast this, for instance, with an art museum's focus on an aesthetic narrative that may prioritize visual effect over conveying knowledge about the objects in its collection. To achieve a respectful dialogue between objects that represent different cultures, a universal (art) museum must assimilate more of the educational practices of a history museum into its displays. Study conducted by: Richard Handler and Eric Gable. *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997: 242-3.

libraries, institutions dedicated exclusively to education, the original home for primary documents. In response to academics' claims that museums trivialize the message conveyed by their exhibits, the institution must also claim the authenticity of their objects, the 'real *things*'.[28] While some libraries host valuable objects, such as ancient manuscripts, these are inherently quite rare and largely withheld from public consumption. In the middle of this spectrum is the museum, where visitors are encouraged to look at and imagine the meaning of objects that are being protected for their great intrinsic value.

Given that objects, or *things*, are at the heart of the museum's four original functions - collecting, conservation, research, and exhibition - it has been in the interests of the institution to magnify the authenticity and importance of its collection. By doing so, administrators and staff of the museum unavoidably become the final authority in determining an object's value. After an object is admitted to a museum, its subsequent interpretation is solely at the discretion of those administrators and staff. Efforts made to neutralize the environment in a museum actually magnify the institution's value judgments and subjectivity of its collection as objects are often completely divorced from their original context.[29]

As this dilemma was especially prevalent in the second half of the twentieth century, the idealism and academic integrity at the foundation of museum collections walked a fine line between being spectacular and dogmatic.[30] Hand in hand with this notion is the widespread belief that museums are the best place to conserve these valuable objects that

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[28] Michael M. Ames. "Museology Interrupted". *Museum International*. 57, no. 3 (2005): 44-51.

[29] In a "neutral" museum environment the idea of art for art's sake is celebrated. Visitors see art objects that are supposedly the best examples of artistic development for a certain artist, period, or geographic area. Often, the only exhibitionary practices that suggest an object's historical or cultural context is in a paragraph of text on a placard.

[30] The dilemma refers to exhibitionary practices that disregard the need for context to create a visually spectacular display. Charles Saumarez Smith. "Museums, Artefacts, and Meanings". *The New Museology*. Ed. Peter Vergo. London: Reaktion Books, 1989: 9.

narrate a history of the museum's specialty.[31] Given these circumstances, one must question a given institution's ability to be the supreme authority on the value and display of an object. Like in any field, within the museological community there exist leading museums who appear eminently qualified to make such decisions regarding collecting and exhibition practices. One such museum is the Louvre while another, perhaps, would be the Guggenheim. With their vast resources and renown that attract experts from many disciplines, museums capitalize on their reputation to make these decisions about aesthetic and cultural value.[32]

Yet the power of supreme authority runs counterintuitively to the Louvre's designation as a *national* collection, steeped as it is in French history and culture. As late as 1996, the Louvre resisted attempts to make its collection more 'universal.'[33] During his terms in office, President Jacques Chirac promoted a campaign to introduce *les arts premiers*, or first (primitive) arts, into the French museum system. Famously, Chirac announced in a 1995 campaign speech that, "[The first arts] must be at the Louvre, which cannot remain a great museum while ignoring the arts of 70% of the world's population. I will make it so in the coming year."[34] Chirac's second term saw to that end in multiple venues. First, the Louvre's Pavillon des Sessions was cleared to make way for permanent gallery space dedicated to 100 pieces representative of *les arts premiers*. Finally, Chirac negotiated the creation of the Musée du quai Branly, a museum dedicated to the arts of Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas. Of greater significance to the museological

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[31] Examples of specialty: contemporary art, objects of a certain medium or geographic area.
[32] "Cultural value" describes an object's use as a representative artifact of a particular geographic area or social organization of people. Often, museums who claim to implement best practices regard the objects in their collection as the eminent examples of these cultures and areas.
[33] Alan Riding. "For Chirac's Mark On Culture in Paris, An Ethnic Museum." *New York Times.* October 9, 1996, late ed: C13.
[34] Elizabeth Harney. ""Les arts premiers" in Paris: le monument de l'autre" *The Free Library.* December 22, 2006. 20 March 2010 <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/"Les arts premiers" in Paris: le monument de l'autre-a0156809469>.

community than the expansion of the French museum system, Chirac's declaration highlighted the growing role of the museum to reflect the changing nature of international relations.

Rapid Response: The Death Knell of the Insulated Arts Institution

Jacques Chirac's campaign to reverse the ethnocentric stereotypes of the French museum system, a reflection of France's population at large, was symptomatic of the growing pressure that museums felt to respond to rapid social change. The most crucial aspect of this call to action, which has been experienced by institutions around the world, was the expected timeframe for completion. All other things held constant, the defining feature of globalization is the accelerated pace at which progress is expected to take place. If the concept of time was irrelevant, one could consider any innovation a result of globalization. As it affects the social arena of people's lives, globalization expedites the speed, scope, and depth of the cultural exchanges between geographically disparate locations. The museological community exists in a world increasingly concerned with timeliness set not by directors and curators but by players in a global economy.

Within the last twenty years, museological practices have adapted to the new global economy in which the museum operates by supporting audience-driven rather than collection-based institutions.[35] This shift is equal in magnitude to the original transformation from private collections into public museums. In the nineteenth century, the development of nation-states fueled the rise of the national museum, which is best exemplified by

[35] Consider, as an example, Chirac's campaign for the Musée du Louvre's Pavillon des Sessions. The Louvre's gallery now more closely reflects the social needs of the French public: greater acknowledgement of marginalized cultures that increasingly interacted with the local French culture. This transition in gallery dedication, from traditional objects owned by the Louvre to objects that came from outside the collection, demonstrates the larger transition from collection-based to audience-driven institution. Please also refer to the next section, "---," which describes the motivations for this shift.

Napoleon's use of the Louvre collection to glorify France. Now in the twenty-first century, the proliferation of globalizing practices transcends national borders to glorify the entities that operate most successfully across those borders. More specifically, contemporary museums must respond, and protect themselves from, to sudden economic pressures rather than the former social and political stimuli. The result is museums whose institutional behavior emulates corporate practices.

Guest editor of the journal *Curator*'s 2005 Special Issue on Museums and Globalization, Klaus Müller, suggests that corporate models can be beneficial for the museological community.[36] As evidence, Müller cites corporations' experience successfully (profitably) operating across barriers of ethnicity, language, nationality, gender, and even religion. Additionally, museums can forgo superficial localization strategies that corporations employ to market their products in the global market.[37] If this is not already a blasphemous notion, Müller also claims that globalization can have an opposite *localizing* effect on museums. To clarify, a stronger local identification occurs in previously established museums, who appear "even more site-bound in their old and often impressive cathedrals of culture." Under these circumstances, social change affects the museum by increasing expectations for the institution to become an inclusive community space. An example of the changing public that the museum must serve will include growing immigrant populations. Müller does not, however, intend his assessment to be universally applicable. He repeals his theory when considering the few pioneer museums in the community who are experimenting with branding. Led by the Guggenheim, these museums are cashing in on

[36] Klaus Müller is an international museum consultant. Klaus Muller. 2005. "A Special Issue on Museums and Globalization - A Note from the Guest Editor". *Curator*. 48, no. 1: 5.
[37] The logic in this statement comes from the fact that (universal) museums handle objects that, ostensibly, come from the cultures in which they are located.

the power of their name, nearly in spite of their location, to meet the challenges of globalization.[38]

As the number of institutions listed in *The Official Museum Directory* climbs well over 8,000, it is also important to recognize how many are *not* listed.[39] Professor James Twitchell, author of the 2004 *Branded Nation*, estimates that there are more than 11,000 museums in operation in the United States alone.[40] This is believed to be a low estimation. With a glut of institutions fighting to educate the public on everything from free software and cowgirls to the nuances of contemporary art, it can only be expected that, "Someone is going to start telling a story about what is offered."[41] While stories sound innocuous, many museum directors and curators balk at the implied iniquity of selling oneself to the public.

Staid museum officials inconveniently forget the mundane details of the institution that require an appropriate cash flow to allow even basic functionality. Even as they denounce profit-based operating models, these officials rabidly chase the unreliable generosity of public patrons. To a lesser extent than their American counterparts European museums also faced a sharp decline in state funding in the last twenty years. This stemmed

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[38] It is striking to note that the pioneer of the expansionary model, the Guggenheim, is concurrently known as a foundation, a museum, and an iconic design for its flagship location in New York. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation was created in 1937 for the "promotion and encouragement and education in art and the enlightenment of the public." The Foundation contracted Frank Lloyd Wright to design a permanent building that would exhibit the now-late Solomon R. Guggenheim's vast art collection that included objects beyond the "nonobjective" category. On October 21, 1959, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum opened at 1071 Fifth Avenue overlooking New York's Central Park [Figure 2]. From its inception, the Museum challenged the relationship between museum structure and the art collection it was built to display- a feature celebrated on the Foundation's website. Wright's design is an aesthetic marvel but overwhelms the viewer as a monument to the architect (rather than the collection).

[39] *The Official Museum Directory* is a list of the members of the American Association of Museums (AAM). Members are those non-profit institutions with a mission statement declaring a goal for formal education, at least one full-time staff member, a program of events, and who also pay dues for membership. The directory is available as both a printed publication and through an online subscription at: <http://www.officialmuseumdirectory.com>

[40] James B. Twitchell. *Branded Nation: The Marketing of Megachurch, College, Inc., and Museumworld*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004: 195.

[41] Referring to the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame and the Free Software Hall of Fame, respectively. These are institutions that memorialize, operating with largely the same functions as a traditional museum.

in large part from the infamous Thatcherism that dissolved up to 90% of funding to some institution, which spread to the continent in the 1990s. By 1993, the Louvre had lost its full-funding status and must now cover 30% of its yearly operating costs on its own.[42] Only in 2009 did newly elected French President Nicolas Sarkozy promise to increase the national heritage budget and (only) partially lift the freeze on state funding for arts institutions.[43]

Alas, a museum's daily operations to satisfy its four core functions: collecting, conservation, research, and exhibition; cannot adjust so quickly to funding shortages. Museums' exposure to the capricious nature of the economy has resulted in nothing if not an increased responsiveness to consumer's demands. Subsequently, museums have re-prioritized their functions and their values more closely align to those of a multi-national corporation.

Cosmic/Terrestrial: The Universal and the Global in Museology

By its very nature, the concept of globalization has touched every industry in today's worldwide economy and the museological community is no exception. Whether willing or reluctant participants, museums must compete in a vast market for visitors, art objects, and novelty. Just as in the 19th-century, when national museums and their collections were called upon to inspire a national consciousness, the institution of the twenty-first century must address its role as a transforming and transformative force in today's global society. One of the most contentious transformations in museological practice, arguably a response to the emerging economic pressures caused by globalization, is the paradigmatic shift in the treatment of the collection.

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[42] Twitchell, page 197.
[43] France24. "National heritage budget gets a €100 million boost." *France24: International News 24/7*. 22 March 2010. <http://www.france24.com>.

In theory, the museum began as a guardian of cultural patrimony and became an audience-driven institution.[44] The various departments comprising a museum, from conservation to education, have been dually charged with maintaining and enhancing the quality of the collection. Their efforts shape the experiences of the current visitor population as well as those projected years into the future. Museums today continue to shoulder this responsibility, with the additional burden of redefining their function to compete in the global market. Like in other industries and economy sectors, current museological practices simultaneously utilize, and compete against, the forces by which the world is globalizing.[45]

The strategy most relevant to a study of changing power dynamics in the museological community is the expansionary model, which responds directly to the economic forces of globalization.[46] By this model, the underlying values of the museum must adapt to reflect the increasingly competitive market for art, visitors, and now financial support. If a narrow view of a museum's responsibilities focuses only on the maintenance of its collections, globalization expands these exponentially and forces institutions to re-prioritize which aspects of the institution are most competitive in an open market. In 1990, journalist Peter Weiss first reported on this paradigmatic shift he saw in museum behavior in his article, "Selling the Collection."[47] Through interviews with museum directors and curators, Weiss revealed how deaccessioning (selling pieces from a collection) was used to develop a collection and sustain a museum's relevance in the global economy. The global economy, for its part, demanded these sales after changing US tax law disrupted the

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[44] Klaus Muller. "Local Institutions Transformed by Globalization." *Curator* 48 no. 1 (2005): 5-9.
[45] The most prominent example of these tools is technology and, especially in the case of museums, the Internet.
[46] While the concept is generally recognized, the most succinct term for the expansionary museological practice being examined here was put forth here: Saloni Mathur. "Museums and Globalization." Anthropological Quarterly, no. 78 (2005).
[47] Philip Weiss. "Selling the Collection." *Art in America* 78 (1990): 124-31.

American museum's acquisition system.[48] Weiss' article focused specifically on the newly elected director of the Guggenheim, Thomas Krens, whose spectacular run of deaccessioning drew intense criticism from the museological community.[49]

In 1986, the United States instituted a tax law reform that de-incentivized charitable donations by abolishing tax write-offs for art objects given to museums. James N. Wood, then the Director of the Art Institute of Chicago, explains how the reform affected collection development practices: "At just the moment when this market became more and more inflated, when there was more and more speculation, more and more foreign money coming in to buy, the tax law created an incentive for American collectors to no longer give but to sell." Before this reform, Museum of Modern Art curator William Rubin estimated that almost 90% of collections acquisitions were donations.[50] Under the new legislation, museum administrators felt pressed to wrack their brains and wring out museums' collections to further their development.

Effectively, Krens is credited with initiating this transformation of art objects into assets to solve institutional weaknesses. With objects circulating in the profit economy, the Guggenheim could alleviate its cash flow problems that prohibited the museum from being a self-sustaining institution.[51] Krens' strategy was first put into practice at a Sotheby's auction on May 17, 1990. Over the course of the sale the Guggenheim's deaccessioned pieces garnered $47.3 million. Members of the museological community quickly condemned the

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[48] Note that the Guggenheim continued to receive some donations, such as those from the Thannhauser collection and a grant from the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation.

[49] A recent example of deaccessioning is in the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University. At the beginning of 2009 the art community was shocked to learn of the university's plan to sell the entire collection, barring any donor restrictions, in order to preserve Brandeis' educational values in the face of the economic recession. Smith, Roberta. "In the Closing of Brandeis Museum, a Stark Statement of Priorities." *New York Times.* February 2, 2009, New York: C3.

[50] Philip Weiss. "Selling the Collection." *Art in America* 78 (1990): 124-31.

[51] The benefits of being self-sustaining are that the institution is less reliant on the generosity of unreliable donors and, as happened to European institutions, state funding that is limited and subject to reallocation.

sales as "dumping treasures."[52] Maintaining a diplomatic line, with respect to the buyers of the deaccessioned works and in defense of his choices, Krens pointed out the popularity among major museums of selling extraneous objects from collections in a bull market. Despite the disapproval of his peers, Krens continued to pursue his aggressive plan to revitalize the finances and practices of the Guggenheim. Regarding his controversial reign, which lasted until 2008, Krens describes his vulnerability as an innovator: "But you know the definition of a pioneer. They're the people in a group who walk at the very front, who are the first to fall face down in the mud and the first to be shot in the back with an arrow."[53]

A later commentary, written by Rosalind Krauss, extends the paradigmatic shift first considered by Weiss to the commoditization of the physical museum structure as an asset in the commoditized collection.[54] Krauss extrapolates the economic subjugation of the collection to one that covers the treatment of the museum as an asset in and of itself.[55] In a sense, the museum building became an art object and subsequent asset under the expansionary model envisioned by Krens. Krauss explains the deteriorating value of individual objects by virtue of the market activity of the 1980s that put ever greater artistic value on the museum space.[56] Noticing an aesthetic change in the museum space, "oddly emptied" yet grandiloquent, Krauss recognized how the building became an object in itself. An interview with Thomas Krens confirmed the speculation that space was indeed gaining

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[52] Weiss cites Walker Art Center, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Art Institute of Chicago as institutions who were wary of deaccessioning but considered it nonetheless. Weiss, 125-7.
[53] Thomas Krens. Intervew by Ulrike Knopel and Ariane Von Dewitz. Spiegel Online, 27 March 2008. Web. 1 Nov 2009. <http://www.spiegel.de>.
[54] Rosalind Krauss. "The Cultural Logic of the Late-Capitalist Museum." *October* 54 (1990): 3-17.
[55] Krauss drew on her experience at a Minimalist exhibition at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris where she first noticed the equivalent shift from physical space to art object, and object to asset.
[56] Minimalism locates itself within the technology of industrial production. Originality in works of art is very subjective because multiple originals may exist, fabricated to be replicas of the first in production. Krauss ascribes influence to the tenets of Minimalism that added pressure to the shifting attitudes about the museum space.

prominence to define the contemporary museum experience.[57] Krens goal was to create a highly integrated experience between visitor, art, and space. This integrated and intensified institution that Krens imagined completely revised the encyclopedic museum, where the history of art is told in the additive manner of a grand narrative. To replace this traditional museum, Krens pursued the synchronic museum in which art is focused through the subtractive manner of Minimalism. As such, the synchronic museum relies on spatial rather than historical relationships to shape how the viewer looks at art. Krauss then forecasted how the Guggenheim would, and subsequently did, achieve this spatial relationship in displaying its collection:

- Larger inventory. At the time of Krauss' publication, the Guggenheim was in the process of acquiring 300 works from the Panza collection;
- More physical outlets through which to "sell" the product. By 1990 the Guggenheim was speculating expansions in Salzburg and Venice;
- Leveraging the collection. For the Guggenheim's continued expansion this meant suspending the sale of objects and instead moving them into the credit sector or circulating art as capital,[58]

Over the next decade of Krens' career, his reputation as a pioneer and innovator was cemented as he pursued a vision for a Guggenheim with a global presence. Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation administrators largely shared his vision and encouraged Krens to "[spearhead] alliances and [develop] facilities designed by world renowned architects outside New York, establishing the Guggenheim brand and extending its influence and reputation around the globe."[59]

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[57] Interview took place on May 7, 1990, see Krauss "The Cultural Logic of the Late-Capitalist Museum": 7.
[58] Krauss rebukes the Guggenheim's deaccessions at the May 17, 1990 Sotheby's auction. She cites the wide spread (40%) between the expected prices on the works and those garnered. Had the Sotheby's or Guggenheim staff more clearly understood the demands of the market, fewer works would have been sold to reach their fundraising target for purchasing the Panza collection: 16.
[59] Today, Krens vision has been successfully executed in branches in Berlin, Bilbao, and the forthcoming Abu Dhabi project. These branches join the New York home institution and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, Italy, as museums owned and operated by the Foundation. The Guggenheim Foundation. "Thomas Krens to Step Down as Director of Guggenheim." Guggenheim. 11 April 2010 <http://www.guggenheim.org>.

Fifteen years after Krauss' article was published, in 2005 Saloni Mathur took a retrospective approach to the implications of the "cultural logic of late capitalist museums." [60] Paying homage to the earlier article, Mathur credits Krauss with identifying the paradigmatic shift in the museological world that destabilized the museum's identity and announced their increasingly corporate behavior. [61] After witnessing the realization of the Guggenheim's expansion into Berlin, Bilbao, Las Vegas, and Venice, Mathur advocates for a new critical approach to the unstoppable trend of the globalizing museum.[62] From a purely theoretical standpoint, Mathur's article applies a postcolonial perspective to museological practices of the 21st-century.

First, Mathur discredits the critics who announced the death of the Guggenheim's expansionist model after the September 11, 2001, attacks in New York that severely curbed tourism and aggravated the faltering financial markets.[63] Most unsettling for the author is both the growing trend of corporatization, which Krauss acknowledged in her 1990 article, and the issue of global expansionism.[64] In analyzing the Guggenheim's expansion, Mathur coins the term "McGuggenheimization" to describe the multi-nationalist proliferation that

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[60] Saloni Mathur. "Museums and Globalization." *Anthropological Quarterly*, no. 78 (2005): 697-708.

[61] Separately from the Guggenheim, the Musée du Louvre operated under late capitalist museum logic when it began large-scale lending programs like the one with the High Museum in Atlanta, Georgia. Here, the two museums established a series of "Louvre Atlanta" exhibits that will take place over three years. The fundamental difference between a loan program like this one and the expansionary model that produces a universal museum is twofold: one, the loans are for a much shorter time period and the relationship is characterized as mutually educational for both museums as the Louvre is not acting in any kind of supervisory capacity over the High Museum's operations. Brenda Goodman's article suggests that the Louvre is examining the High's exhibitionary practices that are more thematic than geographic or chronological. Brenda Goodman. "The Louvre Views Its Art in a New Way (When Showing It in Atlanta)." *New York Times*, October 16, 2006. 26 April 2010 <http://www.nytimes.com>.

[62] At the time of publication, the Guggenheim's cooperative effort with Russia's Hermitage had not been closed and the impending Abu Dhabi project had not been announced.

[63] Mathur cites: Kimmelman's "An Era Ends for the Guggenheim", *The New York Times* 6 December 2002 and "New York's Bizarre Museum Moment" 11 July 2004; Muschamp's "When Art Puts down a Bet in a House of Games," *The New York Times* 14 April 2002; Rosenbaum's "The Guggenheim Regroups: The Story Behind the Cutbacks," *Art in America* February 2003, among others: 699.

[64] Concluding her commentary on the shift of attitudes in the museological world, Krauss foresaw an increasing similarity of industrializing art institutions with other industrialized leisure areas like Disneyland, to use her example. Krauss, 17.

Thomas Krens advocated. Mathur views this trend as a form of colonialism: an expansionary Western model imposed on other parts of the world. She correlates this trend to the popularity of the New York-based style of abstract expressionism that spread insidiously through the post-Cold War world.[65]

Returning to the history of the museological world, Mathur takes issue with the *Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums*.[66] This document, released in December 2002, was signed by 18 directors from prominent museums who crafted it during a meeting of the Bizot Group in October of that year.[67] Members discussed the increasing pressure to repatriate objects from their 'universal' collections. In response, the directors asserted that, "Universal admiration for ancient civilizations would not be so deeply established today were it not for the influence exercised by the artifacts of these cultures [who were calling for repatriation], widely available to an international public in major museums." Beyond Mathur's objections, other commentators such as Klaus Müller question whether this self-designation is a pretext for evading claims for cultural repatriation in historical collections.[68]

It took a year after the publication of the declaration for the International Council of Museums (ICOM) to respond. Essentially, ICOM is the museological community's form of an official governing body. Formally, ICOM is "the international organization of museums and museum professionals which is committed to the conservation, continuation and communication to society of the world's natural and cultural heritage, present and future,

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[65] Stephen Dubin, *Displays of Power: Memory and Amnesia in the American Museum*. New York: New York University Press, 1999: 7.
[66] Available online at the website of the International Council of Museums <http://icom.museum/universal.html>.
[67] The Bizot Group was founded by Irène Bizot, formerly the head of the Réunion des Musées Nationaux, and who meets annually to discuss issues pertinent to the entire museological world.
[68] Klaus Müller is an international museum consultant and guest editor of *Curator* magazine's Special Issue on Museums and Globalization. Comments extracted from Müller's feature article "Local Institutions Transformed by Globalization."

tangible and intangible."[69] Ideally, their response ideally sets a precedent for both advocates and critics within the community to debate any institution's claim of universality. These claims are particularly relevant to the contentious issue of cultural repatriation.[70] The theme of the ICOM's initial publication investigated the idea of "Universal Museums in Practice," with responses from both supporters and critics of these museums.[71] To facilitate the discussion about "universal" museological practices, the respondents addressed the perceived role and work of these self-designated institutions.

The Guggenheim's article was particularly illuminating in its support by succinctly condemning dissenters who slow the progress of realizing the museum's potential. Betsy Ennis, Director of Public Affairs for the Guggenheim New York branch, summarizes the museum's origins and shares its intended trajectory into the future. As it was established, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation had four goals for its relationship with objects of twentieth century visual culture: collecting, preserving, interpreting, and presenting. Bearing these in mind, the Guggenheim still seeks to achieve a degree of excellence that will legitimize and advocate for twentieth century art, architecture, and design. The Guggenheim employs all aspects of the institution to reflect these goals, including the "architecture, collections, exhibitions, and educational programmes."[72]

Listed as such, the Guggenheim arguably considers the museum's physical structure to be the most tangible method to convey its operational values. Ennis confirms that the

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[69] International Council of Museums. "ICOM Mission." The International Council of Museums. <http://icom.museum/mission.html>. Internet; accessed 14 December 2009.
[70] This topic in itself is quite vast and demands focus on the interaction of museums and local interest groups regarding the character of unique objects. Pursuing the topic of repatriation would lead this discussion away from the emergence of universal museums as a trend in the museological community. Future research into this topic would provide excellent follow-up on how specific universal museum practices changed the nature of inter-community relationships.
[71] *ICOM News*, Vol. 57, No. 1, 2004.
[72] Betsy Ennis. "Universal Museums in Practice: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation." *ICOM News* 57 no. 1 (2004): 6.

Guggenheim's distinctive network of global partnerships will advance the notion of the Universal Museum. However, the implementation of these values through subsequent aspects may prevent the Guggenheim's success. For example, exhibitions would "*on occasion* present the visual arts and architecture of nonwestern, non-contemporary cultures as a point of contrast, support and context" (emphasis added). Coupling this troubling "frequency" with the fact that none of the signatories of the *Declaration on the Value and Importance of Universal Museums* represent nonwestern institutions confuses any claims of universality.[73] Reading on, however, the Guggenheim clarifies its conception of a Universal Museum as one that creates the physical and intellectual means by which the greatest number of people around the world can access the collections of the museums in question. This goal for a Universal Museum is achieved by "creating new museum locations and augmenting their collections." In a word: franchising.

Universality: The Museum's Discontents and Opportunities

> It [the museum] should establish branches, large and small, as many as funds permit, in which could be seen a few of the best things in one and another field that genius and skill have produced; in which could be seen the products of some of the city's industries, placed beside those of other cities, of other countries and of other times; in which thousands of the citizens could each day see… These branches need not be in special buildings. Often, a single room conveniently located would serve as well as, or even better than, an elaborate and forbidding structure. How the idea would be worked out in detail no one can say.[74]

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[73] Signatories: The Art Institute of Chicago; Bavarian State Museum, Munich (Alte Pinakothek, Neue Pinakothek); State Museums, Berlin; Cleveland Museum of Art; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Louvre Museum, Paris; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Prado Museum, Madrid; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg; Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

[74] John Cotton Dana's "The Gloom of the Museum," in: Anderson, Gail. *Reinventing the Museum: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift*. Walnut Creek, Calif: AltaMira Press, 2004: 26.

Members of the museological community who are stunned by the corporate mentality of their constituents should look back to the writings of John Cotton Dana.[75] By 1917, Dana had called for the creation of museum branches to make collections more accessible and enjoyable for visitors. Branches of a city's main museum would create a less intimidating environment for visitors when located, as he conceived them, conveniently for the thousands of expected visitors. Ironically, Dana disapproved of grand architecture to make these branches more appealing. In his opinion, a satellite of the main collection would be housed most appropriately in a setting like the Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin [Figure 7].[76] A product of his time and the limited technological advances at his disposal, Dana could not imagine how his early twentieth century idea would be magnified and manipulated in the era of globalization.

In the 2005 Special Issue of *Curator*, editor Klaus Müller interviewed director Mikhail Piotrovsky of the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia.[77] This article explored the perspective of a museum that had partnered with and was expanding in the manner of the Guggenheim. Like the Musée du Louvre, the Hermitage began as the royal collection of Russia's Catherine II. The collection had grown to three million artifacts by 2005 and the original facility could only display 5% of its collection. As another signatory of the *Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums*, the Hermitage regards creating greater access to collections its chief objective as a universal museum. At the time of publication, the Hermitage operated in three branches: two called "consulates" at the

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[75] A prolific American librarian and museum director of the early twentieth century, Dana advocated the relevance of libraries to the general public and made suggestions to improve the reception of museums.
[76] Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin is a Guggenheim franchise housed in the ground floor of the Deutsche Bank in the "old and new centre of Berlin." In 1997, architect Richard Gluckman from the United States designed a 510-square-meter gallery with an austere interior.
<http://www.deutsche-guggenheim.de>
[77] Mikhail Piotrovsky. *Curator*. Intervew by Klaus Müller. 10-12. Appears in Müller's "The Concept of Universal Museums."

Somerset House in London and the Guggenheim Hermitage Exhibition Center in Las Vegas, with an "embassy" in Amsterdam.[78] Piotrovsky affirmed the logistical and financial benefits provided by partnerships to home institutions such as the Hermitage.

When properly administered, the dispersal of a museum's collection can net rewards for both the home institution and its visitors. Circulating pieces from an original collection, which may otherwise never be displayed in its limited gallery space, provide greater opportunities for visitors in many locations to witness a dialogue between cultural artifacts. Rather than constructing a historical context from a large-scale diorama, which the museum may not be prepared to provide, objects from diverse cultures may be juxtaposed with one another. A danger in this environment is that a limited number of objects represent each culture. The conservation and exhibitionary functions of the museum are critical to avoid presenting visitors with a fragmentary narrative of disparate cultures.

In a universal museum, the goal should be to create a comparative environment. When displaying Christian, next to Buddhist, next to Islamic art from various periods, the objects must be able to contextually hold their own, so to speak. Without recreating an entire altar, Charles Saumarez Smith suggests that conservation departments rethink the notion that a clean object is the most presentable.[79] If there is still evidence of the object's journey from artist to museum, that object is more informative than any placard could convey. Cracks, chips, and lichen, as long as they do not compromise the object's durability, alert viewers to an objects original uses. Curiosity will be sparked about why an object was used in a particular ritual ceremony or kept in a certain location. Objects that are completely

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[78] In 2008, the Guggenheim Hermitage Exhibition Center located inside the Venetian hotel on the Las Vegas Strip was closed due to diverging expectations about the profitability and usage of the space. Kristin Peterson. "Vegas, say goodbye to Guggenheim." *Las Vegas Sun* 10 Apr 2008.

[79] Charles Saumarez Smith was the Assistant Keeper at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, in 1990. Charles Saumarez Smith. "Museums, Artefacts, and Meanings." The New Museology. Ed. Peter Vergo. London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1989: 20-1.

divorced from their original context put museums at risk of superficially assigning meaning to their collections.

Art museums in particular are susceptible to the practice of presenting objects rather than displaying them. The difference in a display, which makes it superior to a presentation, is that it suggests there will be contextual details to support why and how the object arrived at the museum. Too often, art institutions differentiate themselves from history and science museums, that more strictly convey information, by focusing on the beauty of objects.[80] This practice of creating a completely neutral environment happens for a variety of reasons. It could even be an effort to enhance a gallery's overall aesthetic. In the universal museum, however, merely presenting the collection leads to questions about the meaning of objects and who has the authority to determine it. A critical viewer will wonder why administrators from a private American collection like the Guggenheim or a national collection like France's Musée du Louvre are necessarily the experts on all the world's cultures. Why have they been given the authority to identify the best examples of non-Western art to complement a universal dialogue?

The Largest Growth Industry: (Cultural) Tourism and Financial Benefits

Although the definition of many museums relies on their designation as a nonprofit organization, the omnipresent forces of globalization and increasing marketplace competition call for a reality check. To survive and thrive in today's open economy, museums must operate under a sustainable business model. Actions taken by a museum's

[80] Benjamin Ives Gilman served as the Secretary of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts from 1893 to 1925. He emphasized this aesthetic approach of museums that aligns itself with the adage "art for art's sake," which I believe runs contrary to the successful operation of a universal museum. Edward P. Alexander. *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1979: 36.

board must return quantifiable success. In this way, increased usage statistics and higher donations allow the museum to more effectively fulfill its core functions. This is evidence of progressive museological practices that will hopefully result in the museum's greater social acceptance. Museum administrators should take heart that local governments regard the institution as an attractive feature in their cities and urban renewal programs. Just like the museums they solicit, local governments must operate under an equally sustainable business plan. The catalyst of many urban renewal programs is to energize an economy that previously relied on a failing, or simply unsustainable, industry. This cycle is seen in both the economies of Bilbao and Abu Dhabi. In response, these economies are moving toward the tourism sector as it is the world's largest growth industry.

Already in 2002, the World Tourism Organization reported that over 700 million tourists were traveling internationally, despite the economic slowdown that the global market was experiencing. Local governments and branded museums operating under the expansionary model capitalize on this opportunity. Mikhail Piotrovsky of Russia's State Hermitage Museum estimated a first-year audience at the Hermitage Amsterdam location of 50,000-60,000 visitors. The Hermitage's return will be one euro or just over one US dollar per visitor. When visitor rates increase, to 200,000-250,000 per year once the facility is complete, that return will be even more significant. These funds allow institutions like the Hermitage to take on projects for gallery renovations and others that improve, rather than strictly maintain, the museum's operations to fulfill its four functions.

Piotrovsky characterizes these financial benefits as "relevant, but not decisive."[81] The semantic difference would be if the museum expanded purely for profit opportunities. Their relevance as a source of income has the most impact on the self-sufficiency of an

[81] Piotrovsky, Mikhail. *Curator*. Intervew by Klaus Müller. 10-12.

institution. In the case of the Hermitage, such a revenue stream would have protected the museum against the huge decrease in government subsidy that happened after the fall of Communism in the country. France's museum system faced the same problem when the state instituted a funding freeze. As the museological community sought independence from the local governments of their home institutions, emerging players in the global economy found a niche in a previously inaccessible cultural exchange.

Leading institutions, such as the Louvre and the Guggenheim, are the most natural participants in the exchange of cultural capital for financial sustenance. Developing economies want to collaborate with (or be supervised by) high-profile museums because they have the strongest branded images. Consumers instantly understand the quality implicit in the "Louvre" or "Guggenheim" moniker. In a similar way, established multinational corporations such as fast-food enterprises are also successful with tourists from their home countries because diners know what to expect from French fries, but may be uncertain about the taste of *pommes frites*. Even as outsiders in the local population, tourists appreciate accessible points of reference in the infrastructure of their vacation or business destination. The presence of a branded (recognizable) experience, whether it's in an eating establishment or an arts institution, offers a feeling of social inclusion to visitors.

In a developing economy, the introduction of cultural goods that are recognized around the world is also a form of social inclusion for local citizens. Shui-Yuen Yim, working with the Beijing Municipal Government for the Capital Museum of Beijing, explains how the reverse situation is equally important for local governments to consider.[82] Consuming these products allows geographically and culturally disparate peoples to have mutually relatable experiences. These interactions, however, increase the danger of homogeneity inherent in

[82] Shui-Yuen Yim. "Globalization and the Development of Museums in China." *Curator*. 1 (2005): 27-9.

such globalized exchanges.[83] Yim explains how markers of outside culture can be regulated by the local government. When the government initiates the cultural exchange, as is happening with the franchises of the Guggenheim and Louvre, there is more moderation of the impact and prevalence of foreign goods.[84]

When developing local governments establish an urban renewal program, like the one in Abu Dhabi, the economy is expected to rapidly modernize to become a successful player in the global marketplace.[85] By taking responsibility for the introduction of foreign cultural products, the government implies that there is a local culture to protect. The area must not be culturally bankrupt if the transmission of foreign products is regulated to avoid burying local traditions and goods. It does, nevertheless, acknowledge that local "core values" and "natural practices" of one organization are alien to another community.[86] Seeking out the leading institutions in the museological community eases the developing economy's growing pains during rapid modernization by adopting its best practices.

Bridging a Cultural Divide: East Invites West

Developing from little more than barren desert tracts into a thriving federation that quite literally fuels the world, the United Arab Emirates, and the emirate of Abu Dhabi in particular, strives to match the pulse of the global economy. As oil-dependence falls further out of sync with countries' environmental and foreign policy, the emirate's diversified

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[83] "Homogeneity" is used to describe the diminishing uniqueness of cultures when they interact. People from one culture who assimilate into another dilute their traditional values and practices and may transmit some of their own practices onto people from other cultures. Hence, a generic uniformity among all.
[84] The "cultural goods" and "products" used here to refer to museological practices being adopted and the supervisory role played by Western institutions such as the Guggenheim and Musée du Louvre.
[85] Developing local governments actually have the opportunity to become not only successful but ideal players in the global economy. Instead of arriving piecemeal at a product or service that is in high demand, these suppliers can skip the process of development to perfect an already finished product.
[86] Corinne A. Kratz and Ciraj Rassool. "Remapping the Museum." *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*. Ed. Ivan Karp. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006: 349.

economy will survive on the strength of its adherence to the values of its trading partners. Simultaneously, the city must effectively reach local, regional, and international sectors of consumers in several industries, not the least of which is the tourism sector. To encapsulate the three levels of interaction, Abu Dhabi is planning its expansion in a more fiscally responsible and culturally sensitive manner than in rival Dubai.

From the building projects themselves to the way in which they are advertised, Abu Dhabi blends the unique character of its heritage with the demands of foreign consumers. Instead of catering exclusively to Western visitors, the city features the third-largest mosque with the largest prayer rug in the world and the Emirates Palace Hotel is built with a strictly Islamic-style facade [Figure 8].[87] Unlike Dubai, Abu Dhabi advertises their properties featuring Arab families in traditional dress. Similar ads in Dubai often show Western visitors drinking and cavorting. In planning their high-end tourist destination, Abu Dhabi designers imagined "pearls" or special gathering places that define the project.[88] These pearls will be most noticeably seen in the Saadiyat Island project.

The island, a man-made area off the coast of the Abu Dhabi town island, will feature world-class cultural institutions, a marina, a golf course, and housing for several thousand residents. While the cultural institutions are associated with major players in the museological world, Abu Dhabi has borrowed a few unseemly ideas from Dubai's expansion. Shopping malls, a racetrack, theme park, and polo fields will complement the two mosques tentatively scheduled for construction. With an emphasis on Muslim values and traditions, Abu Dhabi's projects welcome Arab tourists and investment as well as internationals.

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[87] The prayer rug measures 60,546 square feet and is used in the Sheikh Zayed Mosque. Ali, Lorraine. "Abu Dhabi: an Oil-Financed Cultural Center?" *Newsweek* 19 Nov 2009.
[88] Quote by Jose Sirera, architect with Gensler, the firm that designed the Saadiyat Island project. Barney Gimbel. "The Richest City in the World." *Fortune* 19 Mar 2007: 168-76.

Power Dynamism: West Meets East

When given a map, most travelers are hard-pressed to locate the United Arab Emirates [Figure 9]. Fewer still will be able to confidently identify its capital, Abu Dhabi, even if its neighbor-city, Dubai, has built a high international profile. The two cities are cornerstones of the small Arab nation situated along the southern coast of the Persian Gulf, adjacent to Saudi Arabia and Oman. Dubai is a coastal city located 90 miles to the North and Abu Dhabi rests at the center of the country's coastline [Figure 10]. Abu Dhabi is the name of both the capital city and the largest emirate within the federation.[89]

As early as the 1960s, the seven sheikhdoms that now comprise the United Arab Emirates (UAE) cooperated to a limited extent as the Trucial States. On December 4, 1971, the seven emirates, which cover a geographic area of approximately 30,000 square miles, became a unified political entity under a central governing body.[90] Initial predictions as to the viability of the nation were pessimistic. Historically, disputes over territorial boundaries, rivalries, and tribal structures fostering paternalism plagued the emirates' relationships. Traditionally, the rivalry between Abu Dhabi and Dubai produced the greatest source of conflict. The resources of each emirate, Abu Dhabi's land mass and Dubai's developed trading community, supported their controlling families' bids for power.[91] However, the emirates had a more overwhelming desire for survival, to raise living standards, and to

[89] Politically, an emirate is a territory ruled by a dynastic Muslim Monarch known as an *emir*.
[90] Fenelon, K.G. *The United Arab Emirates: An Economic and Social Survey*. London: Longman Group Ltd, 1973.
[91] Abu Dhabi is approximately the same size as West Virginia, while Dubai is closer in size to Rhode Island. Dubai hosted merchants who took advantage of their sheltered, easily navigable creek while the tribes of Abu Dhabi were Bedouin nomads and pearl divers.

preserve underlying cultural and geographic links; all of which ultimately led to their integration.[92]

Power dynamics shifted in Abu Dhabi's favor after the 1958 discovery of the fifth largest crude oil reserve in the world, 90% of which lays under Abu Dhabi sands.[93] Finally, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan was in command ahead of the Dubai family's Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed al Maktoum. While Sheikh Zayed, the ruler of Abu Dhabi, was named President of the UAE, Sheikh Rashid became the Prime Minister. This hierarchy also mirrors the country's financial situation as the majority of the UAE's federal budget comes from the emirate of Abu Dhabi, and to a lesser extent Dubai. Thus, the other emirates have always relied heavily on the capital to finance the federation's infrastructure.

In the 1970s, the United Arab Emirates could be classified as underdeveloped in nearly all indicators. At this time, hospital beds were available at a ratio of one to every 1,000 members of the population. Schooling was provided only to the 35,000 children who happened to live in settled towns.[94] These figures were coupled with a dearth of housing, power supplies, communication technologies, and a reliance on subsistence farming. In the relatively short life of the federation, these deficits have been nearly reversed. Much of this development coincided with the more profitable agreements the Zayed government brokered with international oil companies who previously controlled the entire industry's production, transportation, refinement, and marketing.

Naturally, such accelerated development was be accompanied by growing pains. Leveraged beyond the experience and understanding of officials in the financial sector, the

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[92] Khalifa, Ali Mohammed. *The United Arab Emirates: unity in fragmentation*. London: Croom Helm; Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979.
[93] This excludes the discoveries made since the 1970s that allow the region to export nearly 3.5 million barrels per day in 2010.
[94] Frank A. Clements. *United Arab Emirates*. Oxford (GB): Clio press, 1998.

country endured a banking crisis in the early 1990s. An unsophisticated banking system that lacked the proper controls could not support the demands of a booming economic.[95] Sectors such as construction advanced at a tremendous pace, though port facilities suffered and docking space was a rare commodity. At its worst, ships were forced to anchor in the Gulf with perishable cargoes waiting to be unloaded. The greatest shortcoming of the federation's early development, encompassing many of its discrete errors, was the lack of an overall strategy to guide development. As a result, the prominent projects to build government buildings, educational facilities for all levels, hospitals, ports, and palaces cost far more in the UAE than in other developing countries. These consequences highlight the tremendous importance of strong leadership and expertise for technical and managerial success [Appendix B].[96] Now under the rule of Sheikh Zayed's son, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed, the emirate of Abu Dhabi has embarked on a plan for large-scale growth that requires immediate action for long-term results.[97]

Plan Abu Dhabi 2030: Abu Dhabi and Saadiyat Island

"We move fast," Emirati developer Khaldoon Khalifa al Mubarak said in a 2007 interview.[98] Khaldoon leads a government-owned investment company, Mubadala Development, responsible for supervising global investment projects in places such as Libya and Nigeria. Fast is a pace that is nearly breathtaking in comparison to typical government

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[95] For further information, please refer to: J. Greenwald,. "Taken for a royal ride." *Time* 138 (1997): 46-8.
[96] Abbas J. Ali, Ahmed Azim. "A cross-national perspective on managerial problems in a non-Western country." *Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 136, no. 2 (1996): 165-72.
[97] Zayed's eldest son, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed, inherited his father's role in the government and is now both the emir of Abu Dhabi and president of the UAE. Please refer to Appendix B for a more complete explanation of the historical background to Abu Dhabi's development, particularly in relation to Dubai.
[98] Khaldoon leads the government-owned investment company, Mubadala Development, and answers directly to the crown prince of Abu Dhabi, Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, who is next in line to become the President of the United Arab Emirates. Barney Gimbel. "The Richest City in the World." *Fortune.* March 19, 2007: 168-76.

building programs. Two years is sufficient time in Abu Dhabi for the construction of an international airport, 15,000 hotel rooms, with more infrastructure already planned.[99] It is no coincidence that the plans for Abu Dhabi, including hospitals, universities, museums, and skyscrapers, closely resemble the existing developments in Dubai. Though the country was built with profits from extraction, the region recognizes the need to address the changing global attitudes toward oil and technological advancement.[100]

In 2006, the Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council (UPC) released a document called the Urban Structure Framework Plan or, as it is popularly referred to, "Plan Abu Dhabi 2030."[101] The plan was a 25-year projection of growth outlining how, and for what purpose, development will continue on the island of Abu Dhabi [Figure 11]. Spurred by the opportunity for rapid and large-scale expansion, the Abu Dhabi UPC developed "Plan Abu Dhabi 2030" as:

> A coherent picture for the future of the City of Abu Dhabi as an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable community and as an increasingly important National capital. It provides for a way to grow and take advantage of the economic opportunities at hand without sacrificing the best of the city and while adding new elements to make it a great world metropolis.[102]

The document goes on to describe the "building blocks" by which developers will create a dynamic urban environment. Furthermore, the overarching themes of social cohesion and economic sustainability call for a reorganization of the city's infrastructure. This structure will facilitate movement within and enjoyment of the city of Abu Dhabi's residents and,

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[99] Abu Dhabi now features the international carrier, Etihad Airways, and the Emirates Palace hotel.
[100] At the current rate of production, Abu Dhabi's reserves will likely last another 50-90 years. Davidson, Christopher. "Abu Dhabi's new economy: oil, investment and domestic development." *Middle East Policy* 16.2.
[101] "Plan Abu Dhabi 2030" is the first program of large-scale expansion within its region. Decisive actions carried out in its accordance will become benchmarks for future urban design in the UAE and the greater Middle East.
[102] Urban Structure Framework Plan, page 19.

perhaps more importantly, visitors and tourists. To achieve the aesthetic and organization of an efficient capital city, the Plan also calls for the creation of precincts. These areas distribute key infrastructures across the city to maximize Abu Dhabi's liveability for residents and navigability for visitors on business or pleasure. Arguably the most notable new precinct is Saadiyat Island.

Masterplan: The Island of Happiness

Saadiyat Island, meaning "Island of Happiness," is a large island off the coast of the primary island city of Abu Dhabi. Referred to by the Urban Planning Council as a "key character area," Abu Dhabi's expansion will further develop the precinct of Saadiyat Island into seven distinct districts: Saadiyat Beach, Retreat, Lagoons, Reserve, Promenade, Marina, and the controversial Cultural District. As parcels of the land are dedicated to specific projects, Abu Dhabi's TDIC assumes a supervisory role over private investors who develop their sites according to the regulations put forth in the Urban Structure Framework Plan. Several projects have been announced and are currently in the initial stages of development. Abu Dhabi's development projects have already attracted widespread media attention after details were released regarding the cooperating partners who will develop specific sites.

The Cultural District has garnered the most international attention as it will host an array of institutions that seek to define the future of the museological community [Figure 12]. Currently the most impressive aspect of the master plan for the Cultural District is the roster of architects who will design the museums and performing arts center for Saadiyat

Island.[103] On January 31, 2007, TDIC, a company established by the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority to control operations on Saadiyat Island, announced the commissions of the architects who will design four of the five arts institutions that define the Cultural District. In the press release, Frank Gehry, Jean Nouvel, Tadao Ando and Zaha Hadid were named as the architects for the following projects respectively: the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the Maritime Museum, and the Performing Arts Center. This initial press release also gave details of the designs for the Guggenheim and Performing Arts Center [Figure 13]. The announcement attracted early interest in the project and introduced a cultural complex that would exceed the greatest arts institutions in the world if only for the proximity of designs by so many "starchitects."[104]

The last of the projects announced but the first to be completed, in 2012, is the Zayed National Museum that celebrates the life of the UAE's first president, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (1918-2004), and his contributions to the country's development. Foster + Partners from the UK will provide the plans, unreleased at the time of this writing, for the Zayed National Museum whose operations will be supervised by the British Museum. Next to be completed, in 2013, is the Louvre Abu Dhabi, designed by Jean Nouvel that will open as the "classical museum" presenting traditional masterpieces in all mediums from around the world.

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[103] Architects and their commissioned designs: Jean Nouvel for the Louvre Abu Dhabi, Frank Gehry for the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, Zaha Hadid for the Performing Arts Center, and Tadao Ando for the Maritime Museum. Later, Foster + Norman was commissioned for the National Museum. Four of the five architects are Pritzker Prize winners and all are internationally renowned. The Pritzker Prize is the highest distinction to be awarded in the practice of architecture.

[104] Star + architect, also known as a starchitect, describes an architect whose celebrity transcends the architectural world and has some degree of recognition amongst the general public. Their celebrity is a function of their avant-gardist novelty and is exploited by developers to obtain financial support for and add value to their building projects.

The Louvre in Abu Dhabi: Jean Nouvel

Jean Nouvel's design for the Louvre Abu Dhabi draws on his tradition of incorporating the climatic features and history of the site into the physical structure of his project. Central to his plan are forms integral to Arabian architecture, which Nouvel describes as an "island on an island."[105] This aptly describes the collection of buildings, ponds, and landscaping arranged similar to that of an ancient city that will be covered by a dome jutting out over the sea on the coast of Saadiyat Island [Figure 14]. The 180-meter dome is the complex's most distinctive feature, a lace-like skin hovering over the museum's enclosed gallery spaces and open walkways. Nouvel was inspired by design motifs from the mashrabiya, a decorative screen that covers windows and balconies without inhibiting air flow [Figure 15].[106] The museum structure will encompass 260,000 square feet, with 65,000 square feet of exhibition space for permanent collections and another 22,000 square feet for temporary exhibitions. Working with Nouvel, French museographer Nathalie Crinière won the commission to create the exhibition design.[107] The commission includes developing a graphic identity, lighting scheme, curatorial and directional signage, and multimedia elements.[108] Crinière's contributions provide further opportunities for the museum to brand itself as a franchise of the Louvre while enhancing the vision of Nouvel's design.

Like a mashrabiya, the dome's diffuse lighting system allows greater interaction

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[105] TDIC website for Saadiyat Island, Louvre Abu Dhabi: The Building.

[106] Mashrabiyas emerged as an artistic and decorative element as early as the 14th century. Their original function was to shade alcoves where water was stored to cool. As the screens became more decorative their use was expanded to cover windows in private quarters to allow for airflow and cooling of residents. Simultaneously they act as a window, curtain, air conditioner and refrigerator. Traditionally, these screens are made out of wood and intricately carved with lines from the Quran or motifs of water ewers and hanging lamps.

[107] The competition jury panel was chaired by: Sheikh Sultan Bin Tahnoun Al Nahyan, chairman of TDIC; Henri Loyrette, director of the Musee du Louvre; Bruno Maquart, general director of Agence France-Museums; Jean Nouvel, architect; and Lee Tabler, CEO of TDIC."Nathalie Criniere chosen to create the design for Louvre Abu Dhabi." *Gulf News,* January 7, 2009. 2 Nov 2009 <http://gulfnews.com>.

[108] Young, Niki May. "Louvre Abu Dhabi Exhibition Architect Announced." *World Architecture News*. 2 November 2009 <http://www.worldarchitecturenews.com>.

between the museum's interior gallery spaces and outdoor environment. In this arid climate, architectural engineering will provide what Nouvel describes as a "rain of light."[109] Although Abu Dhabi enjoys 320 days of sunlight, the building required an opaque skin that protects open spaces and visitors. This design element is a revolutionary technique for lighting the corridors and open spaces between galleries [Figure 16].[110] Two five-layer sections, each made of different geometric patterns, will allow 30% of the sun's rays through the top layer and 3% through the innermost layer. Once complete, the roof will create a constantly changing effect recalling sunlight filtering through the fronds of a date palm [Figure 17]. Conceptually, Nouvel's design emphasizes a free flow between interior and exterior spaces reminiscent of a *souq*, or local market found in the Middle East. Nouvel claims this fusion of east meets west to be a symbolic link between world cultures.[111]

A unique aspect of the Cultural District project is that the sites of the Louvre, Guggenheim, and Zayed National Museums are located on an island without any existing structures. To confront this challenge (and opportunity) Nouvel said: "I research the character of the missing piece of the puzzle in a city. Hence, my buildings are different each time and more related to its cultural, economical and social context."[112] Nouvel is familiar with Arabic design elements and the environmental characteristics defining the region. Previously he garnered critical acclaim for his design of L'Institut du Monde Arabe (Institute of the Arab World) in Paris, France [Figure 18]. Like he will repeat in Abu Dhabi, the most striking feature of Nouvel's Parisian glass and steel structure is seen on the exterior. Light-

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[109] Bradley Hope. "'Rain of Light' for Louvre Abu Dhabi." *The National*. 14 December 2009 <http://www.thenational.ae>.
[110] Some gallery spaces beneath the dome may feature more conventional methods such as skylights. A lighting system for nighttime hours is still being developed.
[111] Heiko Klaas for *Speigel Online*, 9 February 2007.
[112] Sona Nambiar. "Transparent Film to Protect Louvre Abu Dhabi from Rain." *Emirates Business 24-7*. 7 December 2009 <http://www.business24-7.ae>.

sensitive metallic apertures on the building's façade adjust to allow for varying amounts of sun to penetrate the interior gallery, library, and office spaces. From outside, the autonomic movements of the diaphragms recall the shifting patterns of an Islamic pierced screen.[113]

Nouvel's commission for the Institute came from the Grand Projets campaign of President Francois Mitterand during the 1980s.[114] Originally, L'Institut du Monde Arabe was built to advance the country's exposure to Arab culture while acknowledging France's colonial interventions in the region. Now more than a decade later, the construction of the Louvre Abu Dhabi reflects the profound shifts in relations between France and Arab regions. Nouvel has designed the first universal museum to be built outside of the Western world that nevertheless bears the name of the Louvre, an institution with a colonial past.

Bigger than Bilbao: Frank Gehry and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi

Early in 2008, the Board of the Guggenheim announced that Krens would be stepping down as director, only to take a more active role as the Foundation's Senior Advisor for International Affairs. Krens' reassignment seems to more appropriately align the former director's interests in marketing and expansion with logistical rather than purely artistic details of museum operation. His first task as advisor will be to supervise the completion of the Abu Dhabi project. Abu Dhabi's branch will be the largest Guggenheim museum to be built to date at 450,000 square feet, which is 35% larger than Bilbao. The scale and scope of the new franchise is set to exceed the precedents set by any existing contemporary art museum.

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[113] Dennis Sharp. *Twentieth Century Architecture: a Visual History*. New York: Facts on File, 1990.
[114] Mitterand launched the Grand Projets campaign as a civic building program in Paris. All of the buildings erected for the campaign are public in nature and serve as cultural institutions or government offices.

The chief way that Krens will ensure the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi becomes "one of the greatest new institutions in the world," while competing in the modern global marketplace, is with the museum's physical structure. Drawing on his experience developing the Guggenheim Bilbao, Krens projected the importance of architecture onto the sustainability of museums. "After Bilbao, everyone recognized that we need museums that are architecturally unique -- but that also offer content that appeals to people... That's the effect I wanted to achieve. It's technology, cosmology, science and religion, all thrown together. Breathtaking."[115] Like Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim and Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Bilbao, structural mass and innovation will play a role equally, if not more, important than the collection for the Abu Dhabi satellite.

Frank Gehry, architect of the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi as well as its international predecessor in Bilbao, Spain, must also draw on his experience of transplanting universal institutions into local cultures. In this sense, his approach is similar to Nouvel's method of drawing on ancient Arabic architecture to inform a strikingly modern structure. Like Nouvel, the footprint of the building is based on an organically grown Arab village or town with corridors between galleries that resemble streets, alleys, and plazas. The Guggenheim Abu Dhabi's exterior incorporates dramatic conical forms inspired by wind-towers that were historically used in the region [Figure 19]. Serving as more than elements of visual interest, the cones will provide an ecologically friendly method of ventilating and cooling the museum's covered courtyards. A modern air-conditioning system will still cool the core of the building. Gehry imagines the experience inside the building will "be an adventure, a kind of walk through a town with art along the way."[116] At 452,000 square feet, the newest

[115] Krens' inspiration was the effect a cathedral of the Middle Ages had on pilgrims coming from the country into the city. From interview.
[116] Frank Gehry. "My Abu Dhabi Adventure." *guardian.co.uk*. 14 December 2009

branch in the Guggenheim family will be the largest to date and the only one in the Middle East.[117] The 130,000 square feet devoted to gallery space also makes this museum the largest of those planned on Saadiyat Island. Twentieth and twenty-first century contemporary art from the around the world will be displayed in these gallery spaces. Special preference will be given to exhibiting works demonstrating major developments from Arab, Islamic, and other Middle Eastern arts. Beyond their functions of their previous museum branches, the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi will put a special emphasis on education and collaboration with other local and regional arts institutions. Recognized for better or worse as a global innovator, Gehry's design for the newest Guggenheim is expected to set a benchmark for future contemporary art museums with global ambitions.

Trending Upward: Constructing Cultural Opportunities

In the effort to create a preeminent cultural oasis, TDIC chose to exceed expectations and push the bounds of imagination by commissioning a unique aesthetic for the Cultural District of Saadiyat Island. At first glance, any of these structures creates a swell of interest as the latest addition to the growing collection of destination museums created by starchitects around the world. Together, the effect of the Louvre and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi is overwhelmingly magnetic - exactly the response that the Tourism Authority is hoping to provoke. To strengthen the primacy of the cultural movement taking place in Abu Dhabi, and solidify its role as a social and political leader in the Middle East, the developers sought the greatest names in contemporary architecture.

Ironically, these choices will also draw great attention to the problems these

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<http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/artblog/2007/mar/05/myabudhabiadventure>.

[117] From Guggenheim Museum's initial press release announcing the expansion. Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation. "Guggenheim Abu Dhabi." Guggenheim. 2 December 2009 <http://www.guggenheim.org/guggenheim-foundation/architecture/abu-dhabi>.

institutions seek to solve by highlighting the shortcomings and controversies of the museum as a cultural institution. At this early stage it is difficult to determine the success of these designs in conveying both international relevance and local integrity as competitors in the global market for visitors, exhibitions, and novelty. Certainly the goal is to create an exceptional city within the framework put forth by the "Plan Abu Dhabi 2030" to support the key aspects of Emirati identity: state, culture, and religion.[118]

At the same time, Abu Dhabi's quest to become a leader in cultural tourism and international business is fraught with peril when interactions between local and regional institutions attract global interest. Particularly in the case of Saadiyat Island, the deeply religious beliefs of the native population contrast sharply with the largely liberal, tolerant, and exuberant art world. Cultural biases threaten to divide the project philosophically while practical differences suggest that the users and providers also disagree about the eminence of economic or esthetic interests.

However, a critical look into deeper social and political implications illuminate fundamental shifts within the museological community and exemplify underlying problems in its practices. On April 17, 2007, just two and a half months after the first announcement regarding the architects commissioned for the projects, TDIC issued another press release celebrating the 30-year cultural accord reached between the government of Abu Dhabi and the Republic of France.[119] Touted as a "unique milestone" in international relations, the press release confirmed that several French art museums, including the Musée du Quai

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[118] Identified by the *Urban Structure Framework Plan: Capital City Framework* as the driving principles behind the concept of movement- or how a visitor arrives and travels through the city. These aspects define spaces for commemoration, celebration, and distinguish Abu Dhabi as a Royal City.
[119] *Louvre Abu Dhabi to be Created Within the Saadiyat Island Cultural District*. April 17, 2007 <http://www.saadiyat.ae/>.

Branly, Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée d'Orsay, Versailles, Guimet, Rodin, and the Réunion des Musées Nationaux would provide long-term loans to the Louvre Abu Dhabi.

Of all the institutions listed in the accord, the Louvre museum will be the key participant in the exchange of visual material, museological resources, and brand recognition. Former French President and supporter of the arts Jacques Chirac said of the agreement:

> By choosing the Louvre, the emirate of Abu Dhabi not only sealed a partnership with the world's most visited and well-known museum, but selected one which, from its very inception, had a vocation to reach out to the world, to the essence of mankind, through the contemplation of works of art.[120]

In effect, the French museum system also secured funding for its national cultural assets. The details of the agreement read more like a financial deal than a cultural exchange. On March 6, 2007, the French Culture Minister Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres and Sheik Sultan bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan of the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority signed an accord stipulating that in exchange for:

- $750 million, the Louvre will provide the services of French managers, 300 loaned artworks, and staff to launch and administer to the Louvre Abu Dhabi;
- $525 million, the Louvre will allow the Abu Dhabi institution to use its name;
- $33 million, the Louvre will receive as a gift to renovate a wing of the Pavillon de Flore in the Paris Louvre that will house international art and will be named after Sheik Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan; [121]

Referring to the contract, the Louvre's president, Henri Loyrette, told the Agence-France Presse in Abu Dhabi that, "It's a fair fee for the concession of the name. This tutelary role deserves reward. It's normal."[122] Normal, however, precludes the additional $108 million

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[120] Al Bawaba Group. "Louvre Abu Dhabi to be Created Within the Saadiyat Island Cultural District." *Mena Report*. 27 October 2009 <http://www.menareport.com/en/business/210487>.
[121] Associated Press. "Louvre to Build Branch in Abu Dhabi." *MSNBC*. 27 October 2009 <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17482641>.
[122] Alan Riding. "The Louvre's Art: Priceless. The Louvre's Name: Expensive." *New York Times,* March 7, 2007.

cost of constructing Jean Nouvel's design for the Abu Dhabi museum. After announcing the collaboration and consequent details of the agreement, the French government faced both commendation and outrage for their business model that fundamentally changed the nature of France's national collection of art.

For supporters, like France's former President Jacques Chirac, the museum represents a wealth of opportunity for both the nation and the museum's visitors, embodying the commitment of the French Republic and the United Arab Emirates to economic and social cooperation. Notably, the same New York Times article that reported the details of the contract also released economic trade figures between the two countries. Over the last 10 years, the UAE has ordered 40 *Airbus 380* aircrafts and purchased approximately $10.4 billion worth of arms from France. Now the Louvre Abu Dhabi represents the potential to recreate "Bilbao Effect" in the Middle East. This model highlights the role of architecture, rather than industrialization, in successful urban renewal programs.[123] Bilbao, Spain experienced spectacular success in attracting positive attention and tourists to the Basque region after partnering with the Guggenheim [Figure 20].[124] In the museological community, however, the Guggenheim Bilbao offered more than an example of the monetary benefits of franchises. The project also energized the debate about the future of museums concerning the institution's responsibility to its public as well as the ethical concerns of cultural appropriation.

Presumably, in the name of political unity and cultural sensitivity, the Louvre has embraced growing economic trends based on trade and cultural tourism sweeping the globe. Critics, however, have been skeptical of France's motivations for entering into the

[123] Bilbao, Spain, as of 1997, features a Frank Gehry-designed Guggenheim of its own and is the most successful example of former Guggenheim Director Thomas Krens' expansionary model.
[124] The Basque region was previously best known for its political instability that was often marked by terrorist activity. Bilbao was also home to a defunct steel manufacturing industry.

accord. They predict a distortion of the Louvre's values through fragmentation of its impressive collection and warn against the possibility of artistic censorship. In the process of expanding, the museum has had to forfeit its position of not trading philanthropic financial assistance in exchange for gallery naming and dedications. These fears also arise in response to comments like the ones made by Mubarak Al-Muhairi, deputy chairman of the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority. In a 2007 interview, Al-Muhairi ambiguously rebuffed concerns about censorship of loans featuring figural Christian art or exhibitions with nude imagery. "In principle, there are no restrictions, but both sides will agree on what is shown."[125]

If Walls Could Speak: *Talking Art* in the Louvre Abu Dhabi

Nearly two years after France entered into the partnership with the Emirati government, construction on the Louvre Abu Dhabi was celebrated with an exhibition to preview some of the works that will appear in the museum. The exhibition, *Talking Art: Louvre Abu Dhabi*, included 19 works, some purchased specifically for the museum and others loaned from French national museums. With a budget of $56 million a year, a French team of curators is responsible for acquisitions and building a collection that seeks to honor both cultures of which the Louvre Abu Dhabi is a part. "We want this to be a collection of masterpieces that make sense together, that have soul and that will form a dialogue with different civilizations."[126] This dialogue is how the Louvre plans to respectfully establish a universal museum in Abu Dhabi.

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[125] Alan Riding. "The Louvre's Art: Priceless. The Louvre's Name: Expensive." *New York Times*, March 7, 2007.
[126] Quote from Laurence des Cars, a curatorial director from Agence France-Muséums, the French public organization who will supervise the museum project. Carol Vogel. "Abu Dhabi Gets a Sampler of World Art." *New York Times.* May26, 2009, New York: C1.

Cutting across time and space, the works from the *Talking Art* exhibit, which took place at the Emirates Palace hotel, ranged from ancient Greek ceramics to paintings by Edouard Manet from 1862: *The Bohemian* and *Still Life with Bag and Garlic*. These were shown with an engraving of Manet's original composition that he separated to create the smaller canvases, which will be reunited at the Louvre Abu Dhabi [Figure 21, 22, 23].[127] Paul Cézanne's *Rocks Near the Caves Above Château Noir* will be on loan from the Musée d'Orsay [Figure 24]. Currently, there are no permanent acquisitions to represent art from areas such as Africa. However, a 19th-century wood Tsonga headrest from Zambia and a wooden stool from Benin, two loans from the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, serve as placeholders for *les arts premiers*.

More than just discrete examples of the objects' time periods and sculptures, the Louvre Abu Dhabi created a space that exemplifies the best opportunity available in a universal museum - a comparative environment. At the exhibition, curators placed a sculpture of Christ facing the head of a Buddha, near a 14th-century Koran.

> The scientific and cultural project of [the] Louvre Abu Dhabi takes the importance of this symbol [the universal museum] and translates it into an original museographic form. The Louvre Abu Dhabi will be a fine arts museum whose purpose and scope are universal. It will present thus paintings, drawings, sculptures, manuscripts, archaeological findings, decorative arts ... created and collected all over the world. The museum will be designed for the XXIst century and dedicated to the people living or visiting the Emirates. The galleries will showcase dialogue between art from different civilizations and cultures around the world, stretching from the most remotely immemorial to the very latest, while overstepping boundaries between techniques, and between civilizations and geographic regions.[128]

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[127] Other items reported in Carol Vogel's account of the exhibit include: a standing bodhisattva from the second to third century A.D.; a Chinese white marble head of Buddha from the Northern Qi Dynasty, A.D. 550-577; a 16th-century Venetian polychrome painted copper ewer; a 1480 Bellini *Madonna and Child*; a 16th-century Bavarian/Austrian sculpture of Jesus; Jean-François de Troy's *Esther Fainting Before Ahaseurus* of 1730; two items from the estate of Yves Saint Laurent: 1920s African-style stool and Mondrian's *Composition With Blue, Red, Yellow and Black* of 1922. As reported in Carol Vogel's "Abu Dhabi Gets a Sampler of World Art."

[128] Tourist Development Investment Company. "Louvre Abu Dhabi: The Concept." *Saadiyat Island- Island of Happiness*. December 2, 2009 <http://www.saadiyat.ae>.

The symbol to which this passage refers is the Louvre Abu Dhabi's unique position as the first universal museum to be constructed outside the Western world. Its universal spirit will abolish the boundaries of what "animates" author Donald Preziosi's museology: a single collection of objects as a fragment of the ideal whole that no discrete institution could fulfill.[129] Recognizing this deficiency in modern museological practices, certain artists and institutions have commented on the narrow-minded narrative that many museums offer.

Artist Fred Wilson engaged this problem quite poignantly in his 1992 exhibition "Mining the Museum" at the Baltimore Historical Society.[130] Years before the museum curators of the *Talking Art* exhibition, Wilson promoted the use of startlingly contradictory objects as compositional devices.[131] Drawing on common curatorial practices, Wilson revolutionized the visitor's experience with the art by juxtaposing art objects to provoke a deeper analysis of their meanings. In this way, the museum and its collection became the tools and product of Wilson's artistic vision. Wilson's treatment that narrated Maryland's history of slavery relied mainly on the power of the objects rather than textual evidence. Reviewer Philip L. Ravenhill commended Wilson for highlighting how history is remembered and the accretion of practices that shape contemporary interpretation.[132]

An important revelation from Wilson's work is that display practices strongly influence the visitor's analysis of the exhibition. To foster a constructive dialogue in a universal museum, both local citizens and visitors must be able to take pride in, and be educated by, the objects that demonstrate their place amongst all the world's cultures. Counted amongst the objects that curators have at their disposal is the museum's physical structure.

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[129] Donald Preziosi. *Grasping the World: the Idea of the Museum*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2004.
[130] "Mining the Museum: An Installation by Fred Wilson." The Contemporary and Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, MD. 1992.
[131] For example, Wilson placed a Ku Klux Klan mask in an Edwardian-era baby carriage.
[132] Philip L. Ravenhill. 1993. "Review of Mining the Museum". African Arts. 26, no. 3: 72-73.

Wilson views the museum as his "palette."[133] The Louvre and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi are particularly rich palettes. Based as they are on local architectural designs and stamped with a Western brand name and practices, the buildings will provoke visitors. Questions will arise about artistic value, cultural biases, and the ability to determine historical truth. Instead, the thoughtful universal museum will address but cannot hope to fully answer these questions. Exhibitionary practices that complement the architecture of the gallery spaces, such as lighting, placards, and placement of objects suggest the means by which visitors will form their questions. Careful (if jarring) juxtapositions of objects, each representing a local culture, allow visitors to engage in a broad comparative study.

This shall be the true importance and value of the universal museum, an institution of conversation, healthy skepticism, and contemplation. In the very near future, these two powerhouse museums, formerly separated by time, space, and specialty, will stand together as cornerstones of a progressive renewal plan. It remains to be seen whether this plan, which advanced the practices of the museological community, will endure to redefine the "international arts and cultural horizon."[134]

Conclusion: Realizing the Possibilities of the Universal

Open economies, improved modes of transportation, and greater cultural interaction characterize the global marketplace in which today's museums compete. These unavoidable forces of globalization catalyzed the evolution of the fundamental nature of the museum. "Globalization" collectively describes the driving forces that shaped the marketplace into which museums must reassert their legitimacy as cultural institutions. The public, inundated

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[133] Art: 21. "Museums and Collections." 27 April 2010 <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/wilson/clip1.html>.
[134] Tourism Development Investment Company. "Cultural District." *Arts Abu Dhabi*. November 9, 2009 <http://www.artsabudhabi.ae/en/Content/Cultural_District.aspx>.

with information transmitted by advancing technologies, has difficulty defining its relationship to the museum institution. Directors are being forced to reevaluate their museum's role as a guarantor of cultural preservation, an agent of cultural interaction, and a channel for economic growth. Their response has been to re-prioritize their core functions - collecting, exhibition, conservation, and research - by adopting the expansionary model that promotes branding and franchising to the detriment of the latter functions.

At the same time, developing local economies who wish to survive and thrive in the global marketplace also participate in the expansionary model. One of the most exciting aspects of these partnerships is that they are yet to be completely understood. Previous scholars on global expansionism have failed to examine the fundamentally different relationship in museum projects that now occur in developing regions of the world. Carol Duncan, writing from little more than a decade ago, dismissed cultural exchanges between developed and developing nations. They were simply the attempts of princes and despots to attract foreign aid and investment in their countries by showing respect for, and adherence to, Western values.[135] The situation now is very nearly reversed. New capital leaders from developing outposts draw Western institutions, like the Guggenheim and now the Louvre, into cooperative relationships in the pursuit of culture. Leading institutions are incentivized to capitulate to the cultural needs of emerging players in the global market, whose values are more firmly rooted in local traditions. These rapidly growing economies promise financial support that their Western counterparts cannot.

Universal museums are now the centerpiece of many urban renewal programs, such as the one in Bilbao, Spain and the highly anticipated Abu Dhabi project. By design, these museums are liminal spaces where the interaction of cultures is synthesized and visitors

[135] Carol Duncan. *Civilizing Rituals: inside Public Art Museums*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

may question how they view the world. Spectacular architecture, branded with the image of a trusted cultural institution, has proven to attract international media attention and appeals to visitors. The ability of developing economies to host these projects sends a signal to the rest of the world: cities such as Abu Dhabi are an extraordinary place to conduct business, enjoy leisure time, and experience a world-class culture. As a result, the world is induced to visit a reflection of the myriad cultures from which they come as Abu Dhabi presents a universally appealing destination. The universal museum, by its very name, seeks to be all things to all people. However, the institutions that strive for universal appeal also threaten the regions that welcome them. The dangers of hegemony and implied cultural bankruptcy in the host region are intrinsic to these "universal," inherently Western, institutions.

A major criticism of globalization decries the homogeneity that results from increased interactions between cultures and the transmission of products around the world. To participate in the global marketplace, developing regions perpetuate the dominance of Western institutions by inviting them to shape the development of local cultural assets. Cited as leaders in the museological world, the Louvre and Guggenheim museums have leveraged their position to provide a guide for "best practices" in these projects. Critics rightfully question how the expansionary model, which pairs such powerful institutions with developing economies, can transcend the perceived disadvantages of globalization. The architectural projects by Jean Nouvel and Frank Gehry for the Saadiyat Island Cultural District herald the latest transgression of borders and shifting power dynamics in the global market and cultural arena.

Overall, the visual and experiential effect of the museums in the Cultural District will surely impress the public and perhaps there will be fewer skeptics of the universal museum's role and social function. However, even former critics, including the Louvre, must

continue to question and examine the strategy of the expansionist model. As the newest trend in museological practice, the model employs stunning architecture to house deaccessioned objects that disperse the original collection to build an institution's brand name. Ironically, the ideal of the universal museum developed as a means rather than an end in itself. Growing social and financial pressures on the museum institution requires the community to justify its mere existence in the rapidly changing political and technological frontier of the era of globalization.

The projects in Abu Dhabi that will determine the immediate success of the universal museum are still in planning stages. The benefits, and consequences, to the participants in the expansionary model have yet to be fully realized. Yet part of the beauty of this future trend in the museological community is that it subverts the traditional power structure of "west" over "east." Developing local governments, who adopt western institutions to speed their entrance into the global economy, are able to retain at least a modicum of authority by controlling the partnerships' capital flows. As a word of caution though, universal museums must be careful not to devolve exclusively into displays of wealth, power, and privilege for their host cities. The best end is the one where local citizens and visitors take pride in, and are educated by, their place amongst all the world's cultures that are cross-sectioned in a universal museum. Ideally, the objects in the Louvre and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi are not fragments of broken local cultures but can be used for comparative study.

The undeniable truth of the arts institution is that, "Every museum has a crucial responsibility to … encourage [its constituencies] to be constructive citizens of the world."[136] As it may be seen, there are compelling social, political, and cultural benefits to the

[136] Douglas Evelyn. "American Museums in Global Communities: A Report from AAM/ICOM." *Curator* 48 no. 1 (2005): 20-2.

universal museum as the future trend of the museological community. Skeptics perform an equally important role in realizing the potential of this trend by challenging its speculation in what are truly the museum's "best practices." These discussions signal the advancement of social autonomy and freedom of expression. Visitors have developed beyond their Enlightenment counterparts who could only express gratitude and admiration. Now they provide a critical assessment of the practice's effectiveness, which museums must carefully heed.

More than ever, the museum institution is an integral component of global societies. While their collections and intellectual property may be shared electronically, the brick-and-mortar structure of a museum is an increasingly crucial aspect of the institution's success. Even if it is for no other reason than to remind visitors of their critical voice. When a less egregious alternative is devised, the forces of globalization (or a post-global universalism) will encourage a convicted group to assert it. For now, the museological community is embarking, with trepidation and hope, on a model for the future: one that conserves and enhances cultures in a universal context.

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Appendix A: Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums

The international museum community shares the conviction that illegal traffic in archaeological, artistic, and ethnic objects must be firmly discouraged. We should, however, recognize that objects acquired in earlier times must be viewed in the light of different sensitivities and values, reflective of that earlier era. The objects and monumental works that were installed decades and even centuries ago in museums throughout Europe and America were acquired under conditions that are not comparable with current ones.

Over time, objects so acquired—whether by purchase, gift, or partage—have become part of the museums that have cared for them, and by extension part of the heritage of the nations which house them. Today we are especially sensitive to the subject of a work's original context, but we should not lose sight of the fact that museums too provide a valid and valuable context for objects that were long ago displaced from their original source.

The universal admiration for ancient civilizations would not be so deeply established today were it not for the influence exercised by the artifacts of these cultures, widely available to an international public in major museums. Indeed, the sculpture of classical Greece, to take but one example, is an excellent illustration of this point and of the importance of public collecting. The centuries-long history of appreciation of Greek art began in antiquity, was renewed in Renaissance Italy, and subsequently spread through the rest of Europe and to the Americas. Its accession into the collections of public museums throughout the world marked the significance of Greek sculpture for mankind as a whole and its enduring value for the contemporary world. Moreover, the distinctly Greek aesthetic of these works appears all the more strongly as the result of their being seen and studied in direct proximity to products of other great civilizations.

Calls to repatriate objects that have belonged to museum collections for many years have become an important issue for museums. Although each case has to be judged individually, we should acknowledge that museums serve not just the citizens of one nation but the people of every nation. Museums are agents in the development of culture, whose mission is to foster knowledge by a continuous process of reinterpretation. Each object contributes to that process. To narrow the focus of museums whose collections are diverse and multifaceted would therefore be a disservice to all visitors.

Signed by the Directors of:

The Art Institute of Chicago
Bavarian State Museum, Munich (Alte Pinakothek, Neue Pinakothek)
State Museums, Berlin
Cleveland Museum of Art
J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Louvre Museum, Paris
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence
Philadelphia Museum of Art
Prado Museum, Madrid
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg
Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Appendix B: The Legacy of Sheikh Zayed

Despite initial financial and political setbacks, Sheikh Zayed's reign, ending upon his death in 2004, is a testament to modernization and diplomacy in the Middle East region. Much of Zayed's legacy and his relatively smooth transition into power were made possible by encouraging foreign entities to prospect in the newly discovered oil reserves. At the same time, Zayed fiercely protected the rights of the Emiratis. To curb the domineering influence of outside investors, legislative policy prevented them from owning land. A sparsely populated country, the UAE has drawn an enormous immigrant labor force with their massive building projects.[137] These workers, like outside investors, also could not purchase land, leaving wealth and influence in the nation mainly in the hands of the minority. Structured as such, the United Arab Emirates is cited as "the best example of a capital-rich state suffering from severely limited indigenous human resources, but experiencing spectacular economic growth."[138] This structure has contributed to statistics showing the UAE as one of the wealthiest countries, especially in terms of GDP per capita.[139]

Under the loose political structure of Sheikh Zayed, Dubai was free to implement its own land ownership laws. In 1997, Dubai legalized property sales to nationals of the UAE and five years later established districts where foreigners could buy as well.[140] This fundamental difference in attitude toward nationals and non-citizens set Dubai apart as a fully developed urban landscape, despite Abu Dhabi's vast wealth and resources. Dubai was able to offer a significant investment opportunity for nationals and residents, the

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[137] Workers have primarily immigrated to the United Arab Emirates from the Indian subcontinent and South East Asia.
[138] Birks, J. S., and C. A. Sinclair. *Arab Manpower: The Crisis of Development*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980.
[139] In 1990, Abu Dhabi in particular was exporting oil for a profit of more than $50,000 per citizen. "Sheikh Zayed." *The Economist* 20 Nov 2004: 90.
[140] Gimbel, Barney. "The Richest City in the World." Fortune 19 Mar 2007: 168-76.

domestic impact of which cannot be underestimated.[141] A subsequent massive development project allowed Dubai to become a high-class international tourist destination. Critics of Sheikh Zayed's conservative protectionism blamed him for restricting Abu Dhabi's property laws that held the city's growth behind that of its neighboring emirate.

The impetus behind such a policy change was an effort to diversify the economy. By the 1990s, the emirates began to recognize both the finite quality of oil and its allied products as well as advancing technology to curb oil consumption. Dubai was the first to capitalize on its other resources, namely its good weather, well-developed infrastructure, and policy for competitive pricing in hotel accommodations.[142] Regional stability to promote a secure destination precipitated the foundation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981.[143] These factors naturally led to the emirate's movement into the tourism sector. Initially, Dubai marketed itself as an ideal European winter retreat and that focus has expanded to a worldwide clientele.[144] The state, however, found its greatest success in attracting business visitors and exposed itself to significant debt to financially support development projects aimed at increasing tourist traffic.[145]

If Zayed's policies are to be admired, it is for preventing Abu Dhabi's demise like the one witnessed by Dubai. Preceding the complete financial meltdown revealed this year, Dubai was plagued by overtaxation, inflation, crime, and even prostitution.[146] The emirate's

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[141] Dubai's role in the economy is similar to how Singapore positioned itself as the site of commercial, financial, and recreational center to intercept the profit transactions related to more industrial sectors.
[142] M. M, Ali. *Trade and Industry* (Dubai), vol. 14, no. 157 (1989): 10-6.
[143] GCC also incorporates the member states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. Yemen has been introduced as a limited partner with the goal of eventual full membership. Features of the cooperative promote: internal free market trade in agricultural and industrial products, lower internal trade barriers, establish common external tariffs (of 5%), and develop institutions to organize investment and industrial practices.
[144] *Trade and Industry* (Dubai), vol. 15 nos. 175-176 (1990).
[145] "The Making of Dubai's Success Story." *Middle East Economic Digest*, vol. 39, no. 14 (1995): S6-S8.
[146] In relation to social issues, Dubai is also famously tolerant of Western decadence: liquor is served in many hotel bars and the dress code adheres to low standards of coverage necessary for women. Often, liberalism

resulting bankruptcy is nothing if not a lesson for Abu Dhabi. Already the tone of Abu Dhabi's urban development program sets itself apart from anything that has come before it. Financially, Dubai's expansion was poorly planned, driving the emirate deeply into debt with creditors for total liabilities of nearly $100 billion. Currently, expired loans require a $10 billion bailout, which was granted by Abu Dhabi.[147] The bailout signals a new era for the country, one in which the emirates are more firmly aligned politically and financially. International markets were surprised and relieved by Abu Dhabi's swift response to the crisis.[148] The efficiency with which the decision was made is a hallmark of the administration since 2004.

Moving forward, Abu Dhabi's tourism base is forecasted to be more stable than Dubai's. If there is political instability in the region, Western consumers are likely to react more strongly and negatively. Arab visitors suffering a similar "home bias" in that instance will still feel secure in the area. Christopher Davidson, a political science professor at Durham University in Britain, predicts that the demographic base of Dubai's visitors would lead to its destruction under those circumstances.[149]

At the same time, Abu Dhabi's quest to become a leader in cultural tourism and international business is fraught with peril when interactions between local and regional institutions attract global interest. Particularly in the case of Saadiyat Island, the deep religious beliefs of the native population contrast sharply with the largely liberal, tolerant, and exuberant art world. Cultural biases threaten to divide the project philosophically while

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attributed to Dubai mistakenly refers to these oversights of tradition rather than supporting the formation of working standards, unions, or disagreement with the government.

[147] Cummins, Chip. "Dubai Gets $10 Billion Bailout to Ease Debt." *Wall Street Journal,* February 23, 2009: A1.

[148] Thomas Jr, Landon. "Abu Dhabi Tightens Its Grip as It Offers Help to Dubai." *New York Times*, December 14, 2009, New York: B1.

[149] Gimbel, Barney. "The Richest City in the World." *Fortune* 19 Mar 2007: 168-76.

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