

A Story of Two Museums: An Ethnographic Exhibition

Museum of Jurassic Technology, Los Angeles
Museum of American Art, Berlin

Exhibition
& Programs

Apr 3–
Jun 7,
2014

***A Story of Two Museums: An Ethnographic
Exhibition***

**Museum of Jurassic Technology, Los Angeles
Museum of American Art, Berlin**

**The James Gallery
The Center for the Humanities
The Graduate Center, CUNY**

**365 Fifth Avenue at 35th Street
New York, NY 10016**

centerforthehumanities.org/james-gallery

**Free and Open to the Public
Tue to Thu, 12–7pm
Fri and Sat, 12–6pm**

Apr 3–Jun 7, 2014

The Museum of Jurassic Technology chronicles an uncommon history of expression and innovation in the arts, humanities, and sciences. Inspired by several historical periods, the Museum's exhibits reflect the diverse collections of natural and man-made wonders that marked the early development of museums in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Museum's exhibitions highlight the intersections of art and science with a focus on individuals who have gone to great lengths in the service of unusual ideas.



The Museum of American Art, Berlin, is primarily dedicated to assembling, preserving, and exhibiting memories of the early years of the Museum of Modern Art and the exhibitions of American art that traveled through Europe in the 1950s organized by its International Program. Those exhibitions contributed to the formation of a common European post-war cultural identity that was based on ideas of modernism, internationalism, and individualism.



"A Story of Two Museums: An Ethnographic Exhibition" takes as its subjects The Museum of American Art, Berlin, which opened in 2004, and The Museum of Jurassic Technology, Los Angeles, which opened in 1988 in its current location. Both institutions are concerned with the histories of museums as well as the varieties of paths to knowledge. Exhibiting artifacts that cross disciplines of history, art, anthropology, and literature, the museums inherently question those disciplines: The Museum of American Art's activities engage with specific chapters from the history of modern art, and The Museum of Jurassic Technology holds a specialized repository of relics and artifacts evoking some of the more obscure and poetic aspects of natural history and the history of technology and science. A mix of objects from their collections as well as outside materials present an alternate, ethnographic study of human artistry and ingenuity.

—Walter Benjamin, Katherine Carl,
Florence Ostende

Settings and the Instrumentalization of Knowledge

"A Story of Two Museums: An Ethnographic Exhibition" is an educational experience that takes on the qualities of an exhibition. Set in a gallery that is inside a university, what frame does one employ after crossing the threshold? Looking for clues to piece together, the viewer could believe s/he is entering a gift shop: in the first section there are souvenirs from the Museum of Jurassic Technology's (MJT) shop in Los Angeles.

This is in keeping with the tourist trade surrounding the Empire State Building location, but nothing is for sale. Furthermore, the trinkets displayed refer to obscure histories of faraway places. On the other hand, the viewer could imagine this to be a history or science museum: a feature about the dogs of the Soviet space program is featured in the first small room near the entry. Despite the vast amount of didactic information provided for each exhibition of the Museum of Jurassic Technology and the additional wall labels provided by the curators throughout the exhibition, the meaning of the objects remains elusive.

In the second part of the exhibition, which is devoted to the Museum of American Art, Berlin (MoAA), artifacts of art, including: catalogues of exhibitions, paintings of the catalogues, and paintings of labels from the walls of previous exhibitions. Although this looks as if it were an art exhibition, it most certainly is not an exhibition of art. The objects, whether paintings or icons, are not made by artists. We may have ventured into a re-territorialization of museum space and historical time. This cannot be simply an archive of memories relegated to the past. These materials in this setting are not of "the past" but of "history." Perhaps they even play a different role in another story of history. It is this possibility of action and reinvention that marks such a project as distinctly contemporary.

We have much to learn from materials that run against the grain of the notion of an authentic artwork. What is the value of documentation that is not factual, or paintings and art objects

not imbued with the touch of an artist? These particular objects have the ability to outlive the infrastructure of the museum settings through which they have been produced. Paradoxically, the objects and setting do not perform a masquerade nor a lie, performance, or even a fictional history. To the contrary, their longevity is due precisely to the fact that the objects serve as markers of the story of history and can operate in different stories. As a representative of the MoAA has said on occasion, "It is not a problem of meaning but of naming." An object, for example a painting of the cover of the Documenta II catalogue, is starkly the thing itself—that is a painting not a book—and it is shown without investment in belief, although not without meaning. This particular story the object tells is that of ideology: the ways in which belief systems occupy objects, spaces, institutions.

To be precise, this is not an issue of context but of setting. A context determines meaning, whereas an array of objects placed purposefully inside a setting—both of which are crafted (like MJT and MoAA), display the instrumentalization of knowledge in this case through scientific and artistic objects because of the motivations of infrastructure.

MoAA is an example of a radical deterritorialization. It reminds us of the story we know well about the creation of museums: that their collections have been built from colonial plunder—which wrenched objects from their original geographic locations and cultural contexts—for ownership and display in European cities. The paintings displayed in the hospitable domestic space in Berlin provide another solution for these masterpieces, multiplying their stories as well as illuminating their overlooked aspects. This sets in motion a polyvocal approach to history.

As much as MoAA and MJT may appear to have an affinity with Marcel Broodthaers' Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles, a collection of fine art reproductions and labels created in Brussels in 1968 and appearing in different locations for the next three years, and Robert Smithson's interest in natural history, MoAA and MJT are not created by artists,

and do not seek to place themselves in an artistic lineage. Instead they are truly public museums, which use various modes of display and labeling to mix primary and secondary objects, in order to rethink hierarchies.

The two institutions that are the subject of "A Story of Two Museums: An Ethnographic Exhibition" are entry points into contemporary inquiries into exhibition, collection and museum histories. Their specific contribution to this growing body of knowledge is created through exhibition practice itself. Furthermore they introduce overlooked research and spin stories from unexplored angles. The deterritorialized location for these museums inside the James Gallery (an art gallery) at The Graduate Center (an educational institution) provides new way to examine what we take for granted to be part of our collective experience and our collective memory. When folds, gaps, and glitches open inevitably in the retellings, new knowledge arises.

—Katherine Carl

From the Mouth of the Inhaling Spectator

"A Story of Two Museums" is an exhibition about how stories are told as much as it is about the story itself and its relationship with truth and history. Last year, during a visit to The Museum of Jurassic Technology (MJT) in Los Angeles, I was expecting to meet the founder of the museum playing accordion in front of the building as many stories tell us.¹ But David Wilson was actually sitting on the roof, in the recently-opened section of the garden. The museum had always been described as a dimly lit wunderkammer-like atmosphere but it was now open to the bright sunlight, with luxurious plants and birds flying out of their cages. I was also surprised to see Wilson, reported to me as a solitary man, in the middle of a conversation with another character I had also been following for a while, a man with a cap who introduces himself as the technical assistant of The Museum of American Art (MoAA) from Berlin.

What kind of conversation could those two men possibly be having? At first sight, MJT and MoAA do not share the same areas of interest. The scope of knowledge the two museums provide is radically different, one being mostly concerned with human sciences and the other with the history of art. The Jurassic is a period rooted in the early days of the industrial revolution, between the 18th and 20th century, which somehow consciously obliterates modernity: "As I was following the voice-over, I expected to hear 'modernity' anytime, but was told that, instead, this was the 'Jurassic,'" reports Science and Technology Studies Professor Mario Biagioli.² On the other hand, MoAA focuses on the narratives of modern art through the scope of MoMA's history of exhibitions in New York between the 1930s and the 1950s. Despite the large chronological gap, the two museums belong to an informal network called "sympathetic institutions,"³ which is only visible on the MJT website as a section listing a range of places with whom they work "in cordial cooperation," such as their neighbors The Center for Land Use Interpretation, but also the Freud Dream Museum in St. Petersburg and the Sir John Soane's Museum in London.

Sympathetic institutions... what better name on earth could there possibly be? The small logo of this unusual consortium is a drawn sketch of two hands making a string figure, also known as the game Cat's Cradle children like to play. Founded by a Japanese mathematician, the International String Figure Association is also a sympathetic institution whose books are available in the MJT gift shop. The design of the string figures storytellers use to illustrate their tales is the subject of a curious exhibit on display since 2006 at MJT entitled "Fairly Safely Venture: Cat's Cradles and their Venerable Collectors." Visitors can learn string figures which are on display on monitors as well as books in glass cases through which you can also watch a stereoscopic movie with a holographic image of hands performing patterns.

This interweaving of loops, knots and strings provides a didactic metaphor of any visitor experiencing both museums: the non chronological layout leads the spectator through a constellation of objects which exist in networks rather than in taxonomies.⁴ It is certainly no coincidence the MoAA's tree logo is the emblem of the 1913 Armory Show which introduced another network metaphor: internationalism. The iconic symbol of this internationalism is the famous chronological chart made by Alfred Barr on the occasion of the landmark 1936 exhibition "Cubism and Abstract Art." This diagram is one the most recurring didactic device displayed by MoAA. The technical assistant of the museum insists on the fact this chart shifted the narrative from national school to international movement, and interestingly this was happening at a time of nationalism leading to World War II.⁵ The original diagram shows the interrelations between the schools and movements of 20th-century art from 1890 to 1935, but MoAA made its own version replacing the cradle of modern art in China in 1790 which traveled to the United States in 1890 to end its journey in Paris in 1990 where things origin-ally began. The new chronological boundaries and geographical spheres of influence suggested by MoAA reverse the course of the official narrative.

Although MJT and MOAA introduce themselves

as "educational institutions" dedicated to the transmission of knowledge, the visitor feels like an ant crawling on a gigantic constellation of diagrams and string figures, a garden of forking paths. The apparent clarity of the didactic devices contrasts with the fragmented layers through which the story is being told. Doubt and wonder compete with each other and produce a distancing effect inducing the visitor to embrace bits and pieces of incomplete tales as a non-hierarchical sequence. Most of public talks delivered by the assistant of MoAA are literally teaching sessions that focus on the meta-history of the knots and strings that founded the narrative of modern art history as we know it today. The transmission idea is at the core of what "sympathetic institutions" do. Wilson often takes a stink ant as a metaphor for MJT. This ant from West Central Africa inhales spores from fungus which causes it to behave in irrational ways: "All of us at the museum feel like we have inhaled something that is causing us to behave in curious and irrational ways. The final result is this ability to rain down these spores and hopefully infect other people as well."⁶

Twisting the traditional format of the museum, MJT and MoAA both use a specific way of displaying artefacts through alternative means of communication deriving a constant slippage of forms and meaning. Before even considering them as museums, MJT and MoAA occupy rooms, buildings, real estate, specific neighborhoods in specific cities. So the question remains, when curating an exhibition with "places" rather than with "artists" in the traditional sense, how to represent "space" without building a literal replica with a spectacular scenography? Our initial idea was to experiment with the function of the exhibition as a public educational platform through which narratives of history can be performed and opened with the aid of objects and display strategies. Working like ethnographers, we divided the James Gallery in two sections, each devoted to one museum.

The areas painted in green are collected artefacts produced by both museums about their exhibits which they use as devices of transmission – publicity, items from gift shop, pub-

lishing and educational materials, amateur footage from YouTube... "A Story of Two Museums" is mainly composed of secondary materials that represent both places from an external point of view, hence the subtitle "An Ethnographic Exhibition." For instance, the sound piece of the MJT section is the ambient noise of the museum as you walk through the space. The areas painted in white are devoted to the interpretation of the secondary sources which are not considered works of art but artifacts.

"A Story of Two Museums" is not an art exhibition but still operates in the art world by circulating into the preexisting biotope of the James Gallery and The Graduate Center, CUNY. By bringing together a museum on science and a museum on art, we are certainly celebrating a proto-exhibition model before the era of the Enlightenment when art and science were united. This lack of distinction between the art world and the natural world goes back to the early days of museum history encapsulated in the wunderkammer. This exhibition is a time machine that does not rely on landmark chronological dates but on individuals and characters who embody forgotten stories: Dorothy Miller, Gertrude Stein, Alice May Williams, Geoffrey Sonnabend, Walter Benjamin, Athanasius Kircher... As Walter Benjamin says: "I have been dead since 1940, but it seems I am also alive today in a certain way. I guess we shouldn't necessarily trust chronology all the time."⁷ Even the members of the curatorial team remain inhaling spectators.

—Florence Ostende

¹ "Wilson is on the sidewalk, blithely serenading the passing traffic," in Lawrence Weschler, *Mr. Wilson's Cabinet Of Wonder*, Vintage Books New York, 1995, p.17.

² Mario Biagioli, "Confabulating Jurassic Science," in *Technoscientific Imaginaries: Conversations, Profiles, And Memoirs*, ed. George Marcus E. Marcus, University of Chicago Press, 1995.

³ The list is available on this link : <http://mjt.org/Links.html>

⁴ "Most art museums today tend to be white walls and linear chronological display of objects with vast distan-

ces between them. But I think museums are beginning to recognize it is a very unproductive way of looking at things and it is also not the way objects exist in the world because objects always exist in network, they are knots that interrelate... It's the way they intersect and associate with one another." Barbara Stafford (Professor of Art History, University of Chicago), in *Inhaling The Spore, A Journey Through The Museum of Jurassic Technology*.

⁵ Conference paper given by the assistant of the museum at EHESS, November 21, 2012, Paris.

⁶ Quotation taken from the film *Inhaling The Spore, A Journey Through The Museum of Jurassic Technology*.

⁷ Walter Benjamin, *Recent Writings, New Documents*, 2013, <http://new-documents.org/books/walter-benjamin>



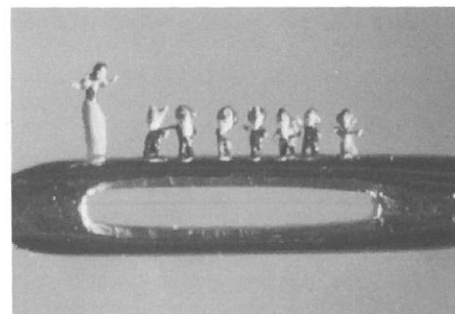
Museum of Jurassic Technology, Los Angeles, Front Entrance. Photo: Technical Assistant, Museum of American Art, Berlin.



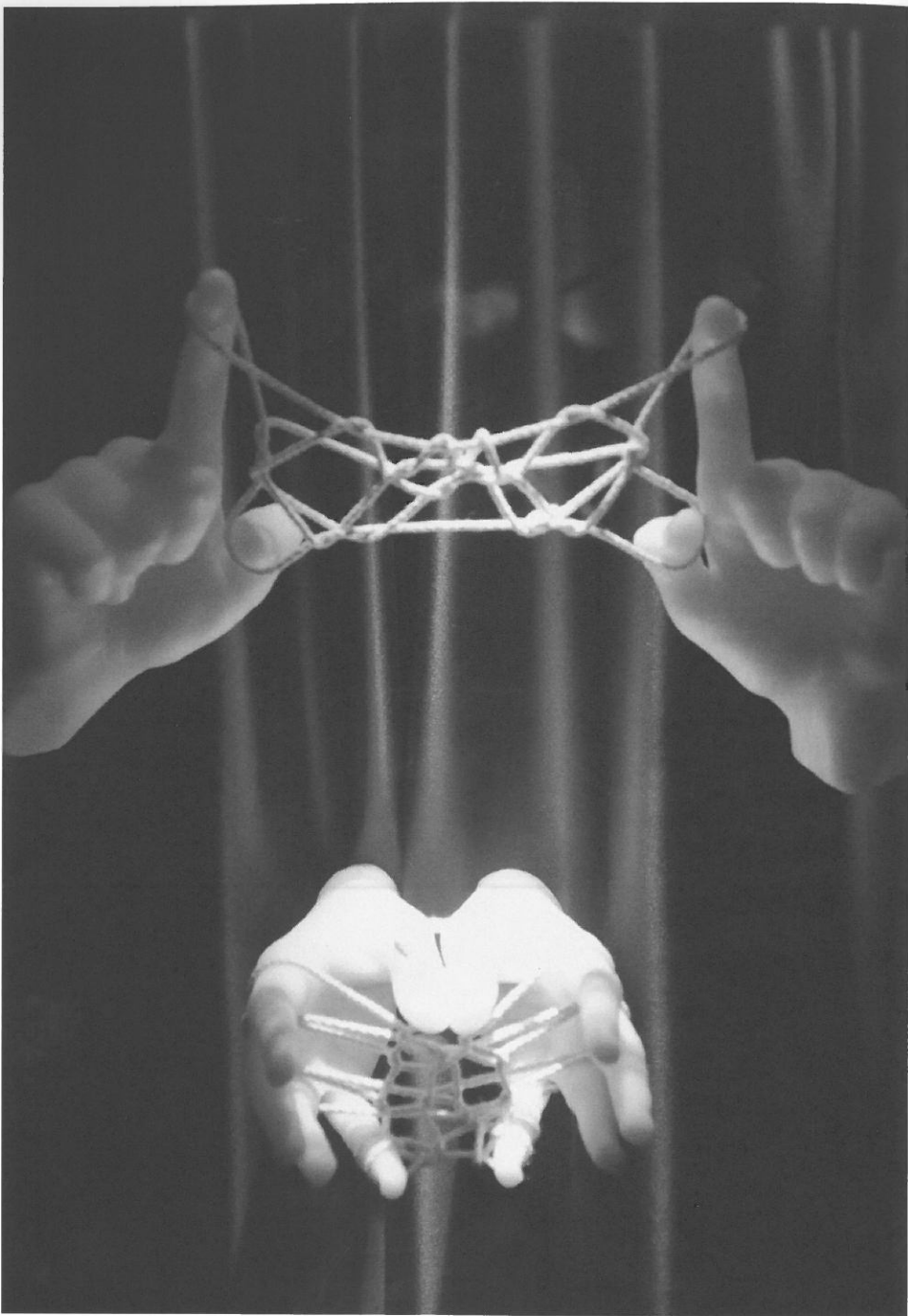
Museum of Jurassic Technology, Gift Shop. Courtesy Museum of Jurassic Technology.



Rotten Luck the Decaying Dice of Ricky Jay (detail), 2003. Museum of Jurassic Technology. Courtesy Museum of Jurassic Technology.



The Eye of the Needle: The Unique World of Mircrominiatures of Hagop Sandaldjian (Snow White and the Seven Dwarves detail), 1997. Museum of Jurassic Technology. Courtesy Museum of Jurassic Technology.



Fairly Safely Venture: String Figures From Many Lands and their Venerable Collectors. Courtesy Museum of Jurassic Technology.



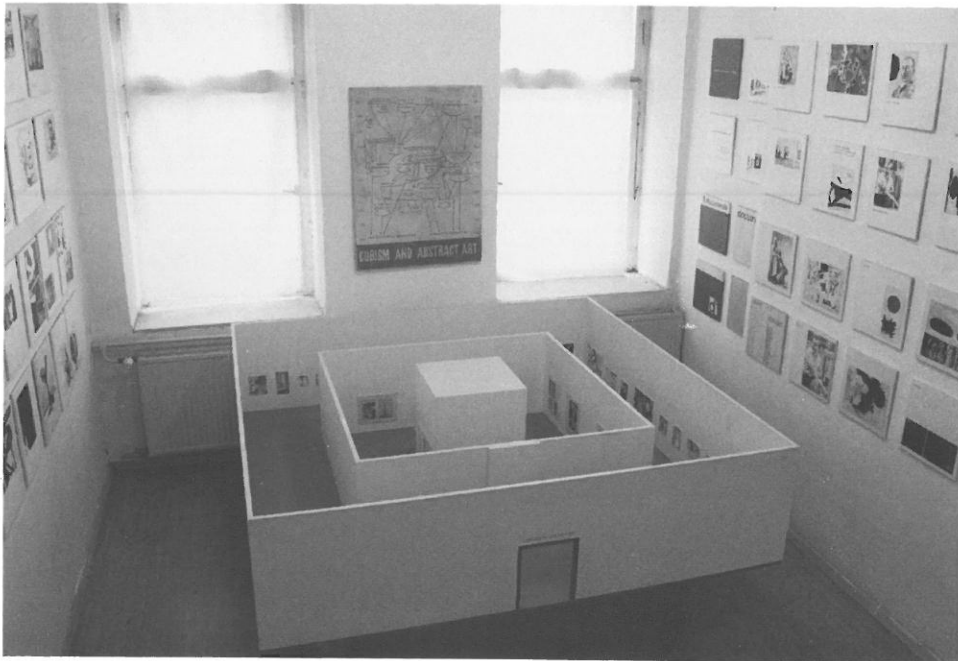
Documenta II, What is Modern Art? at Künstlerhaus Bethanien, 2006. Courtesy Museum of American Art, Berlin.



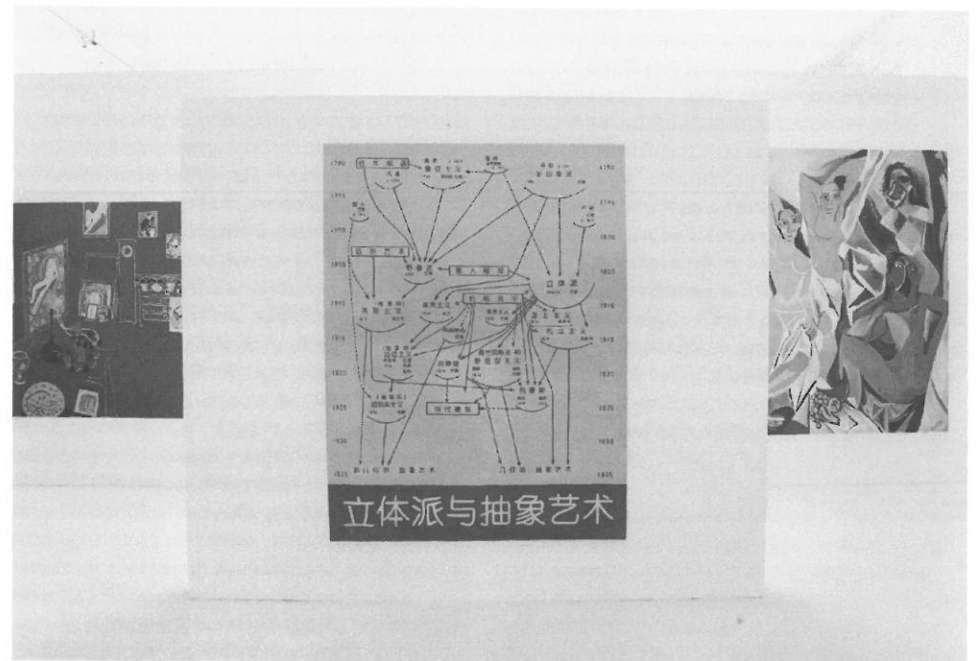
Dorothy Miller Gallery, New American Painting, 2004. Museum of American Art, Berlin. Photo credit: Joshua White.



Modern Art in USA at Istanbul Biennial, 2009. Courtesy Museum of American Art, Berlin.



Alfred Barr's Gallery, 2004. Museum of American Art, Berlin. Courtesy Museum of American Art, Berlin.



Museum of Modern Art Made in China at GuangDong Times Museum, Guangzhou, China, 2011. Courtesy Museum of American Art, Berlin.

Two Museums

The learner must be led always from familiar objects toward the unfamiliar; guided along, as it were, a chain of flowers into the mysteries of life.

—Charles Willson Peale (From the introduction to MJT)

Museums are unusual places. We go there to see things. Those are various kinds of objects depending on the museum. In principle, a museum is a collection of objects exhibited in a physical space. It is usually arranged in a manner that forms a story that is primarily expressed and experienced visually. Each artifact in the display could carry a specific meaning or a story and could be perceived as being separate from the other objects. When several objects become connected through an exhibit, it itself will establish another story, a story of the display or a display narrative. A museum usually has a written story as well, a story that connects these objects in a meaningful way. In some cases it could be a meta-narrative in relation to stories of particular objects. Museum exhibits are particularly convincing when both their written and display narratives coincide.

By establishing a collection, we are on the one hand preserving some kind of memory through a certain material/physical database, while on the other we are in fact constructing it by making a story that in some cases could become part of the collective memory. Those stories could be tales, myths or histories. Unlike a tale or a myth, in which time could be undefined or cyclical, history is a story about the past organized chronologically and populated by unique characters, objects and events. And unlike a tale or a myth, it is presented as an objective recollection of events from the past. Most of the museum exhibits today are organized chronologically along a linear time line having an open end toward the future. However, there is no such thing as an objective history. Histories are constructed from a certain perspective and we should not confuse a history as a story with the event that it's describing.

Whoever had a chance to walk through The Museum of Jurassic Technology (MJT) would notice that it has all the features of a museum but at the same time would experience a sense of mystique and bemusement. Because of the nature of many of its exhibits, it is perceived and interpreted as a contemporary cabinet of curiosities. Wunderkammer or cabinets of curiosities began to appear at the dawn of the Enlightenment, together with a growing awareness among educated people for a need to change the existing paradigm based on religion and superstition, and establish another one that favors rationalism and scientific knowledge. Thus the cabinet of curiosities gradually became an "asylum" where something unknown and potentially dangerous was tamed and isolated, as a way to contain a potential chaos within an emerging new rational order. Collected specimens, whether natural or artificial, claimed certain rarity and uniqueness, but their authenticity was uncertain and usually could not be proven. Each of those strange specimens was often associated with an even more unusual story, but the cabinet itself didn't have an overarching story that would connect the objects in the collection, except for the atmosphere of mystery of the cabinet itself. It is with the emergence of the museum that some of the specimens which passed scientific examination became included into, let's say, a natural history museum as a "legitimate" exhibits, or within an ethnographic museum as an example of a certain custom, belief or superstition. This transition of a specimen from a curio to a museum exhibit is irreversible within the existing cultural paradigm. Since through the museum an order of modernity was imposed on the (pre-modern) cabinet by introducing chronology and authenticity, the museum itself can be interpreted as a meta-cabinet (meta-wunderkammer).

A closer analysis would indicate that the Museum of Jurassic Technology is indeed a kind of a museum. In spite of its confusing name and declaring itself to be a museum of a (non-existent) technology of the Jurassic era when humans didn't exist, it nevertheless resembles a natural history museum, or a museum of science, or an ethnographic museum, but its

real subject matter seems to be this pre-museum display of various collections of strange and unusual objects exhibited often in especially assigned rooms known as a wunderkammer.

Each of the museum exhibits is presented separately, usually within a glass case accompanied with a label and long description typical for, lets say, a natural history museum. The museum has an admission fee and a small but well supplied gift shop at its entrance. Many of the items, produced in the museum workshop, relate to the museum exhibits. What makes things interesting is that many of the museum exhibits are also manufactured in the same workshop. While both the cabinet of curiosities and the museum are based on the rarity and the uniqueness of its specimens, quite a few of the MJT exhibits are not only recently manufactured but could be in fact reproduced if necessary. While in a conventional museum we trust the labels that describe the exhibits, because of a sense of uncertainty we have with the MJT exhibits, we are never sure if what we are looking at is what the description next to it suggests. We are even not sure if the museum itself believes in everything that it says it is exhibiting. Here the burden of deciding what is the truth is not on the side of the exhibit/museum but on the side of the visitor/observer.

Although some of the exhibits have chronological references (Tsiolkovsky, Space Dogs), the entire museum doesn't have a time line. Most of the exhibits and the museum itself are in some way "timeless". Thus, the Museum of Jurassic Technology is not based on the notions of uniqueness and chronology, which are the foundations of any proper contemporary museum usually conceived to represent a materialized history. It seems to be much closer to the cabinet of curiosities after all, not so much as its contemporary reincarnation, but rather as its museum-like reflection.

On the other hand, the Museum of American Art by its name relates to a specific kind of museum known as an art museum. A visitor who knows something about art would quickly realize that the main exhibits of the museum, specifically the paintings on the walls, are not

the originals. These are all copies one way or another, copies of other paintings, copies of photographs, paintings of pages from catalogs, most likely all commissioned by the museum itself. Particularly interesting and a bit puzzling are the copies of abstract paintings that are on display. Understandably they all look abstract, but on the other hand it's a question if copies of abstract paintings are abstract themselves, or perhaps they could be interpreted as realistic or representational. This semantic ambiguity, a realization that a copy "is not what it seems to be", is one of the reasons for a certain sense of uneasiness and confusion among some visitors of this museum. Since, copies are not just trivial paintings, they are also meta-originals. Thematically all the MoAA exhibits relate to the early decades of the Museum of Modern Art in New York (as an "American invention based on European artifacts") and its International Program through which several exhibitions of American art traveled across Europe in the 1950s. According to the museum's statement "those were the exhibitions that helped establishing a first post-war common European cultural identity that was based on modernism, internationalism and individualism". The exhibits of this museum are almost in a private setting and do not have labels. Although most of the exhibits relate to some events (exhibitions) with a specific date and place, the museum itself is not organized chronologically. It doesn't have regular hours or admission fee, and there is no gift-shop.

In many respects it is by its character closer to the cabinet of curiosities than to the museum. Since we might say that copies are not really art. Thus in this museum we won't find art nor museum. On the other hand it is some strange place that is about art and about museum. The theme of the Museum of American Art, its subject matter, is modern art history and the art museum itself, represented through the story of The Museum of Modern Art, although in the museum itself there is nothing modern except its subject matter.

Both of these places (MJT and MoAA) are now presented at the exhibition "A Story of Two Museums" in some documentary or ethno-

graphic fashion. In other words, what we have in front of us is an exhibition about two museums which themselves have as their themes two kinds of museums: the wunderkammer and the art museum. While the stated intentions of MJT are to follow the path of Peale's flowers that would lead us "from the familiar toward the unfamiliar" by turning the unknown into the known what the museums are intended to do, the MoAA is proposing another path that also leads from the familiar to the unfamiliar, but in this case by turning the known into the unknown. However, the MJT is not exactly a conventional museum. Being a contemporary reflection of the wunderkammer with its newly produced curiosities, instead of turning the known into the unknown, the MJT is rather turning the unknown into the seemingly known or simply into the unknown. Thus MJT remembers the pre-modern past (cabinet) through a modern display, exhibiting even some newly produced artifacts as if they are "out of time".

All this would lead to a conclusion that both the MJT and the MoAA are museums by name only. As places that reflect the museum, they could be understood rather as some kind of meta-museums. While the MJT is looking into the cabinet through a modern (museum) lens, the MoAA is looking into the (art) museum through a pre-modern (cabinet) one. In other words, the MJT is a museum about the wunderkammer, while the MoAA is a wunderkammer about the museum.

—Walter Benjamin, Berlin 2014

Fri, Apr 4, 10am–6pm
Symposium

Setting as Spatial Strategy

Katherine Carl, The James Gallery/The Center for the Humanities, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Géraldine Gourbe, Aesthetics, École Supérieure d'Art de l'Agglomération d'Annecy; Ilya & Emilia Kabakov, artists; Patricia Mainardi, Ph.D. Program in Art History, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Christian Philipp Müller, School of Art and Design, Kassel; Natalie Hope O'Donnell, Oslo Centre for Critical Architectural Studies; Florence Ostende, Dallas Contemporary; Richard Pell, Center for Post-Natural History; Technical Assistant, Museum of American Art, Berlin; Margarita Tupitsyn, writer and curator; Arseniy Zhilyaev, artist.

What are the motivations and consequences of contemporary artists' settings, or environments with objects on display that operate at the scale of an exhibition or an institution? How does working at this scale open unexpected ways of creating narratives around art and other artifacts, and invite viewers to ask new questions about the objects on view? Without the artist taking the role of the curator, agent provocateur of institutional critique or creating a space solely for performative interaction, can artists' settings potentially revive the avant-garde notion of a total artwork? How do they implicate cultural beliefs about the construction of history and politics within the reality of the exhibition space itself? Join this group of artists, writers, and curators as they discuss the operations and meanings of this work for new research and experimentation.

Room C198

The symposium is presented in the framework of ART², which is An International Platform on Contemporary Art, presented by the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the U.S. in collaboration with the New York presenters Institut français, the French Ministry of Culture and Communication and FACE (French American Cultural Exchange). frenchculture.org

Fri, Apr 4, 6pm–8pm
Exhibition Reception

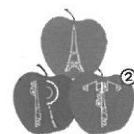
A Story of Two Museums: An Ethnographic Exhibition

Curators: Walter Benjamin, Katherine Carl, Florence Ostende.

The Museum of American Art, Berlin, and The Museum of Jurassic Technology, Los Angeles, are both concerned with the histories of museums as well as the varieties of paths to knowledge. Exhibiting artifacts that cross disciplines of history, art, anthropology, and literature, the museums inherently question those disciplines: The Museum of American Art's activities engage with specific chapters from the history of modern art, and The Museum of Jurassic Technology holds a specialized repository of relics and artifacts evoking some of the more obscure and poetic aspects of natural history and the history of technology and science. A mix of objects from their collections as well as outside materials present an alternate, ethnographic study of human artistry and ingenuity.

The James Gallery

The exhibition is organized by the James Gallery at The Graduate Center in the framework of ART². ART² is An International Platform on Contemporary Art, presented by the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the U.S. in collaboration with the New York presenters Institut français, the French Ministry of Culture and Communication and FACE (French American Cultural Exchange). frenchculture.org



Mon, Apr 7, all day
Symposium

Exhibit A: Authorship on Display

Ian Berry, Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum, Skidmore College; Claire Bishop, Art History, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Carol Bove, artist; Caitlin Burkart, writer and curator; Lynne Cooke, Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art; Boris Groys, Russian and Slavic Studies, New York University; Chelsea Haines, Ph.D. Program in Art History, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Lucy Hunter, Ph.D. Program in Art History, Yale University; Grant Johnson, Ph.D. Program in Art History, The Graduate Center, CUNY; David Joselit, Art History, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Lewis Kachur, Art History, Kean University; Josh Kline, artist and curator; Natalie Musteata, Ph.D. Program in Art History, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Florence Ostende, Dallas Contemporary; João Ribas, Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art; Pietro Rigolo, Getty Research Institute; Dieter Roelstraete, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

In the last two decades, the study of exhibition history has grown exponentially. Yet the discussions around this nascent field are conspicuously bifurcated, shuttling between a smallcoterie of curators on the one hand, and a select number of scholars on the other. In curatorial circles, discourse often focuses on individual practices, with little sustained reflection on broader historical and museological implications. In academic circles, the history of exhibitions is often situated in terms of spectatorship, without directing attention to the various forms of authorship involved in exhibition-making. This conference brings together artists, curators, art historians and emerging scholars for a day-long forum.

The Skylight Room (9100)

Cosponsored by the PhD Program in Art History and the Doctoral Students' Council

Wed, Apr 9, 6:30pm
Lecture

From Topos to Virus: A Media Archaeology
of Networked Visual Culture

Erkki Huhtamo, Design Media Arts, University
of California, Los Angeles.

The Internet is a viral image disseminator generator. Its enormous, nearly instantaneous "traffic" of imagery is in a state of constant flux. This is a major challenge for visual cultural analysis. We don't have effective tools for analyzing it, especially when it comes to the transmission, transformation, and migration of meanings. Software tools may help to visualize "Big Data" but shed little light on issues of semantics. Yet, as Erkki Huhtamo will illustrate, media archaeological topos analysis can grant us insight into this transformative cultural sphere.

The James Gallery

*Cosponsored by the Film Studies Working Group:
Moving Images in Theory and Practice and The Film
Studies Certificate Program.*

Thu, Apr 10, 7pm
Workshop

Workshop on Workshops

Mark Allen, Machine Project.

What are the different forms of workshops, and why do people participate in them? Why are workshops an interesting form to work in as an artist, curator, or organizer? This event will consist of a two-hour session on the creation, planning and production of educational programs as a form of experimental curation. The process begins with an intensive brainstorming exercise where each participant comes up with 50 topics they have some minimal knowledge of (crochet, escaping from handcuffs, satellite design, napping, etc). From there we will take selections from the topics and develop them into workshops which are not only open to different styles and speeds of learning, but satisfying, surprising, and welcoming to the public.

C-198

*Cosponsored by the Extra-Institutional Education
Seminar in the Humanities.*

Tue, Apr 22, 4pm
Gallery Tour

What Makes A Museum?

Chelsea Haines, Ph.D. Program in Art History,
The Graduate Center, CUNY.

This discussion-based tour will investigate the museum's origins during the French Revolution to consider why it remains a specter of unrealized revolutionary potential, and a site of fascination for artists today.

The James Gallery

Wed, Apr 23, 6:30pm
Lecture

Two Museums

Walter Benjamin, writer and philosopher.

Walter Benjamin will deliver a lecture written especially for the current exhibition. He addressed issues of originality and reproduction in his article, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936). Many years after his death in 1940, he reappeared in public for the first time in 1986 at Ljubljana's Cankarjev dom to deliver the lecture "Mondrian '63-'96". Since then he has published several articles and has given interviews on museums and art history. He most recently appeared publicly in 2011 to deliver the lecture "The Unmaking of Art" at the Times Museum in Guangzhou. In the last few years, Benjamin has become closely associated with the Museum of American Art in Berlin. He has curated "What is Modern Art?" with Inke Arns at Kunstlerhaus Bethanien (2006) as well as "The Collection, The Museum and The History" in the exhibition "1:1" (2013) and the permanent installation "Lenin and Coca-Cola" (2011), both at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Ljubljana. A collection of his recent lectures, interviews, and articles have just been published in *Recent Writings* (New Documents, 2013).

The James Gallery

Fri, Apr 25, 6:30pm
Panel

Law, Images, and Information

Nate Harrison, School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Moira Meltzer-Cohen, Just Info; Ruthann Robson, CUNY School of Law; Sergio Muñoz Sarmiento, Art & Law Program, Fordham Law School; Diala Shamas, CUNY School of Law.

What ethical issues arise when a public square becomes a public library, when a private life becomes a plotline, or an old song is sampled to create a new one? How are the potential legal implications of art-making considered and strategized for by artists and arts organizations? Join us as we explore the intersection of art and law on issues of civil rights, intellectual property, public space, and more. Panelists with diverse backgrounds in modern law and contemporary art will share their disparate perspectives in this conversation, which is part of our year-long Andrew W. Mellon Seminar on Images and Information.

Martin E. Segal Theatre

Cosponsored Andrew W. Mellon Seminar on Images and Information.

Tue, Apr 29, 6:30pm
Conversation

The Datalogical Turn

Patricia Ticineto Clough, Sociology and Women's Studies, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Karen Gregory, Ph.D. Program in Sociology, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Benjamin Haber, Ph.D. Program in Sociology, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Josh Scannell, Ph.D. Program in Sociology, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

Does data want to be visualized? What queer new capacities are emerging as sociology's datalogical unconscious finds expression in the visual, running at the speed of capital? Join Patricia Clough, Karen Gregory, Benjamin Haber and Josh Scannell for a presentation on "Big Data" visualizations, non-representational method, and the emergence of a new onto-logic of sociality.

The James Gallery

Cosponsored by the Film Studies Working Group: Moving Images in Theory and Practice and The Film Studies Certificate Program.

Wed Apr 30, 5pm
Gallery Tour

The Present Past

Grant Johnson, Ph.D. Program in Art History, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

"To articulate the past historically," wrote Walter Benjamin, "does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was'...it means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger." With Benjamin's Theses on the Concept of History in mind, this tour will interrogate how the exhibition space seizes hold, slows or even halts objects in motion. What is at stake in the stillness of the gallery space?

The James Gallery

Fri, May 9, 6:30pm
Screening and Conversation

Renzo Martens, Institute for Human Activities.

As Director of the Institute for Human Activities, artist Renzo Martens is working to increase living standards in the Congo through a multi-year project of artist-initiated gentrification based on a former Unilever plantation 800 miles north of Kinshasa on the Congo River. Martens has gained much critical acclaim for his earlier documentary film *Enjoy Poverty*, which presents the case that images of poverty are the Congo's most lucrative export. Join Martens, whose projects have been presented at institutions including the Walker Art Center, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, and Van Abbe Museum in Eindhoven, ZKM in Karlsruhe for a discussion about how academics and entrepreneurs facilitate the Institute's mission and other non-governmental organizations working in Africa.

The Skylight Room (9100)

Cosponsored by the Andrew W. Mellon Committee on Globalization and Social Change and the PhD Program in Art History.

The Amie and Tony James Gallery joins the Center for the Humanities' mission to create dialogue across disciplines. Located in midtown Manhattan at the nexus of the academy, contemporary art, and the city, the James Gallery brings a range of pertinent discourses into the exhibition space through a number of innovative formats. While some exhibitions remain on view for extended contemplation, other activities, such as performances, workshops, reading groups, roundtable discussions, salons, and screenings have a short duration. As a space for interdisciplinary artistic and discursive activities, the gallery works with scholars, students, artists and the public to explore working methods that may lie outside usual disciplinary practices.

The Center for Humanities at the Graduate Center, CUNY, encourages collaborative and creative work in the Humanities at CUNY and in the intellectual communities it serves through seminars, conferences, publications and exhibitions that inspire sustained and engaged conversation and change inside and outside the academy.

Exhibition Design: Technical Assistant,
Museum of American Art, Berlin

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Design by MTWTF, New York

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The James Gallery

The Center for the Humanities

- Apr 3 Museum of American Art, Berlin
Museum of Jurassic Technology
- Apr 4 Katherine Carl
Géraldine Gourbe
Ilya & Emilia Kabakov
Patricia Mainardi
Christian Philipp Müller
Natalie Hope O'Donnell
Florence Ostende
Richard Pell
Technical Assistant, MoAA
Margarita Tupitsyn
Arseniy Zhilyaev
- Apr 7 Ian Berry
Claire Bishop
Carol Bove
Caitlin Burkhart
Lynne Cooke
Boris Groys
Chelsea Haines
Lucy Hunter
Grant Johnson
David Joselit
Lewis Kachur
Josh Kline
Natalie Musteata
Florence Ostende
João Ribas
Pietro Rigolo
Dieter Roelstraete
- Apr 9 Erkki Huhtamo
- Apr 10 Mark Allen
- Apr 22 Chelsea Haines
- Apr 23 Walter Benjamin
- Apr 25 Nate Harrison
Moirá Meltzer-Cohen
Ruthann Robson
Sergio Muñoz Sarmiento
Diala Shamas
- Apr 29 Patricia Clough
Karen Gregory
Benjamin Haber
Josh Scannell
- Apr 30 Grant Johnson
- May 9 Renzo Martens