MUSEUM EXHIBIT COMMENTARY

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY AS PUBLIC HISTORY: THE MORPHING LANDSCAPE OF MUSEUM EXHIBIT EXPERIENCES

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The museum landscape is more complicated than ever before, especially as museums try to educate a more diverse audience and respond to external influences. Disciplines such as marketing, entertainment, storytelling, and technology have profoundly helped to bolster the emergence of experiences.

Museum administrators and corporate executives on planning teams are often unclear of the differences of experiences from traditional, and sometimes passive, communication processes; perhaps it's just a point of nomenclature and not disagreement that is intrinsically based. How does an exhibit differ from an experience? Over time the museum culture has shifted from a display, which in the traditional sense is represented by panels, graphics and text; to interpretive exhibits, which place artifacts within a context; to experiences, which places the visitor within an environmental context to further understand not only an artifact but information and ideas. Early in my museum career at the American Museum of Natural History the director of exhibits and my mentor, George Gardner, emphatically

said that *we are not display designers, we are exhibit designers*. And it was the inclusion of interpretation and context to which he alluded.

The word "display" comes from a Latin root which means to unfold or to spread out. As used in a variety of situations, it conveys the concept of attracting attention, for example a bird displays its plumage; a billboard displays advertising information; the department store window displays merchandize for sale; and in a broader definition, fairs, expositions, and World's Fairs display products, inventions, and technology. The word "experience" comes from a Latin root which means to try. To some museum professionals, experience is a physical action that means to do; in other circles the senses are accentuated and feeling, the sixth sense, is emphasized. More recently, experience has emerged as a defining end product of the exhibit design process. Experience becomes synonymous with the concept of "interactive" in which doing, feeling, and thinking interconnects—museum staffs that talk about *engaging the visitor* are illusively referring to this latter definition where communication becomes an important goal.

Although on one level, experience is a viable interpretative tool, on another level experience is an agent of change that may yield more questions than many are willing to accept. Dr. Robert Mac West observes, "There are instances where collection-based museums, long known for high-quality artifacts and stunning static presentations, have expanded their offerings not only by adding new content but by presenting that content in the most contemporary interactive style. To some people, both inside and outside the institution, this perceived as a violation of the traditional mission and/or dumbing-down or 'Disneyfication' of the museum experience. To others, this is the natural course of institutional life as the museum and its constituencies change over time."[1]

Why should experience be of increased interest for most types of museums? Since the late 1990s, museums as well as most leisure oriented and retail organizations are searching for ways in the tight economy to tap into the cultural heritage benefit and attract visitors to meet costs. In the June 2005 article "Pop Goes the Museum," Kris Axtman observes, "More museums are using the kitsch and cache of contemporary phenomena to help balance the books and bring in younger crowds ... to help defray costs, they have tried everything from renting out museum space for private events to adding restaurants and expanding museum shops." [2] The National Trust notes that in 2002, 81% of U.S. adults included at least one cultural, art, historic or heritage activity totaling 118.1 million adult travelers. Visiting historic sites

and museums is the third most popular vacation activity for U.S. travelers behind shopping and outdoor activities.[3] In *Theme Parks by Generation X: 13 Trends*, Bob Rogers remarks that regardless of technology and size, people want to be wowed, entertained and educated.[4] Rogers's design firm, BRC, completed the design and development of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, Springfield, Illinois, in April 2005. "What is being promised is not just a tourist attraction, but a full Lincoln Experience. As Richard Norton Smith, the museum's executive director, said, 'If you want to see marble icons, go to Washington.' BRC's founder, Bob Rogers (who once worked at Walt Disney Imagineering), said the goal was to overturn traditional expectations and create an 'experience museum.' 'There is nothing we wouldn't do,' he said in a conversation, 'to get people in.'"[5]

What has happened is that there has been a change in our feelings about how space is used in communicating content to the public, that is to say how we create an environmental context by giving meaning to the space around an object or in a room. So we may move from a presentation paradigm where objects and artifacts are presented or displayed with a minimum of interpretation to a communication paradigm, which incidentally is educationally based, yet influenced by entertainment. Whether a given example has a commercial, entertaining, or educational intent is not as important as communication taking place.

Experience: Influences and Emergence

Museum staffs can begin to understand the experience phenomena if they are familiar with their customers (aka public) and influences that impact the museum culture and shape experience development. Experiences exist in diverse marketplaces and are not unique to the museum culture. As a major retail store chain that sells outdoor gear, Cabela's in Hamburg, Pennsylvania, illustrates the power of attracting customers through experience. Cabela's has been in business since 1961 and has evolved into a small nationwide chain of stores. The Hamburg store contains a mix of entertaining and educational features, such as a waterfall and trout stream running inside the store; a huge aquarium stocked with native fish; an indoor archery and gun range; a restaurant with a menu of wild game dishes and common fare; and museum quality dioramas and displays with mounted specimens and historical reference. They also present seminars and clinics to educate customers about using their

merchandize. So, Cabela's communicates information in order to merchandize their product line; and if Cabela's were a non-profit organization, maybe a history museum, their mission may very well change—to communicate information in order to educate and preserve.

But even more telling of is the way customers feel about the respective environments. Cabela's is regarded as tourist attractions in and of themselves, perhaps because the corporation and staff focus on their constituency. On the other hand, not all staffs at non-profit organizations share the corporate vision or a focus on visitors; they are not tuned into even early findings by researchers, like Molly Hood who found that visitor's primary needs are for social interaction and feeling comfortable in their surroundings.[6] Dr. Enid Schildkrout of the American Museum of Natural History remarks, "One of the elements that distinguishes museum work, and exhibition work in particular, from academic work is the nature of the audience and the need to constantly find ways to reach that complex and amorphous entity, 'the general public,' without sacrificing a commitment to intellectual honesty and scholarly research." And this is the double-edged sword that many museum staffs respect. Unfortunately, the result is that regardless of the need to attract visitors, "experience" is considered not to be authentic or factual, but is in fact invented; fact and authenticity are considered essential cultural characteristics of museums, being trusted agencies within society (American Association of Museums 2001) that collect and care for historical objects, artifacts and specimens, and art.[7] As these types of objects are removed from their original context, placing them into another context—one that is invented—becomes a more difficult challenge. However misunderstood the concept, experience becomes a useful concept when it can be utilized as an interpretive tool.

Almost from their origin museums have been organized around scholarly pursuit, earlier with wealthy hobbyists to present day highly educated specialists. Americans visiting Charles Willson Peale's "respectable" museum in the late 1700s in Philadelphia were awed by the diversity of artifacts and objects, such as mounted birds, animals, and bones displayed in Cabinets of Curiosities—at that time objects and artifacts were considered curiosities and displayed in cases filled with as much as possible, a practice that continued into the 1900s, and unfortunately, still prevails in some museums. Peale might have even created the earliest known museum dioramas by exhibiting mounted animals, namely animals supported with armatures, in front of painted naturalistic settings. If true, this was one of the very first efforts in

the United States to give objects a context or a setting that attempts to replicate a natural habitat.[8] Peale's museum failed to raise the necessary funds after his death in 1827 and P.T. Barnum, the showman, bought some of the holdings of Peale's museum. The term showman was synonymous with Barnum's museum period and had more to do with his style of packaging and the environment in which his collection of oddities were presented. (Barnum had not yet ventured into the circus business.)

Nearly a half century later, an English visitor in 1870 wrote that a "'museum' in the American sense of the word [referring to a Dime Museum] meant a place of amusement, wherein there shall be a theatre, some wax figures, a giant and dwarf or two, a jumble of pictures, and a few live snakes."[9] 18th and 19th century museums emphasized collections and research over exhibition of their artifacts and specimens. William Jerdan writing in 1866 noted that up to the time of Peale [1782] "little attempt had been made to organize museum materials in any systematic, rational way, let alone to add a touch of showmanship."[10] Even at that time, scientific specimens juxtaposed curiosities; exhibits were unsophisticated requiring little interaction by visitors with objects except their reading of brief identification labels.

Early museums provided a legacy, or rather a foundation, on which modern museums build their collections; objects and artifacts represent symbols of memories—the kinds of things that were kept in attics or were discovered in some hidden tomb. In *The New Museology* Charles Smith recounts, "The collections of the British Museum originated in the massive and diverse private collections of Sir Hans Sloane [1743]," and because object interpretation was minimal at best, objects and artifacts created an element of fantasy in the visitor.[11] Remarkably, this suggests that education of visitors was not a priority, but perhaps was even secondary to some form of entertainment.

Although world's fairs and expositions have been around since the Great Exhibition in London in 1851, along with local fairs and amusement parks they were established popular outlets of entertainment in America by the late 1800s and early 1900s. Even large scale fairs and expositions were found near large populated areas and used by a wide range of people.[12] World's fairs and expositions represented the best, or highest technological marvels up to the time of the event, though present day we have come to expect technological innovation as a matter of routine. Noted world's fair historian Robert W. Rydell summarizes their importance:

Exhibits, ranging from an early display of television at the Chicago fair to General Motors's World of Tomorrow display at the New York World's Fair, radiated the gospel of technological utopianism and marked a significant shift in the structure of American society, as exhibition palaces devoted to agriculture, mining, fine arts, and the like, gave way to exhibition halls bearing the names of corporations. In short, these fairs played an integral role in adjusting Americans to a new, corporation-dominated economic order and actively promoted the development of a consumer culture as a way out of the depression.[13]

Important in Pennsylvania was the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, the first exposition of its kind in the United States. The Centennial Exposition also marked the inaugural sponsorship of the United States government, which had been struggling through post-Civil War difficulties. The greatest impact of the Exposition was on the United States as it was shown to the rest of the world to be a progressive major economic and industrial power. Machinery Hall displayed a crowded array of industrial products, and among the wonders introduced to the public for the first time were typewriters, Bell's telephone, and Edison's telegraph. In *The Century: Its Fruits and its Festival* Edward Bruce states, "No part of the exposition more vividly illustrated the changes of the century and accelerates it at pleasure."[14] Through the decades world's fairs and expositions became even more political, and governments used the genre to present information and commercial products on a global scale for enlightenment and education and to advance economic goals.

At the urging of fair organizer Robert Moses, Walt Disney and his Imagineers approached several corporations to build pavilions at the 1964–65 New York World's Fair to produce shows utilizing the technology developed and carried out in the construction of Disneyland (c.1955). It was a pivotal moment for Disney. It was in New York that Disney introduced Audio-Animatronic figures used in the Carousel of Progress for General Electric, for example; at the earlier 1939 World's Fair he had prepared a special Mickey Mouse film shown in the Nabisco pavilion. The Carousel of Progress was immensely popular with visitors proving "that he could entertain while educating hundreds of thousands of fairgoers."[15]

In the second half of the 20th century family theme parks moved into the spotlight. Most notably Walt Disney World (c.1971) and Disney's EPCOT Center (c.1981) have been at the forefront of utilizing technology to entertain and educate a middle-class society, allowing people to have a unique and

personal experience. Visitors to Disney-MGM Studios are attracted by the same formula of disaster shows found in early amusement parks where standard entertainments were park recreations of actual events, such as the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius or the 1889 Johnstown flood, which devastated that Pennsylvania town and was considered one of the worst disasters in United States history. Events like these have been reinvented and updated. Disney-MGM's *The Great Movie Ride* puts visitors right in the middle of a simulated event, such as an earthquake that unleashes fire and explosions, or a 70,000 gallon flood that wipes away a tractor trailer—natural disaster events that are probably recreated motion picture scenes, yet reminiscence of news stories—in the late 1990s, the Mississippi River burst its banks and images of flooded farmland and floating houses were prevalent in the media. It's a moot point if such experiences educate; moot because some people say it's not educational but thrill-seeking, although others say people learn (through reenactment of an experience) about the destructive force of nature and man.

Karal Ann Marling writes in *Designing Disney's Theme Parks* that Disney wanted his park to be different from those "dirty, phony places, run by tough-looking people—he wanted something new, some kind of family park."[16] Disneyland, called a family theme park because its theme is on Disney's characters, appears to mix the thrill and excitement of early amusement parks with the imaginative techniques often noted by scriptwriters for motion pictures. A visitor's experience is such that around every corner is a visual discovery, very much like a storyboard for a motion picture.

Before Disneyland materialized, Walt Disney is known to have visited Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia, historic Greenfield Village in Michigan, and Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, Denmark. All of these examples are immersive experiences for visitors, but with differences. Williamsburg is a historic site where people still live and work. Restoration began in 1926 to restore the historic structures of Virginia's 18th century capital, and work eventually expanded to encompass 85 percent of the original area. On the other hand, historic Greenfield Village contains an assortment of buildings like Noah Webster's house, William McGuffey's Pennsylvania log-cabin birthplace, and a traditional New England green with church and other buildings. In a similar vein, the largest historic site administered by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission is the Daniel Boone Homestead near Reading, Pennsylvania. The property was sold to the Commonwealth in 1937 and its first visitor's center was developed in 1940. In additional to historic structures original to the site, it includes historical buildings that were moved to the

site—a combination bake oven and smokehouse outbuilding and 1769 black-smith shop. Although the buildings are authentic at Greenfield and Daniel Boone, their recreated setting is still a simulated environment—an authentic experience that is attractive to the tourist trade. Tivoli, a pleasure garden that opened in 1843 and still in operation, contains restaurants, pavilions, open-air theaters, and an amusement park within extensive flower gardens. Various entertainment acts also perform in the summertime throughout the site. These examples all have elements that are strangely familiar in the Disney lexicon.

In *The Representation of the Past* Kevin Walsh summarizes, "The earlier success of many open-air museums acted, in part, as the prompt for Walt Disney's first theme park development. [Also,] there is no doubt that the development of many heritage attractions {in Great Britain} owes a great deal to Disney, both in terms of the media used, and the style and systems of organizations developed in the Disney parks."[17] But the major difference between entertainment and education genres is how the museum culture articulates its goals, as exemplified by the mission statement of the Henry Ford Museum, a part of the Greenfield Village complex: The Henry Ford provides unique educational experiences based on authentic objects, stories, and lives from America's traditions of ingenuity, resourcefulness and innovation. Our purpose is to inspire people to learn from these traditions to help shape a better future.

In *Making Imagination Safe in the 1950s* Erika Doss remarks that Disneyland was designed to be a safe place where visitors "imaginatively engage with and negotiate familiar myths and rituals on their own terms."[18] By understanding three characteristics of experience, museum staffs can become a part of a developing vision that is increasingly emphasizing individual and small group communication and experience, making your facility a destination and a place where people stay for awhile:

- Experience helps to tell the story
- Experience puts a human face on the event
- Experience is emotionally compelling and engaging

Experience helps to tell the story

At the crux of experience is storytelling, which is a transformation of the real world of the visitor to a world of interpretation. Storytelling is essentially an interactive learning tool used to implement interpretation of given objects

and artifacts—our *stuff*. In a well-planned experience visitors are immersed in a theme-based environment and come away with increased empathy and understanding for the subject.

Lynda Gearheart, senior director of external communications at the Fort Worth Zoo, made a telling conclusion about the value of storytelling in *Entertainment Management.* Gearheart describes the efforts of the staff to create a new experience for their visitors:

> After research and consultations, the zoo responded by employing the same tactic Walt Disney used when reinventing amusement parks in the 1950s: storytelling ... now, Zoo Hannover [Germany] Managing Director Klaus-Michael Machens speaks passionately about the migration of traditional into theme parks. Zoo attendance increased 53 percent between 1995 and 1999, while the park was being transformed from a typical municipal zoo into a unique zoo experience ... now, Fort Worth Zoo operators are becoming themed-entertainment believers, too. Since opening *Texas Wild!* on June 15 [2001], attendance has increased 30 to 40 percent over the same time last year, despite 100+ degree temperatures and excessive rain during its opening weeks.[19]

Stories are always comprised of these major categories: people, places, events, and viewpoints characterized by role-play. Keeping these four elements in mind is a helpful way to make content come alive for visitors.

An immersive environment created in the late 1960s was the Carboniferous Forest in the Earth Science Hall of the William Penn Memorial Museum, now The State Museum of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg. Early development drawings (November 28, 1967) from the Richard Rush Studio, a contractor from Chicago, Illinois, then well-known for the construction of large and detailed traditional dioramas, demonstrates that the design was influenced by techniques used in dioramas. The diorama had evolved into an essential exhibit technique for museums and many were installed in major east coast museums, like the American Museum of Natural History, the Smithsonian's museums, the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh, and the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. Even The State Museum's dioramas in the adjacent gallery were themselves nearly completed by 1968; and in The State Museum's exhibition files, were reference photographs of a pre-history Pennsylvania coal forest diorama at The Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago. Also, at recent world's fairs and expositions visitors were immersed in environments that seemingly

transported them to other times and places using innovative technology, particularly surround sound and audio-visual techniques. Originally drawn as a environment containing a series of traditional dioramas in approximately 9,000 square feet, sections of the Earth Science Hall showed historical geology, rocks and minerals, and large-scale dioramas depicting glaciers, a mastodon, and a flora and fauna setting recreating the Pennsylvanian geological period. The gallery space as planned was to be shaped with several devices that communicated a recreated environment. First, a colored carpet covered the winding pathway, and second, a stylized rock-like facia made of Fiberglas lined the walls to obscure the building structure, lighting, and storage areas; and finally life-like models of plants and animals and lighting would finalize visitors' impression. The design proposal articulates the intended scope:

> To give the viewer on a 'walk through time' a simple way to become
> aware of how long ago each epoch existed, what life could be found on
> earth (life size as much as possible) and how scientists know these facts
> (related specimens) and where (in Pennsylvania?[sic]) these are found.
> Hopefully, most of the restorations and diorama like environments can
> be open and unglazed to give the 'you were there' effect.[20]

As the project developed, budget considerations affected the interpretive context of the gallery sections; while other interpretive sections diminished in importance the Carboniferous Forest became more significant, being "a very large area and the most complete and exciting of all." Through revisions, it remained true and presently stands as originally conceived:

> A Pennsylvania Epoch, Carboniferous Forest scene will have a pathway
> running thru [sic] the center of it so the viewer could actually feel he
> was in the real thing. To complete the effect, real water will be used to
> cover parts of the swampy floor of the forest and the visitor will walk
> over a bridge to see down to the amphibians and fish that were in these
> waters. If possible, even rain dripping off the trees will be included.
> Large insects will be suspended on nylon threads in the distance. Scale
> trees, ferns, etc. would form a canopy over the pathway but out of the
> viewers reach. A sound story with spot lighting will identify the flora
> and fauna as the visitors cross thru [sic] the Forest.[21]

Experience puts a human face on the event

We have seen the museum landscape shifting from traditional Cabinets of Curiosities to interpretation, the mechanism for producing stories. World's fairs served as an early form of entertainment that used stories to connect hard-to-imagine events. "Among the most popular exhibits in Omaha [Nebraska, 1898] and the fairs that succeeded it were reenactments of the Battle of Manila, the sinking of the Maine ... and in St. Louis [Missouri, 1904] the Battle of Santiago."[22] On man-made lakes measuring about 300 feet by 280 feet, scale models of battleships, each about 21 feet long, created a mock battle. Visitors' experiences were summarized as "the ultimate tourist spectacle, where the visitor not only viewed but also became a part of the sight, part of the show, simultaneously insider and spectator."[23] Inherent in the creation of experiences is the invitation to the public to play a role—to see and feel, or experience. Storytelling gives visitors a sense of place within an interpretative context; they are given a point-of-view, which is the device that puts a human face on the event.

The development of the immersive WWI Trench exhibit, formerly at the Pennsylvania Military Museum, Boalsburg, shows twofold the relationship of creating an attraction that interprets events that took place on the world stage and also helps to accentuate the unique personal story of what war time is like. The museum was built on part of a larger acreage originally reserved as a shrine to honor members of the 28th Infantry Division, Pennsylvania National Guard, who died during World War I; other monuments were added through the years commemorating the valor and sacrifices of individuals and units. In a memorial address in 1945 then Governor Edward Martin paid tribute to fallen comrades of the 28th Division in World War I and II:

> There are names from World War I that stir our memories and our emotions. We cannot forget the little hills along the Marne that guarded the roads to Paris; or the heights beyond the Meuse; or the valley of the Ourcq [river]; or Sergy Hill; or Dormons; or Mount Balinville which gave us one of its historic crosses [to be part of a shrine]; or the Argonne, with its historic Varennes; or Apremont; or the Thiaucourt Sevior, or anywhere else we left our dead.[24]

There is no clue from early original exhibition planning documents that anything other than traditional exhibits—panels, cases, dioramas, uniformed

mannequins, scale models, and rare World War I military vehicles—would appear in the new museum, which opened November 11, 1968.[25] There were to be two types of exhibits. The first was a condensed chronological interpretive historical account of the major wars in which Pennsylvania citizens participated, and second was to be a display of a large collection of military vehicles. And it the latter that is of interest because at some point in the development process, a replica full-scale walk-through World War I trench scene was developed to provide the military vehicles a backdrop, or an environmental context. It is not known if the trench scene was influenced by the Carboniferous Forest walk-through that was also undergoing construction at the William Penn Museum in Harrisburg. The interpretive scene chosen depicted the second Battle of the Marne, mentioned previously in Governor Martin's remarks, where the 28th Division valiantly fought and stood its ground against the last major offensive of the Germans.

Designed as a multi-sensory attraction, the trench immersive environment recreated for visitors a section of trench life common to Pennsylvania troops serving on the French front in 1917. As visitors walked on the rough wood plank-lined trench, which was laid out to zigzag through the large gallery, artillery fire sounded and flashes of red denoted explosions. Brief audio segments commenced as visitors neared the sandbagged bunker where a soldier was sleeping, then a nearby first aid station, and a communications dugout. The large vehicles—the rare Renault tank, vintage ambulance, and Dodge utility truck—were displayed realistically mired in the muddy ground above the trench, with a smaller story taking place around each vehicle using sound and dressed mannequins. Donald Morrison, curator at the museum in 1968 said:

> There are not too many museums [that] have advanced to this newest
> technique. The idea behind it is that the more of your senses that are
> exposed to something, the more you will remember about it. This recre-
> ated battlefield takes the glory out of war. There's too much of that on
> TV today. When I ask children how they felt touring the display, they
> say, "I was afraid." And I tell them that soldiers were afraid too, that
> there was nothing fun or glamorous about it.[26]

The exhibit attracted many visitors over the decades and became an icon for the museum until its removal in 2003 for building renovations. As a museum experience visitors were placed in the scene and became metaphorically soldiers in the trench scene; visitors had the same point of view of other

soldiers on the battlefield where the world around was exploding. K. Patricia Joy, a travel writer for the West Penn News, describes her impression as she surveyed the scene from the upper balcony in 1973:

> It vividly reminded me that war means personal tragedy. I felt the des-
> olation of the dispossessed family as I looked upon the fire-scarred walls,
> the charred furniture, shattered windows, torn pictures, broken toys, and
> blackened coffee pot. I felt the sadness of their loss as I gazed upon the
> little wayside shrine—so typical of France—standing twisted and for-
> gotten in the yard. The uniqueness of this exhibit was intensified as the
> steps led me down and directly into the trench, and where before I had
> been an observer, I now became a participant.[27]

Some people were glad to see the old trench dismantled because it told the wrong story or did not tell enough. However, in an interpretive context, the trench told a *different* story. And for many visitors it was a *meaningful* story.

Experience is emotionally compelling and engaging

In the *International Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship* Roger Miles, who initiated landmark exhibit development at the Natural History Museum in London in the mid-1970s, distinguishes between scholarly and visitor impressions, explaining that the scholarly perception sees the museum as a learning, not recreation, institution, while the visitor perception holds that museums are for entertainment, that is to say entertainment is a leisure and social activity.[28] This interpretation of the word "entertainment" by visitors is important because it represents a mature perception of adult play activity, which contrasts to the adolescent paradigm of, for example, going to the arcade to play video games. The scholarly approach is traditional in the sense that it follows the systematic classification of artifacts and objects, and Miles' work seems to expand upon—not contradict—the scholarly position by suggesting that although the learning act of visitors may be a derivative of the traditional approach, it is an engaging itinerary. Immersion in a simulated environment helps to create the magic people hope for when they visit a museum.

Immersion in a simulated environment helps to create the magic people hope for when they visit a museum. One reason experiences are engaging over other forms of communication is the visitor is made to be a mobile architectural

component of the exhibit landscape. Visitors' point of view constantly changes as they move—a time element—through the exhibit gallery—a space element.

Some blockbuster exhibits like *The Treasures of Tutankhamen*, which toured the United States 1976 to 1979, are renowned for their simulated environment.[29] In *Exhibits: Planning and Design* Larry Klein recounts its development: "Gaillard Ravenel, Chief Designer, built walls within the space to provide a series of fifteen small, connected galleries to give a more intimate setting for the objects and to avoid the large, open (and untomb-like) galleries prevalent at most of the succeeding installations ... this resulted in an excellent synthesis of individual, jewel-like settings with a contemplative spatial character more appropriate to the tomb itself."[30] People recall walking through narrow tomb-like halls of *Tut* where the aesthetic experience was momentous—the visitor was no longer aware of thinking, feeling, seeing, or communicating as separate processes. For many visitors, *Tut* represented a pivotal example of non-participatory edutainment. Like a time machine, visitors were transported to this defining time of history.

To communicate a concept, object-oriented exhibits might be unisensory, which is engaging one sense, such as using touch to feel the shape of an object that cannot be seen. However, multisensory intrigues and engages the visitor, and allows even more people to be participates. People are conditioned by stories like *Alice-in-Wonderland*; Alice falls down the rabbit hole and into a land where her senses are turned upside-down as she experiences changes in size and shape, environments, sounds, smells, and colors.

"The richest communication will be that which selects just the right combination of senses, allowing us to rely on our memories and imaginations," writes Wendy Richmond suggesting that if too many senses are used to convey an experience, visitors may be deprived of using their creativity.[31] Sometimes though, an interactive technology is not the right method of communication. Interactive media designer Douglas Crockford writes, "The delivery medium does you little good if you are using it to deliver experiences that nobody wants ... in the long run, audiences will not be judging you on the highness of your tech,"[32] Can another exhibit enhancement like scale manipulation be substituted? The indoor children's area at the Philadelphia Zoo contains two exhibits that seem to appeal to people of all ages. The first, the Milkweed Meadow exhibit, is the story of metamorphosis; a caterpillar, cocoon, and butterfly are shown. The exhibit contains an enormous caterpillar under an equally enlarged milkweed plant, which is about 15 feet tall. A cocoon is attached to the underside of a leaf, and flying above the plant is a monarch butterfly. Even

within the environmental context—a large-scale meadow—suggested by this exhibit, scientific accuracy and authenticity exists. Also at the Zoo, the Prehistoric River exhibit illustrates the time of the dinosaurs. Centered in the exhibit is a crested dinosaur on which children can climb, and under the chin children can poke their heads into the dinosaur's head to look through magnifying lenses in the eye pockets, which may represent the dinosaur's visual field (but is scientifically inaccurate). Each exhibit is imaginative and interactive; they enhance the visitors' perception and increase their understanding of a concept. And both engage visitors, though not every visitor.

Over other types of presentation methodology, experiences must contain equality between the visitor, the form of the exhibit and its content, and the exhibit context, which is shaped by visitors' perception of authenticity. Context, discussed earlier, gives a framework to understanding and shows relationships; when context does not exist people get confused and do not know how to react to an experience—so they are neither compelled nor engaged.

Conclusion

An intriguing possibility may exist if we can imaginatively apply these same ideas about experience to a large geographical area, like an economic corridor. In such an example, the visitor may drive from one location to another, often choosing their own path of interest—visitors act the same way in a museum setting. For our "corridor" exhibit each location of entertainment, food, and lodging are balanced with authentic experiences of local historical societies, museums, outdoor activities and the like. And of the three characteristics—story, human face, engaging and compelling—story emerges as a cohesive factor for these diverse elements. This is not an example of branding, but rather experiential treatment. And the result could be a high-end experience that delivers your message with style and impact. Although a visitor in a museum may stay two or three hours, in the economic corridor they could stay for days or weeks. I think it is important to take this point of view because it allows for the concept of experience to be viewed on a much larger, holistic and meaningful scale and creates a context in which smaller museums, which may feel isolated, to be connected. And it allows visitors, or tourists, a framework of time and place for viewing their own lives or even understanding past events or even national history.

NOTES

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12. Nasaw, *Going Out*, 80–95.
13. Robert W. Rydell, "World's Fairs," www.hmco.com, July 17, 2005.
14. Edward C. Bruce, *The Century: Its Fruits and its Festival* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1877), 150.
15. The Imagineers, *Imagineering: A Behind the Dreams Look at Making the Magic Real!* (New York: Hyperion, 1996), 31.
16. Karal Ann Marling, *Designing Disney's Theme Parks* (New York: Flammarion, 1997), 39.
17. Kevin Walsh, *The Representation of the Past* (New York: Routledge Press, 1997), 97.
18. Marling, *Designing Disney's Theme Parks,* 180.
19. Janet Ritter, "Animal Attraction: Ed-Zoo-Tainment Creates New Interactive Experiences at Discovery Cove and Texas Wild!" *Entertainment Management* (September-October 2001): 32–37. Note: The Ft. Worth Zoo states on its website: "In addition to these new exhibits, substantial improvements have been made to Zoo facilities, including handicap accessibility as defined by ADA standards, as well as improvements to restrooms, shade structures, walkways, food outlets, picnic areas, animal areas and exhibit space. Public reaction to the Zoo's renaissance has been tremendous, making the Fort Worth Zoo one of the most popular attractions in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. The Zoo has been ranked as a top zoo in the nation by *Family Life* magazine, the *Los Angeles Times* and *USA Today*, and as one of the top zoos in the South by *Southern Living* Reader's Choice Awards." (July, 2005)
20. "A Design Proposal for the Earth Sciences Hall of William Penn Museum," General State Authority (GSA) Project Directive 946-6, Richard Rush Studio, Inc. (April, 1971), Division of Exhibition Management, The State Museum of Pennsylvania.

21. "Fixed Exhibits – Phase IV, Final Design, Plans, and Bid Specifications," General State Authority (GSA) Project Directive 946–6, Richard Rush Studio, Inc. (May 28, 1975), Division of Exhibition Management, The State Museum of Pennsylvania.

22. Nasaw, *Going Out*, 74.

23. Nasaw, *Going Out*, 69.

24. "Highlights of Martin Speech at Boalsburg," *Centre Daily Times*, State College, PA, Sunday, July 22, 1945.

25. "Part One: Phase One Building Ground and First Floors," Exhibits Program, 28th Division Memorial Shrine, Boalsburg, Pennsylvania, GSA 977–1, February 2, 1967 (revised), Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, Harrisburg, PA. Document set belonged to Col. Duncan Campbell, then curator of Military History and assistant to the director, Bureau of Museums, who supervised exhibition development with Donald Morrison, resident curator for the new Military History Museum.

26. Janie Musala, "Military Museum Marks 200 years of Pa. Sacrifices," *Daily Collegian Living*, March 26, 1976, 9.

27. K. Patricia Joy, "Pennsylvania Own: A Mini Vacation," *West Penn News* (October 1973), 10.

28. Roger Miles, "Museum Audiences," *International Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship* 5/1 (1986): 73–80.

29. *Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs*, an updated version of *Treasures* began a four-city, 27-month tour of the United States on June 16, 2005.

30. Larry Klein, *Exhibits: Planning and Design* (New York: Madison Square Press, Inc., 1986), 151.

31. Wendy Richmond, "Using Your Imagination," *Communication Arts* 37/3 (1995). July, 159.

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