CHAPTER ONE

HISTORY OF THE DEPARTMENT STORE & MUSEUM

The development of both of the department store and the art museum can be attributed to social, political, and industrial changes and progressions in technology.

In the second half of the 19th century industry underwent a major shift from the production of goods to the selling of goods. The main focus of this shift was the invention of new wants and desires, rather than simply the satisfaction of basic needs. This process of commodification led to increased amounts of goods being produced with a greater variety, and in Marxian terms, an increase in exchange value over use value. The object’s use or necessity was not the main issue but rather its value as a commodity and its relationship with people and other commodities. It is this shift to commodification which led to the introduction of department stores, however, the advent of art’s commodification occurred much later, around the beginning of the 20th century.

The most significant difference between the objects in a department store display and those viewed in a museum display are that in a department store objects are consumable, they may be purchased, thus satisfying consumer’s needs, wants and desires. In a museum environment, however, the objects on display are portrayed as
precious and unobtainable, only mementos or tokens of their existence may be purchased in the form of postcard images, catalogues, or related souvenirs. Therefore it is not the art object which becomes a consumerable commodity but another related form of mass-produced merchandise which attempts to satisfy the audience / consumer desire for their favourite works of art or artists.

Whilst the museum attempts to reinforce the Modernist notions of aura, originality, and authenticity in relation to the works of art it displays, the proliferation of images generated by mechanical reproduction for mass consumption oppose these concepts and have partly led to art’s commodification.

Some of the similarities between the department store and the museum are apparent in their functions of accumulation, display techniques, display equipment, and architecture.

The utilisation of glass and steel technologies by both institutions allows for large expanses of transparent roof, along with window and cabinet displays which are employed to arouse curiosity and increase perception of the object’s value.

Both institutions enjoy architectural prominence and interior ephemerality, however, the changes to a department store’s decor are much more frequent and rapid, often characterised by continually changing trends and fashions. The actual objects within the art museum may change almost as often as stock in a department store,
due to the frequent change of temporary exhibitions.

Whilst both institutions claim to welcome a ‘general’ public, both actually have codes in place which signal to society what type of audience or customer ultimately they wish to attract. These codes which society is conditioned to recognise and interpret may signify the preferred level of economic, or intellectual capital required by those members of society it wishes to attract or seduce, alternatively they may signal to other members of society that they are not welcomed and will not feel at ease within that particular environment.

Spectacle, fascination, and enticement surrounds many visual media present in society including displays in both the museum and the department store. This occurs when particular needs, wants and desires of particular groups of individuals in society are targeted by the production, advertisement, and display of commodities which claim to satisfy these needs, wants, and desires.

As a type of leisure activity, shopping could be considered similar to visiting a museum, or even the theatre, since shopping is predominantly an activity of visual fascination. This fascination is generated by highly contrived, choreographed, and often inventive displays which aim to create visual curiosity along with a positive emotional response.

Many do not visit stores intending to buy, but rather to witness the spectacle, which is a similar reason for visiting a museum or gallery.
however once in a department store, or for instance a gallery shop, the exciting visual displays and vast array of consumer goods are arranged to entice their viewers to develop a desire for these goods, thus, creating commodity fetishism. Jill Bennett analyses the interrelationship between art and commerce in her catalogue essay for the exhibition ‘Virtual Reality’, she states:

The incorporation into a museum space of commerce and industry informs us not simply about the context of the production of contemporary art, but also indicates the cultural conditions that generate particular types of viewers or consumers. As art changes, so too do the consumers of art in their abilities and expectations....Indeed, the point is often made that the quintessential postmodern cultural pursuit is not art but shopping...In a postmodern society in which identity is no longer something fixed and unchangeable, but rather something chosen, created, bought, the marketplace is the major site of creative activity: the place where we make ourselves. And it is there that we learn to deal with the mass of visual images - advertisements, publicity material, television imagery - through which desires are forged.

(Bennett, 1994, p6)

Marx’s writings on the subject of fetishism introduces the idea that the value of an object has little to do with its materiality, rather, it is the relationship between capitalist production and social discourse which determines value and creates object fetishism. To Marx, fetishism occurs as a process between people and things, not as something intrinsic to either.

For Freud, however, fetishism refers specifically to the relationship between desire and things. His psychoanalytic theory interprets
fetishism as a form of compensation for the absence or lack of the maternal phallus through castration or disavowal. Hence, it is that which attempts metaphorically to replace this lacking power and value, embodied in the phallus, which is fetishised.

William Pietz defines the relationship between objects and people in his interpretation of the Marxist theory of capitalist fetishism:

...the materiality of “value” is not physical but social. For Marx, value is a social substance that appears in a series of material forms (labor-selling people, commodified things, money).

(Pietz, 1993, p14)

Marx, therefore, saw value in the process of exchange between people and objects. In semiotic analysis, this concept of meaning operating with objects and not as part of them is described by Edwina Taborsky as the act of ‘signification’:

...the concept of ‘signification’, which can be described as an object having a meaning which is not inherent in that object, but which is socially assigned to it... The important concept here is the issue of ‘standing for something’ which suggests that being meaningful is not inherent but is an assigned property.

(Taborsky, 1990, p51)

Hence, the meaning and value of material objects is not a physical characteristic rather, it is something which is socially determined and assigned. This semiological structure involves ‘objects’ and ‘interpreters’ within the process of ‘signification’. The operation of context, signs and codes in this process generate and effect our sense of value and also fetishism. These meanings and effects, though, are
capable of considerable degrees of change with the influence and movement of each of these factors, for example, viewers bring to the work of art and the department store display their own individual knowledge, experience, ideas, or what is generally referred to as ‘baggage’.

Therefore, from these readings of fetishism, the meaning and value of objects operates through the processes of communication and interaction of subjects, contextual setting, and the object. It is the mode of contingency operating around objects and their meanings, as described here, which stands in opposition to the Modernist paradigm, whereby, objects are defined wholly by their internal relations. Hence, the socially constructed discourses external to the object transform objects into fetishised objects.

This research of the department store and museum, thus, relies on the idea of ephemerality in relation to the context, codes, subject, and object. This analysis will indeed employ these concepts further by studying the phenomena of design and display in museum spaces and department store / retail spaces and the possible impact these have on the visitor to these spaces.
THE DEPARTMENT STORE AND BOUTIQUE

Exterior and Interior design

The exterior design of retail spaces can involve two different types of design: open or closed. An open design generally is characterised by having an extremely wide entrance, this type of design seems to encourage browsing as people can wander in and out of these types of entrances freely and without having to make a drastic decision about whether to go in or not. In contrast, closed designs are typically defined by a narrow entrance or doorway which involves a more deliberate and confident effort to pass its threshold. These types of open and closed designs are not related to the entrance alone but can be recognised inside areas of the store as well when, for instance, aisles may appear closed or too narrow to comfortably pass through or even may appear blocked by merchandise.

Closed designs are much more confronting to customers and can often signal exclusivity relating to the type of store they are approaching, its image, its merchandise, and the type of customer they ultimately wish to attract. The use of doors at the point of entry which physically require opening are visible, physical and psychological barriers to entry for some, thereby, deterring potential customers from entering the store. To have a person employed by the store to welcome customers and open the door for those wishing to enter can sometimes be intimidating but more encouraging for people than a closed door. A doorman also indicates a store's exclusivity, similar to the position
of a porter or valet at an expensive or lavish hotel.

Window displays are also a major component of most storefront facades, but this is increasingly changing as department stores move into larger shopping centre complexes where there is no allowance made for a window display space.

Window displays are aimed at promoting the particular store's merchandise, store name, and image. Often windows are created as a theatrical environments which become a city spectacle, thus, increasing the store's public image and exposure. Window displays not only focus the merchandise to a particular target market but also aim to enhance the viewer's perception of its value. This transformation of its value may be achieved through the combination of many elements such as lighting, theatrical display, stark, minimal and isolated approaches to the presentation of products, and other types of display devices like plinths, pedestals, and glass display cases.

Window displays generally are changed frequently to keep up to date with the latest fashions and products. Often there is a level of expectation involved with the window displays of larger or high-profile department stores, for example, in Sydney the David Jones and Grace Bros city stores attract wide attention and publicity with their annual Christmas window displays.

The interior plan of a store relies on three important factors - the merchandise, the customers, and the sales staff. These elements effect
the integration of the product and the environment as well as the experience of the customer in the retail space. If these elements are disparate, unfocused or uncoordinated then the store plan, customer stimulation, and sales will probably reflect this.

In retail spaces which, for example, are overly complicated, or have obstructed circulation paths, or maybe even annoying sales staff, the customer may feel confused, intimidated or even disoriented and will probably wish to leave the store.

Similar to the exterior design of a store, the interior can signal or give the impression of exclusivity or conservatism. In this situation the store may connote expensiveness, through the type of merchandise and the way it is displayed, the materials used for construction and decoration of the interior, even the dress and demeanour of the sales staff. Alternatively, other stores may use these same elements to project a discount, self-service retail atmosphere. This could be conveyed through such things as flooring, lighting, the amount of goods displayed and the way in which they are presented, and even by the position and amount of sales counters.

**Planning and Circulation**

Circulation plans ultimately are aimed at moving the customer around the store - from front to back, side to side, and up and down. These plans combine to sequence the relationships between different
departments and areas within the store, and attempt to shape patterns of customer behaviour. For instance, some circulation plans may be complex and confusing for the customer and, therefore, hinder their interest in pursuing other departments or browsing longer in the particular store. Conversely, clearly defined paths of circulation may encourage customers to browse more comfortably.

A certain psychology of sequencing merchandise can create customer circulation in a subtle way through the placement of particular goods which are popular, or basic items, towards the back of the store. Perhaps placing other eye-catching items towards the back and sides of the store will also move customers from side to side and front to back.

In most department stores vertical circulation plays a very important role. Generally, the higher the ascent of levels into the hierarchy of departments, the more exclusive the merchandise and overall style of departments become. In many stores the designer fashion houses, bridal departments, restaurants, and even an art gallery may occupy these upper levels. Interestingly, with the development of more and more department stores in large multi-level shopping centres each level appears to be an entry level and the distinction between upper and lower floors is less distinct. Indeed, in many department stores the street-entry level is not always the lowest floor, since most stores have a ground floor and a lower-ground floor. The lower-ground floor will often carry more essential items, possibly a food court, confectionery, stationary, pharmacy, banking and travel services, music, and toiletries. The displays, lighting, and circulation paths on these levels
typically are less detailed or theatrical to allow for quicker access and identification of essential or necessary goods.

By looking at various horizontal circulation plans and discussing their possible effects on customer behaviour it may be possible to define which forms of circulation planning and movement of traffic flow is more useful than another.
Refer to Fig. 1.1-1.4 (Source: Fitch & Knobel, 1990, p40)
Refer to Fig. 2.1-2.3 (Source: Barr & Broudy, 1990, p24)

The **Straight Plan** is usually characterised by pathways which offer direct access from front to back, sometimes incorporated with the placement of display units to divert circulation. This type of plan may encourage customers to move freely and willingly towards the back of the store, especially if high-impact displays of merchandise are visible from the front of the store to lure the customer towards the back of the store. This type of plan is quite effective due to its simplicity, which would hopefully not intimidate or confuse browsing shoppers. This type of plan may, however, move customers into the store through a central aisle and back out of the store the same way without encouraging circulation throughout the store.

The **Racetrack, Walkway or Pathway Plan** is more common in larger stores. This type of circulation plan is fairly distinct as it maps out a path for customers to follow, moving them through the store. A feature of many department stores, these pathways may be defined by different types of flooring materials like carpet or tiles, or even
fig. 1.1 'Straight plan'

fig. 1.2 'Racetrack plan'

fig. 1.3 'Diagonal plan'

fig. 1.4 'Curved plan'

(Source: Fitch & Knobel, 1990, p40)
fig. 2.1 'Straight plan'

fig. 2.2 'Pathway plan'

fig. 2.3 'Diagonal plan'

(Source: Barr & Broudy, 1990, p24)
through simple colour differentiation of the floor. Again this type of circulation device, like the straight plan, is comforting to customers as by it they are less likely to become lost or confused if in a large store. It also gives shoppers the opportunity to browse in certain departments of interest, and then return to the pathway to orientate themselves towards the next department, sales counter, escalator, or exit.

The **Diagonal Plan** could be viewed as an intimidating and potentially confusing type of design, but alternatively is a design which offers a greater sense of self-initiated circulation and movement throughout the space. Generally this type of design encourages angular traffic flow through the placement of displays and the positioning of angular walls, the location of the cashier in the centre of the space can in some ways promote a circular flow around the store, but can also be intimidating to customers who feel like they are under surveillance and cannot browse comfortably.

The **Curved Plan** is a less common type of design mainly due to its expense. It is based on curved walls designed to increase circulation flows. Similar to the diagonal plan, it may promote movement but at the same time could hinder a customer’s desire to browse with its centrally located sales desk.

These types of circulation plans are obviously different when applied to specific locations, however, there are a few additional factors which will affect the customer more than others. As already mentioned, the placement of the sales counter is a vital factor in the design phase and
its effect on customer behaviour. If it is centrally located or in the entrance to a store it will appear quite confronting to the customer and signal that sales is the main priority of this store. The positioning of merchandise and visual displays will also greatly affect a customer’s movements. High-impact displays and the placement of staple items towards the back of a store will increase a customer’s gravitation to the rear of a store.

Another important circulation factor is the presence of separate doorways for entrance and exit. A separate entry and exit door may greatly affect circulation as it may hinder or decrease movement around the store. This type of design may encourage a direct path from entrance to exit with only a glance at other displays along the way. Hence, having only one doorway promotes circulation within the store.

The large scale of many department stores means that designers have the mission to entice or manipulate the customer to spend more time in the department store than the amount of time they may spend, for instance, in a single-purpose store. If facilities are provided for physical refreshment, for example, cafes, toilets etc, then a customer more likely will take advantage of these facilities and stay longer.

**Merchandise display**

The display of merchandise and the designs for display fixtures are just
as important and influential as the exterior and interior architecture and design of the retail space.

A merchandiser or designer generally will aim to create a setting that will increase the shopper’s perception of the value of the products on display and the implied benefits gained by ownership. A visual merchandiser may dramatise the presentation of promotional items or add an element of glamour to goods on display to create the desire for ownership or what is called commodity fetishism.

Susan Buck-Morss explains this transformation of commodities into objects of desire, referring to the texts of Walter Benjamin.

For Benjamin... the key to the new urban phantasmagoria was not so much the commodity-in-the-market as the commodity-on-display, where exchange value no less than use value lost practical meaning, and purely representational value came to the fore. Everything desirable, from sex to social status, could be transformed into commodities as fetishes-on-display that held the crowd enthralled even when possession was beyond their reach. (Buck-Morss, 1989, pp 81-2)

This type of commodity representation may be achieved through the context and style of display and presentation, the use of props, and lighting.

Advertising is also a major factor which projects onto society the level of status and desire associated with certain objects.

Consumption hierarchies, in which commodities define life-styles, now furnish indications of status.
more visible than the economic relationships of class positions. Status is thus easy to read, since the necessary information has already been distributed through advertising. (Crawford, 1992, p11)

Advertising primes the shopper with a barrage of messages which transpose particular emotional and social conditions with certain products, this in turn, manipulates or induces a new set of needs which are distinct from ‘real’ needs.

Each product’s image is often researched and transmitted according to a lifestyle or repertoire of taste to which targeted customers hopefully will identify with. Through the type of display an object could be transformed into something exotic, fantastic, mysterious, and desirable.

The visual merchandiser has many factors to take into account when displaying goods such as - what will make the product appeal to customers, how can it be presented to convey this, what are the dimensional considerations, how many of the product are needed on display, and will the customer be able to handle the product or does it need protection because of fragility or security?

When it comes to merchandising and display devices there may be a range of reasons why certain merchandise should be inaccessible. Most commonly these are security, danger, and fragility. This type of inaccessibility of goods on display implies a certain degree of exclusivity or increased desirability, since objects kept behind glass and
in locked display cabinets convey the idea of being expensive, rare and precious. These are important points which will be discussed in the next section.

Lighting

Lighting is one of the most important elements of store design and has strong impact on customer behaviour. Since the human eye adjusts to the light level even before it begins to transmit to the brain information about the merchandise, lighting must be considered, whether consciously or unconsciously, one of the most influential factors on customers. Lighting is not only an essential function employed to illuminate the store and its merchandise, but is also the most influential element in creating a sense of atmosphere.

There are two categories of lighting which most retail environments employ: ambient and theatrical. Ambient lighting generally is the type of lighting used when overall illumination is necessary, whereas theatrical lighting, as the name suggests, will combine varying degrees of illumination and contrast to focus on particular areas and create different effects. Most stores will, however, fall between these two types of lighting or utilise both to varying degrees. Typically, it is considered true that most people feel happier and more at ease in well-lit surroundings. Darkened spaces, or spaces which employ too many contrasts of dark and bright light may increase a persons feeling of insecurity, instability, and disorientation.
Lighting the merchandise brightly also is an important priority in a store, and since displays and merchandise change frequently, it is appropriate for lighting to be adjustable, flexible, and changeable. Spotlights often will be employed to focus strong light on objects displayed, whilst the rest of the space remains more evenly lit. This is a combination of ambient and theatrical lighting.

Many factors to consider when choosing what type of light source to use could include capital costs, running costs, and colour rendition. Incandescent light sources have the advantage of the lowest initial cost. A newer type of light source is the multi-reflector, usually a low-voltage dichronic tungsten lamp. These have the advantage of producing 'white' light, thus, providing very accurate colour rendition. Designers may also consider the oldest light source - natural light - however it is not quite as inexpensive as perceived due to the architectural alterations needed to allow for skylights or an atrium, along with the cost of glass. Natural light also is difficult to control and may cause certain types of merchandise to fade, especially fabrics.

The use of natural light was to be a large component of Karl Friedrich Schinkel’s designs for the Bazaar on Unter den Linden,(1827). Schinkel’s designs featured the use of large expanses of glass in the form of rows of large windows which would occupy almost the entire length and height of the building. Having significant influence on his designs were the earlier developments of new arcades and covered markets in Paris and London. See (fig.3.1 - 3.3).
fig. 3.1  Illustration plan of Bazaar on Unter den Linden

fig. 3.2  Floorplan of Schinkel's Bazaar on Unter den Linden

fig. 3.3  Cross-section plan of Bazaar on Unter den Linden

(Source: Rave, 1962, pp125-9)
Store logo / graphics

A store logo or symbolic graphics may be featured on the exterior of the building, in window displays, on ticketing of items, on clothes labels, and on packaging and shopping bags. The carrier bag probably is the most powerful of all these forms since it is publicly visible and is a moving advertisement or identifiable symbol representing the particular store or boutique.

These types of signs, images, and aesthetics, along with references in this section to design and display practices within retail environments can be argued to be derived from practices within the arts, as Rachel Bowlby outlines:

The dominance of signs and images, the elements of pleasure, entertainment and aesthetic appeal indicate what the new large-scale commerce shares with practices derived not from industrial production, but from the arts. Yet if industry, through the shift to selling techniques involving the making of beautiful images, was becoming more like art, so art at this time was taking on the rationalized structures of industry.

(Bowlby,1985,p8)

As Bowlby indicates here, the marketplace has been taking on board many characteristics borrowed from theatrical, graphic, and visual arts. Progressively, though, these very same areas of the arts have been borrowing from industry through their increase in merchandising products or commodities and the incorporation of increased recreational facilities like cafes etc. The increase of corporate interest and sponsorship of many art exhibitions and cultural events, along
with the growth of many corporate collections of art, show that the merging of industry and culture is proving to be successful and valuable, yet sometimes controversial.

THE ART MUSEUM

Public art museums initially were developed for the visual presentation and display of the history of the state or nation, or the progress of civilisation. (Bennett, 1995, p171).

The architecture and location of many art museums combined to project them as publicly-prominent socio-cultural monuments. Their architectural stature is usually quite bold amid their contextual setting, and often geographically they are located in or close to the city or town centre. The construction and perception of the art museum as a public icon implies a particular sense of social status, cultural credibility and legitimacy, and historical importance.

The exterior and interior design of art museums has varied dramatically over the last century. Schinkel’s design for what has been heralded, by Douglas Crimp, as the paradigmatic early art museum is characterised by a two-storey colonnade along the south facade, a two-storey rotunda at the museum’s centre, and freestanding columns on the main floor. (Crimp, 1993, p290).

Schinkel’s floorplan positioned the gallery spaces so that one opened
onto another, in a kind of uninterrupted continuum of connected
rooms with an axial linking. (Fig. 4.1 - 4.3). This plan is defined as en
filade and is explained here in greater detail by Campbell Gray:

In this schema, rooms of slightly varying
dimensions are abutted against each other in linear
sequence beginning from the museum's entrance, and
continuing from the left-hand side of the entrance
in a square formation around a central rotunda or
courtyard until it is completed at the right-hand
side of the entrance. A central axial passageway is
constructed by placing doorways between the rooms
which permit visitor's sight lines to remain
unbroken from room to room and which signal the
way forward. (Gray, 1996,p7)

A criticism which has been made of Schinkel's museum and has
motivated debate and many theories of museum design and function
ever since is outlined here by Markus Lüpertz.

The classical museum is built like this: four walls,
light coming in from above, two doors, one for those
coming in, the other for those going out. All these
new museums are often beautiful, noteworthy
buildings, but, like all art, hostile to "other" types
of art. They do not give simple, innocent pictures,
simple, innocent sculptures a chance...
(quoted in Crimp,1993,p290)

Whilst it was some 160 years after the development of Schinkel's Altes
Museum when Lüpertz made this criticism, Alois Hirt was making
these very same claims in Berlin in the 1820's when Schinkel was
designing the new museum for Berlin. Hirt opposed Schinkel's
designs on the premise that the museum should be built for its objects,
not in the reverse with objects utilised to sustain the museum's
architectural project. Lüpertz again reflects concerns similar to those
Hirt expressed in 1824:
fig. 4.1 Plan of Altes Museum. (en filade)

(Source: Snodin, 1991, p127)
fig. 4.2  Schinkel's Altes Museum

(Source: Snodin, 1991, p21)

fig. 4.3  Schinkel's Altes Museum

(Source: Watkin & Mellinghoff, 1987, p94)
Architecture should possess the greatness to present itself in such a way that art is possible within it, that art is not driven away by architecture’s own claim to be art, and without - even worse - art’s being exploited by architecture as “decoration”. (quoted in Crimp, 1993, p290)

Whilst Lüpertz is making these comments in 1985, many other developments in museum interior design had already taken place throughout the advent of modernism. Here, the museum’s gallery spaces were characterised by an interior architecture and design which was intended almost to be invisible, and not detracting from the works on display. As Brian O’Doherty writes in 1976:

The ideal gallery subtracts from the artwork all clues that interfere with the fact that it is ‘art’. The work is isolated from everything that would detract from its own evaluation of itself. (O’Doherty, 1976, p14)

This new type of exhibition space was largely referred to as the ‘white cube’ and was considered ideal for the autonomous display and viewing of works of art. However, the notion of art’s autonomy and the neutral ‘white cube’ gallery has been challenged, but also reiterated, by many over this last decade.

Douglas Crimp, Donald Kuspit, the later texts of Daniel Buren, and the work of many others, each maintain that the museum’s primary role is to collect and preserve the fragile work of art. For them the work of art is seen as subservient to the museum’s institutional framework, fostered by the supposed stability and security of the museum. Whilst Crimp, Kuspit, and Buren recognise that the museum is a coded social
/ cultural space, dealing with factors other than the physical context for art, they nevertheless, imply that the museum is a fixed and obdurate form. Therefore, the critical analysis of the museum in texts by these writers, and many other theories emerging within postmodern discourse, often fail to recognise the contingent factors, external to the museum environment, which affect the work.

Artists such as Marcel Broodthaers, Michael Asher, Hans Haacke, and the already mentioned artist / writer Daniel Buren, have analysed and deconstructed the hegemonic structures of the museum, attempting to expose the systems of the institution which inscribe authority, value, and status upon the work of art. Joshua Decter describes the work of these artists as being concerned with:

...the way in which such matrices of socio-cultural value, authority, and norm were constructed in and through the primary site of the museum...therefore the museum becomes a metaphor for the intersection of so-called "dominant" social value systems and the aesthetic objects which comprise the artifacts of only particular quadrants of the cultural arena: as arbiter of general taste and historical legitimation, the museum necessarily assumes the role of authority through the imprimitur of expertise. (Decter, 1990, p140)

The work of these and many other artists including Louise Lawler and Gordon Matta-Clark, not only investigate and critique the museum-as-institution but, ironically, often present their work in the very same institution they serve to critique. These artists necessarily rely on the museum to present and promote their ideas and criticism, however, they are also subscribing to the same museological structures from

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which they are trying to critically intervene and oppose, thus, confirming the museum’s social and political importance.

These contemporary discourses which attempt to engage with the context of the museum, object, and viewer, have made it virtually impossible for one to ignore the mode of contingency related to the museum, work of art, and their meaning.

Museum professionals, on the other hand, are often ignorant of these factors because they have become so familiar with the function and space of the museum, often appearing less critical and less sensitive to the factors which influence and construct the museum. This outcome is often referred to as ‘storeblind’, since it is equally applicable to professionals in the retail environment, and perpetuates the myth that the museum operates in a Modernist mode.

The visitor to the museum is, nevertheless, sensitive to the factors which construct the museological message and the work. Some of the components which effect the visitor’s relationship to the museum are described here by Campbell Gray:

They see the “work” (the object, the exhibition, the institutionalised meaning) in relation to a context. They proceed to the work having moved from the external social context, through the often imposing entrance and the various transitional spaces coded carefully with authority and behavioural imperatives. By the time they have reached the space of display, they are psychologically conditioned to receive what appears to be a predetermined message from a context of institutional politics, isolated from a volatile external society. Indeed, the strategies of
marketing, of circulating the visitor, of announcing and qualifying the exhibition are loaded with ideologies that condition thought and perception.
(Gray, 1994, p7)

Thus, the components which shape the viewers experience of the museum are numerous and changeable. The dialectical relationships between the museum, its context, and the visitor are discussed in the following section.

**Exterior and Interior design**

The mode of installation, the subtle messages communicated through design, arrangement, and assemblage, can either aid or impede our appreciation and understanding of the visual, cultural, social, and political interest of the objects and stories exhibited in museums.
(Karp, 1991, pp13-14)

The actual design of a museum and museum exhibition, as quoted here by Ivan Karp, involves the arrangement of visual, spatial, and material elements to create an environment which 'ideally' viewers will interact with comfortably.

Whilst museums profess that everyone is welcomed and encouraged to visit, the reality is somewhat different, and museums have many visual and psychological barriers in place which actually deter or inhibit many people from visiting museums. It is possible that after a visitor has entered the museum space these physical and psychological barriers and codes, which are specific to museums, become even more powerful.
Upon making the decision to visit an art museum, whether it be inspired by an interest in a particular temporary or ‘blockbuster’ exhibition, or another form of leisure time activity, education, or even as a symbolic gesture associated with art museum patronage and the acquisition of socio-cultural status and prestige, the first thing a visitor encounters is the museum’s geographical position, its relationship to the surroundings, its immediate environment, forecourt, and facade.

Of course all museums differ from one another over the world and over time but there are certain characteristics generally which emerge in most museums. A common feature around the exterior of a museum site is the presence of sculpture or a sculpture garden. This is not a characteristic exclusive to the site of an art museum since many public and private institutions display sculpture in their grounds or entrance courtyards, for aesthetic reasons and also possibly as a symbol of corporate wealth, power, and status.

Public spaces, have over the last few decades, become increasingly more popular as venues for the display of site-specific and urban art. As Juliet Steyn here describes, public art represents “openness, inclusion, availability, participation, accessibility and visibility.” (Steyn,1989,p54).

Therefore, the display of sculptures outside the entrance and forecourt of an art museum are not only a part of the museum itself but also gesture to many different agendas including those referred to by Steyn. Possibly they act as an attraction which motivates people to enter the
museum and experience many other artworks, perhaps they act as a bold reminder of the cultural significance of the particular site of the museum and its societal, political and institutional prominence, or even there is the possibility that some of the works are too large to be shown within the museum building itself.

The facade of the museum usually is an imposing, architecturally striking feature. Historically, museum facades are characterised by large colonnade, and make extensive use of stone, typically sandstone, or even rendered brick, as in the case of Schinkel's Altes Museum.

For the facade of his museum Schinkel chose a long colonnade of eighteen Ionic columns... The majestic row of 40-foot-high Ionic columns along the 266-foot-long front seals the building off from the outside world yet at the same time compels the visitor to ascend the steps and enter. (Watkin & Mellinghoff, 1987, p96)

The type of facade described here may entice the visitor to enter through the curiosity and intrigue to experience more of this grand architecture, but alternatively may repel a visitor from entering as they may feel intimidated or apprehensive to approach or enter inside this monumental structure signifying cultural prominence and cachet.

The number of stairs ascending towards the entrance of the museum is another visual, physical, and psychological barrier which could inhibit the visitor's motivation to enter the museum because an elevation from ground level involves a sense of dislocation from the familiarity, comfort, and stability of 'street-level'.
Similarly, the actual entrance into the museum can affect a person’s ease with which they cross the threshold into the museum’s interior space - the position of the entrance, the number entrances, the size of the entrance opening, and the actual type of entrance used, are all factors which consciously or subconsciously affect the potential visitor. If the entrance is singular and very small it can impede a visitor’s confidence to enter, since the movement from outside public space into an intensely coded cultural / social space is made even more distinct when the entrance requires such definite negotiation. A larger opening signals an increased freedom of entry, however, smaller and more numerous entrances can still appear intimidating and also confusing as the decision regarding which one to enter has to be made. An entrance with a door which needs opening is probably the most extreme entry deterrent, however, a doorman or a rotating doorway will ease some of this entrance confrontation or anxiety. A single but relatively wide entrance is perhaps the most effective type of entrance since it provides visitors with a clear indication of where to enter and how many people can enter at one time, therefore relieving the sense of intimidation. Security may still operate effectively since everyone enters and exits through the same doorway.

Once inside the museum foyer the visitor often is required to check-in bags umbrellas etc. with museum guards or volunteers. Some museums also charge admission prices to all or some exhibitions, these may be encountered upon entry to the particular exhibition galleries or at the general entrance. All of these activities accumulate to condition the visitor and remind them of the museum’s role to
secure and protect the fragile object and enforce their authority upon
the visitor whose behaviour or movements have already been
controlled within the foyer.

Then comes the progression into the main entrance space of the
museum which typically connects to many separate gallery or
exhibition spaces and often leads to numerous other levels. It is at this
point that usually there is some form of information desk, staff or
guide to give information on exhibitions, catalogues, and orientation
throughout the space. The placement of this desk also has significance
to the overall priorities of the institution, these priorities will be
discussed in relation to aesthetics and economics later in this paper,
and compared to particular priorities of retail spaces.

The front desk, guards, gallery shop etc, positioned in the foyer to the
museum signal to the visitor the discourses of the museum, for
instance, the museum shop represents the accumulation of cultural
goods for sale. These often quite expensive goods highlight the
economic value and sacrifice for cultural purchase. The shop
predominantly sells book therefore signalling the museum’s
educational priority.

Guards who peruse the galleries signify the necessity for security to
protect the precious, fragile, and valuable objects accumulated by the
museum. The surveillance of visitor’s by the guards enforces the
behavioural control and power the museum has over the visitor.

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Planning and Circulation

The design and organisation of the space and objects within the museum ultimately affect the way in which visitors receive the museum and the work on display. Some of the factors which a designer or curator must consider are outlined here by Svetlana Alpers.

The way a picture or object is hung or placed- its frame or support, its position relative to the viewer (is it high, low, or on a level? Can it be walked around or not? Can it be touched? Can one sit and view it or must one stand?), the light on it (does one want constant light? Focused or diffuse? Should one let natural light and dark play on it and let the light change throughout the day and with the seasons?), and the other objects it is placed with and so compared to- all of these affect how we look and what we see. (Alpers, 1991, p31)

Many techniques may be used by a designer or architect to orientate visitors and organise their pacing and circulation around the museum. In temporary exhibition galleries these circulation and display plans will be altered regularly and are mostly designed by the curator or exhibition designer. Planning and circulation plans ultimately aim to encourage the visitor to move further through an exhibition bearing in mind that visitors become progressively fatigued. Some forms of circulatory paths may be overtly defined by different materials such as tiling and/or carpeting or even different coloured flooring which is similar to the materials used in department stores. Arrows or signs may also indicate how to reach other floors or levels, toilets, exits, other exhibitions, cafes, etc. All of these circulation
devices can aid the visitor and perhaps make them feel more comfortable and orientated. However, if these devices are too structured or definite visitors / viewers may merely follow the pathways glancing at works from a distance. Visitors may feel frustrated and restricted by pathways yet may not feel confident to leave these zones of control and circulation.

Here are some examples of circulation plans within exhibition spaces. (Fig 5.1 - 5.10) - (Source: Hall, 1987, p130)

1/

![fig. 5.1](image)

This type of corridor display has a separate entrance and exit with a direct passageway between both. Whilst the intention of the designer probably is to create more freedom for the visitor to choose which displays to look at in their own time and order, the placement of a larger freestanding display nearest the exit and in a central viewpoint from the entrance means that the visitor may gravitate quickly towards this display and, hence, exit more rapidly.

2/ & 3/

![fig. 5.2](image)

![fig. 5.3](image)

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Similar to the last example, these two circulation patterns are more likely, however, to encourage the viewer to move more slowly and observe more of the exhibits before being drawn towards the vision of the exit. Plan 2 is probably too similar to the first corridor plan since this central avenue leading toward the exit displays freestanding exhibits which may attract the visitor through this tunnel towards the exit disregarding many of the works located on the walls. Plan 3 probably is a more effective plan for circulating viewers throughout the exhibition in a more structured manner because the subject has no direct view of the exit from the entrance, and limited view of the exit from other points throughout the exhibition. Thus, the viewer is more likely to move around the angular direction of the walls, paying more attention to two-dimensional works and free-standing displays.

The type of plan shown here often referred to as an ‘interlocking comb’, encourages visitors pass through every part of the display in a directional plan or maze leading to the exit. Again, with no direct sightlines to the exit the visitor is lured to follow the structured pathway and observe all the exhibits along the way.

This type of display could, in some circumstances, lead to anxiety for the visitor as they may become fatigued and wish to know how close they are to the exit.
This display resembles parts of the previous plans, providing clear views of the exit along with a directional flow through small display areas connected by the pathway. This would probably be one of the most effective circulation plans in comparison to those seen so far, ultimately because it demonstrates a simple directional flow around the displays providing knowledge of the exit location.

The absence of any displays placed in the corridor leading to the exit, removes any attraction or focus towards the direction of the exit which may limit the viewer's attention to other exhibits.

The type of design featured here is aimed at creating a certain freedom of pace and direction to observe these clusters of freestanding displays. Once again this design is characterised by the direct alignment of entry to exit, but in this case the exhibits which obstruct and distract from this pathway allow for the viewing of all displays without creating any direct orientation towards the exit.
Similar to the designs shown in illustration 1/ and 2/, this plan encourages visitors directly towards the exit after entering the space. The main difference in this plan is the entrance offers the visitor with a choice upon entry, to enter through the left or right side of the split doorway. This entrance device is common to many exhibitions as it is often an ideal way to display the title of the exhibition and maybe show one piece of work or display on this feature wall to entice visitors to enter and see the other exhibits which are concealed behind this wall.

The circulation and display plan shown here is vastly different in its effect from all of the others shown so far because it only has one doorway which acts as entrance and exit, therefore encouraging maximum circulation around the room and central displays. This type of design also creates a sense of containment within its defined perimeters. This offers a greater feeling of stability and groundedness, and also an increased affinity between the viewer and the work as the viewer is a part of the work and the space. This type of room-like
design could be regarded as providing the optimum conditions for viewing works of art.

As with the previous design the use of only one doorway will create greater circulation around the space and exhibits, whether they are singular or multiple, placed on the wall or freestanding displays the movement of the viewer around the pieces is greatly emphasised and encouraged in this type of spatial design.

Like illustration 7, the positioning of a wall at the entrance to the space which therefore impedes viewing of the space and exhibits from the entrance, is an effective device for arousing curiosity for what lies beyond. Typically, the display of information, graphics or a display itself outside the entrance, will be a more successful means of enticing the visitor to enter with curiosity to see the rest of the exhibition.

Through the illustration of these floorplans outlining exhibition design and circulation, three main types of designs may be defined regarding traffic flow - suggested, unstructured, and directed.
Fig. 6.1 - 6.3 (Source: Dean, 1994, p54)

1/ (Fig. 6.1) - shows a 'suggested approach', whereby pathways are loosely structured and defined leading towards the exit, however, within this plan there are many options the viewer may take whilst freely moving around the exhibition.

2/ (Fig. 6.2) - shows an 'unstructured approach', which clearly demonstrates the open-plan of this design. Visitor circulation or traffic flow is free to move in any direction, with the exit a visible option at most times. This type of design is most likely to breed confusion and possibly cause visitors to miss viewing some displays.

3/ (Fig. 6.3) - illustrates a 'directed approach' to circulation flow. This type of design is highly structured and fairly rigidly directs the viewer throughout the space and displays. If an exhibition is structured around a particular theme or chronology this would be the obvious type of circulation plan which would convey this effectively.

Another feature of exhibition designs which affects the behaviour of visitors and their somewhat premature orientation towards the exit has arisen with the increasing excitement surrounding 'blockbuster' exhibitions and their merchandise section usually located near the exit of an exhibition. Many visitors gather for long periods of time in the gallery shop, excited at the prospect of being able to purchase a souvenir, postcard, catalogue, or some other form of merchandising paraphernalia which relates to the exhibition. The role of the exhibition merchandising outlet will be discussed further, in the latter part of this paper, and in relation to art's commodification.
fig. 6.1  Floorplan of suggested approach to traffic flow

fig. 6.2  Floorplan of unstructured approach to traffic flow

fig. 6.3  Floorplan of directed approach to traffic flow

(Source: Dean, 1994, p54)
Lighting

When planning lighting, designers cater for the vision of the visitors. Light sets the atmosphere for an exhibition and can control how things are seen and how they influence the visitor’s reaction to them.

Both natural daylight and artificial lighting pose specific problems for exhibitions. Daylight is particularly suitable for the lighting of things like stone sculpture, which are not subject to damage from the ultra-violet component in natural light. Ultra-violet rays in the light spectrum are the most harmful for collections. In non-living substances they cause serious degradation of their molecular structures. Daylight may not always be chosen by the designer, but thrust upon them due to the fact that many galleries of museums built in the last century feature skylights and windows which served as the only form of illumination when built.

Whilst very low light levels may be initiated by the conservator, they are not always appreciated by visitors and many complain when faced with dimly lit exhibitions. In exhibition spaces, general illumination is often kept well below 300 FC or 300 lux for stable paintings in oil or acrylic.

The colour of the lighting used in an exhibition is also important, since there are many variations between different light sources. These differences are usually described in terms of ‘colour temperature’ or ‘colour rendition’. The tungsten filaments of incandescent lamps
provide light across the whole spectrum but with a bias towards red, and fluorescent lamps are generally biased towards green, blue, and yellow. For the optimum colour rendering of works of art a truly 'white' light source is required. This type of light source emits waves from the whole of the visible spectrum.

In some exhibitions the intention may be to use theatrical effects or strong lights to define areas of subject matter, or emphasise points of punctuation. This type of lighting relates to commercial display and what is referred to by Stephen Greenblatt as "boutique lighting" as quoted here by Ivan Karp.

Greenblatt describes the contemporary use of "boutique lighting" as an attempt to impart wonder from outside, to give the object a sense of mystery that is derived not from itself but from the apparatus of commercial display. Boutique lighting thus provides an instance in which the spectacle of possession is presented as if it were the mystique of the object. (Karp, 1991, p18)

Museum logo / graphics

Merchandising material which promotes the art museum / gallery itself, is often represented by the image of the Greek column. In Australia, the Art Gallery of NSW, the Museum of Contemporary Art, and the National Gallery of Australia, all sell key-rings, stickers, and sometimes have packaging displaying the symbol of the column. See (fig. 7.1).
The Art Gallery of New South Wales

fig. 7.1 Sticker logo for Art Gallery of NSW

(Source: Art Gallery of NSW bookshop)
The Relationship between the Department Store and Museum

The most significant difference between the planning and circulation plans in department stores, as shown earlier, and those in art museums, are their fundamental priorities for either aesthetics or economics.

For instance, in department stores the principal aim is to position those elements which signify economics, predominantly the cashiers counter, sale or discounts signs, or displays of reduced items, at the front of the store to notion that the priority of this particular environment is an economic priority connected to selling and profits.

A secondary priority in a department store would, thus, be aesthetics. The merchandising displays, positioning of products, lighting, and other visual motifs which attract the customer’s attention and increase their movement around the space are undoubtedly a primary part of the store’s function and appeal.

Conversely, in a museum aesthetics, along with education, are of paramount importance, whilst economics plays less of a role. As discussed earlier the bookshop, cafes, merchandise shops etc, all have an educational and economic priority but the institution itself is mainly geared towards aesthetics and education.

Some commercial art galleries, however, operate on a system based on economic priority, whereby the space is visually coded for the intended
purpose of selling art as commodity. In these galleries the spatial positioning of the sales desk along with visible pricing and information systems utilise similar principles to retail environments like department stores, or more specifically, designer boutiques.

Many connections can be identified between both art and fashion, such as the movement of changing styles and trends, the methods of display for objects, and the way in which certain codes and contextual material influence consumer / audience perception of objects. In the world of fashion and selling, styles and trends are changing almost constantly with the seasons and with the latest European designs, however, in the museum changes take place at less frenetic pace and generally are motivated by political and social issues, and changing architectural requirements. For example, many changes to the professional structure of the museum are influenced by arts funding and policies which are mostly determined by government and private arts organisations. Changes in artistic styles and movements may also impact eventually on the architecture of the museum, for example, the large scale of many Modernist paintings led to the introduction of larger and increasingly flexible exhibition spaces.

Other similarities which appear between art and fashion institutions, are apparent in architecture and modes of interior design and display. The devices employed for display in the art museum, such as the plinth and vitrine, contribute to its construction as an established site of expectation and coding. These objects are employed to support, protect and emphasise works of art, however, they also act as
accessories which are psychologically and museologically coded creating a sense of impact and importance for the objects they display. Once inside the museum, plinths, vitrines, labels, roped barricades, lighting, and museum guards are a few of the coded forms which, in turn, also affect the viewers interaction and perception of the objects displayed. For example, the display of objects in a vitrine signifies certain meanings or issues relating to the value of those objects. Since they are isolated and protected, and access is restricted they may be perceived as special, expensive, exclusive, and desirable. This type of display cabinet or vitrine originates within the department store, as Chantal Georgel explains in her essay 'The Museum as Metaphor':

These “mahogany tables enclosed by glass on all four sides” or “glass cages” were called montres (meaning both “watches” and “to show”) before 1830...Under the July Monarchy they came to be called vitrines, a term borrowed simultaneously from the vocabulary of interior design, commerce, the bazaar, and the department store. (Georgel, 1994, p118)

The display of consumer objects within these large glass display cabinets / vitrines is also closely related to shop window display. This type of display is designed to attract the casual shopper, pedestrian, and voyeur, and stimulate their desires. Based on the formation of the arcade in Paris in the late 19th century, and related to the movements of the flanéur (and later women shoppers), stores increasingly used their windows as lures to attract the viewer and increase the desire for the commodities displayed. Today, multi-media advertising, along with window and in-store merchandising displays, theatrically and artistically stage objects to appeal visually to the customer’s sensory
impulses. Consumer objects, displayed in isolation or amongst other objects and props, are transformed by this type of presentation.

Department stores and boutiques, in turn, have borrowed from the museum through the appropriation of Minimal Art in their approaches to interior design and display of merchandise. Many designer boutiques, particularly fashion boutiques, have adopted the ‘minimalist style’ actually designing concept stores to sustain the idea of basic ‘less is more’ design.

Whilst the notion of ‘less is more’ is not related to the principles of Minimalism, sometimes works ‘appeared’ to be displayed in this way despite the fact that what these works were actually resisting and critiquing industrial technology and consumer capitalism. Rosalind Krauss actually raises a similar issue when commenting on the way in which Minimalist works employed the same codes and were possibly perceived in the same way as those objects and the market they were attempting to react against. She asks:

...is it possible that a movement that wished to attack commodification and technologization somehow always already carried the codes of those very conditions?...in its very resistance to a particular manifestation of capital - to technology, say, or commodification, or the reification of the subject of mass production - the artist produces an alternative to that phenomenon which can also be read as a function of it, another version, although possibly more ideated or rarified, of the very thing against which he or she was reacting.  
(Krauss, 1990, pp.10-11)

Therefore, the appropriation of this kind of ‘minimalist-style’ could be
viewed in a similar way to what Krauss is arguing here, that Minimalism could have been perceived almost as a celebration of industrialisation, commodification, and seriality, and therefore was adopted or reinterpreted by other institutions such as the department store and boutique.

This type of minimal-style design is equally applicable to the range of designer fashion garments and their display. In this situation the minimal effect creates a sense of the unique or ‘limited edition’ which, in turn, creates an increase in the value of the object. Thus, subscribing to the Modernist principles of aura, originality, and authenticity surrounding the work of art. By means of ‘signification’ this contrived display of singular, isolated designer-signature objects perpetuates ‘commodity fetishism’.

The most significant difference between the objects in a department store display and those viewed in a museum display are - that in a store these objects may be purchased, thus, satisfying the consumer’s desire, however, in a museum environment the objects on display are, in a sense, owned by the public but physically unobtainable with only mementos of their existence able to be purchased in the form of postcard images or related souvenirs. The proliferation of commodified mementos relates to the museum’s increasing appeal to the mass-market and audiences living in the consumer, information, and technology era.

As Virginia Nightingale describes here, the commodity culture class
sees the actual art as somewhat incidental to the sale of related ‘spin-off’ commodities.

...this ‘audience’ began to content itself with the type of art product television culture led them to expect: not works of art but postcards, posters and, for serious expenditure, catalogues. Ownership of such simulacra compromised not only the desire for an original but the commitment to culture as art.
(Nightingale, 1996, p28)

Nightingale goes on to discuss that not only is it art which is being commodified but also the audience, whereby, the tourist industry has developed packages for audiences to visit art exhibitions and also enjoy a luxurious weekend away.

The gallery package (accommodation, gallery admission, posters, catalogue) tied the art object to an entertainment-plus-tourism deal...The art became incidental, tactical, a kind of foreplay...
(Nightingale, 1996, p28)

Therefore, the accumulation of activities and objects which circulate around the art object itself become consumerable and the subject of desire, similar to the effect of the consumer object in a department store.

The Museum Object

Obviously another vital element in any art museum or exhibition is the art itself. This may include two-dimensional works or three-dimensional installation works. Whether displayed on the wall, on a
plinth, in a display case or vitrine, on the floor, hanging from the roof, or utilising any other method of presentation, these works are not isolated objects but part of the overall contextual interplay active in the museum experience. These objects are represented within the overall museological context and are dependent upon external social, political, cultural and institutional factors for their meaning and existence.

Thus, it is the dialectical relationship between the context, object, and viewer which is deemed valuable and meaningful. This notion, however, operates in contrast to Modernism and the theories developed by Clement Greenberg. It was the Modernist belief, defined by Greenberg, that the work of art operated in isolation, and "should confine itself exclusively to what is given in visual experience, and make no reference to anything given in any other orders of experience." (Harrison & Wood, 1992, p758)

For Modernism, the museum’s perceived role as a fixed site of artistic authority and expertise is metaphorically symbolised by the ideal, ‘white cube’.

The first works which attempted to dissemble the idea of the internally-related work came from Marcel Duchamp. His use of the everyday readymade object, which was dislocated from its functional context and repositioned in the museum context provoked many ideas and relationships between the object’s production, consumption, and display.
Since Duchamp's introduction of the *readymade* and its resistance to the hegemony of the museum's value and authority, the museum has become the subject of intense scrutiny by artists following the Duchampian aesthetic tradition.

The presentation of *readymade* objects in the museum opposed Modernism's concept of a fixed, static, and neutral space of display, and hence, revealed the impact of external, associative factors affecting the work's meaning and value. The *readymade* object questioned the museum's environment, as the viewer was forced to look beyond the object's material properties to its metaphoric and metonymic implications.

Contrary to Modernist theory, the museum is not a fixed form, it is indeed, ephemeral and contingent, connoting an ideological, socio-cultural, political, and historical agenda. The effects of such agendas influence society's perceptions of the museum and the objects displayed within.

There is an apparent, yet somewhat mysterious, *distortion* which occurs between the physical reality of objects and their ideologically constructed meaning and value. It is this *distortion* which is of particular interest to the topic of fetishism. The most significant values related to objects within an art museum are aesthetic / artistic value and their educational effect on the viewer. When objects are taken out of their everyday or functional sphere and placed within the museum, they are reinvested with new meaning and associations brought to the
When consumer produce is placed in a museum it is reinvested into a new economy: an economy of art, which does not operate (overtly, at any rate) on principles of commerce. Within such an economy, the consumer of art is offered something other than the product - and thereby something more than unrequited desire...In other words, the institutional setting provides the object with a brand new set of associations, so that we do not expect the same pay-off from an artwork as from a consumer product. (Bennett, 1994, p6)

Hence, viewer or consumer desire for objects, displayed within the museum, is different to the desire one may have for these same objects in a shop because the museum has endowed the object something more or other than its everyday meaning or perception. In the museum desire for the object may be exploited, but not satisfied, since the museum “frames objects as precious rather than consumerable”. (Bennett, 1994, p7).

Perhaps it is to this end that the department store and boutique have implemented and appropriated some of the display methodologies present in the museum. With the intention of changing perception of certain consumer objects, without removing them from their commercial environment, retailers are creating a level of value and desire around these objects and, thus, gaining the potential for higher economic return.

This concept is echoed in an article published in Elle magazine which discusses the new wave of designer fashion stores on New York's
Madison Ave. Referring to the interior design and display techniques of these new and refurbished stores, Lee Tulloch states:

...the mood up on Madison Avenue is clearly a brutal one. Minimal is maximum. Out with the gilt chairs and in with the chrome fixtures. In with the blond wood and out with the plush carpets. We have seen the shopping future and it looks like...an art gallery. Unfortunately, with price tags to match. (Tulloch,1996,p166)

As quoted here and mentioned earlier in the same article, Tulloch referred to the representation of Minimal aesthetics in many of the newer stores along Madison Avenue, as a revival of monochromatic colour and the less-is-more approach to design. She argues that this particular design style signifies an exclusive and expensive mode of consumption.

Similarly in London, boutiques are being designed and referred to as "polito/ art statements" as stated recently in an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald*. (Alderson,1996,p4). The author of this article, Maggie Alderson, goes on to describe the interior design of many London department stores and boutiques including a boutique named "Vexed Generation" which displays its clothes in a large perspex box in the centre of the room. (fig. 8.1).

The display of items in this type of vitrine is, perhaps, an appropriation of museological display systems, however, once again the difference arises, whereby, individuals in the boutique have the opportunity to touch the items on display through the placement of
fig. 8.1 Photograph of shop "Vexed Generation"

(Source: Sydney Morning Herald, 17/8/1996, p4T)
‘portholes’ in the vitrine, and they may also purchase the items on display. This type of display overtly designates the objects as special, precious, and protected. The objects are transformed by their display acquiring aesthetic, economic, and social value and status.

Hence, through these examples of interior design and merchandising display mentioned above, the question arises, that if the designers of such stores are referencing and appropriating modern and postmodern aesthetics, which are supposedly seen as representative of the art museum, how long will it take for the museum to redefine its perceived ensemble as anything but minimal and neutral? Perhaps the answer to this is that it is only the superficial appearance of the museum which is being appropriated, along with the perception that any lack of ornament is a sign of intellectual, social, cultural, architectural, and economic power.

The possibility arises that it is only the ‘appearance’ of specific forms of display and aesthetics being borrowed by boutiques from the modern museum, without any real critical evaluation of the theories and agendas evolving within the museum or gallery.
CHAPTER TWO

ANALYSIS OF EXHIBITIONS

The analysis of two exhibitions held in Australia in 1996 provides this research with practical examples which can be applied to the phenomena of display, design, and viewing, as discussed in the first chapter of this paper.

‘Islands : Contemporary Installations’ - National Gallery of Australia

31 August - 27 October 1996

The exterior image of the National Gallery is the first encounter for the exhibition visitor. The imposing monumentality of the museum’s architecture reinforces the visitor’s sense of subservience to the dominance and authority of this institutional edifice.

Access to the museum is gained via an ascending staircase or rampway which raises the visitor above ground level, thus, inscribing the museum’s control upon the visitor.

At the entrance to the museum the visitor is then confronted by a revolving doorway which provides a challenge, since the visitor must consciously and swiftly step into a section of the doorway and be thrust into the museum’s foyer. This type of entrance may create anxiety and confusion as individuals attempt to enter through the doorway-in-
motion. Each visitor has to individually negotiate this doorway which in itself can be intimidating and cause hesitation if too many people try to enter at once, or perhaps if the door is revolving too fast. This is especially significant for the elderly. Thus, pacing is affected by this type of doorway and the process of crossing over the threshold from outside to inside made more distinct.

Once inside, the visitor becomes disengaged from typical social relations and is confronted with the austerity of the museum environment. The foyer area is occupied by various forms which are coded to create a sense of expectation, and impose behavioural conditions, for example, the information and admissions desk, cloakroom, and gallery shop are to the right, in the centre is the entrance to the Aboriginal collection, whilst to the left there is seating, display cabinets and entrances to other galleries. The design of the foyer does create some confusion, however, it more explicitly signifies the institutions control over visitor behaviour and attitude towards the museum’s authority.

Also noticeable above the reception area to the right are the offices presumably of certain museum professionals. The large glass windows of these offices allow the visitor to witness professional activity, thus, exposing and reinforcing the museum’s power, surveillance, and influence.

Once inside the gallery, the visitor to the National Gallery of Australia may wish to view the entire museum collection and other temporary
exhibitions or may only be interested in seeing one particular temporary or ‘blockbuster’ exhibition, however, with the ‘Islands’ exhibition these two modes of viewing have been integrated so that the museum visitor has to locate the temporary installations comprising ‘Islands’ within the galleries dedicated to the permanent collection.

Whilst a map is provided to locate each particular ‘Islands’ installation within the gallery, there is an element of confusion, but also surprise associated with this type of exhibition arrangement. (fig. 9.1 - 9.2) Referring to the lack of sequential ordering of works in the exhibition, the curators describe the motivation for this type of display, in the exhibition catalogue as follows:

The installations are located throughout the display areas of the National Gallery of Australia...It is necessary to explore the museum to discover the exhibition, to find each work. The installations are dispersed in this fashion both due to the practical considerations of available space, and to maximise the impact of each installed space in contrast to the conventional galleries. (Davidson & Desmond, 1996, p7)

Although these works are invested with the discourse of the museum, they also act as a disruption and subversion of conventional viewing and perception of the museum’s permanent collection. This occurs not only through the placement of installations in the space but also through the methods of display, materials, and lighting used in the presentation of these works.
Islands: Contemporary Installations

Lower Level

9 Lyndal Jones  
[From the Darwin Translations: Room with Fishes]

10 Rosalie Gascoigne  
[String of Blue Days]

11 Richard Wilson  
[2630]

12 Alfredo Jaar  
[The eyes of Sutee Emeita]

fig. 9.1  
Map / floorplan for lower level 'Islands' exhibition

(Source: National Gallery of Australia)
fig. 9.2 Map / floorplan for entrance level 'Islands' exhibition

(Source: National Gallery of Australia)
This type of contemporary art referred to as ‘installation’ crosses many boundaries creating a ‘hybrid’ discipline, which combines many forms including architecture, performance, video / computer art, ‘readymade’ and mixed media, along with other traditional mediums such as painting and sculpture.

Installation incorporates what was referred to earlier as the “newer aesthetic”, whereby, the space / site, light, the object(s), and the viewer’s perception of all these factors constructs the work and its meaning. Although these are the same factors which operate with the viewer when looking at the any exhibition, with installation art the artist is provoked to become aware of or conscious of these factors and address or critique them within the work itself.

In the foreword to the publication titled Installation Art, the authors briefly describe some of the defining elements of Installation art.

Installation...is a relatively new term. It is really only in the last decade or so that it has been used to describe a kind of art making which rejects concentration on one object in favour of a consideration of the relationships between a number of elements or of the interaction between things and their contexts...Procedures which activate the potential or repressed meanings of a specific place, which play real space and time off against the imaginative dimensions of the various electronic media, which question the cultural ‘truths’ reflected in patterns of collection, scholarship and display in the privileged spaces of art, and which relate the social space in which they operate to the sense of public, private and communal found in the language of architecture, all fall within the scope of the term.

(de Oliveira, Oxley, Petry, 1994, p8)
The installations in ‘Islands’ incorporate many of these elements which force the viewer to recognise their bodily presence within the space, and their psychological presence within the work’s meaning.

Many of the works in ‘Islands’ were physically obtrusive within the space and subverted conventional methods of display including Annette Messager’s installation ‘Penetration’ (1993-94) which involved a range of soft toy-like bodily organs suspended from the ceiling. These objects, hung at eye-level, were arranged in a formation which occupied the entire space and forced the viewer to weave their way through the objects to reach other adjacent galleries. (fig. 10.1)

Another piece which affected the viewers movement around the space was Yukinori Yanagi’s ‘Chrysanthemum carpet’ (1994). This installation was comprised of a large red carpet covering a large part of the gallery floor, forcing the viewer to circulate the perimeter of the carpet, and thus, the perimeter of the space, to reach other exhibition spaces and also to view works on the wall.

The scale of both of these works are monumental and aim to impact upon the viewer’s physical presence and movement throughout the space and their psychological response to the work.

In Messager’s piece the gallery is quite dark, lit only by three bare light bulbs hanging amongst the dangling objects. This creates a challenge for the viewer who has to dodge the objects which tenuously hang from a fraying pieces of string. Shadows of these objects are cast on the
Annette Messager, Penetration 1993–94, installed at Monika Spruth Galerie, Cologne 1994. 60 sewn and stuffed fabric elements, angora wool, eight lights. approx. 500.0 x 500.0 x 1800.0 cm overall (varied). Collection: National Gallery of Australia.

fig. 10.1

(Source: Davidson & Desmond, 1996, p55)
walls of the space with the mobile viewer becoming part of this reflective landscape as they carefully negotiate and penetrate the work and the space.

The dim lighting of the space creates not only a contrast to the brighter illumination of the other exhibition spaces but also provides a sense of warmth, calmness, and contemplation. (The theatrical style of using dim ‘romantic’ lighting could be considered similar to methods used in areas of department stores and boutiques for lighting merchandise such as jewellery).

The installation in ‘Islands’ which perhaps forms the greatest impact upon the viewer’s physical and psychological reception of the work and space is Richard Wilson’s work ‘20 : 50’ (1987). (fig. 11.1).

This work includes a room filled with sump oil which the viewer enters into alone via a slightly narrowing ramp-way. The work is based on an illusion created by the reflective lake of sump oil which deceives the viewer making the reflected gallery space appear more than double the height, or rather, depth. This sense of illusion has a vertiginous effect which is breathtaking and incredibly destabilising inducing a sense of disorientation and a phobic reaction to heights, for some viewers.

The perfect mirror-like reflection created by this flooded room of black oil exposed the roof structure of the gallery, thereby, revealing the structures which the museum typically conceals and aims to render
Fig. 11.1 Richard Wilson 20:50 1987,

(Source: Davidson & Desmond, 1996, p62)
discrete. These structures include the lighting systems, supporting brackets, tracks and other devices necessary for the hanging and lighting of works, along with air conditioning units and other architectural structures.

Some of the artists in ‘Islands : Contemporary Installations’ not only aim to manipulate the physical and visual aspects of the gallery space and methods of display, but also incorporate the use of sound and smell into their work to arouse the viewer’s other senses and experiences.

All of the installations in this exhibition provoke the viewer to participate in the work. The viewers perspective is not considered from a single viewpoint but rather they are mobile viewers interacting with the works. It is this type of mobility characterised by the viewer of installation art, in particular, which connects to the mobility of shoppers in a department store, shopping mall, boutique, or 19th century arcade, as outlined in the exhibition catalogue.

A tradition of walking and viewing has its origin in flânerie, the nineteenth-century practice of promenading. The emergence of architectural forms, such as exhibition halls, department stores and museums facilitated and encouraged the pedestrian’s mobilised gaze.

(Davidson & Desmond, 1996, p5)

In both the museum and the department store the viewer / shopper is the central receiver of meaning, influence, and reaction. The methods of display, lighting, circulation patterns etc are only effective through
their interaction with an audience.

The floorplan for the permanent collection galleries where the 'Islands' installations were located, subscribed to a combination of suggested and unstructured traffic flow.

Smaller galleries are contained within larger open spaces of display which flow onto other smaller and larger spaces and ramps and stairways leading to other levels in the gallery. There exists no overtly structured method of circulation for seeing all the galleries and exhibitions in the museum.

Whilst the viewer may appreciate the freedom to meander through the exhibitions and seek out the 'Islands' installations at their own pace, there is also a possibility that the viewer may miss something, overlooking a particular work or even an entire gallery, or having to weave back over a repeated path to reach other galleries.

Whilst the 'Islands' installations appeared to disrupt and subvert museological conventions via their scattering throughout the permanent collections of modern painting / sculpture, Asian art, Aboriginal art, and other traditional works, these installations were using the space to critique the museum but relied on the museum to foster and give value to these works. So whilst these works may aim to challenge the museum and its various discourses the work is also reliant on the museum for meaning, attention, and value.
"The Second Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art"

Queensland Art Gallery


The pedestrian approach to the Queensland Art Gallery is an altogether different experience to the entrance of the National Gallery of Australia - the entrance to the Queensland Art Gallery is quite unassuming in comparison. The Queensland Art Gallery lacks a grand emphasis on the point of entry, rather, it features just a few small pathways through the gardens which display sculpture and soothing water features like fountains and ponds.

These pathways lead upstairs towards the gallery entrance. This entrance opens into, or adjacent to, the gallery bookshop / giftshop, which then opens onto the main foyer area. In the foyer there is a centrally located information desk and cloakroom off to the side. It is an open and relatively informal space with plenty of natural and artificial light.

The Triennial exhibition occupies most of the main galleries in the museum, therefore, making it easy to locate the exhibition, however, once having entered the main gallery spaces, the smaller installation spaces, which were arranged within, are often hidden by confusing configurations. Some circulation paths led straight through the galleries exhibiting Triennial works and onto galleries displaying the permanent collection, therefore, disrupting the viewing of one exhibition with another.
The visitor was faced with the option of viewing the upstairs and downstairs galleries of the Triennial or mixing the contemporary installations featured in the Triennial with other permanent traditional displays on both levels. This juxtaposition could perhaps induce some confusion and disrupt the continuity and attention devoted to the Triennial and permanent exhibition. This, however, would depend on the viewers' intentions and priority to see the entire gallery or specifically the Triennial exhibition.

A view from the top gallery space to the lower levels displaying contemporary art may also have signalled to viewers that the Triennial exhibition was continued downstairs, allowing them the opportunity to pace themselves throughout. Indeed, for the viewer to see all the installations in the Triennial exhibition he or she was required to backtrack over the same paths many times.

Similar to the 'Islands' exhibition, many of the artists, curators, and exhibition designers in the Asia-Pacific Triennial exploited conventional forms of presentation and display.

Yanagi, who exhibited 'Chrysanthemum carpet' (1994) in the 'Islands' exhibition had a piece in the Triennial exhibition which consisted of rows of flags from Asia-Pacific countries. (fig. 12.1)

These flags were designed using coloured sand which were encased in perspex frames. These perspex cases were mounted on the wall and connected by plastic tubing which then connected to a large perspex
fig. 12.1
Yukineori YAMAGI b. 1959
Lives and works in Kamifukuoka,
Saitama, Japan
PACIFIC—The art form project 1995-1996
Installation comprising axes,
coloured sand, plastic boxes,
plastic tubes, plastic pipes
Collection: The artist

(Source: Asia-Pacific Triennial exhibition catalogue,
Queensland Art Gallery, 1996)
vitrine containing live ants. The ants moved through the tubes in the wall creating tunnels in the sands of the flags, and moving the coloured sand of one flag into that of another. Yanagi’s flags are described in the exhibition catalogue as follows:

As the ants make their tunnels through the flags, they move sand from one box to another. After a while, the ants break down the flag designs and mix up the sand. This dissolution of the flags alludes to world conditions in this century when more people than ever before travel, emigrate, or are driven by force from one country to another. (Nanjo, 1996, p76)

The viewer may not actually realise that the above process is taking place until they walk around the other side of the wall and see the ants in the vitrine. Here, Yanagi subverts the gallery wall - a form which typically aims to be neutral - and brings it into the work causing the viewer to walk from front to back, not considering the wall as a prop for hanging work or a neutral barrier, but as integral and active in the work.

Yani Arahmaiani’s work titled ‘Nation for sale’ (fig. 13.1) is described in the catalogue as:

...a metaphor for the reality of the region where Arahmaiani is from, where many people have experienced cultural displacement since farm lands have been converted into huge factories established by industrial nations...Their culture is being transformed into a television-watching culture and so they are all too happy to imitate the language and way of life from industrial nations, the exporters of popular images...In the meantime, the elite, the holders of social and economic reins, continuously profit from the system. (Dwl Marianto, 1996, p81)
fig. 3.1
ARAHMAIANI
May 1996
Installation comprising
photographs, plastic toys, set,
walls, oil, mirrors, plastic bags,
mirrors, paper, neon photographs
by Marjan Drews
Mural, Singapore
Collection: The artist

(Source: Asia-Pacific Triennial exhibition catalogue,
Queensland Art Gallery, 1996)

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Whilst this quote from the catalogue describes the meaning or intended meaning of Arahmaiani’s work, the actual installation itself perhaps provokes other associations to the seduction of slick and stylish methods of presentation and display.

Arahmaiani’s installation space exuded a certain coolness in its pristine whiteness and use of fluorescent lighting. This lighting is installed in white hollow plinths which have objects placed in them including jars of dirt, water, and pills, and toy guns packed with shredded paper.

These objects, presented with such precision, style, sophistication, and refinement, resembled the chic displays seen in department stores and boutiques.

This particular outcome is actually applicable to many of the works on display in the Triennial which have been presented in this way. Indeed, with some installations, it was difficult to derive any intense meaning from the work without being affected by the seduction of the overly ‘designed’ presentation; this style of display actually seemed to trivialise many of the meanings intended by the artists.

With seventy artists and over one hundred works exhibited in the Triennial it was quite difficult for the viewer to take in every work. The openness of many parts of the gallery, the cool temperature, and combination of artificial and natural light were, however, controlled to make the visitor more comfortable, but, still inevitable fatigue has
the potential to hinder a visitor's patience with such a large exhibition. The open plan of the main lower level gallery and its water/sculpture feature are areas which aim to be soothing and relaxing, but in the Triennial the clustering of sculptures within this area defeated this aim. Relaxation and refreshment could really only be gained in the gallery cafe.

The viewer to the Queensland Art Gallery may also experience the feeling of being under surveillance and subservient to the power and control of this cultural institution through the architectural arrangement of the space, since the perimeter of the top level of the gallery is surrounded by offices, library, etc which overlook the main galleries.

Overall, this exhibition could be described as exhausting, not only because of the number of artists and variety of works shown, but mainly owing to the multitude of styles of presentation. In an exhibition like this which attempts to show such diversity in the practice of artists from such a large region as the Asia-Pacific, the actual installation of works would have been more effective if it had remained less complicated. Simplicity, in this area would surely have provided greater continuity throughout the exhibition, thus, allowing for a more complex and meaningful relationships between the context, work, and viewer to develop.
CONCLUSION

Clearly, this research has attempted to identify and define the relationships and effects generated between design, display, and spectatorship within the museum and the department store. The viewer has been established as fundamental to the act of ‘signification’ and, thus, to the development of meaning within both institutional settings.

From this analysis many questions arise, for instance, does the future of the museum look like adopting particular characteristics of the boutique and department store, and is the designer boutique going to continue to appropriate certain visual elements related to the art museum / gallery? Obviously the answers to such questions cannot be fully declared, however, the museum is moving in a direction which focuses on the viewer, and this viewer demands greater recreational and leisure facilities which have been inspired and motivated by a consumer society.

The appropriation of museological display in the commercial arena is an attempt to endow the consumer object with the transforming power active within the museum. This transformation occurs, whereby, objects are seen as special, valuable, and desirable in the museum context.

Whilst the modes of display which create desire and fetishism, sociocultural status and prestige, are aesthetically valuable for the art
museum, they are however, economically valuable for the boutique
and department store.

This research has aimed to express the dominance of the viewer in
relation to the museum context and the reception of work's of art.
The viewers changing lifestyles, interests, desire for learning, and
patterns of consumption are, to a large extent, a product of their
cultural, societal, and economic contexts.

Therefore, as changes take place in society the museum must
accommodate and address such changes, either subtilly or overtly, to
maintain a relevant dialectical relationship and function with the
viewer.

Indeed, as technology and capitalist / consumer culture move into the
new millenium, individuals appear to be seeking greater and wider
varieties of leisure activities which increasingly includes visiting
museums.

Therefore, museums are, and should continue, to increase their
attention towards educational programs in the hope that the viewer's
enhanced understanding of the art will encourage them to return to
the museum, and also encourage visitors to make use of other
enjoyable, leisurable activities provided by the museum, i.e. cafes,
bookshop, giftshop, tours, etc.

The educational imperatives often pursued by the museum rarely
make any attempt to reveal aspects relating to the museum itself, or to explain the space, context, design etc, rather, it mainly endeavours to inscribe art historical knowledge upon the viewer. This type of education emphasises the impression or myth of ‘artist as hero’, and defines artistic intention as central to the works.

Despite these educational pursuits conducted within and by the museum, the museum itself still demands separation from its societal and geographical contexts to ensure that it does not jeopardise its designation as privileged, special, and authorial - concepts which the museum projects onto its objects to perpetuate their inaccessibility and desirability.

The creation of object desire within a department store, operates by means of highly contrived display practices, and is perhaps more transient, intense, and rapid than the museum, since these desires have the potential to be satisfied.

This research identifies many of the methods employed by museums to manipulate, control, and guide the viewer, thus, constructing their experience and response. Ultimately, though, the viewer’s knowledge, interest, and socio-cultural ‘baggage’ will define relationships and meanings with the work.

Campbell Gray defines the viewer’s relationship with the museum and the work as follows:
The viewer brings to the act of viewing a dynamic synthesis of individual prejudices and beliefs. In the succession of events that begins with a person’s decision to visit the gallery and trails off some time later when the memory of the visit fades, various messages and values impact upon that person which effect his or her relationship with the work and with art in general. In other words, relevance implies specificity - a relationship between the specific work or exhibition and the specific viewer.

(Gray, 1994, p.25)

Often these factors are employed to control and manipulate visitors, not necessarily for the purpose of developing meaning, but rather, to induce or encourage an individual's needs, wants, and desires.

Clearly, the museum, the department store / boutique, and visitors to these establishments, operate in a mode of contingency, reacting and adapting to change, trends, and desires with various degrees of sensitivity and momentum.

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THE MUSEUM
AND
THE DEPARTMENT STORE

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1997

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PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
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Declaration

I, Sharyn Louise Sonter, declare that the material in this thesis is an original contribution, and that all material gained from other sources included in this thesis are suitably referenced throughout.

This work has not been submitted for a higher degree at any other institution.

Sharyn Sonter
Summary

This research aims to show the relationships between the museum and the department store and the visitor who engages with both institutions.

The visitor to these spaces is the focus for the development of meaning, and reaction, to the objects on display in both spaces.

The methods of interior and exterior design, planning and circulation, and object display, are discussed in relation to the vital context of the viewer, and the consequent construction of meaning and value.

Value itself, becomes a recurring theme in these discussions since design and display within both institutions can perpetuate value, desire, and fetishism for the object. These concepts are further related to the appropriation of Minimalist aesthetics in boutiques.

In the second chapter, this analysis is applied to the critique of two exhibitions: ‘Islands: Contemporary Installations’ at the National Gallery of Australia, and, ‘The Second Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art’ at the Queensland Art Gallery. These exhibitions which predominantly involve installation art are discussed as examples relating to the phenomena of viewing, and the impact of design and display.
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INTRODUCTION

The museum vies with the other spaces of late capitalist culture, all of which function to stage their objects in new and innovative ways.

(Bennett, 1994, p7)

The museum and the department store, both established during the century of industry, play significant roles within ideological and capitalist systems. Through the exploration of the cultural, political and sociological values of the contexts in which art and commodities are placed, this study aims to address certain issues relating to space, display, audiences and viewing, and institutional power and control. Most significantly, though this analysis will focus on the development of desire, value, and fetishism.

The object is important to this discussion, whether it be a consumer object or an art object, both are subject to particular ‘coded’ methods of display, and both are transformed by their specific institutional contexts. The meaning and value of such objects operates with the subject through the process described in semiotic analysis as the act of ‘signification’. This process involves the operation of signs and codes which communicate between the object, viewer and context. The contingency of these signs and codes suggests that meaning is never fixed. Thus, the meaning and value of these objects is not a physical characteristic, rather, it is something which is socially, culturally, ideologically, and contextually determined and assigned by viewers and institutions.
This constructed process of presentation and communication also incorporates the development of commodity desire and fetishism. These discussions are reliant upon the theories of fetishism derived from both Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. (Marx, 1979; Freud, 1977)

This critique not only aims to define the similarities in the presentation techniques, history, design, and reception within the department store and museum but will also focus on the differences which make each of these institutions and environments unique.

Also incorporated into this discussion are the architectural designs by German architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel for the Bazaar on Unter den Linden and the Altes Museum in Berlin, since his designs for both of these institutions have had an impact on the types of designs and materials used in such institutions ever since.

A brief summary of the history of the department store and the museum may provide a useful context for the analysis and critique of these institutions in later discussion.

**Department Store / Boutique**

In nineteenth century Europe, industrialisation and progress in glass technology allowed for the development of a showroom characterised by a facade that, in part, still exists today. This type of facade incorporates large areas of transparent windows. Behind these
immense panes of glass a variety of neatly, and often theatrically, presented products were displayed to entice the customer to observe the variety of goods and invite them to come inside to inspect more closely and purchase goods. The display of such previously unseen goods led, in part, to the introduction of impulse buying.

Indeed, innovations such as large window facades, characterised the development of the ‘arcade’, and gradually gave impetus to the design and development of the department store.

Architecturally, the designs which first anticipate the form of the department store are those by Karl Friedrich Schinkel from the 1820s. His designs for the Bazaar on Unter den Linden were characterised by “very large areas of glass divided by masonry piers.” (Artley, 1975, p6). Whilst Schinkel’s bazaar was never actually built, it has been said that his designs and his ideas for the use of glass, had great influence on the grid-iron, steel-framed facades of this century, and the widespread use of glass as a building material. (Artley, 1975, p6)

It was the retail career of Madame and Monsieur Boucicaut, beginning in 1852, which eventually led to the arrival of the first department store called the Bon Marche. Having enlisted the aid of designers and architects, and observed customer behaviour and psychology, the Boucicauts introduced new and innovative methods of retailing, for example, they abolished the traditional practice of haggling by offering goods at set prices. These prices were clearly displayed by a tag attached to the goods.
Other innovations introduced by the Boucicauts included the customer’s right to exchange or return goods and have their money refunded, and the freedom of public access.

Another major development invented by this retailing couple was the increase of supply over demand designed to increase customer’s desire to buy goods. This was typically aimed at women’s desires as described here by Alexandra Artley.

...one could make a moderate living from supplying a demand that was verbally expressed, one could make an infinitely more brilliant career by supplying a desire that the customer did not know she had until she had entered the premises. Thus, the Boucicauts pioneered the idea of the department store as a building purposely designed for fashionable public assembly and which, by the use of display techniques and eye-catching design which developed rapidly over the next decades, supplanted the commercial principle of supply with that of consumer seduction.

(Artley, 1975, pp6-7)

The creation of consumer desires was also achieved by allowing customers access to experience the tactility of goods on display, and later the freedom actually to try on garments.

By the twentieth century, department stores had become massive institutions which employed architects and interior designers to produce a cohesive store image and to present themselves as commercially and publicly prominent. The department store’s sophisticated window / interior displays, gift wrapping etc. also aimed to attract the new middle and lower-middle classes as customers.
Whilst department store buildings, or their facades, may remain relatively fixed, the interior decor of such stores, and also those of smaller boutiques, are constantly changing with the latest styles and trends which may be influenced by fashion, art, architecture, and interior design. In the 1920s shops were frequently refitted and transformed to become more stylish, comfortable, spacious, and well lit.

The designs for both the interior and exterior of department stores throughout the late-19th to mid-20th century provided innovation and variety, and it has only been in the last 2-3 decades of the 20th century that we have seen a collapse of such energy and confidence towards decorative styles and a move towards a retail space with the supposed appearance of stylistic neutrality. Defined here by Alexandra Artley, these more recently designed retail environments embody a:

neutral limbo of white-painted hesitancy which not only characterises our present confusion but the tender and melancholy cynicism with which we regard the stylistic confidence of the past.

(Artley, 1975, p.10)

Many shops of the 1980s - 90s follow in the chic, minimalist-style design characterised here by Artley. Their interiors are defined by their naked, stark, refined, almost empty appearance, often revealing a stripped-back industrial feel. The intention of this type of design is to amplify or ‘boutiquify’ the articles on display and enhance their sense of beauty, style, and potential to seduce shoppers.
This type of minimalist setting could be argued to be influenced by Japanese aesthetics and the idea of ‘less is more’, along with the contemporary spaces of the modern art museum or gallery which operate on similar principles of spatial design and aesthetics.

Art Museum

The birth of the public art museum was influenced most significantly by sixteenth and seventeenth-century princely collections. These collections of treasures, displayed in ornately decorated galleries and reception halls, were seen as ideal representations of the prince’s intelligence and power. These collections were acquired and assembled by the royal family and used as an instrument of political propaganda to remind citizens of the royal wealth and dominance in political, social, and cultural arenas.

The functions of these splendid and impressively lavish royal collections and galleries were, thus, appropriated, developed and transformed at the beginning of the eighteenth century to establish the public art museum. The significant change from princely collection to public art museum was distinguished by the shift from the citizen’s dependency on the prince, to the citizen’s sense of ownership in the state and the museum’s facility to educate and empower the individual.

In 1793 the French Revolutionary government nationalised the king’s art collection turning the Louvre, (previously a palace of the kings),
into the first truly modern art museum. This transformation was politically significant and influential as a powerful symbol of the fall of ancient regime and the creation of a museum for the people. (Duncan, 1994,p282). Indeed, the Louvre has since been considered the prototype for the typical capital or big-city public museum, with a collection of art which belongs to that specific place and its people.

Since the 18th century, and still existing today, is the perception that having a public art museum makes the state appear more progressive and politically virtuous, as a provider for the collective good and spirituality of its citizens. As a preserver of the past, national art museums traditionally aim to contribute to the spiritual, cultural, and political heritage and identity of their nation, and act as a motive for increasing social status and prestige among nations, cities, and individuals. (Duncan, 1994, pp282-3). This occurs through the museum’s function to educate those who visit the museum, thus, empowering them with new knowledge and ownership of art.

The beginning of museum architecture dates back to the distinct civil buildings of Greek and Roman architecture. Museums have historically resembled traditional ceremonial monuments like classical temples, mediaeval cathedrals, and Renaissance palaces, and indeed, the ‘temple’ facade has been the most popular signifier for the public art museum. Generally, museums of the late 18th to mid 20th century not only looked like temples and shrines but they also endorsed similar qualities relating to learning, contemplation, receptivity, and cultural specificity, as Carol Duncan describes:
Museums do not simply resemble temples architecturally; they work like temples, shrines and other monuments. Museums today, like visitors to these other sites, bring with them the willingness and ability to shift into a certain state of receptivity. And like traditional ritual sites, museum space is carefully marked off and culturally designated as special, reserved for a particular kind of contemplation and learning experience and demanding a special quality of attention...

(Duncan, 1994, p281)

Museums involve both subtle and overt architectural, political, and ideological discourses, along with complex display practices, to create the museum environment and the museum experience. The museum primarily functions to educate, yet everything involved in the museum experience contributes to the individual’s interaction and response and, hence, the museum’s effect, as outlined here by Susan Vogel:

The banners in front of the building tell the visitor what really matters before he or she has entered the display. The museum communicates values in the types of programs it chooses to present and in the audiences it addresses, in the size of staff departments and the emphasis they are given, in the selection of objects for acquisition, and more concretely in the location of displays in the building and the subtleties of lighting and label copy. None of these things is neutral. None is overt. All tell the audience what to think beyond what the museum is ostensibly is teaching.

(Vogel, 1990, p200)

Once objects are placed within the museum environment they are invested with the discourses of art history and criticism, and become objects designated as art. These objects are transformed by the spiritual / ideological meaning and authority associated with the museological

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context and ritual which in turn is itself influenced by factors
including politics, society, and culture. The museological context itself,
however, is the result of political, sociological, cultural, economic, and
institutional agendas.

The shift from the princely art collection to the public art museum,
which developed and evolved well into the modern era, has, since the
1950s, undergone many transformations. There has also been an
enormous increase in the number of museums being built since this
time. (Duncan,1994,p285).

The new modern art museums are a part of the “newer aesthetic”
which focuses on “space, light, and the viewer’s field of vision”.
(Morris,1966,pp 20-23). The “newer aesthetic” is a term used to define
the way in which museums and galleries are becoming increasingly
conscious of the physical context for art and the viewer, and their
impact upon the work and its meaning. The museum is no longer
considered as a neutral container for the display of the isolated art
object but rather a potent space invested with systems of codes,
expectations, and social / cultural meanings and beliefs.

Postmodern art practice embraces this “newer aesthetic” with its focus
on factors which are external to the work of art and which give the
work meaning and existence. These notions were particularly
connected to Minimalism’s ambition to “restructure the very notion
of the viewing subject.”(Krauss, 1990,p8). Here, the reader / interpreter
was deemed “all-powerful” and “radically contingent”, the subject was
not merely a spectator looking at the work of art but, immersed in the space and the experience of the work. The viewer’s involvement makes possible the infinite nature of perception which Merleau-Ponty refers to as “lived bodily perspective” (Krauss, 1990, pp.8-9).

Rosalind Krauss argues that this idea of the subject’s “lived bodily perspective” was relevant to 1960s Minimalism and late 1980s postmodernism, whereby, the subject is a:

...dispersed subject awash in a maze of signs and simulacra...a subject that no longer does its own perceiving but is involved in a dizzying effort to decode signs that emerge from within a no longer mappable or knowable depth... (Krauss, 1990, p.12)

The subject, which Krauss refers to here, embodies a space defined as ‘hyperspace’. The modern and postmodern contemporary museum / gallery which characteristically consists of large galleries displaying permanent collections along with other temporary exhibition spaces, restaurants and cafes, a bookshop, giftshop, and often a library, is part of this ‘hyperspace’. Indeed, the museum has become an industry dealing not specifically with art markets, but rather, mass markets, having more in common with areas of leisure, commodities, technology, and marketing, than the older preindustrial museum. (Krauss, 1990, pp.15-17).

Thus, the museum experience is geared towards the viewer with emphasis on education and providing activities which are common to other recreational interests and spaces, like the department store.
However, unlike most department stores, the museum still (to a certain degree) remains in a somewhat elitist mode, whereby only particular sections of society claim to possess the necessary skills for understanding or ‘appreciating’ the objects on display. Similarly though, in the exclusive designer boutique only particular members of society have the wealth to obtain the items on display, hence, it also operates by means of exclusion. This idea of exclusion actually participates in the perpetuation of desire and fetishism, whereby, something which is projected as unobtainable creates an increased sense of value and esteem of that object. These ideas will be discussed further, in relation to both the museum object and the ‘designer’ fashion object, in the next two chapters.