ART AND ITS INSTITUTIONS

CURRENT CONFLICTS, CRITIQUE AND COLLABORATIONS

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"A museum is not a business. It is run in a businesslike fashion."

ANDREA FRASER

I want to begin with a chronology of a few events in the American museum world in the year beginning June 1999, when Malcolm Rogers announced a sweeping restructuring of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. The restructuring in Boston included merging several art historically defined departments into geographically defined mega departments, eliminating 18 staff positions and creating the position of chief financial officer. The changes were widely seen as imposing a 'corporate model' of centralised power that "devalues curators, making them pawns of administrators who will stress bottom-line considerations rather than intellectual content".[1]

1 Dobrzynski, Judith H, 'Boston Museum's Restructuring Sows Fear Among US Curators', *New York Times*, 8 July, 1999.

In September, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) announced that it would expand the role of its president and chief executive to include the duties of its departing director, reconsolidating a bifurcated leadership structure in the hands of an administrator. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the decision made "LACMA the only major art museum in the country without an art expert at its helm. The action sparked fears that art would become secondary to box office" at the museum.[2]

2 Muchnic, Suzanne, 'LACMA Chief to Add Role of Art Director', *Los Angeles Times*, 9 September, 1999.

A few weeks later, on 22 September 1999, New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani began his attack on the Brooklyn Museum for its plan to show *Sensation*, calling the work 'sick' and accusing the museum of debasing itself for box office. Public scrutiny, brought on by the attacks, revealed that the exhibition received major sponsorship from sources likely to profit from the show, including Charles Saatchi, owner of the work; Christie's, the auction house through which he had turned over his collection; David Bowie, who was given rights to present the show on his for-profit website; and gallerist Larry Gagosian, who represented many artists in the show. Further investigation revealed that Saatchi played a central role in the selection and installation of the show, all but supplanting the museum's own staff in that curatorial role.[3]

3 For an in-depth examination of the *Sensation* controversy see my 'A 'Sensation' Chronicle', *Social Text*, no. 67, Summer 2001, pp. 127-156.

On 27 September, the Guggenheim Museum announced a proposal for a new branch near Wall Street in Manhattan. The proposed museum, designed by Frank Gehry, would include a skating rink and a 1,200 seat theatre. Museum memos suggested that the theatre could be sponsored by "an entertainment giant like Sony, Samsung or Warner Brothers." The proposed museum arguably went further than any existing museum in integrating non-art and commercial entertainment functions in its architectural programme.[4]

4 Blumenthal, Ralph and Carol Vogel, 'The Guggenheim Proposes Gehry Museum for New York,' *New York Times*, 28 September, 1999.

A few days later, a fundraiser for Giuliani arranged by Guggenheim president Ronald O Perelman was held at the Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas. The hotel was also home to the Bellagio Gallery of Fine Arts, the for-profit presentation of the private art collection of Mirage Resorts CEO Stephen Wynn that opened in 1999.[5]

5 Bumiller, Elisabeth, 'Mayor's Good Day: $100,000 Raised, $29 at Craps', *New York Times*, 30 September, 1999.

In November 1999, the Guggenheim announced that its big fall show would be a retrospective of Giorgio Armani. It was later confirmed that the show would also be sponsored by Armani.

In early 2000, the Creative Capital Foundation announced its first round of 75 grants totaling $500,000. Creative Capital was established in January 1999 to channel money from other foundations and contributors to individual artists. The foundation's website outlined its intention to "function as a more progressively minded successor to the National Endowment for the Arts", which ended most grants to individual artists in 1995. In a new model for funding, its guidelines state that "Creative Capital will work closely with its funded artists to provide audience development, marketing and other forms of assistance tailored to individual projects. Artists will, in return, share a portion of their proceeds with Creative Capital."[6]

In April 2000, the Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA), and the Tate Gallery, London, announced a partnership to create a for-profit Internet business. According to a MoMA press release, "New Company Will Draw on Museums' Unrivalled Collections and Intellectual Capital to Expand Global Audience for Modern Art, Design, and Culture". Sources of revenue would include advertising, licensing, and sales of commissioned design objects and multiples. Another source of revenue would include pay-per-view events and information—called 'educational'—such as customised art tours and webcasts of lectures, concerts, and performances. At the time of the announcement, each museum managed retail operations with $50 million in combined sales annually. According to MoMA director Glenn Lowry, "This venture is not just two guys dreaming in their garage, but a company built on two institutions' history, stability and knowledge.... There's a scramble for the design and culture dot com space. Between us we have the engine to found this new company."[7]

A little over a week later, on 28 April, the Professional and Administrative Staff Association of the Museum of Modern Art went on strike after working six months without a contract. Issues included the lowest starting, median, and average salaries among all staff groups at the museum, with the salary ratio between the director and the lowest-paid bookstore clerk hovering around 20 to one—about twice the average in European corporations, although still much better than US for-profits, where such ratios often exceed 100 to one. Other issues included mandatory rather than optional union membership and job security after the museum's $650 million expansion project. Of the 250 staff members in the bargaining unit, about 90 were not in the union.[8]

In May 2000, the Metropolitan Museum cancelled a Coco Chanel retrospective that was to be sponsored by Chanel. Metropolitan Museum director Philippe de Montebello claimed to be uncomfortable with the demands being made by Karl Lagerfeld—despite the fact that the museum produced exhibitions under similar arrangements with Dior, Yves Saint Laurent, Versace, and Cartier. (My current favourite de Montebello quote, "A museum is not a business. It is run in a businesslike fashion," serves as the title of this essay.) Writing in the *New York*

6 Mirapaul, Matthew, "Digital Artists Draw Support from a New Foundation", *New York Times*, 1 January, 2000. For Creative Capital guidelines, see www.Creative-Capital.org.

7 Vogel, Carol, "Modern and Tate Team Up for Commercial Web Site", *New York Times*, 17 April, 2000.

8 The strike came to an end 9 September 2000. While the agreement was represented as demanding significant concessions on both sides, it looked to most observers like a union victory, with an 18 per cent wage increase over five years, post-expansion job security, and mandatory union membership. For more information and a complete bibliography on the strike, see www.2110uaw.org.

Times, Michael Kimmelman suggested that the issue was less conflict of interest and curatorial control than the specific question of including contemporary art. Lagerfeld wanted to commission artists such as Jenny Holzer to make work "inspired by Chanel," saying, "I'm not interested in an exhibit that's just old dresses." Contemporary artists would provide "something jazzier and more up-to-the-minute" that would reflect the "contemporaneity" of Chanel.[9]

9 Kimmelman, Michael, 'At the Met, a Necessary Retreat', *New York Times*, 28 May, 2000, section 2, p. 31.

Also in May, Tate Modern opened with a level of corporate sponsorship unprecedented for a European museum, including four million pounds contributed by 17 founding corporate partners. A Tate press release referred to the contributions as "investments". Other corporate sponsorship included major support from Bloomberg News for audio tours and from Unilever for the Unilever Series of major commissioned artworks for Tate Modern's Turbine Hall. Louise Bourgeois was the first Unilever artist.

In July, in a move widely seen as a response to the *Sensation* controversy, the American Association of Museums (AAM) announced new ethical guidelines for how museums should oversee displays of art borrowed from private collections. According to the president of the association, by adopting the new guidelines, the AAM hoped to bolster public confidence in museums and demonstrate to politicians that museum professionals were eager to devise their own rules.[10]

10 Barstow, David, 'After 'Sensation' Furor, Museum Group Adopts Guidelines on Sponsors', *New York Times*, 3 August, 2000.

Finally, in August 2000, the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC announced it had finalised a deal to provide 26 major Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings and sculptures for a six-month show at the Bellagio Gallery. Instead of receiving a rental fee, the Phillips Collection received the net proceeds from the show. According to numbers provided by *Artnet News*, with an admissions fee of $10 to $12, the museum's 'profit' could easily reach two million dollars.

That's the news report. Now I'll state the obvious. The events of this period showed not only a clear trend but a rapidly increasing momentum—a "scramble" in the words of Glenn Lowry, even a stampede—toward the corporatisation of museums if not of the non-profit visual arts sector as a whole. The continuing rise in corporate sponsorship and decline in public spending for the arts is only a small part of this trend. Much more striking are the changes in the structure, organisation, and orientation of institutions themselves, as well as within art as a professional field. These include the growing emphasis on income-producing activities, whether so-called 'programme-related investments' by non-profits or full for-profit spinoffs; the rise of museum managers who often have little expertise in their museums' fields; a decline in the authority and autonomy of curators and curatorial departments; labour relations that reflect the management practices of for-profit corporations; quantitative criteria with respect to audiences, artists, and exhibitions; marketing strategies that turn the museums' educational mission on its head, tailoring exhibitions to existing audiences, rather than working to produce new ones; and finally, direct competition—if not cooperation—with the commercial entertainment and luxury goods industries.

Obviously these trends mean very different things for different kinds of organisations. It is no accident that all my examples relate to major museums.

Programme-related investments and for-profit spin-offs are going to work only for large organisations that already have access to major resources, including, like MoMA, their own 'brand power'. To paraphrase board members of the now-defunct activist foundation Art Matters Inc., how is an understaffed alternative space going to manage a gift shop? Where is a theatre without adequate performance space going to put a cafe? What kind of business plan can you come up with as a cultural community centre in a red-lined minority neighbourhood where banks won't even make loans?[11]

Small, young, alternative spaces will undoubtedly continue to spring up, surviving on the energy and ambition of their participants, without much of a change in their generally short lifespans. They'll continue to spare major museums the cost of supporting the 'new', while sustaining the image of an independent and vibrant art subculture. The real victims of these trends will be older, mid-sized organisations without the prestige and resources to compete in the race for expansion. More and more of these organisations will probably be absorbed by larger institutions. The P.S.1 Museum in New York managed to accomplish a major expansion, only to end up with a huge renovated space and no money for programmes to fill it. Now it's a part of the Museum of Modern Art.

Competitive pressure is also evident among large institutions. As the Guggenheim, for example, pursues world domination, MoMA and the Tate are following the airline model of local expansion and global partnerships, forming a transatlantic 'Star Alliance' with some half-dozen branches between them—in addition to the proposed dot com.

Economists talk about 'virtuous growth cycles' in their favourite 'emerging markets'. I would say that museums have entered into a 'vicious' growth cycle of ever-expanding costs and expenditures. They need bigger shows to raise more money to have bigger shows. They need more staff to raise more money to hire more staff. They need to raise more money to build more space to have more fundraisers. They need to build bigger spaces to show bigger art that draws bigger audiences and justifies building bigger spaces. And so on. The logic is not only about money, but it is a market logic. Art for the sake of art has been discredited, but its replacement appears to be art for the sake of growth. Or growth for the sake of growth. Or growth for the sake of competition within a field increasingly defined by expanding and consolidating economies of scale, where more is always more and bigger is always better.

The influence of this logic in art-making is also increasingly evident. Bigger spaces demand bigger art. Bigger art demands bigger budgets and bigger backing. As Bruce Ferguson noted in his keynote address at the 2000 Banff Curatorial Summit, artists working in the large scales and technically spectacular forms increasingly favoured by museums depend on huge investments from dealers, collectors, and even, as with Louise Bourgeois and other artists producing installations for the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, corporations. They also require more and more depersonalised and specialised production processes and management expertise—expertise that funding bodies like Creative Capital and

11 See Andrea Fraser, 'Talking to Art Matters', in *Art Matters: How the Culture Wars Changed America*, Brian Wallis, Marianne Weems, and Philip Yenawine, eds, New York: New York University Press, 1999.

curators who have redefined themselves as 'producers' are eager to supply. I really did want this essay to be more than a long description of depressing phenomena that most people in the field are familiar with already. But in fact it seems increasingly difficult to say more. The question I would like to ask is this: on what basis is it now possible to evaluate, let alone critique, let alone reject or resist, these trends?

Not, certainly, in the name of art's superiority to commerce and commercial culture imagined in conservative cultural hierarchies. Not, certainly, since the critique of artistic autonomy initiated in the 1960s, in the name of a field opposed to economic rationality, instrumentality, and the logic of administration. Not, for many in the United States certainly, in the name of freedom of expression and public sector democracy, at least since the government has shown itself to be such an eager censor.

Also not, for many—if mostly neo-liberals—in the name of diversity and difference, since many corporations have shown themselves as eager as major public and private non-profit institutions to embrace 'multi-culturalism'.

Even the familiar charge that economic or 'box office' criteria are supplanting specifically artistic criteria has been called into question. What exactly is a specifically artistic criterion, anyway? Again, the critique of autonomy developed by artists themselves has already problematised a notion of specifically artistic values, free of the influence of context and material conditions.

So why should we care? Should we care? In fact, do we care?

Of course, the political arguments against global corporate expansion apply to the art world as well: that despite the rhetoric associated with niche marketing, such expansion is producing an institutional monoculture of management and marketing that's destroying the diversity not only of culture but also of social and economic relations; that the globalisation of monopoly structures is only leading to further consolidation of wealth and resources and greater inequality in the distribution of cultural as well as well as economic capital. I would guess that many, if not most, artists and museum professionals hold these views. Experience shows, however, that such politics have little influence on the framework that orients how most of us conduct our professional lives. They may appear in artistic and even institutional representations, but rarely seem to figure in practical decisions about what we do, who we work with and how it's paid for.

As an institutional critic with a commitment to self-reflexive analysis, my tendency is to assume that if the corporatisation of museums is moving forward at such an extraordinarily rapid pace, it can only be because it is consistent, on some level, with the interests and orientation of museum professionals and artists—including artists like myself—who staff and supply them; because we have accepted these trends as inevitable, necessary, or even desirable. I don't believe we are as dominated as all that, as a class of agents, in our own field. I don't believe these trends could simply be imposed on us from without, by conditions such as the decline in public funding, or even exclusively from above, by the growing power of corporate sponsors and managers.

Critical discourse and the politics of cultural democracy no longer appear to provide ready arguments against the corporatisation of museums. I would go further and suggest that, ironically or not, the corporatisation of museums has in fact been legitimised by discourses of critique and cultural democracy. The representations of institutions as inherently conservative, expansive, and incorporative that one often finds in more reductive conceptions of 'institutional critique' are not adequate. I would argue, rather, that the corporatisation of museums represents the resolution of a very specific set of contradictions that have been endemic to museums for at least 30 years and developing for almost 80. That is, the contradictory conjunction of a politics of cultural democracy with a professionalising field; of a discourse of critique with administrative pragmatism among museum professionals and a radical individualism among artists ourselves.

I may not be able to prove this hypothesis, but I can try to provide some context. In offering this hypothesis, I'm leaning heavily on Paul DiMaggio's study of the failure of reform during the museum field's first wave of professionalisation in the United States between 1920 and 1940. The "inconsistencies between professional rhetoric and administrative pragmatism" he describes are clearly evident in the contemporary museum world. While the former is often populist and based in a "culture of critical discourse," the latter is defined by organisational survival and by what DiMaggio calls "common understandings of the possible".[12]

12 DiMaggio, Paul, "Constructing an Organisational Field as a Professional Project: US Art Museums, 1920-1940", in *The New Institutionalism in Organisational Analysis*, Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell, eds, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991, pp. 285-286.

I would argue that the corporatisation of museums in the United States was first presaged and then proceeded hand in hand with the professionalisation of art institutions and their curators and administrators. Ironically, I believe that both have their roots in public funding. The rise in public funding and decline in individual patronage at museums in the 1960s and 70s had a double effect. Public sector support provided art administrators with a space of relative freedom from specific private interests—both economic and cultural—and allowed them to develop a critical discourse about those interests. That critical discourse was elaborated in the professional forums that began to emerge: associations, journals, peer panels, lobbying groups, and, in a few cases, staff associations. The foothold of professional autonomy from trustees and patrons gained through these processes also allowed administrators to act on the demands for cultural democratisation being addressed to museums by grassroots social movements. These demands were often consistent with the new requirements for transparency, fiscal accountability, and evidence of social benefit made by public sector funders. Professionalising art administrators also saw the emphasis by public funders on audience and education as in their interest. It tended to shift value and authority within institutions from areas of expertise dominated by patrons, such as collections and connoisseurship, to their own fields of competence, such as education and programmes. (More public funding and more public programmes were among the demands made by MoMA staff during its first unionisation drive in the early 1970s.)

Along with public funders, however, corporate funders also began to take up where individual donors left off. Corporate donors, like public funders and progressive arts administrators, were also interested in attendance figures, but for very different reasons, seeing them not as indicators of public benefit but of potential market reach. With the 'Reagan Revolution' of the 1980s, public funding was reduced and a new period of financial insecurity set in for museums. As corporate sponsorship was pursued to make up for the decline in public funding, the quantitative indicators introduced to gauge public benefit and outreach were increasingly subject to economic analysis, eventually becoming marketing tools. More and more institutional resources were devoted to finding funders and keeping them satisfied. Development, marketing, merchandising, and financial departments were established and grew, often consuming much of the resources they generated. Starting at the Metropolitan Museum in the mid 1980s, many museums began to split leadership between administrative and artistic directors. Where leadership remained with art experts, managerial expertise became an increasingly important qualification. By the time of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) crisis in the late 1980s, many art professionals who had resisted corporatisation had come to see corporate sponsorship and for-profit activities as inevitable, necessary, and even preferable to dealing with the political strings attached to public funding.

It appears that the critique of cultural elitism and the marginalisation of minority and post-colonial cultures and audiences was not inconsistent with corporate interests in pursuing the largest possible markets for their messages. They are also consistent with the interests of artists and art professionals in gaining greater recognition, prestige, and respect for their work, as well as preserving a professional, if not political and artistic, autonomy. I would not draw the conclusion that there has been anything misguided about the progressive discourses that have challenged the cultural hierarchies and exclusionary practices of traditional museums. However, this narrative may indicate a problem with pursuing cultural critique as separable from economic critique and a social critique of professional status and power.

Lest I appear to be picking on museum professionals, let me turn to contemporary artists. As in the case of arts administration, it seems to me that the critical discourse orienting much contemporary artistic practice has also shown itself to be largely consistent with corporatisation.

Of all the recent phenomena I described at the start of this essay, one of the most troubling to me might seem the most benign to many. I suppose I should be grateful that the Creative Capital Foundation has been established to make up for those lost NEA grants. What I find alarming, however, is not only that Creative Capital is a private organisation aiming to take over a formerly public sector function. Nor is it that the foundation community has responded to neo-conservative attacks on the arts with a fundamentally neo-liberal solution. What is most alarming to me is that Creative Capital's entrepreneurial model is presented—and widely accepted—as a 'progressive' solution to funding in the arts. The name 'Creative Capital Foundation' is a perfect trademark for this new entrepreneurialism. 'Capital' is no mere metaphor when guidelines require that a percentage of proceeds from projects must revert to the foundation. Their guidelines admit that "many of the projects we fund will be taking risks and might not recoup their original investment". However, the third of five "Creative Capital Principles" listed on the organisation's website states: "We believe that… artists are often highly entrepreneurial."

It's no accident that Creative Capital funds *only* projects, rather than following the usual formula of fellowships for general support to be spent as the artist sees fit, traditionally to subsidise a studio practice. I don't think it's unfair to compare the difference to that between 'handouts', in the language of so-called welfare reformers, and welfare-to-work programmes. Such programmes are, of course, technologies that produce particular kinds of producers—subjects who are more efficient in their own self-regulation, whose habits and dispositions are better suited to the demands and expectations of markets and managers. Grant guidelines, like welfare rules, may be seen as technologies that can produce practices with an almost Pavlovian precision.

However, these guidelines are far from simply imposed. I'm certain they represent a guileless encounter between thoroughly well-intentioned funders and what they perceive to be the most progressive mode of contemporary practice. On one side, we have organisational professionals with a progressive belief that art happens in specific contexts and encounters with specific audiences. On the other side, we have a mode of practice called project work—a practice I spent quite a bit of time trying to elaborate in the mid 1990s—whose history partly informs that belief and that in turn involved the appropriation of professional models in a rejection of traditional studio practice.

So, what's my problem?

My problem is that it wasn't supposed to turn out this way, with Louise Bourgeois producing for Unilever and Jenny Holzer taking commissions from Helmut Lang. (I, on the other hand, only wear Helmut Lang—when I can buy it on discount.)

Project work, as I understood it, was based in the critique of artistic autonomy initiated by artists in the 1960s, a critique that led to site-specificity and institutional critique, conceptual art, and cultural activism. That critique, with its rejection of artistic autonomy as partial and ideological, led artists to pursue what I call formally heteronomous forms, procedures, relations, positions, and functions. The autonomous work of art for art's sake was replaced with site-specific objects, installations and strategies and with critical and political content. Private, spontaneous creation was replaced with systems and research. And, most important perhaps, the abstract relations of studio production and commodity exchange were replaced with the immediate demands of the contexts of post-studio and community-based projects—including the demands of those who commission or fund such projects, as well as the needs of the audiences or constituencies they attempt to address.

On one hand, the political potential of project work lay in its critical approach to context, including the context of its material support. On the other hand, the heteronomous forms that provided for critical site-specificity also produced what Benjamin Buchloh famously called an aesthetic of administration that Conceptualism embraced "in the full optimism of its aspirations".[13] Perhaps he was right. If so, I'm afraid those aspirations have now realised themselves in the current role of artists as architectural and intellectual decorators, freelance museological stylists, and producers of special events soon to be pay-per-view on a monitor near you.

13 Buchloh, Benjamin, 'Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetics of Administration to the Critique of Institutions', *October*, no. 55, Winter 1990, p. 143.

Artists *are* often highly entrepreneurial, and project work is among the most entrepreneurial of contemporary practices.

Artists, project oriented and otherwise, no less than institutions, have come to see themselves as competing with commercial entertainment and commodity culture, from the explicit pursuit of celebrity to large-scale media events, to the small Internet art groups who have appropriated, ironically or not, the model of the corporate start-up. The artistic appropriation of forms of representation, production, or organisation from the world of corporate and consumer culture may have begun as a critical strategy. For artists no less than for museums, however, entering into competition with that culture implies not only an acceptance of but also an investment in the stakes offered up as legitimate and desirable by that culture.

Artists, like other arts professionals, are often highly entrepreneurial. I would go even further and say that we are the very model for labour in the new economy, a fact that's not an odd irony or quirk of fate, but deeply rooted in our "habitus"—as Pierre Bourdieu calls the habits, dispositions and preferences generated within a given field. We're highly educated, highly motivated 'self-starters' who believe that learning is a continuous process. We're always ready for change and adapt to it quickly. We prefer freedom and flexibility to security. We don't want to punch a clock and tend to resist quantifying the value of our labour time. We don't know the meaning of 'overtime'. We're convinced that we work for ourselves and our own satisfaction even when we work for others. We tend to value non-material over material rewards, which we are willing to defer, even to posterity. While we may identify with social causes, we tend to come from backgrounds which discourage us from seeing ourselves as 'labour'. Finally, we're fiercely individualistic, which makes us difficult to organise and easy to exploit.

Margali Sarfatti Larson begins her now classic critical study, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis*, with a story about architects resisting unionisation as something 'unprofessional'. She asks, "What is there, in the attributes of a profession, that compensates for subordination, individual powerlessness, and often low pay?"[14] If artists have long served as ideological figures for 'independent professionals' as well as entrepreneurs, the answer should be obvious: the promise and privilege of recognising ourselves and being recognised in the products of what is supposed to be uniquely unalienated and autonomous labour.

14 Sarfatti Larson, Margali, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979.

The corporatisation of museums, like other non-profit sectors, is starting to change that. The 2000 strike at MoMA is consistent with a history of union activity among the professional staff there, who were among the first museum professionals in the United States to organise after a long battle with museum management in the early 1970s. One can speculate, however, that the timing of the current strike might have something to do not only with the museum's $650 million expansion, but also the announcement of the museum's for-profit plans. Low wages at museums have long been justified by their non-profit status and common commitment to a mission, where workers, in the words of a MoMA striker in the 1970s, are called upon to subsidise the institution with their own impoverishment.[15] As museums become more entrepreneurial, that rationale will clearly lose whatever legitimacy it once had. If the unionisation of professionals at MoMA was once exceptional it is now less exceptional, as the corporatisation of health care, for example, is driving medical doctors to unions in the United States and as more and more graduate student teachers are organising in universities.

If I am correct that the corporatisation of museums represents a resolution of certain long-standing contradictions within the field of non-profit art institutions, it is also producing new contradictions—or exposing contradictions that have long gone unrecognised. The most obvious of these relates to labour relations within museums as well as between museums and artists.

It is now April 2005. The strike at the Museum of Modern Art came to an end in September 2000 with an agreement both sides represented as favourable. While settling for a wage increase of only three to four per cent and a compromise on benefits, the strikers were able to resist the major concessions sought by management. An important win for the strikers was the right to establish a closed shop, requiring all new employees to join the bargaining unit, which is likely to strengthen the union over time. They also won recall rights for all employees laid off while the museum was closed for expansion.

MoMA's expansion was completed and the museum reopened to the public in November 2004. The contract negotiated in September 2000 is set to expire next month, six months after the reopening, as stipulated in 2000. Negotiations on a new contract are likely to be influenced by the transformation of the museum and its finances in the intervening years. While the employees in the bargaining unit have seen their salaries raise a maximum of four per cent, the compensation of the museum's chief operating officer rose by 50 per cent and that of the director, Glen Lowry, more than doubled, to $619,663, raising the ratio between the highest and lowest paid employees at the museum from 20 to one to 30 to one. Meanwhile, the costs of expansion ballooned to $858 million. Reporting by Hugh Eakin in the *New York Times* revealed elements of the museum's aggressive fundraising campaign to cover expansion costs.[16] More than $500 million was raised directly from the museum's board of trustees, which also expanded during the period to include growing numbers of "exceptionally wealthy patrons" from the business world, some with little background in art. 50 of the museum's trustees each contributed five million dollars or more. Nevertheless, like many for-profit corporations, the museum had to float over $250 million in bonds to cover expansion and debt. Again like many for-profit corporations, the museum had to

15 Alloway, Lawrence and John Coplands, "Strike at the Modern", (interview with members of the strike committee), *Artforum*, December 1973, p. 44.

16 Eakin, Hugh, "MoMA's Funding: A Very Modern Art, Indeed", *New York Times*, 7 November, 2004.

secure a bond rating by Moody's Investor Service before Goldman Sachs would underwrite the bond issue. As reported by Eakin, Moody's wrote in its analysis "that 'MoMA's financial management team has a demonstrated capability to achieve balanced current operations' and praised the museum for cutting back on big, financially unpredictable exhibitions." Among Lowry's administrative innovations reported by Eakin was the establishment of "a new layer of management above senior curators" with the appointment of deputy directors responsible for exhibition budgets who report directly to him. This shifting of responsibility from curatorial to administrative positions has apparently gone hand in hand with an increase in the compensation of high-level management relative to curatorial staff. The role of even high-level curators becomes increasingly marginal to the priorities of a museum that considers large-scale exhibitions a financial drain.

Despite the 50 to 100 per cent raises secured by MoMA's director and chief operating officer since 2002, and despite its almost billion dollar expansion, the museum's operations have broken even each of the past ten years. Again, as in the for-profit world, one can assume that what MoMA's managers are paid so well for is precisely keeping costs down and maintaining revenue streams, even while expanding to increase market share. In the context of a museum, that task includes investing in the prestige that is so central to its ability to attract donations and sponsorship in the competitive market the museum field has increasingly become. And that is why, one can imagine, allowing expansion costs to balloon due to luxury architectural detailing like solid steel mullions and white oak flooring would be considered justified expenditures rather than financial mismanagement by investment analysts at Moody's. One may also be able to assume that, as in the for-profit world, raising salaries beyond inflation would not be considered good management—except, of course, for the salaries of senior managers directly responsible for keeping costs down and revenues up.

Pressure to keep budgets balanced will only increase at the expanded MoMA, where twice the exhibition space also means twice the operating costs. The museum's financial priorities are revealed once again in the fact that only $70 million of $717 million funds raised in the past five years are reserved for the endowment. If endowment income does not increase at the same rate as operating costs, the shortfall will have to be covered by earned income, as corporate and private donors are rarely interested in funding anything they can't put their names on, i.e., exhibitions and other special programmes.

The leading rationale for the MoMA expansion—and justification for the financial machine it set in motion and the economic priorities that machine requires—was to increase exhibition space and put more of the museum's collection on public view. However, a closer look at MoMA's new facilities makes one wonder if expanded exhibition space was rather itself a rationale for expanding the museum's capacity for earned income. In fact, of the 67 per cent total increase in space, only 47 per cent represents an increase in exhibition space. I was unable to find a more precise breakdown. Does that 47 per cent include the 3,780 metre square lobby, I wonder, and the 33 metre high atrium, both of which are more tailored for fund-raising events than art? Does it include the areas on each floor devoted to merchandising? How much potential exhibition space was lost in the trade off for spectacular—and crushingly inhuman—ceiling heights in the atrium and special exhibition galleries? In the museum's four new restaurants and cafes, including the 95 seat "fine-dining" Modern, with which the museum has a profit sharing agreement, and the 98 seat Bar Room?[17] In the 5,800 square foot Design Shop? The 67 per cent overall increase in space does, however, correspond exactly to another increase at the new MoMA: a 67 per cent increase in the admission fee. Jumping from $12 to $20 per ticket, MoMA is now the most expensive major museum in the United States. The free day instituted by the museum in 1970—largely in response to pressure from the Art Workers Coalition—has been reduced to four hours on Friday nights. These 'free Fridays' are now sponsored by the retail giant Target. Even if the museum meets its post-expansion estimate of one million visitors annually, one can be sure that while more people may see a bit more art on display, those visitors will come from a narrower strata of society.

17 Collins, Glenn, 'A Destination for Food (and Some Art, Too)', *New York Times*, 27 October, 2004.

In February 2005, MoMA inaugurated its new temporary exhibition galleries with *Contemporary Voices: Works from the UBS Art Collection*. Described by Michael Kimmelman in the *New York Times* as an "appalling paean to a corporate sponsor's blue-chip collection," the show "gave the financial services company, UBS, an excuse to plaster the city with advertisements that made MoMA seem like its tool and minor subsidiary."[18]

The corporatisation of MoMA, it seems, is now complete.

18 Kimmelman, Michael, 'Critics Notebook: Art, Money and Power', *New York Times*, 11 May, 2005.

On 9 August 2005, the Museum of Modern Art released the following statement:

> The Museum of Modern Art and Local 2110 UAW concluded negotiations for a new five-year contract. An amicable agreement was reached swiftly after only five bargaining sessions and was ratified on 15 July 2005.

Glenn Lowry, Director of the Museum said:

> We are delighted that we have arrived at an agreement with 2110 that has been reached in an atmosphere of mutual respect and utmost consideration for the welfare of the staff. We are pleased that we are able to offer the staff a comprehensive package of salary increases and benefits that are among the best in the Museum world.

The representative at Local 2110 reached for comment agreed with the museum's representation of the bargaining process as well as the results. When asked for an interpretation of the museum's apparent shift away from its previous anti-union stance, the representative said that the closed shop won in 2000 certain helped to improve the position of the union in the museum. But the main reason, he surmised, was that after the record expenditures on the expansion, the doubling of the directors' compensation package, the 60 per cent entrance fee hike, and the opening corporate collection show, MoMA couldn't risk any more bad publicity.

This essay was written in the summer of 2000 and first presented at the Curatorial Summit held in Banff, Canada, in August of that year. It was first published in 2003 in *Beyond the Box: Diverging Curatorial Practices*, a collection of conference papers edited by Melanie Townsend and published by Banff Press. It is reprinted here with minor revisions and an afterword by the author.