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The Role of the University Art Museum and Gallery

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At the College Art Association's annual conference in 2006, the editorial board of *Art Journal* convened a round-table discussion with eight leaders of galleries and museums affiliated with institutions of higher learning. Among the topics of conversation were the challenges unique to these organizations, similarities to and differences from their civic counterparts, pros and cons of collections, and ways of involving various constituencies. The discussion was organized by Anna Hammond, Deputy Director for Education, Programs, and Public Affairs, Yale University Art Gallery, and John Ricco, Assistant Professor, University of Toronto. Hammond moderated the discussion.

### Ideals and Reality

**Anna Hammond:** Let's start by discussing the role of the university art museum and gallery as a laboratory for thinking. I want to ask each of you to describe what you would like your institution to be ideally and what you actually are working on now. Sheryl, you recently moved to an institution that is very estab-

lished in its habits, so you have to work with them and through them to change them, and, like Charles, you have been asked to create something new. So why don't you both begin.

**Anna Hammond, Ian Berry, Sheryl Conkelton, Sharon Corwin, Pamela Franks, Katherine Hart, Wyona Lynch-McWhite, Charles Reeve, and John Stomberg**

## The Role of the University Art Museum and Gallery

**Sheryl Conkelton** (Tyler School of Art, Temple University, Philadelphia): My charge is to reflect all of the departments of Tyler School of Art—art education, art history, and an architecture school, as well as the studio-art programs. Prior to my

appointment, the institution didn't engage much beyond the studio programs. So it's a large and unwieldy challenge for this very tiny facility with only one other full-time person and myself. We have no collection and there is a host of logistical reasons for the small size of the exhibition program. The bulk of it is based in a downtown gallery, but it has sites at the Temple campus and the suburban Tyler campus. There are inherent challenges in trying to get people to the gallery to attend and participate in the programs. The challenges specifically for me are the strong desire of the faculty to have a program that focuses on the value of art and a place where the community could consider an array of issues around art. The previous director had focused on interdisciplinary programs to the extent that much of the school felt excluded from the program.

At the same time, the school is engaged in its own capital campaign. It's going to move from its suburban location in Elkins Park to the Temple campus in Philadelphia to join some of the programs there, and there will be a new gallery at Temple. I'm trying to build a program downtown and to identify even more strongly that location as a place for people to attend programs, to come to

**Artist Fred Wilson speaks with members of two Dartmouth College classes about his Hood Museum of Art exhibition *So Much Trouble in the World: Believe It or Not* in September 2005.**





exhibitions—and, hopefully, to amplify the public programs, so that there is more than simply exhibitions and collateral lectures.

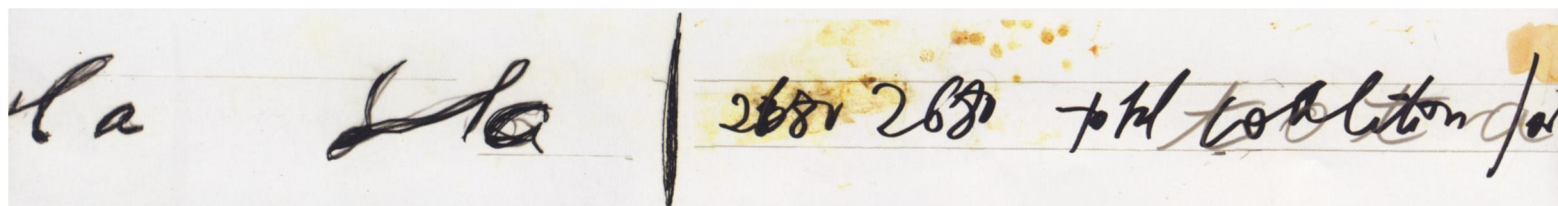
Having said this, because Philadelphia has such a well-developed ecology of arts institutions, I also have to figure out the right niche for our program. Because we are dedicated to the education of young artists, we focus our program specifically on what you might call emerging artists or, rather, emerging practices. We would like to present one or two original exhibitions each year. To augment them, we started an artist-in-residence program. We have an apartment attached to the downtown gallery. I did a really quick residency project with Phil Collins this fall. He was with us a week; he did a project, gave a lecture, was in residence, and was available to the students. In addition to that, I am starting to talk to people in the art-history department, as well as some other academic programs, to see if we can't begin to work on collateral projects together, something that has not been done before.

**Charles Reeve** (Ontario College of Art & Design, Toronto): Toronto's existing museum ecology has been central to my thinking since I began working at Ontario College of Art & Design six months ago. The college is on the cusp of its 130th anniversary. It's a big school. With about thirty-six hundred students, it is one of the biggest art schools on the continent, the third biggest in North America.

One of the advantages that I have, because I'm housed in this big art school in downtown Toronto right around the corner from the Art Gallery of Ontario, is that I am very much in the midst of a community that is already convinced of the value of art and design. I have free rein to think about what we should be and what we contribute to the experience of members of the college community, as well as people in the city and region. I spend a lot of time talking to people in the college and outside of the college—journalists, artists, dealers, and all kinds of other people—about these questions.

There are two things that people are really interested in; one is the idea of more. There's always more happening in the world of contemporary art and design. There could be hundreds of museums and galleries, and there still wouldn't be enough exhibition space. The second is to create a gallery as a question mark (as one of our deans, Blake Fitzpatrick, put it), one that, right from the start, calls into question people's expectations about what the gallery might be.

Geoff Waite, one of my mentors when I was in grad school at Cornell, once said, "If the point of tenure is that you can say anything you want without getting fired, then people who have tenure ought to be required, at least once a year, to say things that would get them fired if they didn't have tenure." I don't think that we should be provocative for the sake of being provocative, but I do think that galleries and museums that need to sell tickets or need to sell art, especially in places outside of huge cultural centers like New York, Paris, or



Phil Collins, *they shoot horses*, 2004, digital projections, seven hours, two installation views, Temple Gallery, Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia. Collection of CRG Gallery, New York. (Artwork © Phil Collins; photograph by Aaron Igler)

The work consists of two different DVD projections, each of which shows a daylong session in which a group of Palestinian youths, auditioned and selected by the artist, dance to the same compilation of Western pop songs until exhausted. These images show views of the installation taken at different times.



London, tend to shy away from challenging or difficult art. This is an area where we might be able to make an impact as well.

**Sharon Corwin** (Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, Maine): I love the idea of the gallery as a question mark. It goes back to something that Fred Wilson talks about, which is thinking of the museum as a place of questions—not answers. I think that what, hopefully, distinguishes the college or university art museum is that it is a place with the potential for really radical critical thinking about not just objects, but modes of display and that kind of thing. I think the model or the paradigm of the laboratory is perfect, because it's a place to experiment, ask questions, and really take risks. There is that potential on a conceptual level, that I think we probably all want, but on a practical level it becomes much more difficult. I'm interested in other ways of pushing critical

and Tom fight to terror level you on the





thinking in the museum, again not just with our interaction with objects, but our interaction with the whole infrastructure of exhibition and display.

**Hammond:** So that would be your vision for your space. John, why don't you talk about the Williams College Museum of Art.

**John Stomberg** (Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts): The idea of the laboratory is what drives our thinking. We can engage in issues that not everybody is willing to approach. We've got two exhibitions up right now that I wouldn't have been able to do if I was working in a civic

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**The Rotunda of the Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts. Center: Robert Morris, *Hearing*, 1972, mixed media, three-and-one-half-hour stereo tape, tape recorder, amplifier, two speakers, copper chair with water and immersion heater, zinc table, lead-covered bed, and wet-cell batteries buried in sand in bronze trough, on wooden platform 6 in. x 12 ft. x 12 ft. (15.2 x 365.8 x 365.8 cm), with 24-in. (61-cm) squares cut from each corner. Museum purchase, Kathryn Hurd Fund and Karl E. Weston Memorial Fund. (Artwork © 2006 Robert Morris/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York). Far back: *Winged Guardian Spirit*, ca. 880 BCE, gypsum, 83 x 39-3/4 x 3 in. (210.8 x 101 x 7.6 cm), and *Guardian Spirit*, ca. 880 BCE, gypsum, 92 x 38-1/2 x 3 in. (233.7 x 97.8 x 7.6 cm), both gifts of Sir Henry Layard through Dwight W. Marsh, Class of 1842.**

museum. We like to push questions about visual culture, for example, into places that a lot of the civic museums that need to sell tickets can't go, because the objects either don't necessarily fit the criteria of art or have the recognizable appeal that translates into gate.

At the Williams College Museum, we try to center ourselves in the campus-wide discussion on visual culture: how people experience life and culture visually. Our argument is that yes, we are an art museum, but that does not make us so hidebound to tradition that we can't engage a broader intellectual conversation. Our motto really is teaching with art, not just about art, and that is where we are trying to take art into the curriculum.

**Ian Berry** (Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York): One of the ways to accomplish these goals is to start with the title of the museum. It was a bonus in our case that we didn't have an existing museum at the college. So we did have new ground in which to plant, and we wanted to signal that right from the naming of the museum by calling it the Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery. When your stated focus revolves around ideas, then the world of objects opens up. It's not only those designated as art or history, but any object. And it also opens up the idea of who can speak in the museum. It's not only the specialist or the art historian or the art patron or the connoisseur who then speaks in a museum of ideas, but a physicist, or an economist, or a mother, or a five-year-old, or an art professional. We also have to make sure that the people who are accustomed to the museum, the art historians and the studio artists, don't feel excluded.

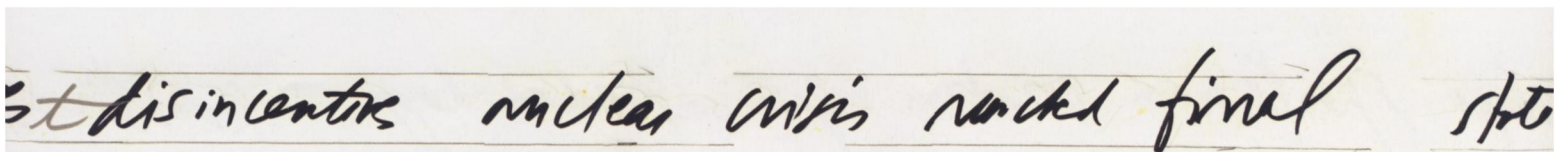
**Pamela Franks** (Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven): It seems as if other kinds of organizations might be more useful models for thinking about structuring your activities—that is, a think tank or a forum of some kind.

**Berry:** Yes and no. We haven't given up connoisseurship, formalism, collecting, deaccessioning, and all of those museum things that structure the traditional definition of what a museum is. We are still very much interested in immediate interactions with objects. We definitely still focus on that live experience with a combination of objects. We have the great freedom to do in gallery spaces what other professors can't do in their classrooms.

**Stomberg:** Yes, a teaching museum is a place where you should turn on and be provoked.

### University versus Civic Institutions

**Hammond:** Let's turn to the relationship of the university museum to the municipal museum. How do we reflect and how do we influence what's happening in the municipal museum?



**Corwin:** Are all college and university art museums teaching museums now? I think that's a question.

**Stomberg:** Or are all museums teaching museums?

**Corwin:** Exactly. I mean, what is that distinction?

**Conkelton:** Having been in both academic institutions and public institutions, I can say that there's been a huge push for quite a while in all areas of museum education to open up experiences beyond the art object, beyond the expertise, to incorporate visual culture, to make people more visually literate. Everything that's been said is not any different from what I've heard in public, civic, or municipal institutions. Having started in museum education and watched this trend, I think it is definitely something that university museums can offer that is very specifically different.

**Hammond:** Can we define it?

**Stomberg:** To me, there is a strong difference between a teaching museum and a civic museum. The realm of teaching activity that goes on in most civic museums is prescribed to certain typically ticket-bearing audiences. In the teaching museum, curricular possibilities inform every decision we make.

**Franks:** The college or university museum exists in an atmosphere of learning and teaching. In a university context, this is what people are doing much of the time, studying, learning, teaching. It's the main work. It can be a great advantage to be in a university setting because you can tap into the habits and ongoing activities of thinking and learning. In civic museums some visitors might be people whose main work is intellectual inquiry, but the context is broader.

**Berry:** We are in an environment that has at its base academic freedom, which is not a freedom that necessarily my colleagues at other museums have. So it helps open up the world of artists that we might choose to work with, or the kind of programming we might try, or even the way we might install an exhibition. It's not that I think that municipal museums are not teaching, but there's a different base that's governing the success of that institution.

**Katherine Hart** (Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire): Academic freedom hasn't come up very much for us. We just do what we do. We give faculty access to do scholarly exhibitions. And then we encourage them to do projects as well, within teaching exhibitions, and not thinking about the canon or chronology or other issues. Our main goal is to get back to a mission of a teaching museum, that is, to create a sense of visual literacy among the widest number of students possible by reaching as far into the curriculum as possible. It is about getting to the students who wouldn't normally go into museums and deal with art and helping them think visually.

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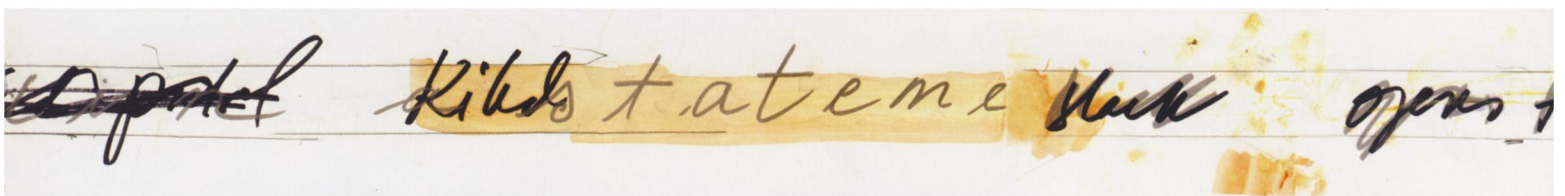




**Tom Brady, *Black Cross*, 2003, oil pastel on paper, 9 x 13 in. (22.9 x 33 cm). Collection of the Eleanor D. Wilson Museum, Hollins University, gift of Ralph Grant. (Artwork © Tom Brady)**

**Franks:** The very possibility of scholarly exhibitions is a big issue. It might not be an issue of academic freedom or overt censorship, but the bringing together of the collection resources and the intellectual resources of the faculty offers a huge potential. There is an important subtlety to what you're saying, Kathy, because reaching deep into the curriculum is a way of reaching students who wouldn't normally go to museums. But the critical thing is the depth of the interpretation that can happen by making connections to whatever intellectual context, uncovering new knowledge and interpretation, so the understanding of the field of study is enhanced, as well as teaching visual literacy skills.

**Wyona Lynch-McWhite** (Eleanor D. Wilson Museum at Hollins University, Roanoke, Virginia): When we talk about what we want our institution to look like, we kind of organize our thoughts around what you are talking about programmatically, but also operationally. The students who are working with us are trained properly in how to do research and exhibitions. And we support the



college faculty, both artists and art historians, professionally and in terms of curriculum. Our university had a fifty-year exhibition program through a gallery when it decided to build a visual arts center and a museum.

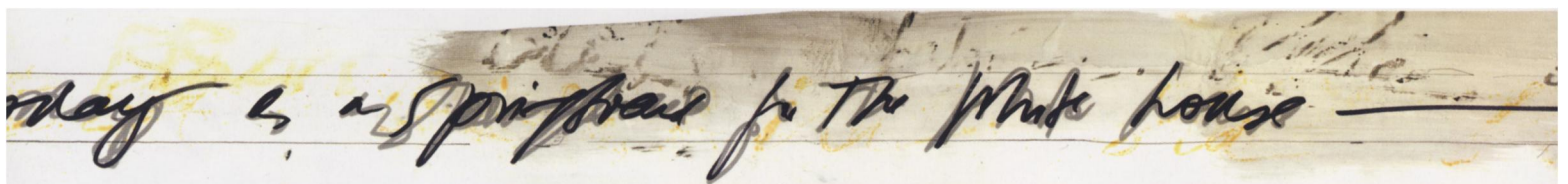
**Hammond:** Why did they decide that?

**Lynch-McWhite:** They decided to build a visual arts center, initially, to bring all of these separate elements of the art program under one roof; art history was in one building, art was in another, everything was everywhere. So the impetus for building a center was to bring all the programs under one roof, and then the impetus for building a museum was, frankly, money. A donor came along and said we have a great gallery program, we've been collecting, and we need a museum to take this to the next obvious step.

It was a very different way of thinking—it went from being a gallery that the studio and art-history faculty helped program to a separate entity over which they had no control or authority, and with a very different mission and budget structure. My task as the first director is to engage some of the ideas we have been discussing here, but it's also just to establish the institution, to make sure that people know us on the campus and recognize that we can do relevant things for them. I care about engaging people in those exciting ways, but first I just want students to come in. Another priority is to make sure that students working in the museum get trained in the proper way and learn the right things. In fact, some have spent summers at the Met or Sotheby's through the university's internship program, so they have had extraordinary experiences. We're not just teaching them, they're teaching us!

**Corwin:** The benefit of working with students is that students are really ambassadors. They bring in other students. They have a particular voice that can speak to kindergarten kids or even their peers that I don't think anyone else on the campus really has. I think if we can engage them in such a way—let them write labels, give gallery lectures, give lectures on individual works of art—it is one more way of bringing people in.

**Berry:** We start with the teachers. It's not only that the student docent is going to attract her or his friends to come to an event, but if a psychology professor is participating in a dialogue with the artist Matt Mullican, for example, there's a whole other group of students of that professor who are now in the museum. If that professor then is excited enough about the experience that she or he decides to bring a class in once a year or, even better, once or twice a semester, then we have a whole new department that is coming through the door for an hour—and hopefully they will come back on their own.



### Collection and Study

**Corwin:** This is a question that constantly comes up at Colby. How does the collection and acquisitions program interface with art history and with curricular needs? We always come up short because we have limited resources and a limited collection. We can't be a survey museum and that's just something with which we continually struggle. We can't answer the needs of art history faculty with the collection we have.

**Lynch-McWhite:** But you can request.

**Corwin:** Absolutely, and we do lots of loan shows. But other than that, what are the solutions?

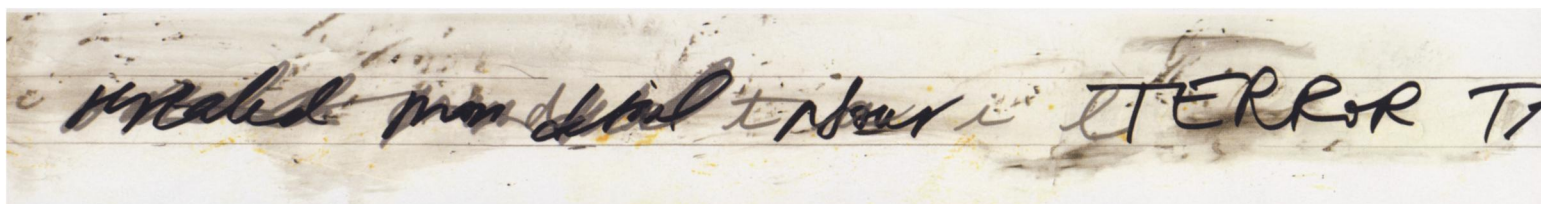
**Franks:** For me, the question is how much a particular university museum is living up to its own unique potential, whether there is a hundred-thousand-object collection, as in the case of Yale and many museums, or a five-hundred-object collection that the students understand very well because they can know every object in the collection over their four years at university. It's about making the most of the resources and conditions an institution has.

One of the things that Yale can do is have collection-based courses, regularly and many of them. It's really a question of looking at what our collection is, what the university offers, what the curriculum requirements are, and then trying to be the best form of teaching organization within that context.

**Hart:** Speaking to the point that you don't always have the object you need, alternatively for one professor you might just have one object with which they want to teach an entire class, but they don't want to come over to the museum to look at that object. So my dream for a while has been to have a smart classroom where we also can build up the digital database that surrounds a particular object or a number of objects. So when faculty members come in, they can put together a visual context for the object we have that makes it worthwhile for them to make that trip to the museum. Combining teaching with the object and with scanned images—this is a great feature of the new digital age.

**Corwin:** A warning though . . . I think all of us would love to have a collection that's digitized and online, tomorrow. My concern is this makes our collection almost too accessible. You've got a student or faculty member going through the collection online, in their office, in their dorm room, studying the collection. But at what point are we assuring that they get into the museum? My other concern is that we don't end up encouraging the serendipitous exploration that can happen in storage, when you pull out a rack or you go through a box.

**Hammond:** Like open stacks in a library.





Sam Van Aken, *01:15:19;22*, 2005,  
detail of multimedia installation,  
dimensions variable (artwork ©  
Sam Van Aken; photograph by Alan  
LaValle).

Van Aken's work was presented in  
the Colby College Museum of Art's  
*currents* series, which highlights the  
work of emerging artists.



**Stomberg:** I also want to talk about the permanent collection. Many of our activities with the permanent collection now are not in the galleries. We closed a public gallery two years ago and made it a study gallery. At any given time we have about 380 objects on view in the museum, but we are showing well over a thousand objects a year in our study gallery.

**Hammond:** How does that operate?

**Stomberg:** That's where so much of the teaching happens, because we'll have classes in there all day long, and each one is looking at twenty, thirty, or forty objects in small groups of ten or twelve students. That's what this room is all about—that's where a lot of our action is. We have a full-time person who became so busy that we had to hire a part-time assistant, which we are now trying to make a second full-time position. So we now need two people working with the study gallery. We went from eighteen hundred student visits annually in our old print room to thirty-two hundred in our study gallery in one year. So now we are trying to use that as a laboratory for exhibitions: Professor X comes in and asks for nineteen objects, and maybe those nineteen objects become the basis of an exhibition.

**Lynch-McWhite:** You just have to think really creatively. You'd be surprised how little niches can be repurposed and rethought. I gave up an office to make the educational resource and print study room, because I didn't need the obscenely large office—I needed a resource room more.

**Stomberg:** Can I have your office? [Laughter]

**Lynch-McWhite:** We had a space that was structured for a storage closet, but we turned it into an amazingly lucrative gift shop. We also use rolling carts—we roll artworks right into the middle of the gallery. There may be a contemporary show going on, but we're showing nineteenth-century prints at the rolling table with the class all clustered around.

**Hammond:** Complicated logistics. But great. This brings up an issue we've been very focused on in our renovations and planning—there must be object study rooms and teaching exhibition spaces that exist in the center of the museum's activity. When all three of our buildings are eventually finished, we will have programmed and increased staff for both these areas. We get adamant about a lot of things, but about these firmly dedicated teaching spaces in particular. Then there is the issue of the installation of permanent collections: how we do or don't integrate what's regularly used in classes into the permanent collection spaces can have a huge impact on the logistics of making study rooms truly active. If objects are regularly integrated into the permanent-collection galleries, the issue of whether or not an installation is cohesive or not impacts the activity





of the curator. In all cases, collaboration is paramount—not always an easy proposition. How do your various institutions address these issues of study and exhibition of the permanent collection?

**Hart:** One of the curatorial issues we have at the Hood Museum of Art is that many of the objects that we have were not collected for display quality and may have condition issues and other limitations. They are great to study, so sometimes that comes into play. We do have a teaching gallery, and we do whatever we want in there. The public is allowed in there, but these objects don't necessarily migrate into the permanent-collection display areas.

We have residencies where outside scholars come in to work with our faculty about objects, to loosen things up and create more dialogue about what we have. They have special conferences with faculty to talk about how they could use objects for teaching. We've had a couple of Native American scholars and curators come through, and they asked why the Native American art in our collection was not integrated into our American-art galleries. So those questions do come up.

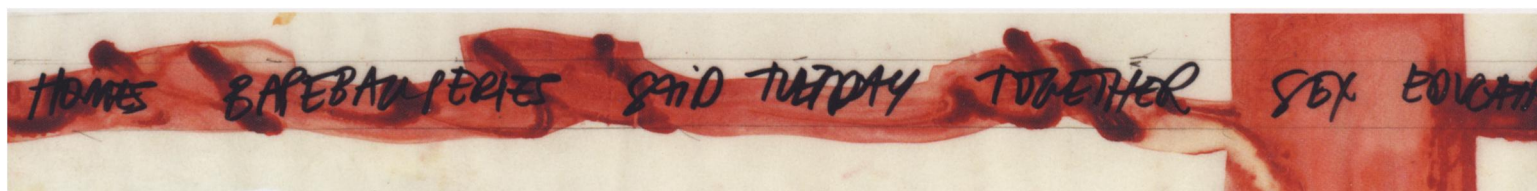
**Hammond:** It's interesting to bring in outside people, though, and a very productive way to get that conversation going.

**Hart:** It's been great. They bring in all sorts of different viewpoints, and, instead of the museum staff talking to our faculty about the museum's collection, we have an outside expert talking to them. Sometimes we have brief leaves for faculty members so that they can spend time with the scholars who are in residence. We just did that with Chris Roy, a historian of African art from the University of Iowa; Judith Byfield, a professor in African and Caribbean history; and our African curator. The three of them spent five days with each other, just talking about objects in the collection.

**Berry:** So we've decided to be a museum about ideas . . . what is the collection of a museum of ideas? Should we even have a collection? Should we collect dolls, patents, maps, contemporary art, video, books, objects of material culture? Our rhetoric is, we invite all these different disciplines, ideas, and objects into our galleries. But then are we going to fall back and have a collection of American art from the last hundred years? That doesn't seem to gel.

**Hammond:** Why would you start collecting to begin with?

**Berry:** We inherited a collection that existed at Skidmore before the Tang Museum was conceived. And we're happy to have it, but it doesn't necessarily match the mission of a museum of ideas. It matches teaching objectives, and it's great for regular use and object-based learning. Since the Tang opened, we haven't decided to start actively collecting, because we're still interrogating this idea of what should a collection be. Should we deaccession everything? What should it be?





Viewers watching Charles and Ray Eames' 1977 film *Powers of Ten* in the exhibition *A Very Liquid Heaven* (October 23, 2004–June 5, 2005) at the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College (photograph by Arthur Evans)



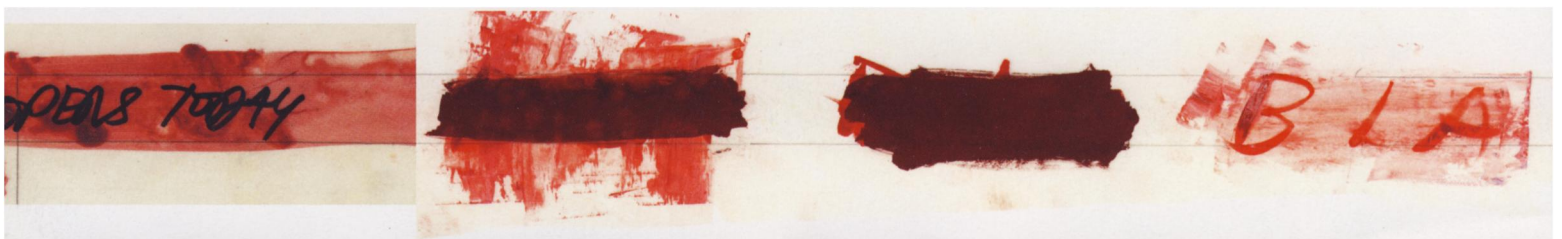
**Hammond:** That's what the Rice Art Gallery did. They redistributed a collection that had accumulated over a number of years. They now have a project space where they commission five site-specific installations a year from contemporary artists. There are definitely great models of a very specific kind out there.

**Berry:** I'm almost certain that we won't choose that, because the objects have a wonderful use, and they are an active part of what happens in the museum. We use the collection in the galleries. It helps us engage donors and the contemporary art world in a way that we couldn't if we didn't have a collection. So we won't abandon the collection, but what it could or should be is something that we'll be talking about for a while.

**Stomberg:** Sometimes the displays in our galleries can be quite different from other museums. We will display an object without purporting to bestow on it masterpiece status. I'm perfectly comfortable having something in the museum that is intriguing for a thousand other reasons than the fact that it's a masterpiece. I think this could be one of the ways that we are separate from municipal museums as well—the interrogation of objects. Actually I was just teaching yesterday, and we were looking at this really bad drawing. It's an eighteenth-century red chalk drawing, and the anatomy is completely wrong. You look at it and it's got the imprimatur of old master all over it. The students come up and they genuflect, but then after ten or fifteen minutes of really looking, they realize, "This is awful—this is really a bad drawing. This person should have been a butcher or something." It's exceedingly useful and it would never see the light of day in other contexts.

**Corwin:** Part of our mission has been to collect certain artists in depth. If we have six hundred works by Alex Katz, we obviously become a resource and study center for his work. With a large collection of works by John Marin, students and faculty can come and look at an artist's work in depth. That type of opportunity is unique.

**Reeve:** I've inherited a collection at OCAD. It's not very big, about thirty-five hundred works, but it's big enough to be an issue. It has been put together somewhat haphazardly over the last century. Therefore its structure is such that it doesn't really have much to do with how the mission of the gallery is developing. Listening to you talk about this issue is making me think that maybe the permanent collection is something that we administer, but it doesn't have the same mission as the museum as a whole. Maybe a museum of ideas has one mission and part of that mission is to administer the university's permanent collection—but that permanent collection is not expected to be integral to the museum's programming. Somebody has got to administer it, it should probably be you, but that doesn't mean that the collection has to be forced into a mission that it doesn't necessarily speak to, especially if it's already got this other purpose.





John Marin, *Brooklyn Bridge*, 1912, watercolor and graphite on paper, 15½ x 18½ in. (39.4 x 47 cm). Colby College Museum of Art, gift of John Marin, Jr., and Norma B. Marin. (Artwork © Estate of John Marin/Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York)

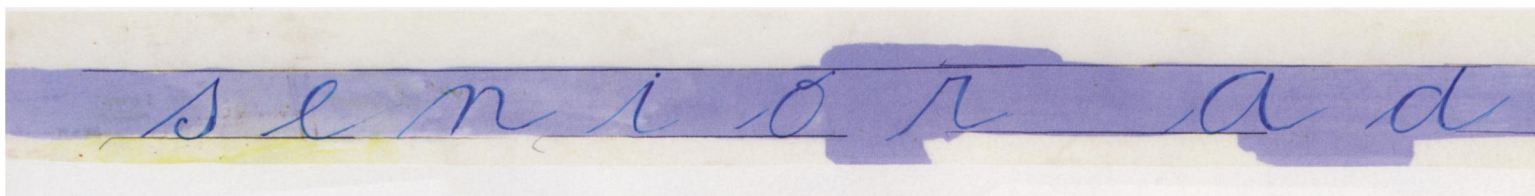


### Involving the Campus and the Community

**Reeve:** One of the problems that our college traditionally has had is that it's seen as extremely isolated, despite the fact that it's right in the middle of downtown Toronto and couldn't be more centrally located. But nonetheless, for years and years it has been seen as isolated not only from the broader community, but from the art-and-design community that surrounds it as well. So I think part of my job is to create a vehicle or mechanism to help the school reach out to the community, and to do something to make that school an indispensable cultural resource for the broader community.

We don't really need to make a special point of reaching out to local artists to come to our exhibitions. Probably they will just come to us automatically. But what about other groups beyond that? What about students in the other universities that are in walking distance of the college, what about high-school students? What about reaching out to all of these book clubs that have just mushroomed? So one of the things that we're thinking about is, what if we started a program whereby every exhibition that we did was accompanied with an online, downloadable discussion kit.

**Conkelton:** I think of all of us as people who need to constantly spin to face our various audiences in different ways every day. We wouldn't focus just on the





students; we all serve the students. That's the thing that all universities say right up front, first thing. But if we are going to get certain things done, we have to make alliances with faculty and others. A lot of this is political, and in a big university a lot of it is also simply logistical.

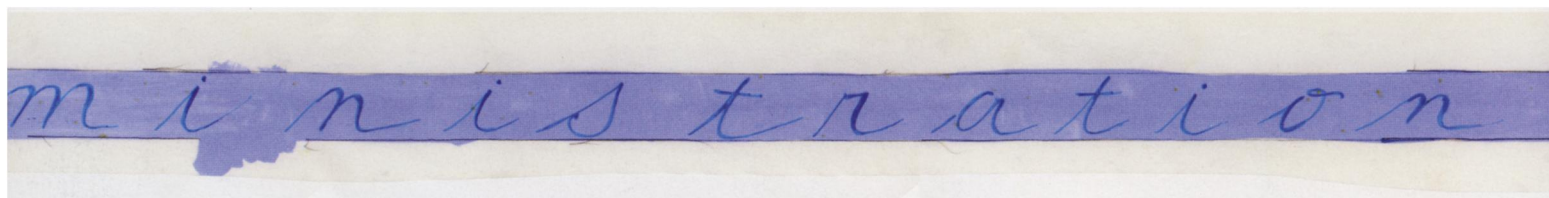
**Lynch-McWhite:** But where your university, museum, or gallery is positioned within the academic system will influence how much that impacts you. I know we all agree on that. So as we look at the future of these institutions, that placement comes into play, because it does affect our product and our outlook. I'm not making a statement that one is better or worse, but I know, as a museum professional who does not come from the scholarly world, that working in a situation where the museum is under a department is one in which true academic freedom does not exist. True exhibition freedom does not exist, so the best way to get that is to remove the institution, take it out of the department setting so that it can be a little more whole. As these galleries and museums try to define themselves, that's got to be something that comes up.

**Berry:** Another one of the audiences that we spin to face is the audience that exists outside the campus. At the Tang, we exist, as many of us do, as one of the main or maybe the public place for the community to come in and see what's happening at the college. Maybe it's the football stadium, maybe it's a theater program, maybe it's the museum. These are places where the world outside of the campus comes to participate in the college. At Skidmore, where we don't have some of those other things, the museum is that public place. The better we do in that arena, the more ability we have to move on campus. We become a place where there's a lot of interest, energy, attention—and all those help our program.

**Lynch-McWhite:** The university museum as the community museum. We often forget about that larger role, and in some cases our institution's museum is the only museum in town or the region.

**Conkelton:** But that brings up an interesting point, because you can also look at it in a slightly different way. My department generates press releases on a regular basis. Everyone's exhibition program does. Information is put out all the time. There's a lot of function that's contained in our institutions that doesn't have a place anywhere else on campus, particularly for those of us who are at older, established universities. We have to establish ourselves as this valuable activity in academic terms, but there are other ways we can offer professional expertise in a collegial way or in a collaboration that actually happens, as well.

**Franks:** The public or community function of the university museum can be a crucial doorway to the world beyond the university for our student audiences



too, a kind of interface with the real-world concerns beyond the college experience.

**Conkelton:** Some of this is obvious to us; we have been doing it for a long time, and some of us have beautiful facilities. But, for instance, most faculty and administrators at my university don't think about my gallery at Tyler as a place to have a program, and I'm out there all the time with my pom-poms trying to get people to do that.

**Hart:** We can do something that is very serious and scholarly one minute, and do something open-ended the next. That is the type of freedom that we have because we don't have to worry about gate. I don't know how many of us charge admission.

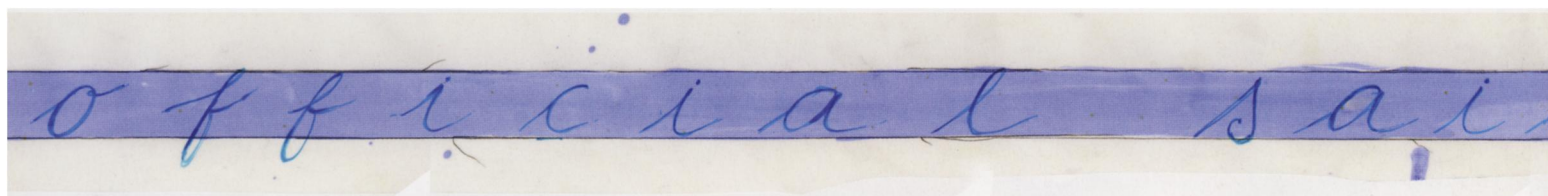
**Stomberg:** Does anybody here charge admission?

**Hart:** We do count, but our administration is not judging us on the number of people who come through.

**Berry:** One of the things we had to do was realize that we weren't open when the students were available. We were open when they were in class, from ten to five, which is exactly when they are not available to come to the museum. We were saying, "Why aren't they hanging out at the museum?" So now we are open later.

**Franks:** This is where I think the "road to students" question comes in, because lots of students come in through their professors, absolutely, and they have very meaningful experiences in those classes. But a lot of students come through their extracurricular groups, a frame of reference that we are tapping into. So whether it's created in a seminar or in a lecture class, or it's created through a gay and lesbian coalition on campus, they are coming with something they are already interested in and invested in, and looking at what's on view through that lens. It's just easier in many cases to tap into specific courses, because we have a syllabus. We know what frame of reference is being developed, because we can talk to the professor. But increasingly, we are having amazing luck with extracurricular organizations across campus and essentially letting them do the programming.

**Hammond:** I want to turn the conversation to the question of critical authority and the relationships between the art historian and the museum, the curator and the museum, and the nonspecialist academic and the museum. There is a difference between the art-historical practice of looking at and interpreting objects and the non-art-historical practice. Your thoughts?





**Jonathan Katz speaking at "Night Out," December 1, 2006, at the Yale University Art Gallery. The scholars Michael Hatt and Jonathan Katz led a discussion about imagery and issues of sexuality in works of art from the collection. The event was sponsored in collaboration with Yale's Larry Kramer Initiative for Gay and Lesbian Studies.**

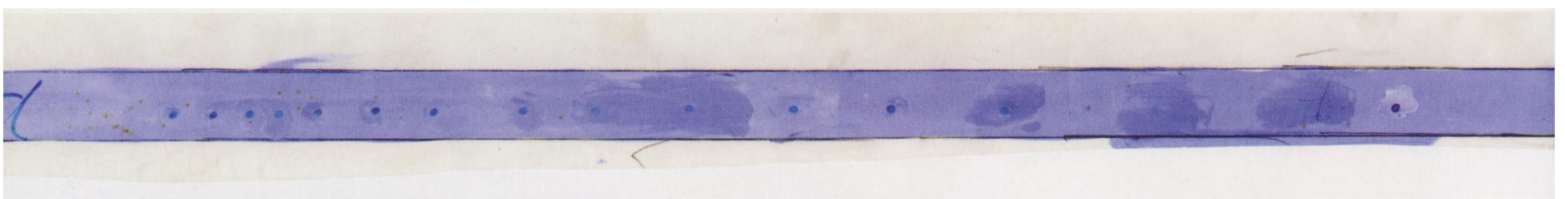
**Berry:** I think we produce real scholarship. We have to make a point in our communications to the world that we are doing that by participating in those forums that determine what is scholarship and isn't for different fields. An exhibition curated by an anthropologist and her students might get reviewed in the local newspaper's art section, but also in her Society of Anthropology journal. It means getting the physics journal to pay attention to the physicists doing an exhibition—by making it count in those other disciplines.

**Stomberg:** If we are laboratories and our exhibitions are our results, it's challenging to get people to think of an exhibition as the result of a process like that, rather than as a group of pictures on a wall.

**Reeve:** I might disagree with how you play out that analogy. I would think that if college and university museums are laboratories, then our exhibitions are experiments.

**Stomberg:** I could certainly see that, but results are often inherently indeterminate.

**Hammond:** It depends on the institution. In one place, you have a lot of freedom to create exhibitions that are very open-ended, and in another environment





you might not. Some of that has to do with actual collections, curatorial tradition, and faculty tradition.

**Berry:** Again, how do we make it count? When you are a junior faculty member and working toward tenure, why would you accept my invitation to write an essay for a catalogue or to curate an exhibition, if your chair says that doesn't count as scholarship? I am very interested in how our exhibition practice can be scholarship in many different fields.

**Lynch-McWhite:** Who is your main constituency? In a university museum, that ultimate first mission—above everything else, above collection, above preservation—is education.

**Conkelton:** But there is a dynamic. It's not that different, thinking about and looking at students versus looking at faculty. We look to faculty not only as our audience, but also as our allies.

**Berry:** The university museum can be the place in your community to train your audience to expect provocation from their experience, to expect active engagement rather than passive engagement, and to expect questions rather than answers. I think we are in a position now at Skidmore where if we weren't provoking some members of the community, we wouldn't be seen as doing our job.

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Pamela Franks is the curator for academic initiatives at the Yale University Art Gallery.

Anna Hammond is the deputy director for education, programs, and public affairs at the Yale University Art Gallery; she is also a member of the *Art Journal* editorial board.

Katherine Hart is the curator of academic programming and the associate director of the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College, in Hanover, New Hampshire.

Wyona Lynch-McWhite is the director of the Eleanor D. Wilson Museum at Hollins University, in Roanoke, Virginia.

Charles Reeve is the curator and an assistant professor of liberal studies and art at the Ontario College of Art & Design, in Toronto.

John Stomberg is the deputy director and senior curator for exhibitions at the Williams College Museum of Art, in Williamstown, Massachusetts.

