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RICE UNIVERSITY

THE MUSEUM TYPOLOGY UNDER STRESS:
A DESIGN PROPOSAL FOR A SCATTERED SITE JAZZ MUSEUM
IN NEW ORLEANS

by

JOSEPH L. POWELL III

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE

John Casbarian, Professor, Director
School of Architecture

Albert Pope, Associate Professor
School of Architecture

Yung Ho Chang, Assistant Professor
School of Architecture

Houston, Texas

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ABSTRACT

The Museum Typology Under Stress:

A Design Proposal for a Scattered Site Jazz Museum in New Orleans

by

Joseph L. Powell III

The museum as a public place for the continuing cultural education of the individual is a social institution whose purpose has seemingly become dated through the advent of cultural diversity, interactive information technology, and the economic rigours of late capitalism. Whereas the museum still has a place and program, its presence as an architectural type has diminished due, in part, to uncertainty in the architect’s response to a changing cultural site. Using a component of a scattered site jazz museum in New Orleans, a design is proposed to establish a museum for the purpose of (re)collecting the many relationships lost to us, rather than establishing the narrative of the traditional museum or sacrificing the museum to the onanistic pleasures of commodity fetishism.
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INTRODUCTION

It is not entirely correct to begin a history of the museum, as a type or concept, with the collection habits of certain animals, the desire of the rich and powerful to display their treasures, or the need of authority figures to expose symbolic objects of power to the masses, though they are sometimes cited as predecessors to the creation of the museum as a Western social institution. These narratives are not related by reason or technique directly to the museum: they did not evolve into the museum but rather dispersed toward it. The museum is a modern presence which arrived on the social landscape just at the end of the 18th century to coincide with the rise of the nation-state and the first forceful exertions of the capitalist economic system. Social ferment naturally included architectural thinking. Explicit theories of type and form were being created and debated

Figure 1. Museum Wormianum, Copenhagen, 1655.
as part of new social needs and the needs of the new authorities in government and in commerce. The understanding of the crafted object, the art object, and the foreign object were reordered by the exigencies of the rational society, breaking them free of past images and symbols which adhered to pre-Revolutionary sources of authority. The strategy of rational ordering of these objects stresses their artifactual (i.e. instructive) nature and suppresses their sensual qualities. We might say that the optic is given precedence over the haptic, a fact which will contribute to the museum’s difficulties in the 20th century.

Figure 2. Western wing of the Louvre, engraved by Israel Sylvestre, Paris, c. 1660.

Figure 3. Altes Museum, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Berlin, c. 1830.

The early museum finds itself at home within rational and symbolically charged neoclassical structures. Former palaces like the Louvre may be co-opted by the people for the edifying display of objects or new museums like the Altes Museum may be constructed according to the most refined rational, classical design. (fig’s. 2, 3)
Figure 4. Arranged by Donald Marron, Susan Brundage, and Cheryl Paine at Paine Webber, Inc., Louise Lawler, 1982.

Throughout the 19th century and its architectural dream of forms\textsuperscript{1}, the museum remained one of the most conservative typologies, and one of the most prominent, with its inevitable public site on a main axis. Its position and form came to invest value and authenticity in the objects it contained just as surely as the labels next to the objects, classified by period, school, and nation.(fig. 4) The objective certainty needed to sustain the rational society with its rising bourgeois class was actually created from the various shifts and differentiations in which the museum participated. Like the Encyclopedia, which only so shortly preceded it, the museum, as a public repository of artifacts and as an edifying institution of “objective” cultural values, was established as part of the creation of a new master narrative.

If it can be acknowledged that the museum has a beginning as a type, institution or concept, it then follows that the museum has a history. Ironically, as a house for the storage and display of culturally and historically significant objects, the museum has worked to conceal its own history. Under the cloak of objectivity, the museum has attempted "to transform history into nature"\(^1\). In the attempt to "present things as they are", i.e. objectively, the museum must insist upon itself as merely a frame and not the structure itself, this being the traditional subterfuge of narrative. The fiction of the museum is that it presents a coherent universe by presenting a metonymic fragment in order to represent a totality in the uncritical belief in order and testimony. By presenting objects as signifiers within an artificially created form, museums underline their otherness.

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and their separation from lived experience.

As noted above, the denial of the haptic experience by the rational museum and its distantly conserved objects has proved difficult. The value and importance placed upon the objects and their home has reified their sensual allure and reinforced their power as desirable objects. The result has been that the museum has played a role parallel to and in support of commodity culture. Just as the museum can be mined for “official” artifacts, Walter Benjamin came to realize that the commercial shopping arcade can be mined for an altogether different type. The arcade provided a site for disposable, “unofficial” culture which could reveal, through its discarded artifacts, unofficial narratives contrary to the legitimized order promulgated by the museum. The museum and the arcade are linked through a perverse ritual of “to have” and “to have not”. (fig’s. 5, 6) In the arcade, you can have it all for a price and throw it away; in the museum, you cannot have, but if the worth is deemed sufficient, you can give, and the worth will be preserved for all time. Both museum and arcade cooperate in commodity fetishism and, as Susan Buck-Morris points out, can be used as textbook examples of Freudian displacement. The relations of classes and class exploitation are displaced into the relations among things, concealing the real situation. Our freedom becomes our freedom to consume, and the revolution simply leads to a clearance sale.¹ The museum becomes the sanctuary for the glittering spoils of our humanity and our displaced desires.

Beginning with Quatremère de Quincy in the early 19th century and re-established with a vengeance in the 20th century, the museum has had its critics. Quatremère was strongly anti-museum at a time when collections were being established for the glory of France by Napoleon as he brought home the spoils of Europe to add to the spoils of the ancien régime in the Louvre. Reflecting social issues that would really not be confronted until the late colonial period of the West, Quatremère argued that art and other cultural objects could never be truly understood without being situated in their context.1 This resonates with the current cultural critique of the museum. By way of introduction, one of the most succinct arguments to establish the recent terrain of the argument is Michel Foucault’s citation of Jorge Borge’s Chinese Encyclopedia.2 Whereas Benjamin would point to alternatives to the master narrative contained within the museum and Quatremère would disallow the physical presence of the dislocated collection, Foucault’s project calls for the doing away with of the very cultural site of the museum which unifies and chronologizes the collection under the master narrative. The various forms of the critique against the museum attack its context and call into question its means of authority. The question has been rendered more urgent with the semiotic quiverings, multi-cultural debates, and late-capitalist anxiety of the late 20th century.

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The form and function of the museum has responded fitfully to the internal and external pressures upon it as an institution and an architectural type. Post World War II Western society has witnessed an unparalleled period of increase in numbers and diversification of the museum. Added to this phenomenon are the building programs of countries both Western and non-Western that wish to exhibit their cultural heritage as part of their (re)emergence into the world cultural and economic system. As the program of the museum has come under question either through transplant or internal cultural debate, the traditional program has itself weakened. This naturally has had its affect upon the formal presence of the museum. Coincidentally, however, the revived debate of the usefulness of architectural type has also had its effect upon the museum as a presence in the urban landscape within which it is traditionally found.

Architects have reacted as variously as the times will allow, which is to say, with a concurrent dreaming of forms analogous to 19th century architecture. James Stirling and Robert Venturi will happily appropriate historical forms for abstract reference and ironic pastiche, leaving the serious business of the museum a bit upended. (fig’s. 7,8) Others, like Frank Gehry, will appropriate laterally, accepting modernism while criticizing it through the dissolution of traditional formal properties through a highly personal effort. (fig. 9) In Germany, there has been an orgy of museum building as it reforges its unity as a nation-state. There are several cases there as elsewhere where the museum simply
Figure 7. Neue Staatsgalerie, Stirling Wilford & Associates, Stuttgart, 1982.

Figure 8. Children's Museum, Venturi Rauch Scott Brown, Houston, 1993.

Figure 9. Vitra Design Museum, Frank Gehry, Weil am Rhein, 1989.

Figure 10. Plan, Museum für Völkerkunde, Richard Meier, Frankfurt.
begins to fade into the urban landscape, no longer the stately, Schinkelesque treasure box situated on a prominent public site. (fig's. 10,11) Still, from shallower within architectural discourse is the rare deconstructivist alternative which would create a political commentary upon the dissolution of the museum while actually creating a fashionable alternative. Debate about the form of the museum has primarily remained with the confines of the art community.

The traditional museum program is expanding and eroding in direct response to economic necessity and the need to be more commodious and entertaining to an easily distracted public. Their placement and, frequently, their purpose is to serve as economic attractors. One such example, the cool, elegant box that is Norman Foster's Médiathèque in Nimes is filled with not only exhibition and storage space, but also a library, a bookstore, a
videothèque, classrooms, the now obligatory restaurant, and offices of local cultural officials. (fig. 12) Museums are frequently playgrounds for the children and the adult, frequently employing user friendly computers and seductive graphics. The issue of technology and computers threatens to undermine the museum as a confrontation with an unmediated reality. The seduction of reproduction is raised by both Walter Benjamin and Paul Valéry. Moreover, with our interactive computer systems, will the museum really be necessary? Economically, their feasibility is questionable. Besides the filing of its spaces with as many income producing spaces as possible, not to mention the plethora of touring, blockbuster shows, the museum has had to go into other forms of business. MOMA’s jubilee year (1979/1980) also celebrated the sale of its air rights and the arrival of the gargantuan Picasso show.¹ Other museums have been obliged to rent out secondary and tertiary works, normally kept in storage, to private patrons who pay dearly to have a piece of the museum in their homes. Indeed, the museum does seem to be establishing closer ties to its sibling, the arcade (read nowadays: shopping mall). (fig. 13)


Figure 13. Edgmar, Frank Gehry, Santa Monica, 1991.
As we rapidly expand the pathways of communication for the sharing of information, the relationships with and within the museum must be reconsidered. The museum has been one of these pathways. It has had a place in the public eye and, for better or worse, has been instrumental in teaching that eye to look and learn. The non-passive involvement of the other senses can be one approach to entice the participant away from more passive forms of optical entertainment. With the exponential increase in the amount of information we are able to access and customize to our needs and interests, the relationships between the bits of information and the relationship between individuals in society becomes attenuated. The museum is first and foremost a public place where part of the program is to establish relationships: between the spectators participating, between the spectator and object, and between the objects themselves. Benjamin proposes that collection becomes "re-collection", and here the monumental work of the contemporary museum can be established. As public relationships appear to dissolve into a non-cohesive sharing of information, the museum can provide an opportunity to re-collect not only the suppressed narratives of society but also to re-establish ties of understanding which can bind us in informed action and survival. With Benjamin's thought that we may discover how to see chimerically and stereoscopically into the depth of history, the museum's relationship to society can be re-collected and re-established as an institution and as a type. This design thesis proceeds on the assumption that context is a broad term expressing theoretical, historical and physical conditions. It is probable that the concept
of type, of which the museum is one, is one of the more sensitive architectural issues with regard to the museum.

THE CONCEPT OF TYPE

The concept of type as a guiding principle of architectural creation was born with the advent of modern institutions. Like the museum, architectural types provide a guided awareness of pre-existing values, e.g. cultural, moral, use, exchange, and aesthetic. Like language, the essence of the architectural object lies in its repeatability, implicitly acknowledging a set of comprehensible rules and physical materials for their expression. More, perhaps, than other architectural types of the 19th and 20th centuries, the museum has readily expressed the challenges which the concept of typology has undergone. The pressures generated by technology and the market place strive directly against the explicit and implicit agendas of the museum. Perhaps the bank has only been more seriously affected with its reduction into the ATM. The bank, however, is an obvious candidate for this transformation, as it is wed directly to the what is actually the cooperative force of technology and market. As a disseminator of information for educational purposes, the museum could very well go the technological route for the neat, “infinite” presentation of its resources. Yet, this would continue its suppressed history of sensual display and, through the formatting of access, continue its own history of “objectivity”. Relationships would still be established for the spectator in an even more limited way rather than allowing the spectator to establish her own. Whereas type can be considered to be, in
Rafael Moneo’s words, “a frame within which change operates”\(^1\), the museum has been a frame in which change stagnates. The questions arises as to whether the museum can survive its liberalization in particular and whether the dialectic established by type will continue to have meaning. A close reading of the father of modern of typology, Quatremère de Quincy, establishes what we would recognize as a more contemporary understanding of type than we would expect of a promulgator of neo-classical style. Quatremère’s understanding of type, as expressed through his writings allowed for a link to be formed to the past during a time of great social change.\(^2\) Society and the discipline of architecture are related to need and nature as a way of allowing for continuity and change rather than a conservative stasis. From this liberal beginning, the concept of type was to take a much more conservative flavor.

According to J.N.L. Durand, the aim of architecture is the composition or “disposition” of the architectural object. Durand likeness composition to needs, with the grid and axis being the means towards compositional unity\(^3\). By contrast, Quatremère’s theories are based on elemental and archetypal forms. Durand’s further abstraction of form into plan grid actually attenuated the connection between type and form, planting the seed for the formal exercises of the 20th century. The program in the 19th century allowed for the transformation of form into composition, resolving the connection between the various new programs and the new, emergent compositions. Models, the mechanical

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reproductions of the architectural objects, were used as examples. Through this process which established the flexibility of industrial and transportation typologies and the conservation of museum and other culturally related types, architectural theories began to link type to functionalism. This led to the rejection of typology when the modern movement made its break with the past. On the other hand, typologies have also been rejected by those who feel that architecture is determined purely by context with programmatic needs a part of the contextual equation.

The “loss” of type in the first half of the 20th century ironically provided for a new understanding. Alexander Klein saw the possibility of type as a working instrument for design and for the building of the city. Paralleling linguistic theories being formulated at the time, Klein and others began to see type as part of an established vocabulary common to many architectural undertakings.\(^1\) Type could be the morphological generator of cities as well as the generator of particular architectures. With a renewed interest in Quatremère de Quincy in the 1950’s and 60’s, G.C. Argan in Typologia proposed the overlapping and comparison of formal regularities in building construction.\(^2\) Later, emphasizing archetypal continuity, Aldo Rossi writes that the logic of architectural forms lies in a definition of type based on the juxtaposition of reason and memory.\(^3\) Alan Colquhoun, reflecting linguistic learning and media sensibility, states that, though type,

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\(^1\) Moneo, pp. 35-36.
\(^2\) Moneo, p. 36.
communication is possible. As architecture masters a meaning, it enters into a process of transformation which contains the possibility of ideological transformation.¹ Within this discourse, the architect’s attitudes have been varied. Rossi, the architect/theoretician creates fractured architecture exploiting formal recombinations and our ignorance of typologies in order to evoke both our memory and our helplessness before it. Robert Venturi, on the other hand, introduces exterior elements with little resemblance to the inner structure, the message being that architecture is only imitative of itself and self-referential. (fig. 14) This reflects more closely the linguistic leanings of typological theory, especially where semiotic studies have shaken the link between signifier and signified (read architecturally as form and function) with its theories that language is actually a semi-autonomous system with its own processes apart from those of meaning and communication. Venturi would propose that type emerges from a reaction to this shattering of meaning. Earlier, Louis Kahn had searched for type and meaning in a pre-linguistic, archetypal condition of architecture. (fig. 15)

![Figure 14. Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery, Venturi Rauch Scott Brown, London, 1991.](image1)

![Figure 15. Interior, Kimbell Museum, Louis Kahn, Fort Worth, 1972.](image2)

It must be asked if the awareness of type indicates its loss. Are we in the process of destroying form in order to master it, out deconstructivist dreams being tantamount to the architectural dreams of the 19th century. (Similarly, we might ask if the museum uncloaked is an indication of its loss.) With our increased technological capabilities in the creation and destruction of buildings, typology has become ever more closely linked with fashion. This is reinforced by the tendency in our society to equate any public expression as entertainment. It might do simply well to note the expressions of the 19th century graphic satirist, J. G. Grandville: in his depictions of the "battle" between Nature and Fashion, Nature wins. (fig. 16) This was counter to the progressive thinking of the age and its product orientation. In the name of rationality and objectivity, humans and human actions have been increasingly separated from Nature, by reifying the status of Western society through a justification of Nature itself according to our history (see pg -, fn -). Quatremère de Quincy's thinking was also counter to the thinking of the age in

Figure 16. *Plantes Marines, Coquillages, Mandrêpores*, J. J. Grandville, 1842.
presenting type as a process not a product where architecture is not an end but an artifice created by social conventions, with their own natural processes and relationships. Architectural imitation is then directed by choices in language, society and architecture. Quatremère’s proposal for mimesis of the classical would lead to abstraction and resolution through architectural form as a natural process, thereby aiding and abetting progressive social thought.¹

Today, though we might recognize the role of memory and forgetting in the expression of type, it is more immediately driven by programs, social needs, market forces and the embrace of technology. Hand in hand, commerce and technology, in particular, drive the current transformations in type with the situation being allowed by the loosening of bonds between forms and meaning. This process is fostering a merging of programs and an employment of forms which are inexpensive, of a definite life-span, easily repeatable, and ready to assume any function. The shed, first used in the modern period for train stations and factories, its increasingly the type of choice for any number of programs. The museum as shed is becoming a common way to create an instant economic attractor. Just as the museum is undergoing a liberalization of meaning, so to the concept of type must re-collect the possibility of dynamism and broadness of site first proposed by Quatremère de Quincy. Type is the link between the city and the museum, and like language, it serves both itself and processes other than itself. Walter Benjamin found this both

¹Lavin, p. 156.
explicitly and metaphorically through his work with the arcades project. City and museum are and can be collages for the re-collection of memory, where today’s surrealism is tomorrow’s normalcy.

THE MUSEUM TYPE

As a harbinger of the role of information in the modern age, the museum became the first teaching machine. Just as the dictionary and the encyclopedia had set forth the project of a rational ordering of the knowledge of society, the museum was an Enlightenment project for the democratization of objects of cultural importance and a systematic ordering of cultural objects produced by the West and taken as spoils from exploited cultures. As the notion of series as a basic technology of history was being secularized, the spatial display of fine and decorative arts in chronological and cultural order became an early form of public education for a wide audience who could learn from the museum as simply as illiterate worshippers could learn from the picture stories in the medieval cathedral. The museum has been the repository of the master narrative, available for all to read. Max Weber credits the museum with being the machine of institutional rationalization and demystification.¹ As noted earlier, this objectification of the object was actually a resocialization in order to establish the relations appropriate to the support and function of the prevailing social order. The “subject” of the museum is the relations of the object. Museums, beginning with the Louvre, arranged art in a linear fashion,

creating “corridors” of art, an arrangement which found theoretical expression in the writings of Johannes Winckelmann. With the invention of “museum science”, its historical series can be likened to an electrical series where the question became one of electrification, i.e. the test of the museum candidate was/is: will the object conduct art? The museum was the silent insulator for this activity, making it possible by fading into the background. Beneath the surface, Western cultural objects are silenced, and non-Western objects are muted and co-opted into the Western canon of art. (The museum is like Western medicine: it appropriates what it can and discards the rest, re-systematizing through cultural absorption.) Finally, in response as much to reproduction technologies as much to the narrative of the museum, art became increasingly abstract and self-referential, already muted to the museum environment and presented in pre-established series. The final stage in the technology of the museum begins with André Malraux’s museum-without-walls, the book. Within this museum, technology has completely domesticated art in the service of order and convenience. Theodor Adorno writes about the dialectic between the haptic and optic in his “Valéry Proust Museum”, arguing that this is the fundamental discourse of the museum as the mechanism of the legitimization of consumption. Architecture, in this sense, has abandoned art, and the final museum will be an on-line service so that the actual objects may be quietly traded as commodities.

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Beginning with Quatremère de Quincy and satirized by artists like Grandville, the museum has never been completely safe from criticism. The most compelling examination of the 19th century attempt to represent the unbroken pedigree of bourgeois civilization and the verity of Western class structures and superiority is Walter Benjamin’s *Passagen-Werk*. The arcades, a material representation of the unconscious of the dreaming collective, is an inversion of the consciousness of the museum program. Both participate in the panoramic phantasmagoria of progress to which can be added: exhibition fairs, national politics, progress on display, urbanism, progress deified, and the notion that “bigger is better”. The museum mobilizes a notion of transcendence to mask its link to the market and commodity fetishism. In the age of mechanical reproduction, the aura of art withers and fetishism is characterized by reproduction. (Photography may have helped to drain the aura from art, but not the realism. It has been finally incorporated in the museum with no ill effects.) The museum by its very existence signifies that art lacks utility. This is the system of values that Quatremère de Quincy criticizes, not the display of objects. He establishes the value of a work as residing in its *rapports utiles*. The museum’s transformation of an object deprives it of its vital relationships.¹

The move to optical art has been influenced by the museum. In the high modern period, the museum gained programmatic flexibility but continued to hide what it could afford to.

As implied in the preceding paragraph, the museum became a counter institution to the factory: production in the factory is performed with a view toward obsolescence while production for the museum has a view toward permanence. In the museum, the financial bet is placed on the objects sent to storage and awaiting “discovery”. The art market has become dependent upon the validation of the museum, promoting the new through validation by the “old”. In the cityscape, the museum has become an “architecture of amnesia” by assisting in the pursuit of a collective national identity through the evasion of uncomfortable narratives. The longing for a depoliticized past through modernism has accommodated the museum’s program of transcendence. This has also provoked a move by museums toward entertainment and scripted interactive narratives. As the museum’s traditional script has grown weaker, the museum’s traditional narrative has grown closer to that of its dream twin, the arcade. The museum, museum store, museum press, museum classroom, and museum annex function as complimentary fashion “machines” of capitalism. (fig. 17) This modern educational machine is striving to keep up with its lessons.

If the art within the museum were entirely passive, Malraux’s museum-without-walls might indeed be a sufficient final stage. As if in anticipation, museums began to dematerialize in the high modern period through the use of glass and lightweight structure; more recently, they have begun to fade into the landscape through the fracture

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of site and form where physical context or the personal whim of the architect sets the agenda in view of the lack of certain typological guides or a fixed program. In response to the changing cultural landscape, it is a further shifting of the neutral pose of the museum as silent frame. Whereas architects have responded rather passively to the plight of the museum, the artwork within the museum has been resistant to the domestication of art by technology and the prescriptive nature of the museum narrative. The techniques of artists in resistance include creating works which are difficult to reproduce, works impossible to contain within the museum, temporary works of fragile materials, and process oriented works. Alberto Giacometti’s *Femme égorgée* can only be understood on the floor as it is displayed, not to mention the lack of “beauty” in the subject matter. (fig. 18) Since the turn of the century, many works have opened themselves to diverse
Figure 19. *Diver*, Jasper Johns, 1962.

Figure 21. *Département des Aigles, Section des Figures* (detail), Marcel Broodthaers, Düsseldorf, 1972.


Figure 22. Interior, Musée d'Orsay, Gae Aulenti, Paris, 1986.
readings, a tactic still in play today. Among those we might include the process oriented works of Cubism, the Avant-Garde, Jackson Pollock, Robert Rauchenburg, and Jasper Johns. (fig. 19) Collage work exposes diverse materials in clusters which refuse to be disguised in package form. Each part, in turn, refuses to stand apart from the past that it carries with it into the work. These are tactics of a new domain of beauty and of the will within a modern conception of objects not based on craft but on industrial thinking. The master narrative of the museum has been more directly criticized through the didactic efforts of Daniel Buren, Marcel Broodthaers, Hans Haacke, Douglas Crimp, and Louise Lawler. (fig’s. 20, 21) The use of a methodological analysis of the museum is frequently informed by Walter Benjamin’s efforts to unlock the secrets of the arcade, recognizing the arcade/museum as a collage, a place for the (re)establishment of relationships and the memory of relationships. The museum is seen as a machine _gesamtkunstwerk_ which is part and parcel of the works contained within. The contemporary case of the Musée d’Orsay by Gae Aulenti, where an old collection is housed in an old, updated way, is impossible to comprehend without the whole leaning in. (fig. 22) The entire museum is one cluttered, collaged parlour of the 19th century. As a museum it is a great success; as a place to view art, it is a miserable failure.

Two very different works by Renzo Piano succeed both as spaces for the viewing of the object and as places for the re-collection of work and relationships. (fig’s. 23, 24) Both
the Centre Pompidou and the Menil Collection offer different kinds of transparency and collage in response to what the museum can now be. Both have become places of gathering and ritual and a link between the treasure box of the museum and the means of production, revealing the relationship between the factory and museum anti-factory. Beaubourg has become the most popular social collector in the city of Paris. The multiple functions of this museum are visible and accessible to the extent that the “high art” housed within the structure blends with the “low art” as practiced on the plaza. The kinship between the two types of expression does not diminish either. Here, most importantly, relationships between people and their actions are being re-collected. If Beaubourg may be dismissed as a “supermarket for art” as both Alan Colquhoun and Jean
Baudrillard have done,\textsuperscript{1} then it may be noted that supermarkets offer clearly established relationships, equal access, as well as the entire range of victuals from the basic and essential to the epicurean delight. There is no dissimulation as to the fact that we have here both vital sustenance \textit{and} commodity, type and innovation, eternal favorites and the latest thing. Almost in direct contrast is the quiet box of The Menil Collection. Its gathering place is a quiet urban residential neighborhood park. The museum is permanently attended by the bungalows of artists who receive support from the Menil Foundation. Cool and elegant, the Menil is open to all free of charge, housing only the collection, curatorial services, and a semi-private research library. The bookstore is in one of the converted houses nearby. The strongest relationship re-collected by the Menil is that between the museum and its means of production. Whereas Beaubourg acknowledges the factory of mass culture as a source for the contemporary museum, the Menil has surrounded itself with the artists who make provide the museum with its wares. The obvious relationship is strengthened by the color coordination of the houses with the museum building. The Menil's transparency is that of a building which has seeped out and whose boundaries lie somewhere between the entrance and the city beyond. The Menil and the Centre Pompidou have managed to maintain their typological standing, the former by creating the context to fit in through planning \textit{and} sensitive design and the latter by flouting its context while offering generous amenities in return, a unique \textit{enfant terrible}.


As a prominent modern typology, the museum has responded variously to our discovery of its structure by trying to fade away into the landscape both physically and culturally. Renzo Piano confronts the needs of the contemporary museum honestly and has been able to create a public presence for it by responding to the public’s new awareness of the role of the museum in society. The simple, non-elitist need for the maintenance of relationships within society is shown to be part of society. Both of Piano’s museums are able to re-collect what the traditional museums would hide by accepting any number of narratives and by offering itself as one that is important to the understanding and learning of society and the individual.

THE PROPOSAL

For the purposes of a design proposal to examine and didactically suggest ways of maintaining the museum within our culture of new awareness and deeper dreams, certain values will be held in check and accepted and others will be challenged. The essential is that the museum be considered as a viable typology with, as suggested above, a larger “site” given over to our understanding of typology and museum. The challenge to both “type” and “museum” (and by extension to the city at large) is the loss of meaning which is equated with the loss of exchange and use value as these values cede to purely representational value. All desires are transferred into commodities as fetish-on-display. The reasons for this have accelerated with the advent of the so-called late phase of
capitalism which is dominated by information services and technological advances for the
display and exchange of information. The high price tag on the “unique”, “old” objects
within the museum only enhances their symbolic value. When newness becomes a fetish,
as it has in our commodity driven, fashion conscious economy, history itself becomes a
manifestation of the commodity form.

The successful examples of museums cited above have something akin to Benjamin’s
proposed method of counteracting the effects of official history (master narrative).
Benjamin, in the Passagen-Werk, saw salvation in the use of montage for counteracting
the illusion of commodity fetishism.¹ Montage is a naturally occurring process expressed
by industrial culture which interrupts the pattern into which it is inserted, that is it
interrupts the pattern that we are taught to see. The Centre Pompidou and the Menil
Collection are montages which conflate the sensual and didactic qualities of art, drawing
people into the spaces made by their presence so that life flows into and through these
museums. The montage is a formal principle of the new technology used to construct an
experiential world and provide coherence of vision necessary for philosophical reflection.
The mystifying enchantment of the objects/commodities on display can be made sources
of metaphysical and political illumination.

The principle variable to be placed into this design proposal is that of the program: part of
a scattered site jazz museum under consideration in New Orleans. Jazz itself is already a

¹Susan Buck-Morss, p. 302.
montage of elements and a living one at that. How can such a complex and living entity be placed in anything which might call itself a museum (re museal; re mausoleum)? Jazz is a legible example of Benjamin’s diagnosis of the state of the commodity and the ways of perceiving it and its history in alternative and justifiable ways. It is not your typical museum artifact, but seen in this light, nothing is. Jazz also has the strength of having come from a “hidden” culture, born as it was in the courtyards, brothels and sidewalks of New Orleans. It hid itself as a survival tactic so that the masters and authorities would not know the intelligence and sensitivity of the oppressed. Though jazz has become something of a commodity with its acceptance as a socially legitimate art form, it is still one of the most resistant and idiosyncratic with respect to that commodification. Jazz is as squirmmy and hard to hold onto as any museum painting, sculpture or domestic object should be. Its long-standing critique of the institutions of authority (the literal master narrative) are as cogent as the work of Buren, Brothaers, or Duchamps. To quote from the oral design presentation:

Jazz is able to transform the flat background of existence with something marvelous. Other powers and authorities have their shapes, their signs, their profiles. Jazz has the background and the background noise. Jazz is the commonplace suggesting the unique. The unique cannot exit without that support. But the support can exit alone. The unique tends to be jealous, because there are things that do not belong to it. The support tends to be indifferent because everything rests upon it. Jazz sustains the wonder of normality.

The program then, more specifically, calls for a listening space for live outdoor performance in the evening, archival listening spaces for the daytime, and office spaces as needed. These are to be situated in such a way as to “re-collect” the connection between
the production and enjoyment of the music, calling for ultimately, of course, a reading into the history of the music and the participation of people to enliven the space of the museum.

Figure 25. Aerial photograph at 1:200 of downtown New Orleans, City Planning Commission, New Orleans, 1982.

THE SITE

In his "Lettres a Miranda", Quatremère de Quincy argues that only context can perform the educational function that advocates of the museum attributed to it. His example was the city of Rome from which Napoleon's General Miranda was removing art and antiquities to the Louvre in Paris as a salvation and part of the lineage of freedom which France was seeking to establish for herself.¹ Quatremère was against the removal of spoils and instead proposed a Republic of Arts, similar to the Encyclopedists' Republic of

Letters, which would be transnational and responsible for the education of all.\textsuperscript{1} This highly participatory, highly democratic confederation was rejected in favor of the needs of the nation. With an increased exchange of information, some of these elements are beginning to pass; indeed, there is some of Quatremère’s spirit in Beaubourg and the Menil. Most importantly for the museum, he called for context. This has been a difficult challenge for the notion of type which must in some way maintain a sense of recognition through a fundamental vocabulary while retaining sufficiently flexible for programmatic needs.

The aesthetics of the modern object has always been an aesthetic of recognition hidden within an aesthetic of estrangement. This is the essential characteristic of the montage, a collection of images, styles, materials, and narratives. In their heterogeneity, the montage is actually a compressed version of the museum itself. (A truly successful museum is one where both readings can be carried out simultaneously.) Museums at most can only be a montage of the varied aesthetic parts collected around them and within them. They may be only as complex and unsorted as the city in which they are found: this is in no way a tight restriction. The skin of the high rise, the automobile, the computer substitutes a unified but irrelevant experience for the sight of the ongoing processes within, the inner array of features and parts. This is a covert biological emphasis in a period of mass production assembly: a break between surface and interior. Some sculptural objects allow penetration of and by space, like the bicycle and the bridge. The museum can

\textsuperscript{1} Quatremère de Quincy, \textit{Considérations} ..., p. 424.
express the site of its typology through wrappings which conceal and unify but allow participation in and exploration of its elements. It becomes less of a physical type and more of an experiential, spatial type for the re-collection and establishment of elements of its montage.

With this in mind, the site chosen is an existent multi-level concrete parking garage and an open slot leftover from the construction of the garage against existing warehouses. Located on the western edge of the Vieux Carré, the garage is publicly available for parking just as it was when it served the now defunct Holmes Department Store which faces onto Canal Street. Located on the corner of Bienville and Dauphine Streets, the parking garage is entered on Bienville Street by foot or car and is exited by car on the Dauphine Street. The tourist strip of Bourbon Street is one half block away. The parking structure is located on a site which has held variously townhouses, a number businesses and a hotel. Built in 1972, it was completed just before the moratorium on new construction in the Vieux Carré. It consists of five levels of parking sloped on a two degree ramp with a spiral ramp to exit; the ground floor is partially occupied by the elevator shafts, elevator lobby, a closed restaurant (The Emerald Room), mechanical rooms for electricity and air handling, and an overgrown courtyard which is the leftover slot. (fig’s. 25, 26, 27)
The garage now stands where townhouses and bars stood. It was not in the townhouses but behind them in the courtyards where jazz has its deepest roots in American. The players were African American, mixing African music with new elements found in the new home forced upon them. This music was often hidden in these courtyards which were used as utility yards rather than pleasure gardens, being located parallel to the so-called slave quarter which projected out from the rear of the townhouse and was completely separated from the street. The leftover slot is approximately twice the dimensions of the traditional courtyard. The bars which followed the townhouses were within two blocks of Storyville, the brothel district where jazz began to take on the form which we now recognize as being a new hybrid form of music. The district where the garage now sits was known as the Tango Belt, and had its own number of brothels and back rooms where jazz, then a music much associated with illicit activity, was performed.
to insure the gaiety of the proceedings. Now the area is swarmed by tourists, performing their own various rituals of recuperation. (fig. 28)

Figure 28. Courtyard of the Lola-Norris house, Alexander T. Wood architect, New Orleans, 1832.

Beside the historical associations of this site, it has formal and programmatic elements analogous to the spaces where jazz was first created and enjoyed. The garage and courtyard are both hidden behind a facade contrived to hide the function of the building as a parking garage. This coincides with the dialectic of public narrative/hidden contents which is found in the society of 19th century New Orleans and the narrative of the museum. The “windows” of the garage are blocked with fixed shutters, creating blank windows like those traditionally found on older temple museums. The exterior facade as
a whole is decorated with balconies and cornices which do not correspond to actual parking deck levels in an effort to rescale the building to its surroundings. The hidden building, once penetrated, is a very transparent structure open to the courtyard and the upper deck open to the sky and cityscape. This is one of the few places in the city, besides tall office buildings and overpriced hotels, where one can view the skyline of the contemporary city. Finally the space and function of the building are of a new order of public gathering space, the parking lot where simple rituals of coming and going occur everyday. The tenuous links between people which can be felt in parking and retrieving a car are common actions which can establish a rhythm which grows in complexity when alternate layers of movement are revealed. Thus the hidden society can be hidden again and revealed selectively through circulation with this common space, made complex by abrupt shifts between regular patterns of movement. Movement through the dark entrance, actually bridging the courtyard above the ground and through the dark and light of the ramped parking decks is the movement through the gray areas of society, in places like bars and bordellos, where the elements that make jazz were and still are fused. It is the view from and into the courtyard where it all begins to make sense.

DESIGN CONCEPT

Like the traditional museum, the spaces of this parking lot are made subtly incoherent through a selective opacity keeping a blank wall to the outside while providing enough light for the business at hand. The effect actually creates a strobing alternation of dark
Figure 29. Interior of a Creole cottage, New Orleans, 1833.

Figure 30. Ink drawing on mylar of a standard working wood shutter.

Figure 31. Photo/drawing analysis of the Holmes Parking Garage, New Orleans.
and light which, when taken with the movement of the automobile in the space, makes orientation to the whole difficult and leaves the individual stranded on the spot. Movement through the space is not unlike one's eye along the axial rod running the length of wooden shutters which is used to control the rotation of the louvers. The blades flap back and forth while the eyes watches helpless and a little dazed. The strategy, then, is to put the shutter back into control and understanding of the individual and use it to increase the penetration of light, thus increasing a sense of orientation. (fig. 30, 31)

Shutters have been traditionally used as devices for control of the environment in New Orleans homes and businesses. They allow for individual adjustment of light, temperature, and depth of view between the inside and outside by the manipulation of hinged planes. Seeing how the parking garage is simply a set of fixed planes, it would be in keeping with a component of the established vocabulary to relieve some of the rigidity of the fixed planes with lighter examples to provide for increased light and an understanding of the shifts between ground/parking deck and inside/outside. (fig’s. 32-38)

Figure 33. Open layer plot perspective plan, Dew Drop Inn.  

Figure 32. Open layer plot looking west through the roofs, Dew Drop Inn.
Figure 34. Open layer plot looking north through booth sequence, Dew Drop Inn.

Figure 35. Roof plan, Dew Drop Inn.

Figure 36. Elevation/section to the west of the spiral down-ramp looking west, Dew Drop Inn.

Figure 37. Elevation/section through the courtyard looking north, Dew Drop Inn.

Figure 38. Elevation/section to the west of the spiral ramp looking east, Dew Drop Inn.
In a nod to the blind windows of the traditional museum, the windows of the parking structure would loose their fixed shutters and be opened, replacing the old closure with thin six inch wide sheets of steel running on the inside of the wall parallel to the ground plane far below, beginning and ending wherever each hits a floor deck or wall. The distance between them is six inches, allowing light to enter across while keeping the facade blank from the view of the ground below. This conforms with the moratorium on radical changes to the facade of existent buildings in the Vieux Carré.

In the courtyard, four foot deep balconies made of lightweight steel and rectangular steel grate are hung off the parking decks and are supported on the courtyard side by two foot diameter steel columns. These also run parallel to the ground plane and thus rise relative to the parking deck beginning at a point nearest to the elevators and terminating at the spiral ramp where the balcony is again accessible by a set of four steps. Bridging balconies on two floors and the parallel set of steel columns across the courtyard are two rolling light-weight steel decks which allow for the adjustment of the courtyard into more and less intimate spaces. Below at the elevator end of the courtyard, is a low stage for the performers. A moveable roof of corrugated steel sheets can slide into place above in the event of light rain or cold, extending the useful time of the space. It operates like a venetian blind.
Listening spaces are gathered around the core of the flat ascending ramps. Totaling sixty-six in number, they are laid out according to the placement of the removed parking places. Their partitions are sculpted according to the position of exterior windows on the street side. The partitions themselves are framed in wood and filled with corrugated steel. Each is built in pairs, with one oriented to the ground plan, pivoting for partial closure of the listening space and the other oriented to the plane of the parking decks, fixed to its axis. Work desks run the length of each row of listening booths and contain the apparatus for ordering and listening to music which is keep off site in a climate controlled storage area. The floors inside the booths is surfaced in wood and made true to the ground plane. The ceiling is exposed concrete. Chairs and climate control are provided. Each series of booths is enclosed by a hall framed in wood and enclosed with glass. The interior wall, following the interior row of concrete columns, is composed of thin six inch metal louvers positioned like ship lap with framed openings to coincide with the openings on the exterior walls.

The office spaces are in a dead space above the final exit ramp. They have an internal wood stair along the window wall screened from the interior space by the same six inch louvers that run across the windows. Each floor is split level with access at each parking level through a single door. The interior elevations are framed in wood and filled with glass. Floors are in wood, and the structure is light-weight steel tubing. The roof
structure above this is covered in corrugated steel with occasional interruptions with glazing.

On the street facade, high above the entrance hangs a sign announcing the museum, the “Dew Drop Inn”. The sign is framed in steel and held in place by cables. The sign panels can be flipped and the sign rotated back to camouflage its existence as it is the most egregious violation of the rules of the Vieux Carré Commission against new construction visible to the public eye.

At no time is the function of parking garage to be eliminated. During the daytime, the stage is quiet except for practice sessions as needed; the listening booths are open to all. At night, the booths are closed as is the upper most parking deck where people can congregate to listen to the music from below, dance and just hang out. The lower parking decks are open to parking but are also for accessing the balconies around the courtyard and hanging out. Indeed, the parking fee is the admissions to the museum. The abandoned ground floor restaurant is reopened providing easy circulation throughout the courtyard. Drinks on the parking decks are made available from small mobile carts like those found at the New Orleans airport.
Figure 39. 3D Studio rendered perspective looking west through the courtyard, Dew Drop Inn.

Figure 40. 3D Studio rendered perspective looking up from the courtyard stage, Dew Drop Inn.

Figure 41. 3D Studio rendered perspective looking east along the listening booths on a typical parking deck, Dew Drop Inn.

Figure 42. 3D Studio rendered perspective looking into typical listening booths, Dew Drop Inn.

Figure 43. 3D Studio rendered perspective looking east across the upper parking deck, Dew Drop Inn.

Figure 44. 3D Studio rendered perspective looking from an office onto a parking deck, Deck Drop Inn.
The two listening structures within the museum are in direct proximity to each other. One need only park the car and jump out or wander up on the elevator. The light infill of the listening booths contrasts with the open space of the courtyard. Mild disorientation within the parking structure is alleviated with a play of planes and light. Music drifts out onto the street. At night the upper deck is a place to view the city as it is and sense where it has come from. The offices are tucked away on the "output" side of the lot; at night,
they are illumined by the passing automobiles on their way to a good time. Parking lots
and jazz places are made for hanging out. (fig’s. 39-48)

CONCLUSION

From the oral presentation:

Among other things, notions of progress are refuted by jazz music. Each step makes any idea of a progressive ascension ridiculous. But at the same time, jazz is a provocation as far as form/function are concerned; it defies them and draws them into a fan that has yet to be fully opened. Each moment, each beginning, through its very appearance, evokes absent counterweights.

Progress is the fetishization of modern temporality which is an endless repetition of the new as the “always-the-same”. Its rebus is fashion, and humanity is simply what your hang your hat on. The museum has had its place in the support of this myth, providing assurance for the validity of consumption by enshrining it in glass cases. The mythic error is in mistaking advances in our control of nature with advances in history.

Grandville and the later Surrealists knew this. The urban, industrial landscape was their teacher. The “discovery” of history destroys the “mythic immediacy” of the present, replacing it with a panoply of narratives. In industrial culture, consciousness is a mythic dream state to which historical knowledge is the only antidote. It is found in discards, usually invisible because of the power of commodity fetishism. With history discovered, its is stripped of legitimacy, ideological function, and old social relations. The museum which has guided these relations can become an institution for the re-establishment (re-
collection) of relations. Technical reproduction gives back to humanity that capacity for experience which technical production threatens to take away, i.e. if industrialization provokes crises through speed and fragmentation, film, for example, employs this through a slowing down, montage and creation of synthetic realities, reintegrating “fragmented” images. The experience of architecture of the museum, broadly sited and broadly contextualized, can provide a similar montage and synthesis.

Jazz and the shutter are a way of putting it together. Unearthing the debris of jazz culture, so useless to the powers and authorities as they move on to the new with which they enchant, makes possible the discovery of a history. In a commodity market where objects are given freely to transformation, the museum is always arbitrary and subject to later reassembly. It is like a Chinese box replicating features from table top to still life to museum to industrial city that houses and produces. Industrial relations are collective and the aesthetic of the montage. The museum particulates and resocializes, but in an industrial/technical society, the museum is itself an elaboration of the spirit of assembly, stacks, parts, components and debris that, in their interconnection, spell out the social space of modernity as a whole. With performance, listening, parking, dancing, and the countermovement of circulation up and down the space, the Dew Drop Inn seeks to portray the rhythm of cultural history and re-collect its many relations in the disguise and recognition of the human body along the path of music filled spaces.
Night city

Cars trundle by:
The ka-lunk-clunk beat
Of manhole covers.

Night city

Cars trundle by:
The ka-lunk-clunk beat
Of manhole covers.
Figure 49. Installation of the design thesis in the Farrish Gallery, Rice University, January 1995.

Figure 50. Installation of the design thesis in the Farrish Gallery, Rice University, January 1995.

Figure 51. Installation of the design thesis in the Farrish Gallery, Rice University, January 1995.

Figure 52. Installation of the design thesis in the Farrish Gallery, Rice University, January 1995.

Figure 53. Installation of the design thesis in the Farrish Gallery, Rice University, January 1995.
APPENDIX

The final presentation of the thesis was held on January 12, 1995. The jury consisted of the thesis committee: Prof. John Casbarian (advisor), Prof. Yung Ho Chang (reader), and Prof. Albert Pope (reader), and the following invited jurors: Dean Lars Lerup (RSA), Prof. Robert Mangurian (SCI-Arc), Prof. Mary Ann Ray (SCI-Arc), Prof. Lilly Chi (McGill University), and Prof. Adi Shamir (U.C. Berkeley). A brief account of their public comments after the presentation are as follows. The responses by the presenter were not recorded:

Chi: Why is it important to get out of the car? Why not bring the booth to the car?

Chi: When do you go into the courtyard?

Mangurian: (discusses clarification of the access to the museum)

Shamir: You described briefly a history of the museum. Why is it a museum in the living museum of New Orleans. Why its silence? Does it hold spoils? What about this is a museum?

Ray: Are there any headphones?

Mangurian: What is your thesis?

Chi: I see something very outrageous in this. I have a friend working on a museum in cyberspace. The reason why is important because the museum
is “here”. This is an interesting challenge. Why not just drive around with
headphones in your car?

Shamir: The way you experience this is like going to the storeroom. Taking it in
fast and moving on.

Casbarian: You didn’t talk about your project as being a fragment of a complex
spread out across city. What is the nature of jazz? Something static/fixed
or something constantly changing. Where is it appropriate to sample and
move on?

Mangurian: Intrigued by jazz being improvised and that recordings are collected. I
wish it had been lighter. Fewer booths that might be happened upon
around the city.

Raye: Good the way you’ve found the hidden areas.

Mangurian: The roof is a problem. When it rains, the sound on metal would drown out
all the music.

Raye: Maybe you should have designed the place to run to.

Lerup: (anecdote from SCI-Arc) I love jazz. The music itself is a kind of space
making. The space is there by the sound. What can an architect add to
it? When the music stops, everyone can go home. Why do we need this?

Shamir: He could have removed everything and it still does not address the issue of
the premise. Why a jazz museum in New Orleans?

Shamir & Lerup: (arguing) Maybe anachronistic
Comment: The written component of the thesis acts in part to respond to the concerns of the jurors. We can indeed sit in our homes and listen to just about whatever we want if we have access to the appropriate technology. The Dew Drop Inn and any museum can provide more by demonstrating some of the relationships which form us and help society to function, all the while it, as an institution, is economically viable, entertaining to the contemporary participant, and available to all. The automobile has become a symbol of our freedoms and of the kind of technology which is available to all. The car, the parking lot, and the museum can make a place for ritual, relationships, equality, storage, and participation.

Figure 54. from *Le Louvre des Marionettes*, J. J. Grandville, 1841.
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