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# ART IN MUSEUMS

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M.A., LL.D., D.F.A. ( Calif. ), D.U.P. ( Paris ),  
D.H.L. ( Massachusetts ).  
*Director, National Museum, New Delhi.*

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DEPARTMENT OF MUSEOLOGY  
( FACULTY OF FINE ARTS )  
The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda



**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF  
ADVANCED STUDY  
SIMLA**

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## FOREWORD

I have very great pleasure in writing a short foreword to Dr. Grace Morley's lectures on 'Art in Museums'.

It is only in recent years that the importance of Museums as aids to education has been realised. In the U.S.A., United Kingdom and Western European countries most of the big cities have good museums. In India we have still very few really good Museums. Museums must have properly trained Curators. In the Baroda University we have, therefore, set up a Department of Museology.

These lectures were delivered by Dr. Grace Morley under the auspices of the Museology Department of the Baroda University. They are sure to be of very great interest to students of Museology and the Curators of Museums.

These lectures deal with many aspects of problems which arise in connection with the maintenance of Museums. The Curators of museums have to deal with problems arising in connection with the collection of objects of art. Most museums have such limited finances that collection of objects of arts becomes a major problem with the authorities in charge of them. Besides collection, the Curators of museums have to deal with the problem of exhibiting to the best advantage the collection of objects they have got. Incidentally, they have to deal with problems of properly storing and preserving their valuable collection. I am sure these lectures will be of great importance to all students of Museology.

J. M. MEHTA,

*Vice-Chancellor,*

M. S. University of Baroda.

Baroda-2.

3rd December, 1962.



## INTRODUCTION

Museums have many aspects today, and during their several hundred years of history have had varied functions. Their role as places where collections are kept safely for study and research is basic and it derives from the "cabinets of curiosities" of the Renaissance. Here dawning scientific spirit brought together specimens and oddities of natural history, random pieces from exotic cultures, sometimes art and decorative arts as data for study. Accumulations of art, decorative arts, antiquities in the palaces of kings and nobles of the period, the art in churches and cathedral anticipated, in their collecting, museums of archaeology and art. In some cases, like the Louvre, the Vatican, Chantilly, Hampton Court, they became great museums. The nineteenth century saw many collections opened to the public and the founding of many museums of all types. More or less directly their appearance and development formed part of the general interest in education for every body that characterized nineteenth century thinking. However, the deliberate development of museums as instruments of education for the public at large, as well as their long recognized use as places of research for scholars, is relatively recent. The first museum, founded expressly for education and devoted primarily to educational activities, seems to have been the Victoria and Albert Museum of London, now just over a hundred years old. It is still faithful to its original purpose, though the form it gives it is much changed and broadened. Some reference to education was almost invariably included as an aim in the charters of the innumerable museums founded everywhere in the late nineteenth century. Increasing emphasis begun to be given to this aspect of their work in most parts of the world from the early twentieth century. In the past twenty years, in the widest variety of activities, education



has become a major concern of every type of museum in all countries where museums are at all active.

In Europe, however, until the Second World War, with a limited number of exceptions, the earlier pattern of the museum devoted to collection, preservation and research remained the rule. Collections were vast and international, care in preserving and studying the material was well developed, and scholarship was of a high order. In them exhibitions and all other provisions for attracting the interest of the layman, giving him instruction and contributing to his enjoyment, played a secondary part.

In countries of recent development, such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, natural history museum often anticipated other kinds of museums. They usually included the prehistory and ethnology of indigenous cultures and sometimes those of foreign origin, especially of exotic type, as well. Their educational function was emphasized and they were early used by schools. Museums of arts followed in time, but since these "new" countries' own cultures had too recent a history to provide much national art and decorative arts in the beginning, museums of art and decorative arts served to link the transplanted culture to its parent in the Old World and collections tended to be international. Because of the need for broad public interest and support, for what were either private foundations, or public institutions in democratic societies where funds for operation and growth depended on the good will of voters, activities designed for the cultivated lay public tended from the first to be more important, or little less important, than the programmes, intended for scholars, in all except a very few of the largest museums. The necessity for broad public understanding and support where scholarly traditions were less widespread and less deep than in the older countries of Europe, especially in cultural fields, explains their early concern for the non-specialist and the amateur and their interest in contributing to education in the broadest terms. This led eventually to the ideal of service

to the public at large which these museums were perhaps the first to emphasize but which has become so common an aim for museums everywhere today. The large museums striving from their founding to be international came to represent well a world-wide survey of their subjects, in outstanding examples. The Metropolitan Museum, New York; The Boston Museum of Fine Arts; the American Museum of Natural History, New York; the Chicago Museum of Natural History; the great general museums in Auckland and Dunedin, New Zealand; the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, the great art museums of Melbourne, Sydney, and Adelaide, Australia, are notable examples. By contrast, museums in countries of longer indigenous tradition, whether in such countries as Mexico and Peru, or in ancient Asia, have been generally developed around national or regional collections, with few or no specimens, whether of natural history or archaeology/art/anthropology, from other lands. They were likewise usually conservative in their programmes and though concern for education is usually mentioned as an aspect of their work in their charters, their progress toward serving effectively the general public and their success in doing it carried out by exhibitions was not always highly developed.

Among Asian countries India has been a pioneer in museums, and is a leader, whether number of institutions or their standards are considered. Its collections, which date to the late 18th and early 19th century are almost exclusively national. It has several great museums over a hundred years old. Their standards of collection and scholarship are sound. Their progress towards broad public service, as represented by attractive and instructive exhibitions and educational programmes on a popular level is a product of the past fifteen years. Indian museums have quickened their pace in this respect greatly in the last five years, to the point where those most advanced in the development of techniques of exhibition can be cited as excellent examples, even on a world-wide basis. Outstanding for natural history are the Prince of Wales

Museum, Bombay and the Government Museum, Madras. For prehistory, archacology, art and anthropology perhaps at this date the National Museum, New Delhi, must be conceded the advantage among large Indian Museums of this scope. This is partly because installation in a new building allowed for a systematic and spacious arrangement and because in presenting its fine material it profited fully by experience elsewhere. Modern installation is more difficult for older museums with large collections and congested halls, arranged in the late nineteenth century or the earlier years of the present century for then quantity rather than quality was the museum ideal. Individual sections of many large Indian Museums, and a considerable number of specialized museums here provide even finer examples of contemporary exhibition methods, in which quality, enhanced by space and sensitive presentation, is the rule. The Craft Museum, New Delhi; the Maharaja of Jaipur's Museum, Jaipur; the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay; the Asutosh Museum, Calcutta; the Rajasthan State Museum, Jaipur; the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Banaras Hindu University, Banaras; the State Museum, Baroda; the Calico Museum, Ahmedabad, are those representing a wide variety in subject, styles and aims which offer outstanding examples of material exhibited well. Few others have exploited to the maximum the opportunities exhibitions give for both education and for enjoyment. Even the National Museum, despite a very real effort, is not entirely consistent nor complete in its use of its exhibitions for public education as well as for pleasure.

Exhibitions, whether permanent collections arranged for public view or special groups of objects, either drawn from the permanent collections, or borrowed, organized in some special way to demonstrate some aspect of a subject, and exhibited for a limited period in a temporary or changing exhibition programme, are the most characteristic and fundamental way in which museums carry out their educational function. Exhibitions are therefore all to view, to enjoy, to learn from, according to individual

interest and convenience, to be seen superficially or profoundly as desired. Many who never can be attracted to formal museum educational programmes of guided lectures, lectures courses or demonstrations, see exhibitions and can learn from them. Perhaps by exhibitions a percentage of casual visitors can be lured on to more frequent visits and more intensive interest in museum activities. The importance of exhibitions therefore is very great to all museums.

It might be useful to call attention to a broader value of effective and attractive exhibition presentation in museums. They are a public relations opportunity, even a financial resource. A museum can add to its educational value to the community and its immediate region the function of a tourist attraction, valuable for the general prestige of the city and the cultural fame of the country. Even beyond these intangibles it can contribute value measured in income for both the museum and the business activity of its city. How important this can be is demonstrated by France and Italy. It is very doubtful whether the many thousands of foreign visitors, from many countries, who flock to museums everywhere in Italy and to the Louvre in Paris, are ardent lovers of art. Yet the lure of museums counts heavily in tourist posters and programmes and contributes to building up the international tourist trade, which is a major industry and a source of foreign exchange earnings, contributing significantly to the prosperity of both these countries. In India the opportunity is great, for it can make an impressive display of its great past and vigorous and varied present to the visitors. They could be attracted in even greater numbers, as the trip to India from the Western countries becomes as easy as the trip across the Atlantic used to be. Museums can help.

Whether the serious local aims of education or the purposes of contributing to foreigners' better understanding of a culture and to the expansion of the tourist trade are considered, the importance of developing the public aspects of museums' work in their exhibitions is of major importance and cannot be over-emphasized.

How to give to material on exhibition maximum advantages for making each piece understood and appreciated in its own terms, establishing meaningful relationships among the items shown, finding ways to make the objects themselves give as clearly as possible their significant communication to the viewer, supplementing the direct communication by the required discrete labelling, in words and graphic means of charts, maps, photographs, is the responsibility of the museum technician. He must be a scholar, to know his material and to know what it is important that it can convey in information, in aesthetic quality or historic or cultural data, as well as a skilled presentation technician, expert in all the devices of visual effect. Each kind of material provides its own opportunities and problems within the general frame work of effective handsome and educational presentation. There are general principles adaptable to all kind of objects. Each field, however, like art discussed here, has certain principles and well-known devices, tried out and proved efficacious, that can serve as general guides in planning the presentation of an exhibition. In the end each is unique, and success lies in the knowledge, originality, ingenuity, and especially the tact and taste, with which its specific conditions are handled. For art exhibitions, some principles, some useful devices, some problems, some questions are discussed in the pages following. However, the individual understanding and the individual presentation must always be the ultimate aim, beyond the rules and the previous experience, in creating an exhibition adapted to the material at hand, the aims that it may best serve, the public for whom it is intended.

## ART IN MUSEUMS

### Collecting, exhibiting, storing, preserving, interpreting art

Art museums and art sections in general museums obviously follow the same broad principles of modern museum operation used in any other type of museum. They have, however, some problems and techniques peculiar to the subject. Some of the most important are discussed under the general headings that follow.

1. **Art Collections:**—Rarely does a museum have the good fortune to have sufficient funds, the knowledge and the opportunities, to collect art systematically in order to form a fully representative and complete collection in any special art field. Usually art collections are somewhat haphazard, assembled by gift or purchased according to what is available on the market. In general, art prices have risen sharply since the war. In some fields of Western art (the Impressionists and major post-Impressionists, notably) they have increased so greatly that museums rarely can afford to buy works of these periods. The only hope of getting fine examples lies in gifts and bequests that may be expected. In the U.S.A., especially, growth of collections in this way is very important. In India, the same difficulty of high prices begins to apply to the acquisition of fine examples of miniatures. Gifts may possibly be encouraged.

Buying outstanding art examples is the only worthwhile procedure from the museum point of view. Quality, condition, importance in illustrating art development, in representing a major artist or school, are other considerations of importance for museums to weigh carefully when they collect. It should be remembered too that selectivity is important, not only because a museum with its standards of excellence, cannot conscientiously exhibit anything of

inferior quality, but because storing safely—and any work of art no matter how unimportant must be well safeguarded—represents a considerable expense in the space it occupies and in the staff required to care for it. Even study and reference collections must likewise be limited to pertinent examples for this reason.

It should be noted that if a museum includes in its scope a wide range of art, collecting can often be done advantageously in fields less popular or fashionable at the time than those in which high prices currently prevail. Vogues change in art as in other fields of activity and are likely to have little direct connection with value for art, intrinsic importance and reference to history.

In accepting gifts it should be emphasized that museums have found it unwise to allow any conditions to be set by the donor. In the past, a number of great museums, in different parts of the world, did accept art gifts which by the terms of donation had limitations, such as that they should always be on view, should always be shown as a unit, should never be lent, or some other restriction. Sooner or later the benefitting museums invariably came to regret such agreements. In most cases they then have had to undo, at great expense and trouble, the arrangements to which they had committed themselves formerly, without realizing that times change, purposes of operation differ, and as collections grow, the pressures, on gallery space for exhibition, and even on storage space, increase unbearably. Frank explanations to potential donors should be made. The enlightened ones will realize that the personal collection, important as a memorial for a time, may maintain its value for the future only if the conditions governing its use are sufficiently flexible to allow adaptations to the hard-to-foresee conditions and needs of the future. Some museums now require a donation of money for maintenance of the collection at the time of the gift, and then set up a fund from which the income can be used indefinitely for this purpose. Unless a gift is of such importance as art that it can be reasonably expected

that it will maintain its value indefinitely, it is much wiser to lose it than place a museum in the position of having to break faith with its promises in the future or, in remaining true to them, handicap its usefulness in time to come by unwise use of gallery space. Sometimes a proposal that the donors' name will be recorded as a benefactor on a tablet in the museum, or that, in the case of a large gift, a gallery will bear his name as a memorial, will satisfy him and persuade him to allow his donation to be without conditions.

The most satisfactory form of gift from the museum's collection point of view is the donation of money to its Purchase Fund. The museum then can exercise freely its power of selection, based on knowledge of the items it needs to round out its collections. Thus it can accomplish those logical developments of its collections' growth, based on sound knowledge and on the recognized needs of the collections.

## 2. Art Exhibitions.

(a) **Types of exhibitions:**—They may be permanent or temporary, according to the aims of the individual museum and the safety requirements of the material. For example, such a museum as the Museum of Modern Art of New York (and many museums in other countries that follow roughly its pattern at least in exhibition policy, such as the two *Museus de Arte Moderna*, respectively of Rio de Janeiro and of São Paulo, Brazil; a number of museums of contemporary art in Germany and Switzerland, that are essentially exhibiting organizations) for many years based its major exhibiting activity on exhibitions of a highly scholarly type changed four or five times a year, and its permanently installed galleries were few. Occasionally no permanent gallery or collection is found in this type of museum. Some few museums have only permanent exhibitions in their galleries (the British Museum, London, the Vatican Museum, Rome, the Prado, Madrid). In practice, however, most art museums



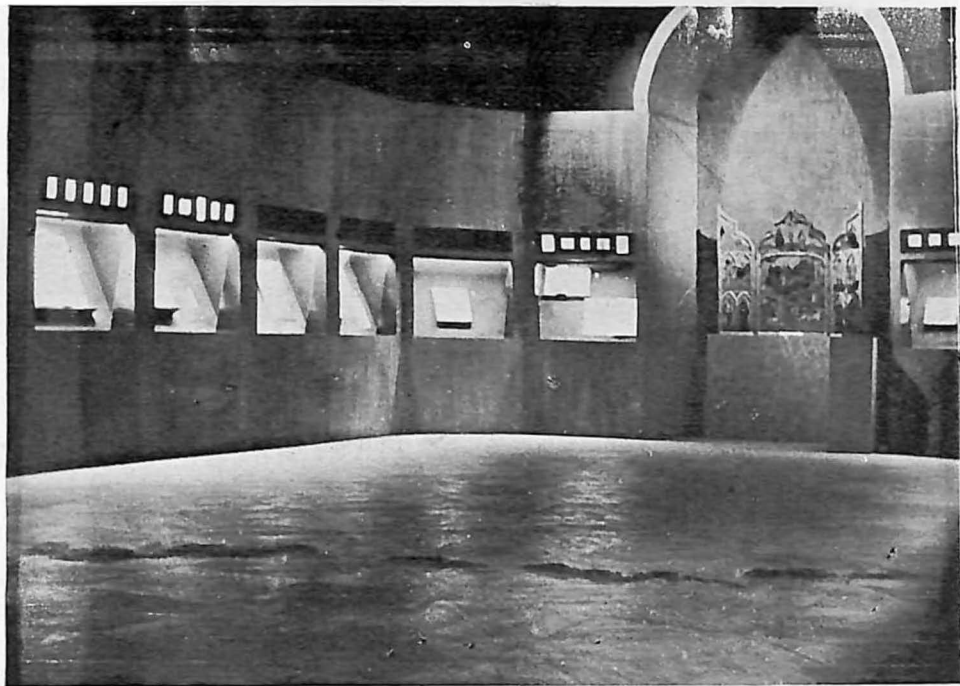
everywhere in the world, no matter how rich their collections, prepare and present continuously or from time to time temporary exhibitions of special importance.

There is a good reason for this change of exhibitions in galleries somewhere in the museum, at least occasionally. It gives an opportunity for calling attention to the museum and its service by the press, by radio, by other appropriate means. It likewise stimulates the repeated visits which alone assure an educational benefit for those who go to museums.

In any field of art temporary exhibitions can be employed for important educational and scholarly aims. Indeed, unless they do have them, most museums in the world today frown on temporary exhibitions despite their usefulness. That is to say temporary exhibitions of important material assembled from other museums or private collectors and presented only for the sake of novelty, merely to attract repeated visits, simply as an excuse for publicity, are not considered justified because of the risks inevitably involved, in any handling, for fragile works of art. In recent years, temporary exhibitions, presented merely as events to provide change in the museum's programme, have largely disappeared from important museums of the world. On the other hand many museums present in rotation selections from the museums' own collections. Too large for showing in their entirety at any one time, they are thus exhibited in sections, often organised to have a special meaning or to give a special emphasis. More importance than ever before is being put on the large, carefully planned exhibitions, scholarly in content, and scholarly in treatment at every stage and from every aspect. They may be assembled by one museum or by a group of museums, sometimes for showing in the galleries of the organizing museum and in those of all participating in their organization only, sometimes shared with many other museums and so going on an extended tour. Such exhibitions may be focussed on a great artist and present a complete



A. View of well designed and finished display cases in the Historiska Museum, Stockholm. Attention is given to enhance the appeal of individual or group of objects.



B. View of the special exhibition on the Venetian Art in the National Museum, Stockholm, notable for the specially erected architectural setting and built-in cases which show transparencies along with the exhibits.



C. View of the main hall in the Museum of Modern Art, Stockholm.



D. Another view of the main hall in the Museum of Modern Art, Stockholm. Suitably constructed movable partitions serve as fitting backgrounds, afford intimate enclosures for smaller exhibits and divide the space both for convenient grouping and circulation.

survey of his work of a lifetime; they may review a school or period or type of art and present the subject in all its aspects; they may illustrate the art tradition of a country, in all its periods and types. An outstanding example of this latter kind of temporary touring exhibition, with a high scholarly purpose as well as the promotion of international cultural relations and national prestige in view, was the *5000 years of Indian Art* exhibition, first organized by the Indian Government at the request of the West German Government, for showing in Essen, Germany, and later exhibited in the principal capitals of Europe. It had an important catalogue, richly illustrated and with an exceedingly scholarly text, published in the language of each of the exhibiting countries, meant to serve in Europe as a thorough introduction to the art of India. Such a significant survey of Indian art could be arranged only by drawing on many collections, and museums everywhere in India lent for the exhibition. In general, temporary exhibition of this scholarly kind have these two characteristics: they draw from many sources in order to present a more complete report on the subject than can be found in any one museum, place or even country (for they often borrow internationally); they are accompanied by one or several scholarly catalogues, or other publications to serve as supplement to the exhibition itself and to make its contribution to scholarship more widely distributed and more lasting than the exhibition itself can be.

The second justification for temporary changing exhibitions—assurance of the safety of the material shown—applies above all to rotating exhibitions from a museum's own collections of material that for one reason or another would suffer deterioration of some kind from long-term exhibition. This restriction on the duration of exhibitions applies with special emphasis to certain categories of collections important in India, especially miniatures, manuscripts and textiles, all of which suffer from too long exposure to even the best controlled light. In the case of textiles, the wear of suspension, unless reinforce-

ment is provided (a safety measure that interferes with the appearance of the thinner materials and therefore often cannot be used), also makes change every few months advisable.

**(b) Presentation of art exhibitions:**—The same principles for making an exhibition coherent, significant and understandable, in terms of the material itself and of the way in which it is arranged, apply to art exhibitions as they do to exhibitions of any other kind. Achieving this desired effect is possibly somewhat more complex for exhibitions of art than for other subjects, because art conveys “meanings” of a number of different kinds simultaneously. Some are: aesthetic significance: “message”, whether of a story telling, factual kind, or emotional or strictly plastic or formal communication, depending on whether it is representational art or abstraction; example of a period or phase or movement; history in the sense that it represents a moment of human experience at a definite time and place; technique, etc. Finding a pattern for the exhibition that will emphasize and bring out clearly the most important aspect of art, its aesthetic quality, achieving an agreeable effect so that there is no interference of painting with painting or sculpture with sculpture, but the position of each item enhances its neighbours and the rest of the exhibition, takes much knowledge, sensitivity and skill.

Rules of thumb can hardly be laid down for accomplishing these complex aims of exhibiting art. However, certain helpful principles of guidance can be recalled.

Most important, as in all exhibitions: space enough, generous space, is a great help no matter what point or points the exhibition is intended to make. Crowding must always be avoided. An order, logical, coherent, laid down with the intention of the exhibition in mind and consistently adhered to throughout, is essential. Good taste in general and sensitivity in regard to the relation of object to object are more important even than for other exhibitions. A fine painting can be made to look inferior

by its neighbours, and a poorer painting can be improved or made inconspicuous by its placing in the gallery; the rhythm of a sculpture, vital to its value as a work of art, can be destroyed by its placing, in relation to the gallery and in relation to other objects in the gallery, whether other sculptures or paintings. Conspicuous labels that interfere with the original objects on exhibition are always an error; in art exhibitions they are inexcusable. Labeling should be ample, so phrased that, in addition to simple identification, it leads to more through visual inspection of the objects exhibited, and so placed that it does not compete with the objects, but is at hand for those who need or wish its help. One way to avoid distracting labeling is to keep labels on the individual objects to a minimum, having them toned to the colours of the background, placing them in an inconspicuous spot and restricting their size. The general aims of the exhibition can be clearly defined by providing an introductory label, or even an introductory section or case in which the framework of reference in terms of aesthetics, art history, technique or whatever is required, and may be of importance, is provided for the entire exhibition. Such a discrete provision of guidance for those who desire or need it, can be ignored by those of ample knowledge and does not distract them in their enjoyment of the exhibition.

The backgrounds against which objects are placed are very important for an art exhibition. They should always enhance the material exhibited, never compete with it in colour or pattern or texture, be quiet and in a very real sense a "background". This is so important a matter that some experts advise using always grey or some other neutral tone. Others believe that some notes or accents of colour can be introduced to mark divisions in the exhibition, to stimulate interest and attention at appropriate places, to provide an emphasis. For example, a change of colour can set off the introduction and the conclusion of an exhibition. Still others like occasionally to use strong colours, for they believe that these colours not only provide a background that can set off the material



exhibited, but that they provide in a subtle way an atmosphere, an association with a period or a style. For example, a brown or rich red suggests the interiors of French, Italian or English houses of the seventeenth century and provides a sympathetic background for the European paintings of the time, a tone of bright, light blue ( du Barry blue ) was much liked and used in France in the eighteenth century and can serve effectively with French paintings of the period to suggest the settings in which they originally were hung. On the other hand, Indian miniatures, not only because of their scale, but because they were painted and enjoyed in airy, generally light-coloured settings, seem to appear most happily against a pale-toned background.

In connection with colour it should be noted that a temporary exhibition, designed to be on view a few weeks or months, can appropriately use strong colours, sharper contrasts and in general more dramatic presentation in other ways as well-lighting, spacing, etc.—than a permanent exhibition. Extremes of presentation date quickly, and tend to become tiresome after a fairly short time. Permanent exhibitions should be more classic in their handling, to the end that their " style " will be good for a long time. The best examples of a perfection of taste and style in every respect are the exhibitions of the Historiska Museum in Stockholm. It was distinguished, when it was first presented to the museum profession by Unesco's MUSEUM in 1949 ( MUSEUM, vol. II, No. 1 ), and still held its place of leadership when it was one of the hosts to the general Conference of the International Council of Museums in Stockholm in 1959.

In general, museums should be sensitive, in their exhibition presentation, to the feeling for space, light, solidity or airiness of supports, etc., that are current styles in the architecture, in the high-level designing and in the decorative arts trends of the times. These are the tendencies to which the public is conditioned and responds. Museums are competing with every other means of communication to affect the public in the modern world,

and so must learn to use appropriately the same means as the others. However, museums should beware of being unduly influenced by the cheapening of these tendencies, illustrated by commercial display and display in fairs, shop windows, etc. and by commercial advertising in all its forms. Yet they should be aware of them also for suggestions. But there should be no confusion: museums, especially art museums, have primary responsibility for the setting and maintaining of standards. They must therefore show integrity, honesty and taste in their presentation, as in their scholarship.

The educational role of an art exhibition is subtle but important. As art itself is concerned with the creative achievements and expression of man, is possibly his highest function, indeed, an art exhibition must always stress this creative aspect of art, the indefinable statement on reality, on life and on man that it is, whether it is representational or abstract. Therefore an art exhibition has always an aesthetic aspect and a cultural role, in addition to whatever else it communicates, and its educational contribution is concerned with the cultivation of sensitivity and taste and with the development of visual and emotional responses in the spectator. This is one reason why the presentation in art museums must be carried out with such care: this aesthetic, cultural aspect of the exhibition must be clearly transmitted. As for the other points to be made by an art exhibition, this is likely to depend on the manner of arrangement, the order in which the material is organized to transmit information. For example, a retrospective exhibition of an artist's work: chronological arrangement to illustrate his development, juxtaposition of works to demonstrate his point of view, his technique, his style within one or several periods, an introduction of documentation about him in photographs and text, a conclusion in which his most famous, or especially typical work, is presented as a sort of summing up of his career up to that time, with some illustrations of his influence or of his place in the art of his country and time are possibilities. It should be noted that

chronological arrangement often makes symmetrical placing impossible. This is not to be considered a handicap. At present asymmetrical arrangement is considered preferable in any case. Agreeable and satisfying balances and equivalents, in size, colour, movement, etc., exemplified by the works of art, result in more dynamic and successful arrangements than the older, more static and monotonous symmetry. Another example of presentation is a selection of works of art to illustrate the evolution of art during a given period. This can be done by an arrangement of works by key artists selected to present a given phase in the evolution of art during this time, grouped together in a meaningful way to trace chronologically step by step changes in style, subject, colour preferences, technique, etc. A simple placing of dates high on the wall at appropriate places to mark the chronology might be used as additions to the very brief individual labels. (The latter type of exhibition is described in detail in the Appendix and was the subject of an illustrated lecture.) An example of an exhibition to illustrate techniques: works of art or of decorative art might be grouped according to the materials and tools used in their production, with completed examples, in a combination of case and wall arrangements. In such an exhibition more profuse labelling with pertinent detail, possibly with photographs and drawings to amplify the examples shown and a good deal of text, might be pertinent. In this case taste and ingenuity in providing the labelling required, without interfering with the visual effect of the exhibition, are necessary.

In art exhibitions even more than in any other types of exhibitions, though it is a principle fundamental to all museum technique, it should always be remembered that the unique role of museums is to communicate by the objects themselves; that ideally no labelling should be required; that the very arrangement of the objects should convey their message as directly as possible to the spectator. Therefore ways to subordinate labelling and to enhance the clarity with which the exhibition transmits

its message, by selection of individual items and by the manner in which relationships between and among items are made evident, is of great importance.

**3. Storage.** Art material, in its wide variety, requires different forms of storage for the items not on exhibition. Western paintings (oils and glassed water colours) can be hung on sliding frames. Prints and drawings of western schools, which are matted, and Indian miniatures and drawings, which can be mounted safely and satisfactorily in the same way, are best kept in solander boxes, holding about 20 to 50 each, of the size of the mats. Textiles should be laid flat or rolled, with creases and folding avoided as far as possible. Small fragile objects—counters for games of prehistoric and archaeological periods, for example, even sherds of pottery—should be arranged in boxes or drawers with padding so they will not rattle about and to protect their surfaces from the wear of handling. Similarly, each kind of material, of which these types mentioned are a few examples, must be studied and its needs for safe storage must be met. Some items need insecticides, others dehumidifiers, all need protection from dust, the wear of handling, and a planned arrangement so that they may be seen for periodical checking and for reference and study with the maximum of ease and avoidance of unnecessary handling. The space, the care, the staff time, required to keep stored materials satisfactorily, represent costs and make it clear that storage is hardly less expensive than exhibition. This brings additional emphasis to the necessity for selectivity in collecting art. No museum can afford to keep, as it should be kept, any large amount of material not useful for exhibition, and therefore should avoid accumulating it, because it represents a useless and avoidable expense.

For certain kinds of collections, important to scholarship, in which all the material from an excavated site, for example, represents important evidence for research and reference, the "visible storage", adjacent to the exhibition area, is a good solution. In the exhibition

area the story of the culture and the outstanding objects are displayed spatioously, in a way to attract and instruct the average intelligent museum visitor, and to present a handsome exhibition. Adjacent, in the study collection area, cases, with numerous shelves on which objects may be grouped systematically and fairly close together, present the supplementary material for the benefit of the scholar and specialist. The National Museum is adopting this method for the Harappan Culture collections in which all the objects that it has from Mohenjo-daro, Harappa, Amri and other related sites are on view, either in the exhibition area or in the study collection space in the same gallery. Similarly the Central Asian collection will eventually be treated in the same way, with special cases with vertical sliding frames for small paintings, and horizontal shallow glasstopped drawers for textiles, in addition to the usual shelves. Coins, where collections number thousands of items, can best be handled by a kind of case that permits both exhibition and a study section of slides and drawers in which supplementary and related examples can be kept, accessible to the visitor interested ( example: coin cabinet of the Historiska Museum, Stockholm, MUSEUM, Vol. II, No. 1, 1949 ).

#### **4. Interpreting art collections: education.**

( a ) **Labels** are necessary, but should be held to a minimum. Individual labels should give title, date, artist or maker, if known, and his dates, school, medium or technique, size, place, country, if in a museum that includes many countries. Introductory or group labels are useful to give the facts pertinent to understanding an exhibition, may provide information on techniques, history, development of the art, or other data of interest. However, it must always be kept in mind that museum objects are themselves the important thing and information is only supplementary and auxiliary to them. An exhibition must never compete with a book, must never seem to illustrate, with its objects, a text spread on the walls. Art exhibitions especially should be labelled with

discretion and taste. Labels serve everyone; they may be read or ignored according to individual preference. If they are not visually disturbing, therefore, they can be considered useful.

(b) **Services** to interpret exhibitions can be simple or elaborate, and represent the direct educational functions of a museum. The guide-lecture provided at a given time is the simplest service. It has its value as an introduction to a museum or collection, but it is necessarily general and superficial. The school visit, as generally arranged for a large class, with pupils trooping through rapidly in the wake of guide-lecturer and the teachers, is the simplest and least satisfactory use of a museum by educators. School visits should be preceded by a class room session on what is to be seen, and why it has value, in relation to what is being studied, and it should be followed by a class room review, by an essay or report on what has been seen, or some other appropriate assignment to focus attention on what has been learned. Such group visits by schools, like other group visits to a museum, should be arranged so that only 20 or 25 students follow a lecturer. Most classes, therefore, have to be broken into one or several groups to be guided separately through the galleries.

For the general public of all ages, a museum may present lectures of different kinds, illustrated by slides, related to a given exhibition or to a collection or to some subject included in the museum's scope. (See Appendix for discussion of what such a lecture can be in relation to a special exhibition). Motion picture programmes on archaeological sites, on historic and artistic monuments, on art movements, on artists, on customs and costumes, recorded by anthropologists, are appropriate educational activities of a general and popular kind. More scholarly lectures directed to a better informed audience, presented singly or in series, and even meetings in small groups for a lecture and discussion in a fashion approximating a class, can be developed as aspects of continuing an adult education by museums. Study groups on specific subjects

are another from of adult instruction that can be developed profitably. These are ways in which to induce visitors to repeat the visit and to consider a museum a place to frequent rather than as a tourist sight to show off to visiting friends and relatives at infrequent intervals. They broaden and deepen the museum's function as an exhibiting centre, and bring it closer to the "university for every one" that it should ideally be for its community.

### Appendix—On Art Exhibition

**From Ingres to Pollock ( Art in Europe and the United States from C. 1800 to 1960 )**, an exhibition of masterpieces of painting, sculpture, drawings and prints, assembled for the inauguration of Kroeber Hall, Art-Anthropology building of the University of California, Berkeley, March 5th, 1960.

The exhibition galleries were three, designed for the use of the Art Department in presenting exhibitions pertinent to its work, and in holding seminars for criticism of students' work. The building, Kroeber Hall, named in honour of a great anthropologist, Alfred E. Kroeber, was designed especially for the needs of art and anthropology teaching, with a flexibly designed museum of anthropology for the University's great collections, fine storage space, workshops, laboratories, a lecture auditorium, class rooms, studios for artist-professors and for students and a library shared by the two departments.

The Art Department, in its contribution to the Inauguration, celebrated also some twenty years of success in functioning as a fully integrated department of creative art instruction and of art history teaching and research, a combination of art history and studio art teaching somewhat rare in a fully successful form in universities of the United States.

For that reason, an exhibition of masterpieces was presented to mark the major steps of the evolution of modern art, to represent its leading masters, and to illustrate its most important facets. It likewise was chosen in order to emphasize a course in modern art, in which the methods of art history are applied to art of the recent past and present, representing the art closest to the professors and students of creative art—a point at which the two functions of the Department may be said to coincide.

The masterpieces were carefully chosen for quality and for scale, for the galleries, though ample, were intimate in size; they were likewise selected for importance in relation to the intention of the exhibition. They were assembled from all parts of the United States, and all leading art collections of universities and colleges in the country were represented by the loans, as a symbolic tribute by colleagues to the celebration of a great university of their company.

The exhibition included 53 paintings, 8 sculptures, 7 drawings, 16 prints, each work a key example of the artist, of an art movement, of a country and of a period. They were arranged chronologically and by medium: the period from neo-classicism, the first breaking away from tradition, through post-Impressionism, in the first gallery, C. 1800 to 1900; Impressionism through Cubism, Expressionism, etc., in the second gallery, C. 1900 to 1920; contemporary movements in the third, 1925 to the present. Special care was taken to illustrate well every significant technique and style in each medium with the needs of the creative art students especially in mind, for they must know the work of their forerunners in modern art.

Labelling was sparse, for a well-illustrated catalogue, with a scholarly listing of the works exhibited, was published. It also contained an essay on the development of the Department and another on the significance of the exhibition, both for art development and for the



reflection of human history during the period, in that individualism, the technological society and other aspects of the time prompted its art expression. The individual labels therefore gave only the title of the work, its date, the artist, his dates, the medium, the country, the lender. There were no introductory labels, for the catalogue, sold cheaply to students, was designed to take their place. The general title of the exhibition was given in large letters at the entrance to the exhibition. The significant date groupings were indicated by small readable numbers, to emphasize the evolutionary aspect of the exhibition, placed high enough above the paintings, to avoid interference with them. For example, paintings in a group of four by Picasso, one of the key figures in 20th century art, illustrating his diverse phases, from his early work through Cubism to his recent work, were given the date span, 1901-1940.

This enabled people fairly familiar with modern art to see at a glance how it had unrolled in relation to time.

Over a thousand people a day, the majority students, but large numbers from within an area of 100 miles ( some coming in chartered buses ), visited the exhibition during its month-long showing. Gallery tours were given by graduate students on Sundays.

The lecture on this exhibition, as given at Baroda 8th March, 1961, reviewed briefly some of this data on the exhibition. It was illustrated by about 20 colour slides of works in the exhibition marking many of its principal aspects, and several gallery views.

The style of the lecture was one that might have been used for a semi-popular lecture in a museum, as part of its educational programme. It was designed for a general, but alert and intelligent audience, some with art training, some with general interest. The remarks addressed to the museologists present were, of course, made only in Baroda. Otherwise the general comment on techniques, with illustrations by details, the references to movements,

etc. were what would serve for the general audience of a museum lecture series. (It was not intended for artists nor art students, but rather for laymen).

Exhibition and lecture are described here as examples in connection with *Art in Museums*, two lectures presented for the Museology Diploma Course, at the M. S. University of Baroda, March, 1961.

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