

The Reappearance of the Authentic

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Abstract

This chapter explores the public space of the contemporary destination resort and theme park and, particularly, the rediscovery of the importance of the authentic object. Through revisiting Walter Benjamin's classic study of the work of art in an age of mechanical reproduction, it is argued that the success and wide popularity of simulated, digital, entertainment – in which the simulacrum often displaces the distinction between the copy and the original – has revalorized the unique and particular. In contrast with the Exhibitionary Complex – the organizing idea of the classical museum – it is suggested that these contemporary entertainment destinations are best seen as part of an “Experiential Complex”.

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Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation. It is no longer a question of false representation of reality (ideology), but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle.

(Jean Baudrillard, “Simulacra and Simulations”, 1981.)

The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced. Since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized by reproduction when substantive duration ceases to matter. And what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object.

(Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", 1936.)

Is the world a simulation? Do the themed experiences of Disneyland, San Francisco's Metreon, Kinepolis in Brussels, Japan's burgeoning theme parks or South Africa's Lost City stand for a hyperreality that is now everything, or are the lives of the majority of people rarely touched by such extravaganzas (Featherstone 1995)? Are material objects – "things", "artefacts" – still essential to grounding our sense of identity? And what are the consequences of questions such as these for museums in the global public spheres of the contemporary world?

The playfulness of themed experiences is matched by a more sober engagement with the material world. For all the appeal of simulated environments, material things matter, and are more than "tourist gazes" that can be collected as photographs (Urry 2002). For a group of Tlingit elders meeting with curators in the Portland Museum of Art, the masks, headdresses and other artefacts from the collections were the occasion for story-telling, establishing a "contact zone" critical to the performance of identity (Clifford 1997). For one-time residents of District Six in Cape Town, whose homes were destroyed in the apartheid removals of the 1960s, the bric-a-brac of everyday life is reconstituted as precious memorabilia, the skeleton of memories (Rassool and Prosalendis 2001). For many in India, the violence of history continues into the future, as complex issues of identity, privilege and politics are realized through claims and counterclaims over the foundation stones of temple and mosque at Ayodhya. In the Balkans, genocide and the destruction of cultural property have been intertwined, an ethnic cleansing of both people and the materiality of their identity. There seems to be a connection between the marking of ethnicity through material culture and genocide -

elision of people with the artefacts that define them seems to make the killing easier, to aid the transformation of ordinary people into their neighbours' killers.

This chapter explores the paradox in juxtapositions such as these – of material objects in a world that seems at the same time destined to simulation. How can the claims for hyperreality be reconciled with the urgency with which many people grasp the material culture of their identity, or the ferocity with which they attack the cultural property of others? What does it mean when the simulation implodes, when the celluloid crinkles and catches fire and the specifics of time, place and object are reasserted as primary?

My argument starts with a small example, seemingly trivial. In their study of the World Showcase at Disney World's EPCOT, Cory Kratz and Ivan Karp find an unexpected aesthetic in the five museums that form part of the theme park. These presentations of the culture of Japan, China, Mexico, Morocco and Norway are surprisingly conventional. In a setting which foregrounds futuristic extravaganza and which uses the most advanced techniques of automation and simulation to amaze and transport the visitor to a fantasy world, the museum displays rely on conventional dioramas, presentation themes and boutique lighting that draws attention to the inherent qualities of the object itself, often on loan from leading public museums (Kratz and Karp 1992).

Visiting Disney World's latest theme park ten years later, I found the same approach in displays at the Animal Kingdom Lodge - the same apparent inconsistency of a conventional museum inside a high temple of simulation. African art works are displayed in the lobby and other public areas on freestanding plinths, with uncluttered Perspex cases and boutique lighting, and minimal, traditionalist labels such as "Initiation mask, Pende People, Democratic Republic of Congo", "Feathered Hat, Cameroon" and "Male and female couple, Lobi People, Ivory Coast". The centerpiece is a giant Ijele headdress with an interpretative display that recounts its making and use in standard, ethnographic style: "The Igbo people of Nigeria enact their traditions and beliefs through the arts of dance and music. Masks are central to their celebration of history, spirit being and scenes of daily village life. The grandest of these 'masquerades' is Ijele, a giant structure that incarnates the spirits of Igbo ancestors ...".

In contrast with this celebration of authenticity – of the originality of the work of art – Animal Kingdom Lodge is pure simulation, Disney at its best. As Cypher and Higgs (1997) have shown in their detailed analysis of Wilderness Lodge (the work of the same architect), the effect is created by distilling the detail from a set of exemplars into a simulacrum – an edifice that combines the best of its sources while disclaiming to be a copy of any particular original. Thus Animal Kingdom Lodge is inspired by the detailed study of a set of East Africa’s best safari lodges as well as of other sources, such as the “Shaka Zulu” footprint for the massive semi-circular kraal of guest rooms. The Lodge’s architecture impresses through scale, with a massive four-story lobby, scaled-up carvings and the dark interior, pools of light, the flickering firelight of the firepits and the suggestion of distant storms. Carefully placed speakers provide faint African rhythms and singing and taped cicadas, evoking the savanna. This theme is equipped with ethics by means of a prevalent association with conservation and the mission to save the planet. Guests are asked to “assist the animal care staff in maintaining the health and safety of the animals” so that the Lodge is “a safe and magical place for everyone and every creature”.

As a simulacrum, Animal Kingdom Lodge aspires to be better than the originals that inspired it. The guest is treated as an intelligent participant in the simulation. This is not an elaborate trick of false consciousness – a pretence of transportation to the Serengeti – any more that *Titanic* seeks to convince the movie audience that it is “really” about to sink into the icy waters of the Atlantic. Disney environments such as Animal Kingdom Lodge are better than the Big Screen, several notches up from Imax, a wrap-around simulation that plays on all the senses at once, an invitation to join in a sophisticated game.

Consequently, the resort to the conventional museum display and ethnographic focus on the inherent qualities of the object is counter-intuitive. Disney’s imagineers are quintessential semioticians who would, we would expect, identify firmly with Tony Bennett’s summary of the destiny of material things as “rhetorical objects”, signifiers with no inherent meaning (Bennett 1995:146-147). Indeed, the Walt Disney Company is the apotheosis of the mechanical reproduction of the work of art that Walter Benjamin, writing in 1936, saw as the end of the “authority of the object” (Benjamin 1999).

There is, then, something here that needs to be explained. An appropriate point at which to start is the question of “artefactual autonomy”. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has presented this as a surgical matter. “The artfulness of the ethnographic object”, she writes, “is an art of excision, of detachment, an art of the excerpt. Where does the object begin, and where does it end? ... shall we exhibit the cup with the saucer; the tea, the cream and sugar, the spoon, the napkin and placemat, the table and chair; the rug? Where do we make the cut?” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 18). Her observation can just as well be applied to any object in a display, ethnographic or otherwise, and can be turned on its head to ask whether the object can be excised completely, leaving only its representation – perhaps a photograph of cup and saucer that evokes, as a minimum, the same responses as if the original place setting was behind the Perspex. This takes us into the realm of semiotics and the relationship between signifier and signified – questions for later in this chapter. Here, I want to explore Bennett’s assertion that the artefact has no autonomy in itself but is rather part of a representational machine, the “Exhibitionary Complex”.¹ It is important to do justice to Bennett’s position here. The key passage is as follows:

- ¹ “no matter how strong the illusion to the contrary, the museum visitor is never in a relation of direct, unmediated contact with the ‘reality of the artefact’ and, hence, with the ‘real stuff’ of the past. Indeed, this illusion, this fetishism of the past, is itself an effect of discourse. For the seeming concreteness of the museum artefact derives from its verisimilitude’ that is, from the familiarity which results from its being placed in an interpretative context in which it is conformed to a tradition and thus made to resonate with representations of the past which enjoy a broader social circulation. As educative institutions, museums function largely as repositories of the already known. They are places for telling, and telling again, the stories of our time, ones which have become a doxa through their endless repetition. If the meaning of the museum artefact seems to go without saying, this is only because it has already been said so many times. A truly double-dealing rascal, the museum artefact seems capable of lending such self-evident truths its own material testimony only because it is already imprinted with the sedimented weight of those truths from the outset” (Bennett 1995:146-147).

For Bennett, the “birth of the museum” can be best understood through an extension of Foucault’s concepts of power and order, as used to understand regimes of discipline and punishment and the construction of penal institutions. Where the prison sought order by removing punishment out of the carnivalesque, unruly public space, substituting a clinical regime hidden within the institution’s walls, the museum contributed to social regulation by promoting a public morality of education and improvement. In this, the museum was one of the essential projects of modernism, closely bound up in the nineteenth century momentum of industrialization and the rise of the bourgeoisie.

More generally, this Exhibitionary Complex supported, and was supported by, other aspects of nineteenth century public life - events and spectacles such as the Highland Games (with royal patronage from 1852), the Royal Tournament (from 1888), the Promenade Concerts (from 1895). “Participating at least once in these leisure events came to be an important part of the emergent sense of Britishness in the late nineteenth century, a sense increasingly derived from people’s leisure activities” (Urry 2002: 25). Leisure in general, and holidays in particular, were promoted as beneficial to health and progress, and the technology of roads and railways underpinned the rise of mass tourism, seaside resorts, holiday camps and, eventually, the theme parks and heritage industry that are the context for museums today (Urry 2002).

While there was, of course, variation in the form and content of museums, Bennett has shown how, through the later nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries, there was an interlinked set of overarching concepts and assumptions that shaped museum themes, the organization of their displays and, where this was possible, their architecture. This was the idea of the progress of humanity towards its pinnacle in European civilization, given evidence by means of the “exhibitionary disciplines” of history, art history, archaeology, geology, biology and anthropology. Museums organized their displays, where they could, as a linear path through these exhibits, building up a story of global coherence and purpose: “the superimposition of the ‘backtelling’ structure of evolutionary narratives on to the spatial arrangements of the museum allowed the museum – in its canonical late-nineteenth century form – to move the visitor forward through an artefactual environment in which the objects displayed and the order of their

relations to one another allowed them to serve as props for a performance in which a progressive, civilizing relationship to the self might be formed and worked upon” (Bennett 1995: 186). This, then, was more than an attempt to impose a dominant ideology through subterfuge. The Exhibitionary Complex worked to construct an idea of the self as the subject of knowledge – the story of humanity’s progression – while also identifying the visitor as the object of the exercise, exhorting the reform of manners through decency of dress, language and behaviour in the public domain. As with Foucault’s prison, this could involve the design of the panopticon, “a technology of vision which served not to atomize and disperse the crowd but to regulate it, and to do so by rendering it visible to itself, by making the crowd itself the ultimate spectacle” (Bennett 1995: 68).

In seeking to civilize the new industrial proletariat, nineteenth century museum curators turned more to the sequence of displays and the information provided for the visitor. In contrast to the curiosity cabinets and private collections of earlier years, museums turned decisively away from evoking surprise and wonder in the object itself – whether three-legged chicken or priceless gemstone – and towards more sober and didactic information. Sir William Flower, curator of London’s Museum of Natural History, writing in 1898:

“First, as I said before, you must have your curator. He must carefully consider the object of the museum, the class and capacities of the persons for whose instruction it is founded, and the space available to carry out this object. He will then divide the subject to be illustrated into groups, and consider their relative proportions, according to which he will plan out the space. Large labels will next be prepared for the principal headings, as the chapters of a book, and smaller ones for the various subdivisions. Certain propositions to be illustrated, either in the structure, classification, geographical distribution, geological position, habits, or evolution of the subjects to be dealt with, will be laid down and reduced to definite and concise language. Lastly will come the illustrative specimens, each of which as procured and prepared will fall into its appropriate place” (quoted in Bennett 1995:42).

For Sir William Flower, then, there was no “artefactual autonomy”. In the Exhibitionary Complex the message is everything, the object an illustration of an interpretation of the world.

In some respects, Flower’s credo seems as germane to our world as to his, and he reads today as a plausible imagineer. Indeed, the design and realization of Disney World followed the same track as the rearrangement of the Museum of Natural History in 1884: Walt Disney’s careful consideration of the purpose of his new complex and his evaluation of the space available in central Florida, his division of the overall theme into “kingdoms” and the determination of the propositions that each would address and, finally, the design of installations, each falling “into its appropriate place” (Foglesong 2001).

This, though, would be to miss the main point of the Exhibitionary Complex – the economic and social context that the new museums served, and in which they flourished. Bennett shows how the nineteenth century museum was a product of bourgeois anxiety about the proclivities of the working class. By proclamation museums were inclusive. In the sententious prose of one commentator on the opening of a new gallery at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1858: “the anxious wife will no longer have to visit the different taprooms to drag her poor besotted husband home. She will seek for him at the nearest museum, where she will have to exercise all the persuasion of her affection to tear him away from the rapt contemplation of a Raphael” (quoted in Bennett 1995:32). But in practice, museums served as an instrument for differentiating populations: “in spite of its formally addressing an undifferentiated public, the practices of the museum served to drive a wedge between the publics it attracted and that recalcitrant portion of the population whose manners remained those of the tavern and the fair” (Bennett 1995: 99). Through proscribing forms of behaviour associated with raucous public assembly, they filtered the respectable working class from the riff-raff: “viewed in this light, the museum might be seen as issuing its visitors with both a prompt and an opportunity to civilize themselves and in so doing, by treating the exhibits as props for a social performance aimed at ascending through the ranks, to help keep progress on path” (Bennett 1995: 47).

The issue, then, is not that the nineteenth century emphasis on thematic displays is preternaturally postmodern, but is rather whether or not the economic and social

conditions that generated the Exhibitionary Complex apply today. They clearly do not. Rather than responding to the circumstances of rapid industrialization, public institutions today are shaped by de-industrialisation, new ethnic identities, the rise of service economies and the widespread loss of credibility in the idea of unitary progress in the face of manifest social inequities. The key to understanding the authority of the artefact – whether in an archive in Sarajevo or a theme park in California – is not in stretching the Exhibitionary Complex beyond the historical context for which it was formulated. It is rather in looking at the economic and social determinants of the “museum effect” today.

In his now-classic interpretation of the postmodern as advanced capitalism, Jameson argues that “culture” has become a “second nature”, “a prodigious exhilaration with the new order of things”, the celebration of commodification as a process (Jameson 1991). This can be seen as originating in the coincidence of information technology, the crisis of the nation state and the rise of new international movements such as environmentalism and feminism, together prompting new, transnational forms of organization (Castells 1998; Hardt and Negri 2000). This “network society” has an economy with the capacity to work as an integrated unit in real time, and on a global scale, resulting in new patterns of capital flows and increasing division between the world at large and the triangle of wealth and power that is North America, the European Union and the Asian Pacific region. This has resulted in a new cultural code, “a multifaceted, virtual culture, as in the visual experiences created by computers in cyberspace by rearranging reality”. Rather than a fantasy, this is a force that “informs, and enforces, powerful economic decisions at every moment in the life of the network” (Castells 1996:199).

Information and media are, of course, central to this network society. The convergence of digitization of telecommunications, broadband transmission and a marked increase in computer performance has allowed interactive, computer-based and flexible systems of communication. At the same time, the widening disparity between centers of wealth and zones of poverty promotes the widespread migration of people, with “information elites” who service global service economies, or large numbers of “generic labourers” who fill low paid positions in the new service sectors, and support their families at home through remittance economies. This is prompting new forms of

ethnicity, as diasporic communities identify with homelands to which they rarely return and may never have known. Arjun Appadurai has shown how media and migration are interconnected in the constitution of subjectivities. Electronic media

“transform the field of mass mediation because they offer new resources and new disciplines for the construction of imagined selves and imagined worlds ...

Through such effects as the telescoping of news into audio-video bytes, through the tension between the public spaces of cinema and the more exclusive spaces of video watching, through the immediacy of their absorption into public discourse, and through their tendency to be associated with glamour, cosmopolitanism, and the new, electronic media (whether associated with the news, politics, family life, or spectacular entertainment) tend to interrogate, subvert, and transform other contextual literacies” (Appadurai 1996:3).

Whatever the continuities with earlier years, then, the last quarter of the twentieth century saw significant changes in the nature of social and economic life: information technology and transnational economic and social institutions; a widening gulf between a developed core and subordinate economies; global diasporas and new ethnic identities, no longer entirely tied to specified geographical regions; and, in developed economies, de-industrialization and the rise of dominant service economies. Pine and Gilmore (1999) have proposed that these changes have enabled a new economic form – an “experience economy” that has, by extension of their argument, particular implications for both museums and for other “cultural sites”. Their premise is that experiences can be decoupled from services and understood as a form of economic output in their own right. Experiences are offered “whenever a company intentionally uses services as the stage and goods as props to engage an individual. While commodities are fungible, goods tangible, and services intangible, experiences are memorable” (Pine and Gilmore 1999:11-12). Consequently, the experience economy depends not merely on entertaining customers, but also on engaging them.

For Pine and Gilmore, an experience can be envisaged as having four “realms”: entertainment, education, escape and aestheticism. Education requires the active participation of the individual. Escapism requires immersion in the experience (in contrast to the passive observation of entertainment). The aesthetic requires quality of

place: “the sweet spot for any compelling experience – incorporating entertainment, educational, escapist, and esthetic elements into otherwise generic space – is similarly a mnemonic place, a tool aiding in the creation of memories, distinct from the normally uneventful world of goods and services. Its very design invites you to enter, and to return again and again. Its space is layered with amenities – props – that correspond with how the space is used and rid of any features that do not follow this function” (Pine and Gilmore 1999:43). Consequently, the key danger in the experience economy is the “commoditization trap” – the disillusionment of customers because things stay the same. In sharp contrast with service economies, the drive in the experience economy is towards customization, creating the impression that every experience is unique, and has been developed for the individual alone. Ideally, service providers become “transformation elicitors” who “must determine exactly the right set of life-transforming experiences required to guide aspirants in achieving their goals” (Pine and Gilmore 1999:176). Such simulated experiences are, of course, only available to those who can afford them, and the world that Pine and Gilmore foresee is the world of the elite of the network society. Indeed, the roots of such eldorados are in the 1980s, in the nexus of developments that are now seen as formative of the network society. Early projects, such as the rejuvenation of Baltimore and Boston’s harbour areas, brought together public and private partnerships to establish festival market places, speciality shops, historic and architectural themes with an emphasis on entertainment and eating. Profitability required “special activity generators” such as sports stadia, casinos, convention centers and entertainment complexes, providing the platform for the large-scale expansion of “themed entertainment” in the 1990s. Today, there is a clear pattern of urban regeneration that is to be found in cities across the world, bringing together in one place the primary consumer activities of shopping, dining, entertainment, and education and culture. By the end of the decade, almost every major multinational entertainment company had established a development team to evaluate and initiate “urban entertainment destination” projects, fueling a new urban economy with clear defining features: scripted themes, aggressive branding, twenty-four hour operation, modularity (an increasingly standard set of components mixed in varying ways), isolation from surrounding neighbourhoods, and a dependence on the spectacular (Hannigan 1998).

Illustration 1 near here

“Postmodern consumers” are attracted to such “urban destinations” by the technology of simulated experiences, which owe little to nostalgia and more to the appreciation of the technology behind the simulation and to the opportunities for accumulating cultural capital: “it is no accident that the profit core of themed restaurants and attractions is not from food, drink or the rides, but is generated instead from its logo-imprinted souvenir merchandise – acting as a passport stamp which confirms that the tourist has come and gone” (Hannigan 1998: 69). At the same time the experience economy is generating a demand for global travel that matches the allure of the urban themed zone with that of exotic destinations. Urry has termed this the “spectatorial gaze” – the valorizing of unique sites that can be collected through participation in international tourism (Urry 2002). In this form of the experience economy towns, regions and, potentially, whole countries can become “destination museums”, offering immersion in a world other than one’s own: “what is most ordinary in the context of the destination becomes a source of fascination for the visitor – cows being milked on a farm, the subway in Mexico City during the rush hour, outdoor barbers in Nairobi, the etiquette of bathing in Japan. Once it is a sight to be seen, the life world becomes a museum in itself” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:132).

Here, there is a close and mutually reinforcing connection between destination museums and photography, which is a means of “taming the object of the gaze” and facilitating the tourist in “collecting” experiences (Urry 2002: 127). Photography gives form to the travel itinerary, providing a reason to take a particular route, stop, and then move on again. Through framing images, the tourist/photographer becomes a semiotician, recognizing that a shot with a thatched roof cottage and roses represents the essence of England, or that a bare breasted woman with a string of colourful beads stands for the essence of Africa. And photography completes the hermeneutic circle of tourism, in which the desire to travel and consume the experience of the exotic is initiated by travel brochures, magazines travel documentaries and the movies, and then recalled

through photo albums, home movies or digital images shared with family and friends via the Internet (Urry 2002).

Rather than providing a unifying morality in the way that the intertwined principles of progress, civilization and Christian values that gave common purpose to museum directors in the late nineteenth century, today's moralities are less certain. Pine and Gilmore recognize this, ascribing "transformation elicitors" with a status that seems somewhere between therapist and priest, and with an obligation to "determine exactly the right set of life-transforming experiences required to guide aspirants in achieving their goals" (Pine and Gilmore 1999:176). They believe that the experience industry will adopt, as a matter of course, a set of ethics akin to the fiduciary responsibility of the financial services industry (an unfortunate analogy). But it seems more likely that moralities themselves will be available for consumer choice. Current destination museums include Auschwitz-Birkenau, Changi Jail in Singapore, Nazi Occupation sites in the Channel Islands, Dachau, extinct coal mines, northern Ireland, Northern Cyprus under Turkish 'occupation', Pearl Harbour, Sarajevo's 'massacre trail' and Vietnam (Urry 2002). Lennon and Foley's (2000) "dark tourism" includes concentration camps in Poland and Germany, the sixth floor room in Dallas from which Kennedy was shot, the site of the Oklahoma City bombing and the place where Princess Diana was killed. Given that pornography and travel arrangements are two of the most successful commercial uses of the Internet, it is likely that destination museums will cater for any predilection, whether this be for a sex tour in Thailand or medieval cathedrals in France.

What are the implications of such diverse destination projects for the nature of the museum – for the future of the authentic, the ethnographic object, or the work of art? In one sense, this is a tautology – the experience economy has no terms of limitation, and the museum of the present and future can be whatever its creators wish it to be, or whatever its visitor-participants make of it. This, though, does not help in isolating those key changes that make today's "museum effect" essentially different from museum visiting a century ago.

My proposition is this. Bennett has shown how the nineteenth century museum sought to reform the manners of its working class visitors through both the meta-narrative of progress towards civilization and through their physical participation through the

bourgeois rituals of dress, language and habits. In this, the “Exhibitionary Complex” works on the individual, seeking to change his or her world view and behaviour through institutions of order and control. In contrast, museums in the experience economy start with the individual, offering to those who can afford to participate the fantasy of a customized world, the opportunity to be whom they want to be through the technologies of simulation. This is Foucault’s penal institution inverted, the camera inside the prison walls, reality television and snuff movies.

As an interim – and tentative – device this can be called the “Experiential Complex”. I will draw out some of the ways in which museums “work” in the Experiential Complex through two, rather different, examples. But keep in mind the crux of the issue – the paradox of the reappearance of the authentic work of art in the stratosphere of simulation. It is my contention that the signal distinction between the Exhibitionary Complex and the Experiential Complex is the eclipse of the authentic artefact in the heyday of the classical museum, and its unexpected reappearance in the age of digital simulation.

The first example is a pair of museums in the north-east of England, widely considered to be a good example of the contemporary approach to museum display and the needs of the visitor. The Beamish North of England Open Air Museum is a civic project administered by a consortium of City, County and District Councils. Established in 1970, it has the purpose of “studying, collecting, preserving, interpreting and exhibiting buildings, machinery, objects and information illustrating the development of industry and agriculture and way of life in the North of England”. In this, it has been singularly successful, winning a string of awards that include both British Museum of the Year and European Museum of the Year and attracting large numbers of visitors to both its installations and its staged events. Set in the grounds of a one-time country house, Beamish comprises a model farm, a colliery and pit houses, and the main street of a market town – places that are imaginary, but which are assembled from “authentic” buildings and machinery from various parts of the north-east. They are linked by a period tramway and circular road that carries visitors, if they wish, in carriages (<http://www.beamish.org>).

Tony Bennett has shown how Beamish works to sentimentalize “the people”. Thus in the introduction to the museum, a “geological narrative” of plentiful mineral resources coincides with a cultural narrative of a tenacious regional spirit, a people tough enough to take advantage of the opportunities offered in coal mining. This story is framed by the “neutral” accent of a “BBC voice”, preparing the visitor to see the people of the north-east “only through the cracked looking glass of the dominant culture” (Bennett 1995:111). From this introduction, the visitor moves to the installations themselves – the pit houses, or the bandstand in the reconstructed market town, or other parts of the complex. Bennett notes that these features are marked as much by what they exclude: labour and trade union movements, or the activities of women in suffrage and feminist campaigns. Beamish organizes a concept of the north-east by bringing together buildings and artefacts from a range of different places and periods, recontextualising them as an integrated system with a harmonized set of relationships between town and country, agriculture and industry and different social classes. “The consequence is that the story of industrial development in the North East, rather than being told as one of ruptures, conflicts and transformations, emerges as a process that is essentially continuous with the deeper and longer history of a countryside in which the power of the bourgeoisie has become naturalized” (Bennett 1995:114).

Beamish, then, is more sentiment than history, part of Britain’s massive heritage industry with its emphasis on the combination of entertainment and education. As such, the museum is a roller coaster, ever gaining momentum. Beamish is a place “where the past comes to life”, providing “entertainment and education for visitors of all ages and interests” “there's always something happening at this ‘living’ Museum - sweet making in the Sweet Factory, horses at work in The Town, lessons in the Village School, 'clippy' mat making in the pit cottages - and many other activities”

(<http://www.beamish.org.uk/visitor-info.htm>). Events for 2002, for example, included the history of Meccano, May festivities (“a recreation of the colourful and traditional May Festivities in the Colliery Village, with a May Queen, Maypole dancing competition and Morris Dancers”), a national Traction Engine Rally, a Morgan and Rover car rallies, demonstrations of the traditional craft of North Country Quilting and patchwork, a School Sports Day (“children, in period costume, compete in customary events including

potato, skipping and three-legged races”), World Championship quoits matches, a National Archaeology Weekend, hosted by the Council for British Archaeology (“calligraphy, baking, candle making, bee skep making and traditional pole lathing”), a recreation of a Napoleonic recruiting muster “re-enacted by the 68th Regiment of the Light Infantry in full battle dress”, a lace making weekend, ploughing match, a prize leek show and harvest festival, and the commemoration of Empire Day, when the Town will be “decorated with patriotic flags and colourful bunting”.

Although Beamish is marketed nationally and internationally, the majority of its visitors come from the region that it represents in its installations, displays and staged events. For most people who go there, this is a familiar countryside, a short drive from Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland or Darlington, and easily reached from the motorway. As Bennett notes, the contrast between Beamish’s sanitized history and the ravages of industrialization in the nearby urban sprawl is evident to anyone. Few will believe that life in a colliery town was maypole dancing, three-legged races, quoits and patriotic flags. So why has Beamish continued to be so popular with those for whom the realities of history are evident?

Here, the explanatory power of the Exhibitionary Complex fails. Beamish is clearly not about reforming the manners of the north-east’s industrial proletariat, or about persuading them of a meta-narrative of progress and civilization. Empire Day at Beamish is more an ironic remembrance of the naiveté of a long-gone patriotism than a rallying call to British nationalism. Bennett suggests that Beamish offers tranquility and reconciliation with the past – following Foucault, a “place of tranquillised sleep”. But this seems too easy, suggesting a simple false consciousness and incongruent with the active participation of the museum’s visitors in the ceremonies of heritage and the energetic reinvention of century-old sports, crafts and pastimes.

I would rather suggest that Beamish’s success is due to a double move that makes it an exemplar of the Experiential Complex. Firstly, the museum is a “destination” that meets the requirements of themed urban regeneration, offering entertainment, advanced simulation and valued mementos in a secure and controlled environment. Beamish is to the Newcastle-Gateshead conurbation as Faneuil Hall Market is to Boston, and South Street Seaport to Manhattan. As Hannigan (1998) has pointed out, such reconstructions

are not expected to persuade their visitors that they are “real”. Part of the pleasure lies in the awareness of the artifice – an admiration for the skill of the animator in creating the simulation. Beamish gives pleasure through the skill and enterprise of its curators in bringing together fifteen or more traction engines in a parade of steam and gleaming brass, or through the attention to detail in re-enacting a muster of the Light Infantry. In this respect, heritage is not history, and doesn’t pretend to be.

Secondly, Beamish is self-reflexive – the subject matter of its fantasy is the past of the majority of its participants. It is self-exoticizing – through its installations, the past is indeed another country. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) has pointed out, this characteristic of heritage results in the alienation of the representation of the past from the community in which it is located, and foreclosure on history. Thus Tyneside’s industrial past – the coal mines and pit houses and the working class culture of the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries – is framed and packaged as photo opportunities and memorable cameos. Such remembrances become part of family histories – the ways in which visitors’ parents and grandparents lived. Indeed, one of the characteristics of Beamish in the 1980s and 1990s (although presumably less so today) was multi-generational visits in which retired participants in the north-east’s decimated industrial economy reminisced about the past to children and grandchildren, using Beamish’s buildings and displays as props for their stories.

Looked at in its wide context, this foreclosure of the past is part of the translation of the north-east from an industrial economy to the service industries characteristic of late capitalism in developed economies. The core of Beamish’s visitors are the new middle class of the region employed in the post-industrial enterprises which are seen as the key to the economic revival of the area. The museum is one of a number of public facilities which represent the new Tyneside: the Metro Centre, promoted as one of the largest retail centers in Europe and incorporating the now-standard entertainment complex; Newcastle’s gentrified city centre and pedestrianized shopping area; opera and the Royal Shakespeare Company’s annual season in the city; the promotion of Newcastle’s club life as the best in the country; the rejuvenation of properties along the banks of the Tyne and Antony Gormley’s extraordinary sculpture, the *Angel of the North*, spreading its wings over the road into Tyneside from the south.

A second museum well demonstrates this claim to the future, and stands as an instructive counterpoint to Beamish. Life Interactive World, close to the centre of Newcastle, is part of a cluster of high-tech buildings that form Times Square, the centre piece of which is the restored Market Keeper's House, built in 1842. Life Interactive World is one of Britain's new Science Centres, seventeen of which have been promoted by the Millennium Commission by means of national lottery revenues and matching funds (Pickrell 2001).

Illustration 2 near here

This is a single-theme, interactive exhibit with linked concepts that fall into three parts. A first group of eleven exhibits – the “River of Life” – takes the visitor backwards in time to the origins of life in single-cell organisms. In tracing back the path of evolution, the visitor is invited to “leave 21st century North East England behind you as you capture your image to morph yourself into your ancestors”. Successive interactive displays go first to the hominoids of the African grasslands seven million years ago, then through successively archaic life forms to the time when until the visitor “scuttles back to the world of the dinosaurs” and becomes “a tiny shrew-like creature coming out to feed in the relative safety of the night”. Eventually, 520 million years before the present, the visitor is invited to become a “strange sea creature, a relative of worm-like *Pikaia*, maybe the first animal with a backbone”. The concluding message of this part of the museum is “that's life – flexible, adaptable, co-operative, productive”.

Having deconstructed life to its most basic biological form, the middle part of the itinerary presents the story of DNA and, through a cluster of interactive displays, explains how the cell is the basis of all organisms. This introduces the third part of the Centre, which constructs the individual as “life's amazing journey”. This series of displays starts with sexual reproduction, the “tunnel of love”: “have we put our animal origins behind us when choosing a mate? Like gibbons, we pair off as a couple, like puffins, the woman invests as least as much in her looks as the man ... like peacocks, men are show-offs”. The theme continues with the development of the human embryo, ethical questions about genetic modification, and the way in which the human brain works. The visit ends with

“life is a roller coaster”, a video arcade and a “crazy motion ride”, which has little to do with the overall theme, but certainly rewards children (and their adult relatives) for having persisted through the educative displays.

Life Interactive World and Times Square Newcastle is a vision of the knowledge economy, “the first time anywhere in the world where entertainment, research medicine, life science business, education and ethics have come together on one site to share the unfolding knowledge of the Secret of Life” (Life Interactive World, 2000). Where Beamish offered closure on the past – a way of converting Tyneside’s industrial economy into nostalgia and participatory entertainment – Life Interactive World uses the museum effect to signal that which the north-east aspires to become. And, as befits the Experiential Complex, Life Interactive World draws the individual out from the mass of life, first working back through time to a point of origin, and then substituting genotype for phenotype, constructing the unique identity of the individual from the moment of conception through to the unique complexity of the individual brain. In contrast to the message of the nineteenth century museum, where the visitor was invited to conform to the manners and outlook of class, Life Interactive World tells its visitors that each is unique, with the prospect of an unbounded future.

Both Beamish and Life Interactive World are simulated environments with strong themes that organize the concepts to which these museums are dedicated. But, in different ways, both depend on material objects for their authority. Life Interactive World deals with DNA and genetic material – the stuff of science that cannot easily be seen, and that is everywhere. It stakes its claim to authority on Times Square, its roots in Newcastle’s history and the authenticity of the restored Market Keeper’s House. This is buttressed by the explicit association with the University of Newcastle and the edifice of the academy. Beamish works by taking the ordinary and making it extraordinary. Nondescript buildings, not worth a second glance in the normal flow of urban regeneration, are taken apart brick by brick, cleaned up and reassembled. Ordinary objects, the stuff of flea markets and dusty attics, are acquired, accessioned, conserved and displayed. In this process, material objects are relocated from the profane world to the sacred site of the museum, which is itself reaffirmed as a special place by accolades and awards, listed as

claims to authority on the Beamish web site. This, again, is the paradox of the authority of the object in a time of digital simulation.

Museums and theme parks are sometimes considered to be different classes of phenomena. But it is a short conceptual journey from Life Interactive World to EPCOT's science and technology installations, or from Beamish's themed entertainment to Disney World's attractions. Indeed, Disney's Animal Kingdom is the direct descendant of the nineteenth century Zoological Garden where, for example, the arrival of four giraffes in 1836 attended by Nubian and Maltese keepers attracted a crowd of more than 260 000 and where, in 1850, Obaysch, the first hippopotamus in Britain, prompted a "hippo craze" in London and the wildly popular "Hippopotamus Polka" (Blunt 1976). Disney's Animal Kingdom is an altogether more serious enterprise, a place to learn about the lives and needs of animals, about the principles of conservation and the danger to the planet: "you can learn so much about animals and the natural world at Disney's Animal Kingdom that a visit should be worth three hours of college credit" (Kramer 2001). Today's theme parks are the direct descendant's of the international and world fairs of the last century, which thrived alongside museums and curiosity cabinets. Like Beamish, Life Interactive World and many other themed entertainment destinations, Disney's Animal Kingdom has a spatial design that directs the visitor ("guest" in Disney's world) through a sequence of installations. The concept is of four "lands" that lead off from a central hub, marked by the Tree of Life, a 145 foot modified steel rig with a 430-seat theatre in its "roots". Africa – the largest of the "lands" – is reached by a bridge across the Discovery River. On the far side, and past massive, carved gates, is the east African town of Harambe, where "Swahili streetscapes, thatched roofs, and world bazaars transport you to a foreign land ... The stage is set for an exuberant African street party with authentic artisans and storytellers sharing their rich African heritage" (Disney's Animal Kingdom Park 2001). Harambe, in turn, is the point of departure for Africa's two major attractions, Pangani Forest Exploration Trail and Kilimanjaro Safaris.

As with Beamish's north-east England and the Animal Kingdom Lodge, Harambe is a composite simulation. Tom Sze, one of its design team, sees it as "true to form as to the textures and essence of an East African coastal town. We created an old town, and it tells a history of that place. It's subtle, but if you sit back and look at it, you will

understand the town's story" (quoted in Kubin 1998). Most buildings are discretely dated, covering the full span of colonial settlement in Africa and ranging from Harambe Fort (built in 1426), to Mrubwa House (1781), now the home of the Mombassa Marketplace, to a signpost dated 1961. Although not explicitly recognized in any guest information or promotional material, time seems to have stopped in Harambe not long after independence from British colonial rule. The contemporary occupants, just out of sight of their guests milling about in the dusty street, are Africans presiding over the weathered buildings and relics of long years of occupation, not long after the colonial authorities have departed.

Harambe gives the impression of honest, well-meaning people making do with scarce resources and the legacy of history – an African equivalent of the gritty Geordie miners who lived in Beamish's pit houses. This serves to reinforce the ethic of Disney's Africa as a whole – the invitation to join a crusade to save the animals of this part of the planet. Thus the Pangani Forest Exploration Trail is imagined as a training school and sanctuary, a "joint effort by the citizens of Harambe and international conservation groups", under the direction of "Dr K Kulunda". Here, in one of the switches in time and place that are unexceptional in simulated environments, the guest is in West or Central Africa and the featured animal is the gorilla. "Cultural Representatives" add to the information provided by display boards and other, quite traditional, museum devices. Here, the assumption is that real people from Africa are experts on animal life: Thembi from Germiston states authoritatively that hippos can stay under water for five minutes without breathing. At the exit to the attraction, there is a message from Dr Kulunda:

"To our esteemed visitors, thank you for joining us here today in the beautiful Pangani Forest. The staff and students hope that you have found here a renewed appreciation for all the animals of our wild Africa. It is only through our concerted efforts and commitment that we can hope to save these precious animals for future generations. Asante sana – thank you".

Having toured the conservation centre and appreciated its animals and the work of its staff, the guest now shares a moral domain with the post-colonial citizens of Harambe and the international conservation organizations that are determined to save Africa's wildlife.

Dr Kulunda's counterpoint at the second major attraction in Disney's Africa is Warden Wilson Matua, who circles overhead in a light aircraft, speaking over the radio to the safari guides and directing them – and the guests in their care – in a chase after an elephant poaching gang. Kilimanjaro Safaris taken place in the Harambe Wildlife Reserve, which we are asked to imagine was established in the 1970s. Introductory displays provide information about the animals, and the Warden – a local citizen of Harambe – asks for help in combating poachers, whose destruction of the wildlife is illustrated by video. The safari, in open-sided Land Rovers that rattle over dirt roads and splash through streams, offers photo opportunities of a variety of antelope, birds, hippo, rhino, giraffe and elephant, whose enclosures are carefully disguised to give the impression that they are roaming free in an east African savanna. As with Harambe town, the relics of colonialism are evident – an “old African bridge” and the track of the East African Railway. The guest, indignant at violations of nature, is invited to repudiate the consumerism of the theme park itself in favour of a more noble cause.

There can be no better accolade to Disney's art of verisimilitude than Jane Goodall's endorsement: “I think when one gets away from the music, the singing and the Disney part of it, the exhibits are wonderful. The animal caregivers are just fantastic. I think the people who come here for the Disney glitz and then get led out to look at the animals – well, maybe they will start to think about conservation in a new way. It may open their eyes to the world around them” (quoted in Kubin 1998). In other words, the animals are reality – authenticity – in a fake world that has lost a sense of priority. In achieving the status of a respected zoological museum or conservation organization, Disney has beaten itself at its own game.

Disney's Animal Kingdom contrives, as does Beamish, to transport the visitor away from the present: “though the Serengeti is halfway around the world, visitors walking along the paths of Animal Kingdom undergo a remarkable transformation. Ambient noises slowly change from the chatter of parents and children to the quiet of a rocky grotto, where the only sounds are running water and whispers inspired by the slow, lumbering gait of an anteater” (Kubin 1998). But – again – the contrivance does not rely on the visitor believing that this is somehow “reality”. Disney makes it clear that this is all theatre, presented by a “cast” that includes the animals. The visitor leaves Africa from

Harambe Station on the Eastern Star Railway, traveling “backstage” past the animal houses. The conductor - “Crystal – all the way from South Africa” - tells the passengers that the animals return each night and receive the “best care possible”. The animals are actors too, joining the dedicated staff and empathetic guest in a common moral crusade to save the planet from humanity’s own depredations.

Beamish, Life Interactive World and Disney’s Animal Kingdom, then, offer themed entertainment with differing, underlying, moralities. Beamish is foreclosure on an industrial economy that is now over, and best framed and contained as nostalgia. Life Interactive World is the possibility of the future, the power of the individual mind to achieve the unimaginable in the knowledge economy. Disney Animal Kingdom is the obligation of the world citizen to unite with like-minded people to save the planet from destruction. All three offer their participants ways of seeing themselves as individuals within the world. Rather than seeking to reform their manners, to encourage them to conform, these museums condone choices that have already been made, and positions that have been attained. Visitors to installations such as these are already part of privileged elites, and participation in themed entertainments helps them feel better about themselves.

What of “artefactual autonomy” in this Experiential Complex? While the object has little inherent authority in the museum as conceived and realized by Sir William Flower and his generation, the value ascribed to authentic items in contexts as diverse as the Animal Kingdom Lodge and the maelstrom of contested identities in the Balkans suggests that there is, so to speak, more than meets the eye in the meaning of things in the network society.

This problem was first framed almost seventy years ago by Walter Benjamin in his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”. Benjamin was fascinated by the consequences of reproduction and, particularly, by the implications of photography. He saw the years around 1900 as millennial in their consequences for art – as a time when advances in technology allowed all forms of art to be reproduced, and therefore made widely available. As a consequence, art was increasingly available to all, rather than being restricted to a small group of connoisseurs who had access to private

collections, galleries and select performances. This phenomenon directed Benjamin's attention to the status of the original, to its particular qualities.

In a way, Benjamin was concerned with the obverse of the issue that I am concerned with here. Writing in 1936, Benjamin was acutely conscious of the gathering momentum of mass, popular culture and the contradiction between the desirability of democratic access to artistic production on the one hand, and the consequences of commodification for works of art, on the other. At the beginning of the next millennium, the easy availability of near-perfect copies of art works is taken for granted, and major genres of artistic production are enabled and inspired by this mass market. The question now is – why the stubborn saliency of original objects at a time when the mass reproduction of copies seems unexceptionable?

Benjamin's argument hinged on the proposition that an original work of art has an "aura". This is founded in its uniqueness, "its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be", and is reinforced by the trace of its history, by "the changes which it may have suffered in physical condition over the years", and changes in ownership that constitute its history. Together, position in time and space and the patina of "trace" constitute authenticity, and authenticity is beyond reproducibility: "the authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced". Consequently, the "authority of the object" is jeopardized by reproduction – "that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art" (Benjamin 1999:215).

Benjamin was interested in photography, and particularly film, because this was a newly-emerged mass art form that could be reproduced without recourse to an original. Here, his argument was that the "aura" of film-as-art was externalized as the cult of the movie star, who became a sort of vulgar, auratic "original". This anticipates Eco, Baudrillard and other post-modern theorists of hyperreality and the simulacrum. Here, and particularly in the voluminous field of Disney criticism, it is often assumed that hyperreality renders originality obsolete, that themed entertainment and simulation catches the participant up in a world in which signifier and signified can be decoupled through artifice. Thus Michael Sorkin on Disneyland:

“television and Disneyland operate similarly, by means of extraction, reduction, and recombination, to create an entirely new, anti-geographical space. On TV, the endlessly bizarre juxtapositions of the daily broadcast schedule continuously erode traditional strategies of coherence. The quintessential experience of television, that continuous program-hopping zap from the remote control, creates path after unique path through the infinity of televised space. Likewise Disneyland, with its channel-turning mingle of history and fantasy, reality and simulation, invents a way of encountering the physical world that increasingly characterizes daily life. The highly regulated, completely synthetic vision provides a simplified, sanitized experience that stands for the more undisciplined complexities of the city” (Sorkin 1992:208).

In a different register, Roberto, the central character in Umberto Eco’s novel *The Island of the Day Before*, is stranded on a ship that has been wrecked on one side of the date line, a short distance from an island that is always in the past. Roberto is destined always to look back in time, to a past represented by an elusive orange dove, “bright as the sun”, “wings covered with silver and feathers with glints of gold”, a “rare beauty – which, if it was now awaiting him, had always been awaiting him since the day before”. Roberto resolves the paradox by casting himself adrift on the dateline: “If he were to let himself float, his eyes staring at the sky, he would never again see the sun move: he would drift along that border that separates today from the day before, outside time, in an eternal noon” (Eco 1995:279, 500).

There is, though, a catch in this formulation. For if we are indeed caught up in a self-referential spiral of hyperreality in which simulations refer only to one another, creating an “infinity of televised space”, or a virtual dateline along which time can be conquered, then how can any economic value be generated? Why, if all is simulation, is the Walt Disney Company a successful multinational company which converts its fantasies to brand-name products that sell at a high premium? A closer look at Baudrillard’s formulation of the simulacrum shows that things are more complicated than they may seem, directing attention back to the distinctive qualities of authenticity and originality.

In his 1981 essay, “Simulacra and Simulations”, Baudrillard distinguishes different “orders” of simulation: the “play of illusions and phantasms”; an “ideological” order, or false representation; and a “third-order simulation”, that of the hyperreal, the condition in which there is no original for the simulation. “Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation. It is no longer a question of false representation of reality (ideology), but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle”. Such “third-order simulation” becomes self-referential. Thus, in Baudrillard’s example, criminal actions such as armed robberies become “inscribed in advance in the decoding and orchestration rituals of the media, anticipated in their mode of presentation and possible consequences”.

This position has served as a foundation for a subsequent tradition of interpretation. However, Baudrillard goes on to argue that “third order” simulation does not make actions inoffensive, without material consequence. It is rather that the simulated world is placed beyond the traditional legitimization of power by ideology (what Althusser would have called the “state apparatus”). Baudrillard argues that this threatens the very basis of social control. For, in a situation where there is “a referential order which can only dominate referentials”, and where there is no constraint over “that indefinite recurrence of simulation, about that weightless nebula no longer obeying the law of gravitation of the real”, power will itself break apart and become “a simulation of power”. Baudrillard argues that in this situation, the only recourse is to attempt to reinsert “realness” into the simulation: “the only weapon of power, its only strategy against this defection, is to reinject realness and referentiality everywhere, in order to convince us of the reality of the social, of the gravity of the economy and the finalities of production” (Baudrillard 2001:182).

In other words, Baudrillard is mapping out, in his concept of “third order” simulation, a vortex in which late capitalism is spinning out of control. Rather than establishing a mandate for a virtual world, whether utopian or dystopian, in which simulation is freed from the constraints of reality, Baudrillard is describing circumstances in which simulation generates an ever increasing need for the anchors of reality. This is the

“hysteria” of material production and overproduction. His essay implies a matching economic thesis, not spelt out, in which the traditional view that economies are driven by production is inverted and the emphasis is placed on consumption as the primary determinant. In this, his thesis anticipates a major direction in contemporary economic theory and, of course, the concept of the “experience economy”. Rather than being divorced from the real world, simulation is intimately connected to economic value through the circulation of commodities.

This, I want to suggest, is the key to the importance of authentic works of African art in the lobby of the Animal Kingdom Lodge, to the reinvention of conventional museum displays in the midst of EPCOT’s futuristic technology, and to the significance of cultural treasure for ethnic identities that seem largely created through virtual media. Caught up in Baudrillard’s vortex where third-order simulation generates the mass production of commodities, which in turn fuel the consumer-led demand for ever-innovative simulation, how can the entrepreneurs of the experience economy anchor their themed environments in ways that will make them memorable, valued and worth paying for at a premium? One solution is to put the aura back on the work of art, to reverse, for a very specific set of objects, the trend that Benjamin identified in his investigation of authenticity and reproduction.

Arjun Appadurai has provided a useful set of conceptual tools for showing how the aura of an object can be established. Appadurai explores the conditions under which things (“economic objects”) circulate in different regimes of value. He shows how objects have social lives – life histories – during which they move in or out of “commodity situations”, defined as circumstances in which an object’s “exchangeability (past, present, or future) for some other thing is its socially relevant feature” (Appadurai 1986:13). In some situations, objects can be “enclaved”, or removed from circulation as commodities (Appadurai gives as an example royal monopolies over categories of things, serving to establish rank). Such restrictions “have clear implications for framing and facilitating political, social, and commercial exchanges of a more mundane sort” (Appadurai 1986:24). Objects may also be “diverted”, often in the service of entrepreneurial interests. Here, the best examples are in the domain of fashion, domestic display and collecting. In these cases, “value ... is accelerated or enhanced by placing

objects and things in unlikely contexts” – “an aesthetics of decontextualization”. “Such diversion is not only an instrument of decommoditization of the object, but also of the (potential) intensification of commoditization by the enhancement of value attendant upon its diversion” (Appadurai 1986:28).

Practices such as enclaving and diversion, then, interrupt the circulation of an object as a commodity, either raising its value because of its scarcity, or else removing it from circulation completely, making it - literally - invaluable. This can, perhaps, be described as “neo-sumptuary” regulation of value, in that it mimics aspects of pre-modern economies in which rare and valued objects, whether liveried coachmen and parasols in seventeenth century Dutch Indonesia or the consumption of marzipan in the Doge’s Venice, were subjected to regulation in law to protect their role as marks of status.

We can now understand why the impresarios of simulation – the curators of a north of England open air museum or the imagineers of a Florida theme park – are drawn to the authentic, whether period artefact, a work of art, a rare ethnographic specimen or a building, restored or transported to a destination museum. The authentic object - diverted from circulation as a commodity, enclaved, serves to anchor the simulacrum, arresting the endless process of production and consumption that drives down the value of experiences, undermining the foundations of the experience economy. In Pine and Gilmore’s terms, enclaving selected objects is a tactic that counters the “commoditization trap”, the disillusion of customers who find that much the same experience is available elsewhere, diminishing the value of the “spectatorial gaze” (Pine and Gilmore 1999; Urry 2002).

This resolves the paradox with which this chapter began. Simulation depends on “reinjecting realness” – on the close connection between hyperreality and the “hysteria” of commodity production and marketing. The “museum effect” is achieved by withdrawing selected artefacts out of circulation as commodities, thus creating a destination with added value. Similarly, in a world in which identities are claimed and disputed by communities who may be far removed from the homelands with which they identify, cultural property may be endlessly reproduced through digital and other media. To retain value, the simulacra of identity need to be anchored by cultural treasures. There

is, then, no contradiction between the experience economy and the materiality of the object, and the Experiential Complex is marked by the return of the aura of the work of art in an age of digital simulation.

With hindsight, Benjamin's contrast between the original work of art and mass reproduction seems overdrawn. Rather than the continued, severe, restrictions on access to private collections, the second half of the twentieth century saw major collections enter the public sphere through museums and art galleries that were increasingly open to all. As Bennett (1995) has pointed out, one of the tensions in the Foucaudian terms of the Exhibitionary Complex was between the wish to segregate the socially acceptable working class from the riotous mass, and the ideology of inclusion that museums and galleries needed to promote if they were to gain acceptability as institutions of social reform. This tension has steadily prised open the museum's doors and major public art collections are now generally seen as a *sine qua non* of the city.

In other cases, though, the requirements of the Experiential Complex are prompting a sort of reverse engineering of authenticity. Rather than appropriating original works of art, reproductions need to be invested with aura through evidence of their rarity and the "trace" of history – much the process that Benjamin identified as the key to adding value to a movie through the invention of the aura of the film star. Here, the Walt Disney Company has led in the development of expertise. Established as a movie company, Disney pioneered "nature drama", shaping perceptions of "wilderness" through techniques of visual extension and compression: the close-sequences of animal "families" in their "homes", allowing the viewer an intimacy with the animal world that could not be matched "in real life"; or the fast run sequences of a flower opening or a butterfly emerging from the chrysalis that compress many hours into a few moments. As a result, the audience is led to presume that "the footage closely records the real thing out there in mountain, meadow, prairie and pond ... we cannot help being disappointed by the real thing" (King 1996: 66). John Hench, a close associate of Walt Disney and for many years one of the company's senior imagineers, saw this as a "recaptured" reality: "We've taken and purified the statement so that it says what it was intended to" (Findlay 1992). In ways such as these, objects can be designed to convey a sense of presence, of fabricated originality. The effect can be further enhanced through additional techniques, long in the

museum repertoire, and including lighting, the implication of value when an object is behind glass, and widening the distance between the work of art and the viewer.

Benjamin observed that, in the creation of popular culture, “every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction” (Benjamin 1999:217). Enclaving an object reverses this direction, and consequently implies greater value.

Benjamin saw the most important mark of authenticity as “trace” – the patina of an object’s history and the genealogy of its ownership. In the language of Disney, this is the “back story”, a key aspect of all themed entertainment. Because anyone can invent a back story, this is a particularly important to an object’s value as a neo-sumptuary marker. In the case of EPCOT, back story was provided by the simple device of loaning objects from national and public museum collections (Kratz and Karp 1992). Similarly, Cultural Representatives are “on loan” from their countries, and their authentic biographies provide “trace” for the installations they introduce and interpret. Thembi, who was the Cultural Representative on duty with the hippos in the Pangani Forest in October 2001, was a university student from the industrial hinterland of Johannesburg who had not been familiar with the ways of animals before she arrived in Florida for a vacation job. But she and the dozens of other young Africans deployed in Disney Animal Kingdom contribute a cachet of “authenticity” to the theme park.

The dependence of an enclaved object on an authentic history gives particular saliency to ethnographic material. Ethnographic collections are a vast pool of potential “new originals” which can appeal to both exoticism and to the politics of identity fuelled by the diasporas of the network society. In the words of Charles Davis, art consultant for the Animal Kingdom Lodge, “we want people to have just as much a learning and visual experience inside the resort as they do outside looking from their balcony. We want them to be so excited that they will want to wander through the resort and read and learn. The idea is to show that Africa is a vast continent full of gifted and culturally diverse people” (quoted in Stull 2001). The centerpiece of the Lodge’s ethnographic exhibits is the Igbo Ijele mask. Here, the designers have broken with the minimalist labeling of the rest of the collection, and have mounted a discursive interpretation of the mask’s history and manufacture, using the familiar text and photograph combinations of the ethnographic

museum. This serves to claim the particular value of this work of art: “the Ijele, the largest and one of the most respected masks of sub-Saharan Africa, usually appears every 10 to 25 years among the Igbo people of Nigeria for celebrations and important events. This rarity is regarded as an attribute of greatness”. The Animal Lodge’s specimen is “the only Ijele known to exist outside of Africa” (Stull 2001)

The Ijele mask, along with the other neo-authentic objects on display through the Animal Kingdom Lodge, convey value by association with the simulated environment that is the theme park’s signature: the lighting and sound effects, scaled-up kraal theme, fabrics, décor and costume of the staff. Similarly, the collections of authentic bric-a-brac in the parlours of Beamish’s pit houses, in the school room, or in the windows of the shops in the market town transmit value to the simulated north of England environment that isn’t anywhere in particular, and is therefore everywhere. This reverses the tradition of the Exhibitionary Complex. Museums in the style of the nineteenth century privilege context, using techniques of arrangement, classification and explanation to convey ideas (Bennett 1995; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998). In contrast, the Experiential Complex makes use of metonymy – the meaning that arises from the contiguous association of things. Value rubs off in the foyer of the Animal Kingdom Lodge. Because the Igbo Ijele mask and displayed objects such as the Pende initiation mask and the feathered hat from Cameroon are evidently authentic, the leopard skin sofas around the giant television set looping a video of the Lion King seem more special. This is why the Lodge’s ethnographic collections are so understated in the promotional literature for Disney Animal Kingdom, why Kratz and Karp found EPCOT’s five museums curiously under-advertised. Anticipation is reserved for the simulated world – the primary business of the theme park. Enclaved objects are there to be discovered, adding their value through association, and anchoring the simulacra around them.

The age of digital simulation, then, is witnessing the recovery of the authority of the object as part of a neo-sumptuary system that connects cultural and financial capital in what Castells has called the “space of flows” of the network society. This leads to some strange mixing of registers, with the trivia of destination entertainment rubbing shoulders with the deadly seriousness of ethnic identity politics, and long-established

ways of exhibiting cultural capital juxtaposed with the razzmatazz of new destination museums.

Such a mixing of registers can be experienced in a visit to *Guggenheim Las Vegas at The Venetian* (available in cyberspace at www.guggenheimlasvegas.org). An introductory video claims the high ground of culture. Careful research, the visitor is told, has revealed that the same sort of people visit both Las Vegas and the Guggenheim in New York, obliging its curators to bring their collection of authentic masterworks to Nevada for the benefit of the people. But one cannot help but think that the real winner is The Venetian. Rather than decry the casino's Renaissance fantasies as the ultimate in kitsch, the Guggenheim's guide book is obliged to describe the themed entertainment of its new-found partner as "new cultural territory" and "an extraordinary western venue". So does the imprimatur of New York high culture mark the coming of age of Vegas entertainment architecture.

Illustration 3 near here

The Venetian is themed entertainment at its most extravagant. The design incorporates elements of the Doge's Palace and St Mark's Square, with richly decorated ceilings in the forecourt and in the hotel lobby, Venetian-style arcades leading to the casino area and gondolier rides for guests. In the words of the Resort Guide: "You are invited to relish the ageless history, inspiring architecture and ambiance of Venice. You are invited to stroll through the magnificent, arched hallways and streets that have inspired artists, poets and romantics for centuries. The Venetian is perhaps the most extraordinary tribute to the beauty and romance of Venice." The Guggenheim's gallery is in the lobby, and comprises an over-size container constructed from rust-coloured, industrial steel. The collection is protected by burly guards with ill-fitting jackets who seem more like nightclub bouncers than conventional museum attendants. On admission, they warn against eating, smoking, drinking, taking notes or writing, touching anything and "any photography whatsoever". Inside are four rooms. The 2001 inaugural exhibition was titled "Masterpieces and Master Collectors: Impressionist and Early Modern Paintings from the Hermitage and Guggenheim Museums" and comprised 44 works by Cézanne,

Pissarro, Gauguin, Matisse, Picasso and others. The paintings are hung conventionally, with minimal labeling and no concession to establishing context.

The Guggenheim at Las Vegas illustrates the meeting of the Exhibitionary and Entertainment Complexes. At one scale, the resulting confusion of codes is unbridgeable. Despite the Guggenheim's attempt to achieve an ironic distance from Mammon by housing its treasures in a rusty box, the juxtaposition is absurd, and becomes comic though the behaviour of the attendants who are a parody of the warders in a Foucaudian institution. But at another scale, the partnership demonstrates the power of metonymy in establishing cultural capital in the competitive world of themed entertainment. As Vegas seeks to attract middle class visitors and families to its world, each resort needs to differentiate itself from the others. In a town where anything, it seems, can be simulated, there is a special cachet in being able to display that which cannot be bought at any price. By their mere contiguity, the Guggenheim's Gauguins and Picassos add value to the Renaissance décor of the lobby, the gondoliers punting visitors on the canal and the slots and gaming tables down the hall.

The Gold Reef resort, to the south of Johannesburg, offers an equally strange juxtaposition between the museum conceived and realized in conventional style and the new extravagance of the urban destination. This complex comprises three major elements: Gold Reef City, a theme park that has been operating for over a decade, the Gold Reef Casino, and the Apartheid Museum, the last two opened in 2001. Together, they give a comprehensively mixed message, with the theme park and casino presenting early twentieth century Johannesburg as a place of wild fun, with little trace of conflict, and the Apartheid Museum presenting the chilling brutality of segregation and cruelty, showing how this same city was a place of misery and death. The Apartheid Museum's key theme is that legislated segregation came into being as a response to massive black migration to the city, while the Casino's organizing idea is that the centre of Johannesburg has always been a free and easy space for all. The Casino's reconstructed town square is now inhabited by black citizens playing the 5 cent slots in hope of a fortune, and the controlling financial interests are held by Abe and Solly Krok, who made their money by selling skin lightening creams to black housemaids until their products

were banned as toxic, and who were inspired to build the Apartheid Museum by the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

Illustration 4 near here

Instances such as these suggest that we are in a time of transition. For Walter Benjamin and others, the early 1900s seemed a welter of confusion, when new art forms such as film were fuelling a mass culture that broke out of the frame of conventional art. Today, mechanical reproduction has reached an apogee in simulation and the search for originality has resulted in premier examples of high art being displayed in a reconstruction of a Venetian palace set in a Nevada desert, and the relics of a brutal system of racial segregation in the grounds of a casino that denies the reality of this same history. Such confusion draws a continuing line from Las Vegas to Bosnia and a raid on a Croat artist's studio in the Sarajevo neighbourhood of Grbavica:

“Serbian soldiers broke into his studio looking to steal money and equipment. They were incensed to discover an Islamic levha – a calligraphic inscription from the Koran – which the painter had mounted as a wall hanging. They took it down and, cursing, butchered it. According to witnesses, they then took all the artist's paintings, drawings and sketches, lined them up against the front wall of the house and executed them with machine-gun fire until they were in shreds” (Lovrenovic 1994).

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Illustrations

Illustration 1. 42nd St.-NY: the reference point for urban entertainment destinations

42nd Street New York has become the type site for urban entertainment destinations, combining movies, theatre, brand-name marketing and dining in a neon extravaganza (Sagalyn 2001). Photograph: Martin Hall, 2001.

Illustration 2. Life Interactive world, Newcastle: authenticity by association with the historic city

Life Interactive World, Times Square, Newcastle brings the futuristic museum of the biology of life to the historic core of an industrial city in rejuvenation. Photograph: Martin Hall, 2001.

Illustration 3. The Guggenheim at the Venetian Las Vegas

The Guggenheim opened its museum in Las Vegas in late 2001 in expectation that the new clientele of a family-oriented Vegas would step out from the casinos to enjoy interludes of high culture. Photograph: Martin Hall, 2001.

Illustration 4. Simulated Johannesburg in the Gold Reef City Casino

Gold Reef City celebrates an imagined Johannesburg in its early years – a city of adventure and possibility for all. The Apartheid Museum, across the parking lot, provides the counterpoint of exploitation, segregation and discrimination. Photograph: Martin Hall, 2001.