CHAPTER 1

The Museum as a Way of Seeing

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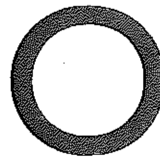

ne of the clearest memories from museum visits of my childhood is of a crab. It was a giant crab, to be precise, which was in a glass case, a quite hard-to-find case, in the Peabody Museum (actually, in the Museum of Comparative Zoology) in Cambridge. As I remember, it was the scale that was so astonishing. I had never seen a crab that size and had therefore not imagined that it was possible. It was not only the size of the whole but of each of its individual parts. One could see the way it was made: huge claws, bulging eyes, feelers, raised bumps of shell, knobbly joints, hairs that extended out around them. It was placed at the corner of a case so that one could walk around from the front to the side and take it in from another view: a smallish main body delicately supported on improbably long legs, like the tines of some huge fork or rake.

I could attend to a crab in this way because it was still, exposed to view, dead. Its habitat and habits of rest, eating, and moving were absent. I had no idea how it had been caught. I am describing looking at it as an artifact and in that sense like a work of art. The museum had transformed the crab—had heightened, by isolating, these aspects, had encouraged one to look at it in this way. The museum had made it an object of visual interest.

The museums of Europe have a long history of encouraging at-

tention to objects, crabs included, as visible craft. This was a good part of the rationale of the early museums, those encyclopedic collections of Renaissance princes. Much has been said of the ideology of power, political and intellectual, engaged in both the collecting of objects and the taxonomic manner of ordering them. But I want to stress that what was collected was judged to be of visual interest (and even was enhanced by early museological concern that cases be in appropriate colors). Spaces were set aside for the display of examples of natural and human artifice from around the world. Rare sorts of fish were displayed side by side with human oddities (two-headed or hairy), Chinese porcelains, and antique busts.[1] In a special class were objects that tested the border between the craft of nature and that of culture, natural artifice and man's—goblets fashioned out of shell, for example, or worked coral. Indeed, painters took up the challenge in their own media: Dürer's watercolor crabs or the painted flowers and shells of Jan Bruegel compete with what nature has made. The visual interest accorded a flower or shell in nature is challenged by the visual interest of the artist's representational craft. Providing paintings of rare flowers and shells for attentive looking in encyclopedic collections was one way that artists were involved with the museum from the start. Some apocalyptic accounts of the modern museum's usurpation of the artist and his or her art are misleading. From Bruegel's time to that of Cézanne and Picasso, museums have been a school for craftsmen and artists.

The taste for isolating this kind of attentive looking at crafted objects is as peculiar to our culture as is the museum as the space or institution where the activity takes place. (A separate space for images is of course not totally exceptional among humans—prehistoric paintings were in caves, Egyptian paintings were in tombs, and already in the Renaissance Europeans had turned a chapel, Giotto's Arena Chapel, into a viewing box where the ritual of attentive looking and the display of skill went hand in hand with religious ritual.) If the crab seems an eccentric example, we might consider instead a Greek statue, removed from its sanctuary or stadium, eyes gone, color worn to an overall pallor. The museum effect—turning all objects into works of art—operates here, too. Though as an issue of national property some Greek statues may be returned to their place of origin, no one would deny—and I think no one has thought to protest—the museum effect, through which Greek sculpture has assumed such a lasting place in our visual culture. By contrast, in the exhibiting of the material culture of

other peoples, in particular what used to be called "primitive" art, it is the museum effect—the tendency to isolate something from its world, to offer it up for attentive looking and thus to transform it into art like our own—that has been the subject of heated debate.

The museum effect, I want to argue, is a way of seeing. And rather than trying to overcome it, one might as well try to work with it. It is very possible that it is only when, or insofar as, an object has been made with conscious attention to crafted visibility that museum exhibition is culturally informing: in short, when the cultural aspects of an object are amenable to what museums are best at encouraging. Romanesque capitals or Renaissance altarpieces are appropriately looked at in museums (*pace* Malraux) even if not made for them. When objects like these are severed from the ritual site, the invitation to look attentively remains and in certain respects may even be enhanced.

But objects are not always exhibited in such a way as to bring this out. Museums can make it hard to see. I shall begin with Dutch art and culture, the case I know best (the crustaceans of my grown-up days). A recent, highly acclaimed exhibition was entitled Masters of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Landscape Painting.[2] The organization of the exhibition was chronological by loosely described types and the catalogue was alphabetical by artist—both established art-historical categories of mind. But there was no visual evidence offered that the categories or the change over time was part of the enterprise of those making the pictures. Of course we know that any order we place on material is ours and not necessarily theirs. But in this instance there was contrary visual evidence, from the layout of the great maplike panoramic views of Koninck to the extraordinary backlit clouds and cows of Cuyp, that Dutch artists had other things on their minds than these proposed types and their sequence.

It is not that a chronological arrangement can never make cultural as well as pictorial sense. Until the rehanging of London's National Gallery in recent years, one could walk through rooms of Italian painting from the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries and discover through looking that the sequence of those paintings—in terms of media, color, and handling and arrangement of figures and setting—resulted from a self-conscious experimental practice. It was not by chance that the model of art as history, as distinguished from other kinds of accounts of making art, is provided by Vasari writing on Italian Renaissance works such as these. The persistent adjustment and calibration of elements construed as problems and taken up suc-

cessively by certain artists is a distinctive aspect of this visual culture. To walk through the rooms was to see that for at least three hundred years those objects themselves constituted a history.

To offer another example in which the historical construing of visual culture is justified: Some of the most successful exhibitions of Western art in recent years have been monographic. The work of an individual artist is a characteristic form our culture takes. Therefore, setting out the lifetime production of one individual makes sense as visual culture. It makes sense to look even if the order that emerges from viewing seems to be obsessional (as Fragonard looked to me) rather than developmental in nature.

But the visual culture of Dutch pictures is different in kind. If one wants to offer it for viewing one might suggest exhibiting landscapes along with drawn or printed maps, which share both a pictorial format and a notion of knowledge. Or one might hang Cuyp's backlit cows and clouds with works in other genres (interiors, for example) that share his fascination with the problems of the representation of light; one might also try to show where else in the culture (in the pursuit of natural knowledge, for example) this optical interest can be traced.

Dutch painters have not been renowned for their history paintings, that major European genre dealing with significant human actions as narrated in central texts of the tradition. Nor did they make pictures of important public events: a map of a battleground or a portrait of a general with his family takes the place of what in another country might be the depiction in paint of a heroic battle or a surrender. What happens, then, when an exhibition is mounted that focuses on a major historical event? In 1979 the Central Museum of Utrecht commemorated the 1579 Union of Utrecht, the Dutch declaration of independence from Spain.[3] But the declaration of union itself was overwhelmed and lost amidst a feast for the eyes—documents, decorated plates, coins, engravings, illustrated journal entries, maps, and drawings of land holdings. One came to understand Dutch culture better but perhaps in a way contrary to the intention of the exhibition. (The catalogue title, which begins with a proverb posed as a question—"De kogel door de kerk?" or "The Die is Cast?"—and the decision to focus not on the event but on 1559–1609, the fifty years surrounding it, already reveal a curious diffidence about an event as the occasion for celebration.) It was as if the Dutch were so committed to recording and understanding in pictures that they could not focus on a single event or text. The museum played its part here: the orga-

nizers obviously tried to collect material of visual interest so that the exhibition would be museum-viable, and the museum in its turn made such objects of visual interest stand out. But nowhere in the exhibition or its catalogue was the proliferation of images itself recognized or assessed. This is not a case of pictures illustrating history, such as we can find in certain types of illustrated history books, but rather pictures themselves constituting a social fact.

The most famous recent attempt to consciously transform the exhibition of European art in the direction of the broader culture is the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. Both in the media displayed (furniture and decorative arts, photographs, and sculpture mixed in with painting) and in the choice of artists exhibited, this museum disputes the accepted canon—by which is meant twentieth-century notions of skill, ambition, and the achievement of art in the second half of the nineteenth century in France. The Orsay, paradoxically, makes seeing almost impossible. First of all, the way the pictures are sited and lighted and the presence of distracting hardware make the pictures hard to see. Secondly, works of lesser visual interest (e.g., Couture) are better placed for looking at than those of greater visual interest (e.g., Courbet), and the paintings of lesser visual interest are not visually improved by this exposure. One critic has defended the Orsay by saying that the social history of art is not about what is visible but about what is invisible. All well and good, but then one might ask: how, or why, exhibit it in a museum?[4]

I started with the hypothesis that everything in a museum is put under the pressure of a way of seeing. A serial display, be it of paintings or masks, stools or pitchforks (I have in mind here the Musée d'Orsay, the Musée National d'Art Populaire in Paris, and any older ethnographic museum), establishes certain parameters of visual interest, whether those parameters are known to have been intended by the objects' producers or not. This might also be accomplished in a museum by the exhibition of one sample of a class—a Couture in Japan, perhaps, or a baled fish net, as on the cover of the catalogue for the Art/artifact exhibition mounted by the Center for African Art in New York.[5] Each of my examples is a work exhibited outside its place of origin: difference from what is customarily seen is a spur to visual attention, while extending a sense of craft. But as the Orsay hugely demonstrates, when exhibited together certain objects in any class might repay attentive looking more than others. When the works of artists were seen amidst the pictures and even in the kinds of spaces and lighting to which the artists themselves aspired—Courbet beside

Géricault and Delacroix in the huge nineteenth-century room at the Louvre, the Impressionists in the intimate, quasi-domestic rooms of the Jeu de Paume—this was acknowledged and visual attention was possible.

The distinction a museum brings out between a Courbet and a Couture is comparable to that which it brings out between a highly decorated African stool (I am thinking here of the Baule word *aguin*[6]) and another, plainer one. But—particularly if the object was not made for such attentive looking—this distinction need not have been a cultural value for the maker and users, nor need the object be what we would call a work of art. What the museum registers is visual distinction, not necessarily cultural significance.

It is only recently that peoples or groups, nations, and even cities have felt that to be represented in a museum was to be given recognition as a culture, therefore giving rise, I suppose, to questions about how to do it right. It may not be politically or institutionally possible to suggest that justice to a people should not be dependent on their representation, or their representability, in a museum. Some cultures lack artifacts of visual interest. And politics aside, museums are perhaps not the best means of offering general education about cultures. It is not only that cultures are not the sum of their materials, but also that books and/or film might do the job much better. I remain puzzled as to how James Clifford would make a museum display in the manner of the anthropological text he praises, which describes the "inauthentic," heterogeneous living tradition of a Zuni Shalako ceremony.[7] The home setting of "tribal" art (e.g., a photograph of the interior of Chief Shake's house, Wrangel, Alaska, 1909) that Clifford offers as an alternative to the Museum of Modern Art's much-discussed "Primitivism" in Twentieth-Century Art show would look suspiciously like a Rauschenberg (if in two dimensions) or a Kienholz (if in three) if it were exhibited in a museum. Our way of seeing can open itself to different things, but it remains inescapably ours.

One measure of a museum's success would seem to be the freedom and interest with which people wander through and look without the intimidating mediation between viewer and object that something such as the ubiquitous earphones provides. Considered in these terms, the Museum of Modern Art in New York is a signal success. When MOMA applied some years back for support from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to put on an exhibition, a question was raised about evidence of educational content. Hanging pictures in a certain way on the wall was all right for art (for the

National Endowment for the Arts) but not for education (which is the province of NEH). MOMA came up with the device of a separate informational room, with much documentation on the wall and so forth, through which one passed on the way to the pictures that were there for the looking. It seems to me a practice worth imitating, though one might even dare to put the documentation after the pictures, not before. Or one could, like the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., offer take-home sheets that do not interrupt and discourage looking while in the museum.

Perhaps more attention could be paid to the educational possibilities of installing objects rather than communicating ideas about them. Free viewers, in other words, and make them less intimidated about looking. One way of doing this is to pay as much attention to the possibilities of installation as to the information about what is being installed. Of course, the two are not separate—though one might argue that the collecting and cataloguing functions of a museum can continue behind the scenes while installations do more in the way of encouraging seeing and suggesting ways to see. Recent monographic shows in which the detailed documentation is put in a catalogue separated from the evidence offered by the works themselves provide one model for this. In the face of the American enthusiasm these days for turning museums into major educational institutions, it is a matter of redressing the balance. The way a picture or object is hung or placed—its frame or support, its position relative to the viewer (is it high, low, or on a level? Can it be walked around or not? Can it be touched? Can one sit and view it or must one stand?), the light on it (does one want constant light? Focused or diffuse? Should one let natural light and dark play on it and let the light change throughout the day and with the seasons?), and the other objects it is placed with and so compared to—all of these affect how we look and what we see.

The history of exhibiting practice makes clear that this idea is hardly new. A visit to museums such as the Pitti Palace in Florence or the Musée de l'Homme in Paris, which retain outdated modes of exhibition, suggests less that they were wrong and we can get it right than that the museum—as a way of seeing—itself keeps changing and that installation has a major effect on what one sees. A constant, however, is the issue of seeing. And the question to ask is, why and with what visual interest in view do we devise this or that display for particular objects?

My conclusion about the representation of culture in a museum is a bit troubling: Museums turn cultural materials into art objects. The

products of other cultures are made into something that we can look at. It is to ourselves, then, that we are representing things in museums. But museums provide a place where our eyes are exercised and where we are invited to find both unexpected as well as expected crafted objects to be of visual interest to us. The mixture of distance, on the one hand, with a sense of human affinity and common capacities, on the other, is as much part of the experience of looking at a Dutch landscape painting of the seventeenth century as it is of looking at a carved Baule heddle pulley of the twentieth. This, it seems to me, is a way of seeing that museums can encourage.

NOTES

1. For a study and catalogue of a partially reconstituted collection of this kind at Schloss Ambras, Innsbruck, see *Die Kunstkammer* (Innsbruck: Verlaganstalt Tyrolia, 1977).

2. Peter C. Sutton et al., *Masters of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Landscape Painting* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1987).

3. S. Groenveld et al., *De kogel door de kerk? De opstand in de Nederlanden en de rol van de Unie van Utrecht, 1559–1609* (Utrecht: De Walburg Pers, 1979).

4. See Linda Nochlin, "Successes and Failures at the Orsay Museum, or What Ever Happened to the Social History of Art?" *Art in America* 76, no. 1 (Jan. 1988), 88.

5. *Art/artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections* (New York: Center for African Art, 1988).

6. Discussed in Susan Vogel's introductory essay to Baule art in *Perspectives: Angles on African Art* (New York: Center for African Art, 1987), 147.

7. James Clifford, "Histories of the Tribal and the Modern," in *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 204, 213.

CHAPTER 2

Exhibiting Intention: Some Preconditions of the Visual Display of Culturally Purposeful Objects

MICHAEL BAXANDALL

In order to get a minimal specificity of focus on the problem, I think I must begin by positing both a certain sort of exhibition and a certain sort of viewer. The sort of exhibition I have in mind is, broadly speaking, traditional, by which I mean that it consists of the display of objects for examination. The objects are presented in vitrines, on stands, or on walls and are accompanied by labels, leaflets, or a catalogue. There may be additional elements—video displays or films, theatrical or musical performances, perhaps even cuisine—but the center of the exhibition consists of objects offered for inspection and to some extent expounded. This may seem a very conservative sort of exhibition, but it seems likely, particularly in the case of permanent displays as opposed to temporary exhibitions, that an array of objects and artifacts offered for inspection will remain the central element.

As for the viewer, he or she is an adult member of a developed society. He (let us say) has the "museum set": he has a sense of the museum as treasure house, educational instrument, secular temple, and the rest. However, it is to two particular aspects of him that I want to point. First, he has come to the exhibition partly to look at visually interesting objects. He expects things to look at and he expects a large part of his activity in the exhibition to consist of looking. If this were not so he would have stayed at home and read a book about the

culture. And in looking at the objects he will find some more interesting than others, for reasons coming out of his own culture—these reasons being aesthetic, from vernacular anthropology, and other. But (and this is the second aspect I want to point to) he is also disposed to be interested in the purpose and function of the artifacts he sees. He wants to know what an artifact is. Like his value judgments, his analytical categories will be to a large extent culturally determined.

It seems axiomatic that it is not possible to exhibit objects without putting a construction upon them. Long before the stage of verbal exposition by label or catalogue, exhibition embodies ordering propositions. To select and put forward any item for display, as something worth looking at, as interesting, is a statement not only about the object but about the culture it comes from. To put three objects in a vitrine involves additional implications of relation. There is no exhibition without construction and therefore—in an extended sense—appropriation.

It is clear that the viewer looking at an artifact from another culture—whether the other culture is distant geographically or chronologically—is in a complicated position. This predicament has been the focus of elaborate discussion since the late eighteenth century. The viewer of an artifact in an anthropological exhibition is subject to further complications and pressures. Three cultural terms are involved. First, there are the ideas, values, and purposes of the culture from which the object comes. Second, there are the ideas, values, and, certainly, purposes of the arrangers of the exhibition. These are likely to be laden with theory and otherwise contaminated by a concept of culture that the viewer does not necessarily possess or share. Third, there is the viewer himself, with all his own cultural baggage of unsystematic ideas, values and, yet again, highly specific purposes.

Let us take the case of a European or American viewer with a Kota *mbulu-ngulu* by itself in a case or on a wall. Because it has been offered for inspection, he takes it that the object has been considered worthy of inspection, either for its cultural importance or for its beauty and the producer's skill. It is spotlit for some purpose. He may or may not find it attractive, but for any of a number of reasons—the museum set, the authority of the exhibitors, or his own curiosity about a visually interesting object—he reads a label or catalogue entry with a view to learning about it. Let us say the label tells him something like the following: The object is made of brass sheet over wood and is the product of the Kota, who live in Gabon and the Republic of the

Congo. They venerate their ancestors, and these carvings are made to warn off evil spirits from the remains of ancestors. The label or catalogue entry also makes two other points. One is that the *mbulu-ngulu* is to be compared with a wooden Fang *bieri* head or figure elsewhere in the room, the Fang being neighbors of the Kota to the west who make the *bieri* figures with a similar purpose of protecting ancestors. The second is that the Kota *mbulu-ngulu* is an example of the class of object on which Picasso drew in making the protocubist paintings of 1907. But for the moment I shall leave aside these pieces of information and discuss the effect on the viewer of the basic information in the label about facture and function.

What the label says is not in any normal sense descriptive. It does not cover the visual character of the object. To do so would involve an elaborate use of measurements and geometrical concepts and reference to the representational elements, and would in any case be otiose, since the object is present. The label stands to the object in a relation of a different kind, not a descriptive but an explanatory relation. What the viewer sees in the object is in the first instance an idiosyncratic representation of a human being—an easily recognizable head with open mouth and cicatrices on the cheeks, surrounded by forms that can be read as representational of some kind of headdress, the whole set on a lozenge-shaped base he is likely to take as representational of a much-diminished body and legs. The interpretation offered by the label, therefore, is explanatory of the object in terms of cause.

The label offers the name of the object, *mbulu-ngulu*. That the object class has a name, even though the viewer's ignorance of the language prevents him from construing any signification or connotation in it, does signify that it is an object that plays a defined or established cultural role. That it has a name means it is a *sort* of thing.

The label also informs the viewer about the materials used, brass sheet and wood. This carries two kinds of explanatory implication. First, it accounts for certain characteristics of the stylization of form and decoration, which are in a fairly straightforward way medium-determined, or at least medium-reinforced. Second, it seems the product of a culture in which a specific kind of metalwork is both highly developed and highly esteemed.

The label also invokes an ancestor cult and the role of such figures as this as protectors of ancestral remains. The viewer is likely to go back to the figure with this information and put it to interpretive use. He will again infer that this object is an important object in its culture. And the information will also color his physiognomic inter-

pretation of the figure, so that the open mouth will be taken as minatory and fierce rather than, say, joyful or anguished.

All this is very obvious, and my reason for so laboring it is to lay the ground for a move away from the sense of exhibition as something that represents a human culture. Rather than one static entity representing another, I would prefer, as more productive, a notion of exhibition as a field in which at least three distinct terms are independently in play—makers of objects, exhibitors of made objects, and viewers of exhibited made objects. Two things are essential to this model. First, all three terms are active in the exhibition. Second, the activity of each of the three is differently directed and discretely if not incompatibly structured. Each of the three is playing, so to speak, a different game in the field.

The first agent, and clearly a very necessary one, is the maker of the artifact. If one thinks of the maker's relation to his culture in terms of the customary distinction between a participant's understanding and an observer's understanding, the maker is the classic participant. He understands his culture more immediately and spontaneously than any outsider (exhibitor or viewer included) can. Much of his understanding of it takes place without rational self-consciousness; much of his knowledge of it is dispositional. The Kota craftsperson making the *mbulu-ngulu* is a person who understands his culture with a tact and a flexibility no outsider, with however many years of fieldwork, can aspire to. He may well have reflected on why and how he makes the object, but it is not *necessary* that he should have done so; and if he has done so, the conceptual medium in which he has reflected will not have been ours. It would be possible for him to proceed with his craft much as he proceeds with his language—in a mood of informal knowledge and mastery. If he does reflect on his craft, he need not distinguish very sharply between the culturally specific and the general condition: between conditions set by the need to protect ancestors and conditions set by the properties of brass sheet. But the maker is active in the field of exhibition, in the artifacts that are the deposit of his activity.

The second agent in the field is an exhibitor. He is, of course, as cultural an operator as the Kota craftsperson. One of the odder products of his culture is the equivocating notion, or notions, of culture itself—a culturally specific concept with which he appropriates interesting things about other people. As the arbitrageur may appropriate the *mbulu-ngulu* by hanging it next to the 1907 Picasso in his living room, the anthropological exhibitor may appropriate it by "hanging"

it next to the concept of ancestor cult in a subcultural universe of discourse. The purposes of the exhibitor's activity are complex. They include putting on a good show and instructing the audience, but if these purposes come under the rubric of representing a culture then they also include, functionally, validating a theory—namely, a theory of culture. There seems nothing sinister in this. But clearly the exhibitor's activity in the field of exhibition has purposes and conditions different from those of the first agent, the maker of the objects exhibited.

The third agent active in the field is the viewer. In order to be able to think about him at all, I started by making some stipulations about his sort. He is a being of his culture; with his museum set, he colludes in the project of exhibition; on a vulgar level, he participates in some concept of culture. But specific to him are (1) that he has come to look at objects of visual interest, and (2) that he seeks understanding of the objects, whether in functional or teleological terms. There is, of course, a reciprocal relation between these two. Explanatory information affects the way he looks, and problems met in looking give rise to a desire for explanation. Culturally, he shares much with the second agent, the exhibitor, even if he does not participate in the stricter anthropological subculture. This degree of cultural overlap between viewer and exhibitor is one of the things that lead to confusion between the two, distinct though their purposes are. But though they may have much in common constitutionally, functionally they are dissimilar.

If exhibition is to be seen as a field in which three agents, not constitutionally identical, are behaving in three differently directed ways, how are we to conceive of their activities coming into contact? Perhaps we can conceive of them coming into contact in the space between object and label.

In invoking a space between object and label I have in mind a sort of intellectual space in which the third agent, the viewer, establishes contact between the first and second agents, the maker and the exhibitor. And I use the word *label* here to denote the elements of naming, information, and exposition the exhibitor makes available to the viewer in whatever form: a label is not just a piece of card, but includes the briefing given in the catalogue entry and even selection or lighting that aims to make a point. To attend to this space, it seems to me, is to attend not only to the scene but to the source of the viewer's activity.

Space (intellectual) exists between label (in its extended sense) and artifact because the label is not directly descriptive of the object. It may offer a name: *mbulu-ngulu*. It may offer a material cause: brass sheet and wood. It may offer a final cause: protection of the remains of ancestors. It may offer an efficient cause: a Kota craftsperson. It does not describe the object. It describes the exhibitor's thinking about the object, or that part of his thinking he feels it to be his purpose to communicate to the viewer. The nearest thing the label offers to a description is the numerical statement of the object's dimensions—something of which the viewer, who can see the object, is unlikely to make very active use. To an extraordinary extent the exhibitor expounds by communicating pieces of information the viewer takes, at least in the first instance, as *causes*—material, efficient, final—of the object being as it is. The exhibitor may have been less interested in causes than effects; his interest in the pieces of information may well have been because they locate the object as an effect, or sign, of this or that cultural fact, one item in the larger pattern of culture he is charged with exhibiting. But the viewer, tackling these alien objects, seeks causes. This would give rise to more misunderstanding, and viewer and exhibitor would be even more at odds, if it were not that the viewer, being a doggedly cause-seeking animal, is at the same time constructing for himself a causal explanation of the exhibitor's behavior as well as the object maker's—but this is a complication I do not want to pursue here.

What I want to lay emphasis on is that the viewer, moving about in the space between object and label, is highly active. He is not a passive subject for instruction. He moves with great vitality between visually pleasurable (or at least intriguing) objects and equally pleasurable cause finding; then he moves back from information about causes to visually interesting objects, scanning the objects for applications of these causes. One can see this shuttling process in different lights. It can be seen as an attempt to reconcile two propositions about a culture—the participant's culturally conditioned action, or practical proposition, on the one hand, and the observer's implicit explanation, by selection of an item of information that potentially is a cause, on the other. It can also be seen as a case of the viewer demanding a certain kind of art criticism. He uses this or that item of information about cause to sharpen his perception of the object—attending anew to a manner of ornament or the significance of an open mouth, material or final cause at hand.

The purest causes—the least contaminated by our own culturally

determined conceptualizations—are the material causes. Names may differ, but an 80-20 copper-zinc alloy is transcultural both as a concept and in its properties. "Brass" is not intellectually appropriative, as "ancestor cult" is. But an exhibition that confined its exposition to material causality would fall short of representing culture. What is more, the viewer would not rest at this point. He works primarily with intention—intention not of course in the sense of mental events in the maker's mind, but a posited purposefulness about the object. The intention of the object is a relation between culturally conditioned goals or functions (it does not matter which) pursued with culturally enabled resources in culturally determined circumstances. Given information about goals (or functions), resources, and circumstances, the viewer will construct an intentional description of the object for himself. And deprived of these pieces of information, he probably will make them up.

What is the exhibitor, who is charged with representing a culture—and with doing so to a viewer whose posture in the field of exhibition entails not so much that he should take artifacts as individual effects of general cultures but that he should take individual cultural facts as causes of artifacts—to do? Obviously, I have been arguing in a general way that one thing the exhibitor might do is to acknowledge in a practical way that he is only one of three agents in the field, and to acknowledge in a practical way that between the exhibitor's own label and the artifact is a space in which the viewer will act by his own lights to his own ends. But I would finish by making three more specific points in extension of this.

First, the objects or artifacts least likely to cause misunderstanding between viewer and maker are objects *intended* for exhibition. I mean that objects designed to be looked at for their visual interest are those that properly can be displayed and examined for their visual interest. A viewer looking at an artifact that is not designed for looking at but that is exhibited as culturally interesting, culturally telling, or indicative of cultural or technical level is hard put not to be a voyeur, intrusive and often embarrassed. But I have more in mind the point that an object that has been made with a view to being examined for its visual interest—to signify, if you will, visually—is less likely to be misread by the viewer disposed to look at things for their visual interest. This is naturally a matter of degree. It is not only what we would call works of art that are designed, at least in part, to be visually admired: there may be a large element of this also in a canoe or a

fishing net, a little in an ax head. But we are less likely to mis-take an object made with a view to its visual effect, such as a *mbulu-ngulu* or a batik textile. In other words, there seems to me to be an issue of exhibitability. The exhibitable object is one made *for* visual exhibition or display. The viewer may indeed bring inappropriate concepts and standards to his examination of it (and this is something the exhibitor can do something about), but the visual curiosity itself will not be improper.

The second point I would make is that it is surely desirable to install actually within the exhibition itself the element of cross-culturality inherent in the viewer's situation, that is, in the display of objects from one culture to persons of another culture. My own feeling is that exhibitions in which different cultures are combined or juxtaposed are inherently more wholesome than exhibitions of single cultures. The juxtaposition of objects from different cultural systems signals to the viewer not only the variety of such systems but the cultural relativity of his own concepts and values. On the other hand, faced by an assemblage of culturally coherent objects, the viewer is less alerted to his own cultural distance; cultural difference is not built into the display. An alternative to the culturally mixed exhibition is the exhibition that thematically addresses the relationship between another culture and our own. Thus one could argue that to exhibit the Kota *mbulu-ngulu* with the 1907 Picasso, at least without the further implications of a setting in an arbitrageur's living room, is precisely *not* to appropriate it but to acknowledge and signal cultural difference—any reflective viewer knowing that the circumstances of the Kota craftsperson and Picasso are different. The effect of visual similarity is to accent difference.

The desirability of recognizing the viewer's disposition to be active in the space between label and object is my third and last point. It is, yet again, the status of the viewer as an agent in the field of exhibition that I want to accent. The exhibitor can accommodate this status less by seeking to control or direct the viewer's mind in this space than by, as it were, enlarging the space. There are many ways in which he can do this. The one I would mention here is the offering of a cultural fact relevant to the object that demands that the viewer work to make the connection. He need not work very hard. If I offer as a fact relevant to a piece of Maori sculpture the fact that Maori carvers of wooden sculpture leave the chips that fall as they cut lying on the ground as they fell, not allowing themselves to clear or disturb them, the implications for the carver's sense of both skill and material

can be drawn, as can the implications of this sense for the object seen. To offer a pregnant cultural fact and let the viewer work at it is surely both more tactful and stimulating than explicit interpretation. Sufficient interpretation lies in the selection of the fact. This can be made even more wholesome by incorporating a concept, indeed a word, from the culture that produced the object. The systematic incompatibility of another culture's concept with one's own culture not only makes the viewer work, but reminds him of cultural difference. The best label for a Fang *bieri* would be an exposition of the Fang concept of *bibwe,* a culturally specific concept in the area of what we would call "balance." The most effective elucidation I know of Chinese painting is the Chinese concept of *pi-i* (literally, "brush-idea"), precisely because of the concept's difficulty and cultural strangeness.

Exhibitors cannot *represent* cultures. Exhibitors can be tactful and stimulating impresarios, but exhibition is a social occasion involving at least three active terms. The activity the exhibition exists for is between viewer and maker. If the exhibitor wants to help or influence this activity, it should not be by discoursing either directly or indirectly about culture, which is his own construct, but rather by setting up nonmisleading and stimulating conditions between the exhibitor's own activity (selection and label making) and the maker's object. The rest is up to the viewer.