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For most people the term museum connotes past and permanent, whereas for some of us it has become involved in flux and the future. That is because war has not only destroyed certain museum buildings but has also struck at the conceptions of what those buildings should enclose. Yet though the pseudo-Greek porticos may have been knocked about the essential foundations remain sound.

The museums profession has defined the prime function of a museum as conservation, has recognized the second main function to afford opportunity for research in relation to the materials conserved. The third and fourth functions should be concerned with visual education and the museum as a centre for the enrichment of the life of the community.

Thus, in view of the physical changes which have been enforced and the ideological changes which have been tacitly admitted, speculation as to the future can be more imaginative. Yet even when the atmosphere quivers with rumours and rumbles of reconstruction, the more wary will realize that at most prophesy is a folly and at best an intelligent interpretation based on the past.

So that before embarking on the diversion of what a museum could be it might be as well to note summarily what it has been and may still be for three major type-groups of people, namely, the governing bodies, the professional employees, and the visiting public. Apart from national museums most others have come under local government control, or the administration of societies, or are privately owned. Poverty is the pass-word which opens the door on the attitude to most of these, poverty of finances, imagination and conception. Speaking relatively, only a minority of large provincial museums are regarded other than as non-profit making, minor departments ranking lowest in the hierarchy of civic authority. Anyone who is inclined to regard this as exaggeration should consult "The Museums and Art Galleries of the British Isles" by S. F. Markham, Report to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees, 1938.

Inevitably, in such a situation where the status is equivocal, the official has tended to adopt various attitudes consonant with self-assertion, preservation and defence. For him the museum may be a sinecure, a place in which to earn a meagre wage, an intellectual retreat, a research laboratory, a medium for idiosyncrasy or a nest for neurosis. Only rarely does he possess, or, more accurately, is he allowed to possess a really complete sense of vocation in terms of service to the community. This does not mean of course that there have not been many fine museum men who have given exceptionally selfless service, but usually at great cost to themselves and to their society in terms of frustrated potentialities.

In no small part this is slinked up with the confused views of the third large class of the general visitor. For him the museum has been a shelter from the weather, a rendezvous for lovers, a wearying item in a sight-seeing itinerary, an old curiosity shop, a place of gratuitous opinions on anything from bugs and beetles to pots and pictures. For him it has become a haunt of morbid curiosity and undigested information, a scene of Sunday pilgrimage, and a temple not so much of the muses as the mummies. All in all, for the man in the street it comprises that marvellous miscellany—a MUSEUM.

For many there is a nostalgic charm about this morbid muddle of a junk museum, akin to the sentimental attachment for olde-worlde cottages with roses round the door and dry-rot in the floors. Whilst such curiosities will doubtless survive in the fabric of a reconstructed world, in the current mood of new horizons, equality of opportunity and encouragement for the masses we must exchange the picturesque for the potential.

The museum potential is a blend of fact and fancy, of philosophical ideal and practical possibility. Though it would be vastly diverting to indulge in a museum of dreams, commonsense and experience eliminate the vision in favour of the wiser reality of envisaging the museum of the future in terms of what would give the citizen the best value for the money he is willing, or can be persuaded to spend. Such an approach has the advantage of cutting out a lot of sentimental eyewash about culture, of stripping from the artist and the official those embarrassing and hypocritical cloaks of aesthetic generosity and intellectual charity with which they are popularly shrouded, and of leaving the way clear for placing the responsibilities and the rewards where they properly belong.

Nowadays there is a frequent tendency to state that in the past the material advantages of culture have been the property of the few who have kept them to themselves. Sometimes we forget that they also paid for them, profited by them, and were prepared to accept the responsibilities as well as the pleasures of patronage. If in the new century of the common man the slogan is to be the best for the most, it would appear as if the common man has yet to realize the responsibilities which his common inheritance entail.

For, in the transfer from individual to communal ownership the thrill of acquisition has rather obscured the very difficult mental adjustment involved in loving as against coveting the possession. The individual owner feels care and affection for his possessions. With communal ownership the responsibility for care can be transferred to a third-party curator, but affection can only be assumed by members of the community; pride of possession is not enough.

Therefore, the crux of the *could* in asking what a museum could be lies in this inculcation of the quality of personal joy in participation on the part of the people who inherit. The museum must be in the heart of the community, both literally as a building and metaphorically as the source from which the life-blood of sensibility would pulsate through the common body. Some may question the analogy, sensing in it a challenge to the church, to which I would reply that I partly distinguish between spiritual awareness as the concern of the churches and spiritual sensibility as the concern of the museums, whilst recognising that the rôles in respect of the citizen must be closely inter-related.

However fallible and open to criticism it may be, it is necessary to express this view because there appears to be too much emphasis on the educative aspect of museum practice, as in the amount of information which can be gained from a label or the quantity of knowledge which can be put on show. I suspect that this may account for a large measure of museum fatigue. Whereas people eat meals of selected foods at appropriate intervals so that "a little of what you fancy does you good," or go to the theatre and the cinema periodically for stimulation and refreshment, when it comes to museums there is a tendency towards 'once in a lifetime' so that eyes, brain and body are surfeited with impressions. Very few know how to use a museum as at one time the majority did not know how to use a library. Gradually they have learned to read one or few books at a time and to consult reference books when necessary, thus acquiring a library habit. Museums could assume such a character that people would similarly acquire a museum habit.

Towards this end it is my consistent policy to aim at an attitude of mind which will lead people to ask: "What's on at the museum?" In addition to courteous and efficient service one wants to create a friendly attitude so that members of the staff become akin to good hosts. Our business should be to make the specimens attractively available for pleasure and use, at the same time making the museum a focus for all kinds of meetings and activities, pleasant and enjoyable occasions. Then when over a sandwich and coffee at the lunchtime snack bar a visitor says 'I've been looking forward to this' or another says 'Although I've lived here for years it's only recently I've realized how much there was in this place to make life more worth while. Thank you for what you've done,' or a busy mother makes time to telephone and say 'I wanted you to know that my children have had the time of their lives in your clubs and come home every day thrilled to the marrow' that one feels that the museum is beginning to justify its existence and that the job is human and thrillingly worth doing.

Recently at a meeting a member of the audience begged me a question by asking: 'If tomorrow the civic authorities told you a site was available, money was no object, and they wanted a new museum and art gallery what proposition would you put up to them? Let yourself go.' Briefly, my answer covered the following main points. First, secure a good architect. Second, allocate about half the estimate for the layout of stores in relation to the main business of conserving the collections, making them extensive, air-conditioned, easy of access, planned on the unit principle for flexibility, and arranged rather like the books in a reference library with many specimens ready mounted for display as those in the Leicester Schools Service circulation collections. Adjacent to them would be laboratory equipment and apparatus to facilitate the enquiries and research of members of the public, students, scholars and that blessed breed of 'men with hobbies' who would have ready access to the collections.

Third, plan efficient quarters for the staff so that they would be encouraged and enabled to do and to give their best work; for them not only efficient workrooms but pleasant offices to form congenial environments. Close to the workrooms a large studio-construction room for the essential preparation of displays and backgrounds.

Fourth, design the main portion of the building with as large, clear areas of open display space as possible consonant with the structural supports so that instead of being cribbed and confined by permanent galleries, frequently changed designed displays could be staged for popular appeal, the theme or 'idea' being set in block units, screen walls, partitions and display cases. The basic principle would involve bringing out from the organized and readily accessible stores such materials which could be adapted and re-interpreted from time to time, much in the way that a large store sets out goods from stock in attractive selling displays or a repertory theatre, using familiar players, puts on a new production at frequent intervals.

Fifth, provide what can best be described as social amenities. For example, an auditorium suitable for lectures, equipped for sound films, with a stage and scene loft suitable for staging plays, this linked up with the museum display studio, as well as being suitable for chamber concerts. Essential provision of a fully equipped kitchen and restaurant, since my experience of a snack canteen working under all the difficulties and limitations of war conditions has proved that almost more than any other single factor it has contributed to making the museum more human and alive. Maybe there is something about a cup of tea, at least for the British, which transforms empires, morale and museums. Moreover, such a gallery restaurant could make quite a considerable æsthetic contribution in the creative character

of the meals it served and the manner of their lay-out and presentation. Under this heading also provide small and medium sized rooms, reflecting various styles in good interior decoration, to serve the double purpose of art display and use for meetings of clubs and societies, women's institutes, youth groups and so on. One could enumerate endlessly the valuable services and returns which in this direction alone a well-planned and well-equipped museum could make in the sphere of social amenities.

Within such a museum something analogous to the 'project' principle in education could be applied, with suitable modifications, to the programme policy. Already, in Leicester, a sample experiment of this kind, necessarily curtailed by wartime conditions, indicated that most satisfactory results could be obtained. The B.I.A.E. and CEMA exhibitions of French Drawings and Paintings were staged in consecutive months, and in relation to them the programmes of weekly lunchtime concerts mostly comprised relevant French music whilst evening university extension courses dealt with French art and culture since 1850. In this way a whole cultural complex acquired richer significance and public response was reflected in increased attendances, press controversy and the birth of new friendships around the glow of animated discussions.

Similarly, the B.I.A.E. 'Design for Living' Exhibition attracted types of people not normally used to coming to the museum because of its personal home-making character. By virtue of its 'open display' i.e. not behind glass, and its gay fabrics and flowers in vases it seemed to transform the whole atmosphere of the building. Within a few weeks it was emulated, with full Museum co-operation, in the staging of an exhibition of homes past and present at a local youth centre. The CEMA Exhibition 'Ballet Décor and Design' was tied up with an exhibit of local theatre designs, the visits of ballet companies, and discussions in an arts circle and a modern dance club.

This principle of co-operating with other groups such as clubs, amateur theatre, youth centres, units of H.M. Forces, W.E.A. evening classes, etc., is most potential for future museum developments because it involves the function of use as expounded above; it makes for an intelligent, and what is more important, enjoyable participation in the life of the museum. An A.T.S. Unit stationed near has planned an Eighteenth Century evening when they will play records, read extracts from writings and borrow pictures and illustrations of the modes of life. A Soroptomist's group has just held one of its meetings out of doors in a period museum, first viewing the exhibits and later eating an alfresco supper in the gardens. By such methods the materials on display cease to be merely objects behind glass cages and become

the raw materials of more intimate personal appreciation, enjoyment, and individual development, which, since this is a contribution to a journal of adult education, I contend is the best path of education through experience which is pleasurable.

This alliance of the pleasure-principle and the play-way with the acquisition of knowledge and experience is most excitingly shown in the activities of the Leicester Museum Children's Clubs, which whilst only in the pioneer stages of development already show most strikingly developments and stimulating possibilities. The two clubs, one for science and the other for art, have their own elected officers and arrange their own programmes. Sometimes they combine for excursions, or to listen to an invited speaker, or for a children's concert, or to put on a marionette show. Their activities aim at variety of approach to the museum materials, with emphasis on the variety. This week it may be a lecture on astronomy or geology, next week a pet's show for the zoologists, when it's fine a field excursion, and when it's wet a treasure hunt through the museum. Even a group of adults found that this last was not only educating but colossal fun.

To take an isolated example of this project we might consider the giraffe, which to most visitors is a large, slightly comic, stuffed creature at the head of the stairs, surveying the activities below with an apparent air of cynical indifference. For the children he has become a most versatile creature of inspiration and is the symbol on their badge of membership, is modelled in plasticine and glitterwax, cut out in coloured paper, incorporated in crayon-drawn fantasies, becomes a leading character in the puppet show, may be the subject of a solemn dissertation in the science club, and for the tinies (we had to limit the age at four) both a fit subject on which to try and pin a tail when blindfolded and a charming character in a Just-So story.

Thus, if one accepts the cynic's view that the average adult is of mental age slightly less than that of a bright school child, maybe the museum which is planned, organized and displayed so as to appeal to children will one day stand a chance of attracting adults. Meanwhile, were I asked to sum up my views of the museum prospect before us, I should say that a museum could be alive and alert, it could still meet the official obligation to be conservative about its collections and liberal in the matter of research, but at the same time there is nothing to prevent it being progressive in its visual education and healthily communal in the range of its social activities. And in prophetic mood I would indicate no longer a remote temple harbouring its collections on a hill but a living museum purveying its goods in the market place.

TREVOR THOMAS