
BOOK REVIEWS

Women in the Museum: Lessons from the Workplace.

Joan H. Baldwin and Anne W. Ackerson.
New York: Routledge, 2017.

Joan Baldwin and Anne Ackerson have done their time in MuseumLand. They co-founded the Gender Equity in Museums Movement (GEMM), and while conducting interviews for their first publication, *Leadership Matters* (2013), participants said that another book about women in museums was needed. This resulted in *Women in the Museum: Lessons from the Workplace* (7).

Women in the Museum exposes historic and systemic gender-related problems. The first lesson is that gender is still relevant in a post-feminist world. The second lesson concerns gaps in the historiography surrounding the building of museums in America. For example, the history of the American Association of Museums (AAM), written in the late 1960s, ignored several influential women: Elizabeth Colt, Laura Bragg, as well as Lizzie Bliss, Mary Quinn Sullivan, and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, aka “The Trinity” founders of the Modern Museum of Art in 1929 (27–28, 34; MoMA n.d.). Colt started her collection of European art in 1862 and donated it to the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in 1905 after her death (26). The Atheneum accepted the bequest once sweetened by a donation of a large sum of money. The money was used to create a wing in her name, but the collection was not displayed until 1996 in an exhibition designed around the Colt firearms company rather than Colt’s art collection (Wadsworth Athe-

neum Museum of Art 2015). In 1921, Bragg was appointed the first female director of the Charleston Museum in South Carolina. Bragg pushed boundaries: she opened the museum to black as well as white audiences; she also created a traveling education program for the museum (29). Despite her museological innovations, Bragg was not celebrated for such and was instead seen as too manly.

The chapters on equity reveal some startling trends. In 1973, a Women’s Caucus formed to address pay equity, hiring practices, and regular data collection on gender. A year later, the founder, Susan Stitt, presented the Caucus’s demands to the American Alliance of Museums to “draw up guidelines for adoption by AAM concerning fair hiring practices with regard to women” (Baldwin 2017). More museum doors opened for women, but many issues raised by the Caucus remain unaddressed (9, 46; see GEMM 2016). For instance, MoMA, the art museum founded by women, has yet to appoint a female director. In 2013, an Association of Art Directors survey showed that women were struggling to break into the big museums and that they were earning almost a third less than their male counterparts (Sheets 2014). The US Bureau of Labor Statistics’ 2015 survey across museums and historical sites found that almost half of this workforce was female. Based on these figures, we should expect to see greater representation of women in senior roles in the near future. However, will increased representation of women employed in this sector solve existing differences in pay?

Baldwin and Ackerson focus on the United States. Perhaps it is time to produce a similar



volume for the Asia-Pacific region. New Zealand has been a forerunner of gender equality since women gained the right to vote in 1893, yet it took another half-century for the first female museum director appointment: Olga Simpson directed the Southland Museum from 1953 to 1959 (Gilchrist 2000). Another landmark moment occurred in 1992 with the appointment of Cheryll Sotheran as founding chief executive of the new national museum, which merged the National Museum and the National Art Gallery to create the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Stuff 2017; Te Papa n.d.).

Baldwin and Ackerson give readers a solid stepping stone to discovering more about the history of women in museums and encourage students to look at their own nations' historical beginnings. They also detail how women seeking a career in the heritage sector will encounter existing barriers. These lessons from the workplace provided me with confidence *not* to accept the status quo.

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Museums and Anthropology in the Age of Engagement.

Christina Kreps.
London: Routledge, 2020.

On the cover of Christina Kreps's fine new book is a photograph of a road sign for a museum in provincial Indonesia: it shows the supposedly universal symbol of a museum as temple with its classical pediment and colonnade. But what we discover with the Museum Pusaka Nias is that, in fact, museums and museology in the Southwest Pacific are *not* merely translations of a Western concept, but take on quite a different form. Staff were certainly "museum-minded" but in their own way, in that their collecting and display practices represented a distinctive "local" museology that was context-specific, or what Kreps refers to as "appropriate museology" (199–201). "Ideally it is a bottom-up, community-based approach,"

writes Kreps, “that combines local knowledge, resources and museological practices with those of the professional museum world to better meet the needs and interests of a particular museum and its community” (200).

This beautifully written and richly illustrated monograph is based on long-standing research, but is also up to date with the latest critical theory and academic debates, amounting to decades of thinking and writing directed to important issues central to museums, anthropology, and their relationships with communities. Kreps is a senior figure in these fields, a fact reflected in the role she often plays as a mentor, editor, respondent, and reviewer, and witnessed by her expertly written afterword to the research articles in this issue of *Museum Worlds*. Readers will welcome a major book by such a seasoned academic and professional, especially one that is at once topical but also timeless, taking the long view on many urgent issues in the present that can be seen through a wider and deeper lens.

Museums and Anthropology in the Age of Engagement is dedicated to Michael Ames, the pioneering Canadian anthropologist and museum director, who is quoted on the first page of the introduction, criticizing museums and anthropology for their lack of public engagement. Ames’s critical anthropology of museums, and his collaborative work with Indigenous tribes around Vancouver, led to groundbreaking initiatives at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia (Ames 1992). Kreps writes that Ames and others, like Richard Kurin at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC, were responding to “pressures to be more socially relevant, publicly engaged, and accountable to diverse communities” (1).

Since this criticism in the 1980s, museums and anthropology seem to have come together to address these concerns, and much has changed. At the end of the book, Kreps, who is Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Museum of Anthropology at the University of Denver, reflects on recent work at the campus museum, which has become imbedded

in academic teaching and research programs as well as community outreach. She and her colleagues participate in transnational projects of intercultural dialogue, reckon with difficult histories through consultation with Native American communities, and work with contemporary artists. University museums have made a comeback, returning to teaching with objects and collections once regarded as old-fashioned, and reconnecting theoretically inclined academic anthropology with museum work through “engaged research, teaching and practice” (27).

In this book, the author aims to map “contemporary trends in museum anthropology” and “provide an historical perspective on engagement and the public role of anthropology practiced in and through museums” (2). The introduction concisely surveys developments in museum anthropology as an applied/public form of anthropology, intersections with museum studies and the new museum ethics, various approaches to engagement, and the growing social role of museums in relation to their communities. Museum anthropology is seen as a type of “cultural work” (4). The expert mapping of the contemporary field of museum anthropology in Chapter 2, guided by an authoritative review of the literature, shows how many diverse forces including postcolonial and Indigenous critiques and activism have powered indigenization and decolonization efforts.

Chapter 3, which I found particularly interesting, described the “shared histories and trajectories” of museum and applied anthropology, showing how these “once separate fields have converged” (24). Kreps’s nuanced historical reading of forgotten or overlooked episodes reveals surprising contributions by female and Indigenous anthropologists in the early twentieth century, and exhibitions in the 1960s and 1970s that prefigured the collaborative practice of later decades. I really liked the way that this “history of continuity in change” casts museums and anthropology in a new light, in contrast to the postmodern crises/critique model of the 1980s, which tends to erase

the past and overlook earlier and ever-present criticism and debate within the field. There are many lessons here: I had no idea about H. H. Frese, the Dutch museum anthropologist, who in 1960 published a book called *Anthropology and the Public: The Role of Museums* (79–80). I was also fascinated to read about the historical origins of the word “decolonization,” so widely and somewhat loosely used today, and what it meant in the postwar period, a genealogy we would do well to remember (on this topic, see Kreps’s incisive intervention at the World Museologies Workshop in Osaka in Osorio Sunnuks et al.’s report in this issue).

The next three chapters cover Kreps’s immersion in anthropology “away” from home: from the 1980s, she has conducted research in the Netherlands following developments at anthropology museums such as the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, doing fieldwork on community museums of colonial and postcolonial Indonesia, like the Provincial Museum of Kalimantan in Indonesian Borneo, and leading collaborative cultural heritage exchange programs with a weaving project in West Kalimantan and a museum on an island off the coast of Sumatra. These chapters, which are a mix of new research and a reworking of and reflection on previous work, show the value of her diverse experiences, which have led to an innovative reworking of Western museological thinking that has been immensely influential in many parts of the world including among Indigenous and tribal scholars and professionals: the idea of cross-cultural curation, the notion of liberating culture, and the concept of a culturally sensitive, culturally specific “appropriate museology” (26, see also Kreps 2003, 2006).

Finally, Kreps returns to Colorado, and thinks through the implications of doing anthropology “at home” in a university museum with the benefit of these international experiences. The arc running through this volume, from Ames’s university museum in the 1980s to Kreps’s Denver institution in the last chapter, may suggest that a reinvigorated and integrated museum anthropology has

responded successfully to the “age of engagement.” But actually, the author contests the facile narrative that museum anthropology receded to the margins of the discipline by the 1950s after the university became the location for research through fieldwork (in place of the old object-based epistemology founded on museum collections), and then reemerged in the 1980s, with a renewed interest in material culture, spurred on by fierce debates about the crises of ethnographic authority and attacks on anthropology’s connections with racism, colonization, and empire (Clifford and Marcus 1986). This familiar story, as Kreps shows, overlooks disciplinary arguments going back much further, which created a climate for the “surfacing” of the “new” museum anthropology “marked by the rise of the anthropology of museums and critical reflexive museology; more equitable and collaborative practice; and the ongoing diversification and decolonisation of museums” (3).

Quite apart from the many takeaways in this book about museums in the present, as a scholar of museum studies I found the deft historicized analysis of museum anthropology’s prehistory one of the most illuminating I have ever read. Kreps looks beyond the “crises” of the 1980s, seeing continuity rather than rupture, and searches elsewhere to see how these issues played out in the Netherlands and Indonesia as well as the United States and Canada. In doing so, she provides an invaluable “historical and comparative perspective” on the different forms that engagement has taken in different times and places. Moreover, she warns, the now ever-present goal of “engagement” is not “inherently beneficent.” But while revealing its contradictory and problematic aspects, she nevertheless argues that engagement can provide “models for ethical and socially responsive practice” (227–228).

In the conclusion, we get a strong argument for what Kreps calls “cosmopolitan museum anthropology” (255–257). In these troubled times, several writers have wondered aloud about what museums are good for (Thomas 2016). Kreps ponders the question: “What

unites us as human beings without eliding our differences?” (256). But as well as providing a progressive forum for debate and a technology for understanding difference, Kreps offers a particular cosmopolitan vision of diversity that we would do well to heed: “We now know there is not one universal museology, but a world full of diverse museologies” (257).

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Te Papa to Berlin: The Making of Two Museums.

Ken Gorbey.
Dunedin, New Zealand: Otago University Press, 2020.

As I turned the pages of this engrossing, extremely readable, humane book, I felt nostalgia and recognition. As a history curator working at Te Papa during Ken Gorbey’s tenure

as Director of Museum Projects there, I was transported back to what, I have no hesitation in saying, was the working highlight of my life. Not because it was easy, by any means, and Gorbey makes that abundantly clear here, but because we were collectively creating something that had never been done before. And I had never worked before with such brilliant, clever, courageous, and encouraging colleagues on such large, complex projects. I had also never been a curator before, but that is another story. *Te Papa to Berlin* sits nicely alongside Jock Phillips’s (2019) recent memoir, which contains an insightful chapter on his time as History Concept Leader at Te Papa.

My nostalgia turned to recognition when the book reaches Berlin, as I put Gorbey’s account alongside my own visit to the Jewish Museum. Could Gorbey take the strengths of Te Papa and use them to develop a completely different type of museum in a completely different city and nation? I saw (and Gorbey writes eloquently about) the same markers of the new museology: a clear sense of purpose, a focus on storytelling, and a focus on visitors and what they might make of it. Yet the two museums could not be more different, and this is a key theme.

The book is elegantly structured around Gorbey’s life in museums from his small-town, rural upbringing in New Zealand, through his first job as an archeologist, to how he learned to engage with Māori and understand the point of view of Indigenous people vis-à-vis land, genealogy, collections, and exhibitions. His formative experiences at the Waikato Museum in Hamilton are sensitively recounted. The chapters on Te Papa and Berlin provide an insider’s account of these large and complex projects and include lots of details on how they got started, what needed to be taken into account, who was invited to get onboard, and how they made progress. Museum professionals should read these carefully.

Gorbey is obviously a people person, and large sections are devoted to key movers and shakers in each project. It is clear who had the greatest impact on his working life, and it

is also clear who he found challenging. Most accounts gloss over all these nitty gritty aspects in the rush to valorize and to keep up the positive profile. The advantage of memoirs, especially one as exacting and unvarnished as this, is that readers can learn alongside the author. There is great color and detail, fascinating anecdotes, and a real sense of being there as things happened.

This book is one of the better guides to leadership (of any kind of organization) that I have read. Gorbey's account is carefully placed in context (particularly in the national-political context) and provides the benefit of experience that is hard-won in many aspects. The amazing achievements of Gorbey and his colleagues are still not given enough weight in the hypercritical literature that surrounds these two institutions. Gorbey is the first to realize the limits of what each institution has achieved. But he remains optimistic and knows that institutions do not stand still; they change and alter as circumstances, staff, and governments do.

While the stories of these two museums are well-known and anticipated, the writing still manages to provide narrative momentum, especially around leadership and negotiations with staff and boards, and how, in each case, Gorbey led an organization to do what it had never done before. The failures sit alongside huge successes, food and talk are ubiquitous, and a never-ending quest to self-educate and learn sits under everything. Gorbey is a born storyteller, and there is a lightness of touch and always a sense of humor, although the subject is often urgent and deadly serious. I found it striking at this point, in the midst of a pandemic and a resurgence of authoritarian populism, to read an extended argument for the moral role of museums, for their purpose as identity institutions, and above all a meditation on and enactment of a thoroughgoing humanism. In what has been a challenging year for me, as for most people, I felt reenergized about the possibilities of museums and of the critical importance of humane yet decisive leadership. This book is a must-read, and

Gorbey's career is an inspiring model of how museums are made and remade.

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Reference

Phillips, Jock. 2019. *Making History: A New Zealand Story*. Auckland: Auckland University Press.

What Are Exhibitions For? An Anthropological Approach.

Inge Daniels.

London: Bloomsbury, 2019.

Inge Daniels is not a big fan of the typical "museum effect," which she defines as displays of iconic objects contemplated from afar. She would rather liberate visitors (and things for that matter) from "regulations and restrained behaviours" through the creation of immersive, evocative, and dynamic environments (2). The resulting "multisensory practices and dialogic interactions" ("playful and boisterous" she calls them elsewhere) are, for her, much more likely to stimulate visitors' imaginations (24).

These sentiments are far from novel, of course. Over half-a-century ago, similar enthusiasms for the added value of hands-on engagement led to the rapid development of science centers as exciting, modern replacements for old-fashioned museums.

But Daniels's persuasive thesis comes from a very different background. She is an anthropologist, whose 2003 PhD focused on domestic clutter in Japanese households. Her findings inspired her to challenge the myth that Japanese households were somehow always imbued with minimalist aesthetics. And she was eager to share them with a broader public, which led to the co-curation of an unorthodox exhibition at London's Geffrye Museum (now Museum of the Home) in 2011, *At Home in Japan: Beyond the Minimal House*. Clearly energized by an inquisitive restlessness, Daniels turned her anthropological gaze on her own

museum experiment. *What Are Exhibitions For?* comes as the fascinating culmination of Daniels's unfolding inquiry.

What readers get from this attractively designed book is a layered account of co-curating an exhibition; an outsider's take on working within an established institution; and close observations of what audiences made of the show. New to the field, Daniels is able to offer fresh and honest perspectives on aspects of museums that those of us who have worked in them longer sometimes forget to carry on being curious about. Her observations are illuminating.

On objects and atmosphere, she makes much of the decision to populate her show not with precious exhibits in showcases, but rather with commercially available, mass-produced commodities found ubiquitously in contemporary Japanese houses. Ordinary things gathered and passed along by Daniels's colleagues and friends became her exhibits—though some museum professionals, of course, might want to insist that these are “props” rather than “objects.” The liberation of not having to be nervous about how to handle them led to an intriguingly unfussy closing gesture: “The majority of our objects [were] given away in a public raffle held at the end of the exhibition” (11).

On touch, she not only reminds us just how valuable it can be to use senses apart from sight in exhibitions, but is especially acute in pointing out the value of touch beyond our hands. So, for example, visitors to *At Home in Japan* were asked to take off their shoes, as would be expected in most Japanese houses.

On photos and photography, her plea is to be less restrained and, frankly, snobbish about the power of both large-scale images without captions and visitors using their mobile cameras to facilitate livelier, more meaningful engagement. Breaking out of standard museum framing practices can, she suggests, help audiences readily imagine being “somewhere else.” She is even more forceful in her assertion that, rather than “creating distance between the viewer and the displays, the camera [as

used by visitors themselves] facilitated a sense of immersion” (175). Borrowing helpful insights from geographer Jonas Larsen, Daniels persuasively contends that visitors with mobile cameras can turn exhibitions into stages of theatrical experience. Armed with a lens, they use their bodies to pose, play, and act “an embodied gazing practice that is a source of pleasure, creativity and sociability in itself” (190).

On visitor surveys, she articulates two persistent problems with quantitative approaches: “the tendency to categorize exhibition-goers solely according to their diligence for learning, and, their propensity to concentrate on the behaviour of individuals while the social aspect of the visit is ignored” (8). Her own evaluation is conducted at a fine-grained one-to-one level. I cannot recall ever reading a published account of an exhibition in which individual visitors are identified by name.

And finally, on the links between research and exhibition making Daniels is exceptionally well placed to explain how exhibitions can provide “important interfaces between academia and the general public,” a space where they can gain dynamic understandings of research into a specific topic, but also explore a collaborative form of knowledge production (21–22).

This all adds up to an impressive understanding of one exhibition's journey from field research through collaborative execution, on to visitation and eventually creative dismantlement. From her cumulative details, Daniels is further able to garner suggestive theoretical insights into the very nature of exhibitions. She is keen to remind us that when museum visitors walk into those uniquely designated spaces, they are being invited not only to partake in an educational agenda of looking and learning but also to participate in the world with all their senses, and especially haptically through their whole bodies.

I learned much from Daniels's practice-based analysis. Her myth-busting approach, nonetheless, occasionally did prompt quibbles. I am not as sure, as she is, that uncaptioned images elevate photographs beyond mere illustrations. Even in her own volume, I found

myself eager to know more about what she was showing me. I also remain less convinced than she is about the widespread value of “destabilizing the aura of museum objects” (135–139). She certainly makes a good case for its power in her own exhibition, where audiences were invited to imagine life in different but also maybe surprisingly similar domestic settings. I suspect, however, that widespread attempts to deliver the currently fashionable “presence effect” will soon throw up their own limitations.

But these are points of detail. Daniels’s book convincingly demonstrates how exhibitions can, as she elegantly puts it, be employed as “technologies of the imagination.”

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The Museum as Experience: An Email Odyssey through Artists’ and Collectors’ Museums.

Dario Gamboni.

Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols.

The latest book by Geneva art historian Dario Gamboni hides his game. At first glance, it is one of those richly illustrated books to be placed on a coffee table to leaf through, on occasion, the photographs of museums where one hopes to go one day, or which one has already visited. But its almost four hundred pages, each one augmented by abundant scholarly notes, actually make up an abundant book that draws its inspiration from three different literary traditions: that of the travel narrative, that of the novel by letters, and that of didactic fiction. It is in fact an account of the experience of visiting museums that is told through the correspondence of two cousins, Dario and Libero Gamboni (note that the author’s middle name is Libero!). In the story, each of them, in turn, undertakes a tour of the museum world after the death of Libero’s father, whose future collection is to be decided. The collectors’ relationship to death is one of the red threads of

these exchanges, since not only does the book open with a death and close with the settlement of the estate, but there are few chapters that are free of considerations on the means offered by a collection to ward off death, whether one is an amateur or an artist.

The book, which sacrifices to a recent fashion in art history, that of fiction writing, follows the rules of the novel by letters—a discontinuous narrative, a double enunciation, and a great variety of tones—moderated by a certain didacticism. The reader is invited to learn about visits for which he must receive a minimum amount of information. Through the exchanges, itineraries, and judgments, complex and often idiosyncratic evocations about institutions and collections take shape: a real art of the museum. For the places to be visited refer to a choice of works, artists, hangings, and contexts that, at each stage draws, in the manner of an ideal museum, the horizon of a total work of art. Where appropriate, one also learns where one can eat more or less well around the museum, generally in a setting adapted to the collection visited.

Beyond a vagabonding that is at once touristic, erudite, and very personal, the correspondence draws a certain type of museum whose evidence is obvious and yet whose definition is far from simple. It is certainly easy to note the absence of major museums, national or universal museums, school museums, or academy museums. On the contrary, it is a question of privileging the collector’s intimate involvement in his objects, or even an artist’s sensibility or practice. Museum, house, monument: it is through this trilogy, according to Gamboni, that the fifteen museums considered here, from 1800 to the present day, take on their full meaning.

In the first chapter, one naturally moves from paternal memory to a visit to the museum near the Gamboni family plot, here the Museum of the Ticino sculptor Vincenzo Vela (1820–1891), in Ligornetto. It is an artist’s house remarkable in particular for its funerary monuments, and where Vincenzo Vela himself appeared on his deathbed. Chapter

2 logically takes us to the gypsum library of Antonio Canova (1757–1822), model and inspiration of the sculptor Vela. The visit to the Possagno Pantheon allows us to evoke the founding debates about the museographic exile that destroyed the values of the *in situ*: indeed, it was Canova's friend, Quatremère de Quincy, who distinguished himself during the French Revolution by defending this thesis. But can respect for tradition not be combined today with respect for the museum, since the latter has become a permanent part of history? The addition of a new wing to the Possagno Museum at the beginning of the 1950s by the famous architect Carlo Scarpa provides food for thought.

We do not leave the artist's museum, nor do we depart the memorial museum with the museum of the architect John Soane (1753–1837) in London, which is visited in the third chapter. If the museum in Dulwich, in what is now a London suburb, is entitled to its own treatment as one of the milestones of the museum genre in Europe, and as an eminently personal place, too—it contains the mausoleum of its founders, two art dealers—then the Soane Museum best embodies what could have been an ideal of a museum at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It exerts a singular fascination in the organization of light levels and chronological strata, from the Egyptian Age to the Middle Ages, passing through an Antiquity gloriously represented by the Apollo of the Belvedere (installed opposite the bust of Soane himself). “The overall effect of this museum is such that one hesitates,” writes Gamboni, “between *Alice in Wonderland* and Poe's *New Extraordinary Stories*.” (69)

In Chapter 4, the cousins consider the case of Munich, evocative of the omnipresence of Italian artistic models, which the neo-Renaissance enthusiasm of the 1860s and 1870s undertook to bring together and exhibit, as everywhere in Europe, but here with singular obstinacy. One collection serves as a guiding thread: that of the diplomat and scholar Friedrich von Schack (1815–1894), a cosmopolitan and orientalist, but also a fervent patriot, who

only brings together German paintings. But he also intended to train artists by promoting their studies by financing their copies of Italian models during their pilgrimages to the peninsula. In this, he participated in the pedagogical and reforming ambitions commonly shared by the museums of his century—and their paradoxes—because the copies multiplied raise the question of the *aura* of the original, lost or reinforced, in proportion to that of the reproductions.

Gamboni organizes the next chapter around the Moreau case in Paris, which is emblematic of the museum devoted by an artist to his posterity, as indicated by the few lines written by Gustave Moreau on Christmas Eve 1862, which are duly reproduced here. Even more so than Soane, and perhaps because of Gamboni's speciality, the history and works of Odilon Redon (1840–1916), the Gustave Moreau Museum is at the core of the book and the core of his reflection on the museum. On the occasion of such and such a visit, the two cousins have headaches, or are victims of disorientation and confusion to the point of evoking the famous “Stendhal syndrome.” But these moments of bewilderment prove to be fruitful because, unlike tourists who are insufficiently prepared for such aesthetic emotions, our two companions are expert visitors capable of imagining subtle connections between the Gustave Moreau Museum and Philip Johnson's Glass House in New Canaan, for example, based on their encyclopedic museum culture.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw a golden age of collectors' museums, with collections that were deeply mediated by and carefully attuned to a specially designed location. Such was the case for eccentric amateurs or benevolent philanthropists, but especially for North American plutocrats. The Boston millionaire Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840–1924), discussed in Chapter 6, or the irascible Dr. Albert Barnes (1872–1951), discussed in Chapter 7, demonstrate their mastery of the art of assemblage—an art now threatened by various additions or moves. Gamboni here takes up a formula of Marcel Duchamp's to

qualify such amateurs: “artists,” who “paint” a collection in the image of “real” painters.

Of course, the collector’s relationship to this intention, and especially its public expression, varies greatly. Gardner, double heiress of family fortunes, has written nothing about her collecting craze, and claims it as a form of aristocracy. Barnes, a self-made man with a touch of vulgarity and a convinced progressive, has, on the contrary, explained the motives of his collection and its singular hang. As a good disciple of the John Dewey of *Democracy and Education* (1916) and *Art as Experience* (1934), he intended to derive educational benefits from it for the use of underprivileged visitors and minorities. Generally speaking, the enthusiast always more or less wants to leave a guide to the model experiences in his collection: like Mario Praz’s autobiography, *La casa della vita* (1958), he intends to provide “the Baedeker of his apartment.” (336)

The strictly political aspect of some museums is not ignored by the two cousins, even if it remains marginal. The proposed reading of the Nissim de Camondo Museum, in Chapter 8, suggests that the fight against antisemitism and the desire for emancipation are not in vain in this creation of an imaginary interior by an eighteenth-century artist. In Chapter 9, devoted to the Anahuacalli Museum in Mexico City, the intimate relationship to the nation of Diego Rivera (1886–1957), who defines himself as the national painter, reflects a passion for archeological collectionism that takes little trouble to condemn grave robbers and the destruction of sites, in order to exalt a collection that ultimately legitimizes itself as a sacrifice to the nation.

A fiction like this cannot provide theoretical explanations; otherwise, it will destroy the illusion. Nevertheless, a short essay is given on the definitions in different European languages of the type of museum envisaged here: a personal museum in German, a private museum or a private individual’s museum in France, a collection museum for Anne Higonnet, and, above all, an author’s museum for Gamboni (63). Such a formula, which explicitly re-

fers to the *film d’auteur*, is part of an already long-standing assimilation between the curator and the director: the North American, and indeed Hollywood, term “blockbuster” began to be applied to successful exhibitions in the 1960s and 1980s, as spectacular ventures in Paris or New York, the Grand Palais and the Metropolitan Museum, were undertaken. *Ipso facto*, it became logical to oppose it to the term *Musée d’auteur*, according to a militant distinction invented by the particularly French film industry.

From this point of view, the Museum of Jurassic Technology (Chapter 10) and the Museum of Innocence (Chapter 13) are representative of directors’ museums, one marginal and the other nobly acknowledged, but both are inscribed in the contemporary media in various ways. On the border between Los Angeles and Culver City, the first city of cinema, the “Jurassic” museum has the merit of revealing, like any extreme example of a genre, the generic features of the category. Resulting from an individual initiative linked to the world of film sets and the profession of directing, the establishment has all the features of *ex nihilo* production, whose references are both universal and ahistorical. One finds there a jumble of imaginative reconstructions, to say the least, of the sacred museum of the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher in seventeenth-century Rome and the construction of a pseudo-Soviet museum dedicated to animals sent into space in the time of the Sputniks, but also the living tableaux of aberrant experiments, the echo of freak shows, or the supposedly scientific illustration of this or that social phenomenon—the cartography of caravans parked on certain dates on American trailers parks. But one should not despise this kind of flea market of the collection across continents and ages. For its inventor, David Hildebrand Wilson, has an undeniable knowledge of the long history of curiosities and an ability to account for contemporary, anecdotal, and heterogeneous mythologies in the manner of the fairground shack. The Museum of Innocence, to be no less a concerted illusion, and a collection “without quality,” is

rooted, conversely, in a specific scenario, that of Orhan Pamuk's novel, which is fueled by a real nostalgia for a golden age in Istanbul. But beyond the shameless fabrication of the false traces of the novel, which can be bought in bookshops, the museum claims, like the one in California, an art of staging, like in cinema and in the music hall.

A final extreme figure of the singularity of the *Musée d'auteur* is its virtual inaccessibility. Mr. Hobart's museum at the end of Tasmania, mentioned in Chapter 12, is obviously a borderline case. The journey to the museum evokes a ritual, that of a pilgrimage or expedition: this is still the waiting horizon drawn in Chapter 11, about the Donald Judd Foundation (1928–1994) in Marfa, the "*Lourdes of Minimalism*" as the *New York Times* wrote (312), a former military camp in the middle of the Texan desert. Even artists' museums in capital cities are relatively difficult to discover (such as the Isamu Noguchi Museum [1904–1988], housed in his sculptor's studio on Long Island) and are certainly unsuitable for the visitor in a hurry.

Finally, this book defends the idea of a resistance by these museums of authors to the globalization of collections, in particular to the multiplication of satellites or branches of large museums, which was initiated by the Guggenheim. Gamboni pleads not for the "petrification" of these collections, but for the sharing of experiences with the founder. On occasion, he is not unaware of the consequences of the gentrification of this or that installation, initially improbable or provocative. It has been said enough, no doubt, how important this book is, the fruit of an academic career devoted to the destinies and experiences of images, between vandalism and iconolatry, as well as to the multiple figures of heritage conservation.

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Comradely Objects: Design and Material Culture in Soviet Russia, 1960s–80s.

Yulia Karpova.

Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020.

The words "Soviet design" conjure up the stereotype common in contemporary discourse that socialist material culture was clumsy, unoriginal, and plagiaristic of Western design. In *Comradely Objects: Design and Material Culture in Soviet Russia, 1960s–80s*, Yulia Karpova argues the opposite and demonstrates how design in that period flourished within a socialist context. She deftly unpacks the seeming incongruity between collectivist culture and design innovation and creativity in the final decades of the Soviet Union. Karpova uses the term "comradely objects" and defines them as "products envisioned by Soviet designers to make everyday life in the Soviet Union more convenient and joyful" (xiii). She sets aside the idea of the designer as elevated artist and instead explores the range of human interactions with common objects from designers to manufacturers to retailers to consumers. She anchors her research firmly in material culture theory, drawing on the work of Daniel Miller, Dan Hicks, and others, showing how objects had the power to transmit (or subvert) messages to consumers.

According to Karpova "comradely objects" trace their origin to the early 1920s and "productivism (*proizvodstvennichestvo*)," a branch of the avant-garde that regarded the artist-designer as part of a larger collective process. Value was placed on utilitarian objects produced for the masses that reflected industrial production, anticipating that they would "stimulate rational and 'comradely' relations between people and objects" (3). However, the New Economic Policy introduced by Vladimir Lenin stimulated consumerism and lessened the desire for things "comradely" during the 1930s and 1940s. Changes in Soviet cultural policies after Joseph Stalin meant a return to

some of the ideas of productivism and a revival of socialist material culture.

Karpova begins her study with the “aesthetic turn” in the arts, a liberalization of culture that occurred during the Nikita Khrushchev years that was characterized by a reconsideration of realism, modernization, and good socialist taste. A balance between beauty and utility resulted in the “honesty” of objects. The establishment of the All-Union Research Institute of Technical Aesthetics (VNIITE) in 1962 established a theory of Soviet design that also looked to international design. Recognizing the active role that objects played in everyday life, the aim was to create proper, well-ordered socialist commodities that could match the designs produced in the West.

After Khrushchev’s retirement from power in 1965, design took an antifunctionalist turn. The concepts of the honest, simple object and universal good taste gave way to the idea of a diversity of preferences, especially in domestic settings. Karpova examines how this shift affected the idea of socialist objects, calling this new emphasis on the complexity of design “neodecorativism.” The primary focus was no longer utility but instead elevating the consumer and allowing them to experience the simple joy and pleasure of engaging with beautiful things. Karpova observes: “Soviet decorative art in the late 1960s became a forum for commentaries on the fundamental challenges of Soviet modernity” (114).

Frustration felt by consumers and ineffective production during the Leonid Brezhnev era led to a desire for improvements to Soviet material culture. Design shifted away from individual objects in favor of an understanding of objects as part of a larger environment. This move toward total design and “de-artificialization” was meant to pull the consumer away from the fetishization of objects. Such design, focusing on all aspects of life but allowing for consumer flexibility, would be more socially responsible. Decorative arts during the 1970s also became a means for exploring the human condition, much like the fine arts did. Designer-makers such as ceramics artists who

had been involved in designing mass-produced commodities were now making works of visual art instead. This shift away from design for industry in favor of experimentation and creativity marked the end of the “comradely object,” and by the early 1980s the idea had lost its relevance.

Through exploring everyday objects, Karpova offers an accessible means of understanding the complex world of late Soviet design. Readers unfamiliar with the details of this history might find some of the finer details of her argument difficult to follow, but this is a minor concern; Karpova effectively conveys her argument about “comradely objects” through her clear writing and object analysis. The sections on the Leningrad Factory of Artistic Glass artists in Chapter 3 (96–99) and “neodecorativism” designs by glass artists Boris Smirnov and Iurii Biakov in Chapter 4 (109–112) provide particularly fascinating examples of how socialist design was materially expressed. Material culture researchers, museum professionals, and others interested in object approaches will welcome these discussions, but Karpova’s book would have benefited from including more of them. Much of her work relies on the writings of art critics and theorists, and it is somewhat of a missed opportunity not to have used objects as evidence to the same extent.

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Museum Development in China: Understanding the Building Boom.

Gail Dexter Lord, Guan Qiang, An Laishun, and Javier Jimenez, eds.

Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2019.

China has experienced a museum boom, with over two hundred new institutions dedicated to culture, heritage, the arts, and the sciences established each year since the start of the new millennium. At the end of 2019, the number of

museums in China totaled just over 5,500. This number represents a 264-fold increase since 1949 and a four-fold increase since 1999. Why did this museum boom occur in China? And what forces lie beneath this more recent rapid development? *Museum Development in China: Understanding the Building Boom* is none other than the editors' attempt to address these big questions from different angles.

The book is divided thematically into four parts. Part I describes the background behind the China museum boom. Over six chapters, various contributors discuss issues such as the global context of museum development and the brief history of Chinese museums. Duan Yong focuses on museum development prior to 1949, while Song Xiangguang looks at the period 1949 to 1995. Next, Sofia Bollo and Yu Zhang explain the musealization of museums in China (21). The International Council of Museums (ICOM) views musealization as the process of extracting things from their original context and conferring them with a new status as museum objects. The politics of preservation and the social role of museums is covered by Han Yong (27–30). These chapters usefully place the present Chinese museum boom in a macro-context of historical tradition, urbanization, and reality-related motivation.

The five chapters in Part II seek to understand contemporary Chinese museums from the perspective of the new urban culture. Scholars from different fields explain changes in museum philosophy brought on by rapid urban renewal, real estate development, and internal migration, and how ideas of cultural inclusion and community connection are expressed in these new urban museum spaces.

Part III mainly discusses the openness of Chinese museums. This openness refers not only to cultural diplomacy, or exhibition exchanges and partnership-building oriented by cross-cultural collaborations, but also to learning and innovation in the theoretical constructions of museology, museum management, and public engagement. Chen Shen's chapter discusses how international visitors shape and influence museum practices in

China (72–73), while Tim Reeves provides insights on cultural diplomacy via institutional collaboration (85–89).

Part IV includes case studies. Here, six Chinese museum administrators elaborate on innovations in museum brand building, exhibition strategies, the application of modern technology, the construction of natural history museums, and the task of engaging audiences.

Although there are still numerous challenges and unresolved problems for museum development in China, undoubtedly China has become one of the regions in the world where museums have grown most rapidly in the past two decades. China's recent museum development has certainly benefited from the experience of Western museums and from strong cooperation with international organizations such as ICOM in a more open environment, but, as the editors suggest, the specific national conditions within China are more significant. The country's rapid economic growth, the practice of awarding officials for cultural achievements, and increased confidence in the nation's culture encouraged Chinese governments at all levels to facilitate the development of museums by strengthening policy support, increasing investment, standardizing management, fostering a "loose" environment, and boosting reform and innovation. All these factors have encouraged avant-garde museums to practice in a more inclusive and diversified way so that they could meet the needs of a public eager to spend its leisure time gaining new knowledge and reliving its cultural traditions. In return, attracted by new technologies and methods in accordance with the times, more personalized service, and the policy of free admission, more and more visitors are walking into China's museums.

In order to observe this museum boom and its sustainability from a variety of viewpoints, the editors of this book include not only museum managers, researchers, and even architects from China, but also some museum directors, scholars, city planners, and journalists from other countries. I believe that this

excellent, well-researched set of case studies will serve as a useful reference for practitioners and researchers in the museum field.

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Refocusing Ethnographic Museums through Oceanic Lenses.

Philipp Schorch with Noelle M. K. Y. Kahanu, Sean Mallon, Cristián Moreno Pakarati, Mara Mulrooney, Nina Tonga and Ty P. Kāwika Tengan.
Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2020.

The book cover image, by artist Verna Takashima, for this 299-page text evokes images of shifting trajectories and connected spaces that represent elements of the text. Divided into three sections, each with two chapters, the book is organized into institutions located in Hawai'i, Rapa Nui, and Aotearoa New Zealand, namely Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, Hawai'i; Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa); and Museo Antropológico Padre Sebastián Englert, Rapa Nui. Based on collaborative research conducted in 2014 and 2016, Philipp Schorch considers "Indigenous museum practices" in the aforementioned institutions, and suggests that the text offers "historically informed ethnographic insights into Indigenous museum practices grounded in Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and cosmologies" (1). Furthermore, the aim is "to refocus rather than deny the ethnographic—by decentering, multiplying, and undisciplining—through Oceanic lenses" (11), of which there is a growing body of work. In the proceeding chapters, the authors integrate intimate revelations of working in museums and the complex nuances that continue to pervade their framings and relationships.

Noelle Kahanu's chapter reviews the "current interpretive shift toward a Native perspective" (22), and contends the Hawaiian lens of Kū Mau Mau is "more akin to a temporal

muliwai" (23). Overall, museum practices and structures require "recognition of the validity and importance of Indigenous staff, who not only represent their own personal interests, but also are perceived both internally and externally as the faces of their community" (40). Overwhelmingly, she recognizes the need to imbed "policies and procedures" as a reflection of real progress for Indigenous programs and practices (41). Chapter 2, titled "Rethinking Temporalities," reconsiders the "curatorship as a dialogical practice: facilitating ongoing conversations, which require various common languages and the translational power of Indigenous skills" (45). At the center, the authors argue that "'the vā,' as the 'space between,' relates and unites people and material treasures or interpretive and material agency and efficacy" (49). The core argument centers dialogue in the process of curatorship, and how far, wide, and deep these conversations extend provides an all-encompassing space for deeper negotiations.

Focusing on research associated with collections and how new approaches are revising some of the work—particularly with communities—the third chapter evaluates the context of Rapa Nui. In presenting a case study of a photography project, the authors describe how the process "allowed present-day descendants to speak back to the collection" (88). Furthermore, "the photographs have played an active role in cultural, political, and environmental initiatives" by "exposing the 'episteme of discontinuity' as a mythical projection through myopic lenses, and forcing us to refocus our 'double vision'" (93). This myopic lens connects to themes in the next chapter, "Curating an Island, Curing Rapa Nui," which presents a case for reframing the island through multiple curatorial lenses and "comes closer to the original meaning of the word *curare* (to heal): the wounds of history, memories of the leprosarium, and the *moai*, the giant stone figures, who are not dead but can be seen as patients who are alive and in need of care rather than heritage to be frozen and safeguarded" (95). The "Rapa Nui heritage complex" is ambigu-

ous (103) and a “contested terrain” (112) and requires a reorientation.

At Te Papa in Wellington, the chapters by Sean Mallon and Nina Tonga, along with Schorch, bring to the fore the central concept of *mana taonga* (the “power/authority” deriving from taonga, or “treasures”) associated with peoples and relationships (121). In this case, what does collaboration and co-curating look like in this context, and how does this process unfold within Te Papa’s practice? As this was a theme throughout the text, I was again drawn to the curatorial decisions to speak back to and to guide the process with communities and collaborators. The speaking back of artists to the German-Samoan legacies provides interesting entanglements showing how Indigenous museum professionals and artists are refocusing the conditioned environment. The multilayered lenses through which taonga can be narrated and framed serves to

position complex Indigenous responses in relation to their work practice.

In conclusion, Schorch suggests that the text works “by decentering and multiplying the interpretive authority and by giving expression to plural voices engaged in the co-construction of knowledge” (179). In many ways, the book draws attention to the long history of Indigenous practices, and it does so in an entangled way in multiple locales. I appreciated the deep insights and the challenges shared by colleagues across the oceans, as they rearticulate the complex and nuanced ways in which we work. In many ways, by reviewing this text during the season of Matariki (the Māori New Year), it was a pleasure to foreground Indigenous museum practices through a renewed sense of collaboration.

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