

CHAPTER I

Museums Are Good to Think: Heritage on View in India

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One of the striking facts about complex societies such as India is that they have not surrendered learning principally to the formal institutions of schooling. In this type of complex society, urban groups tend to monopolize postsecondary schooling and the upper middle class tends to control the colleges and universities. In such societies, therefore, learning is more often tied to practical apprenticeship and informal socialization. Also, and not coincidentally, these are societies in which history and heritage are not yet parts of a bygone past that is institutionalized in history books and museums. Rather, heritage is a live component of the human environment and thus a critical part of the learning process. These observations are particularly worth noting since societies such as India are often criticized for having created educational institutions where learning does not thrive and where credentialism has become a mechanical mode for selection in an extremely difficult economic context. Informal means of learning in societies such as India are not, therefore, mere ethnographic curiosities. They are real cultural resources that (properly understood and used) may well relieve the many artificial pressures placed upon the formal educational structure. Museums are an emergent component of this world of informal education, and what we

learn about museums in India will tell us much of value about learning, seeing, and objects, which in turn should encourage creative and critical approaches to museums (and informal learning arrangements in general) elsewhere.

Museums in India look simultaneously in two directions. They are a part of a transnational order of cultural forms that has emerged in the last two centuries and now unites much of the world, especially its urban areas.¹ Museums also belong to the alternative forms of modern life and thought that are emerging in nations and societies throughout the world. These alternative forms tend to be associated with media, leisure, and spectacle, are often associated with self-conscious national approaches to heritage, and are tied up with transnational ideologies of development, citizenship, and cosmopolitanism. Conducting an investigation of museums, therefore, entails being sensitive to a shared transnational idiom for the handling of heritage while simultaneously being aware that this heritage can take very different national forms.

MUSEUMS AND HERITAGE

Although there is a growing literature (largely by scholars outside the museum world) that concentrates on museums, collecting, objects, and heritage, these discussions do not generally extend to museums in India. Our concern is to build on a few recent efforts in this direction as well as some earlier ones,² so that comparative evidence from non-Western, postcolonial societies can be brought into the mainstream of theory and method in this area.

In anthropology, there is a renewed interest in objects, consumption, and collection more generally.³ What emerges from the literature on this topic is that objects in collections create a complex dialogue between the classificatory concerns of connoisseurs and the self-reflective politics of communities; that the presence of objects in museums represents one stage in the objects' cultural biographies;⁴ and that such classified objects can be critical parts of the "marketing of heritage."⁵ Here we are reminded that objects' meanings have always reflected a negotiated settlement between longstanding cultural significations and more volatile group interests and objectives.

A related set of discussions explicitly links museums to material culture in a consciously historical way.⁶ We are reminded that archaeological and ethnographical collections emerged out of a specific set of

political and pedagogical aims in the history of anthropology;⁷ that collections and exhibitions cannot be divorced from the larger cultural contexts of philanthropy and ethnic or national identity formation; that anthropologists and "natives" are increasingly engaged in a dialogue out of which cultural identity emerges; and that museums contribute to the larger process by which popular culture is formed. As far as India is concerned, museums seem less a product of philanthropy and more a product of the conscious agenda of India's British rulers, which led them to excavate, classify, catalogue, and display India's artifactual past to itself. This difference affects the ethos of Indian museums today, and also affects the cultural dynamics of viewing and learning.

Another relevant body of literature emphasizes the relationship between museums and their publics as well as their educational mission.⁸ For the most part, these studies lack a sense of the historical and cultural specificity of the different publics that museums serve. While the public sphere has been most richly discussed in terms of the last three hundred years in Europe,⁹ there are now a host of non-Western nations that are elaborating their public spheres—not necessarily ones that emerge in relation to civil society, but often ones that are the result of state policies in tandem with consumerist interests. Thus, there is a tendency in these discussions for the idea of "the public" to become tacitly universalized (though some of these studies are concerned with sociological variations within visitor populations). What is needed is the identification of a specific historical and cultural public, one which does not so much *respond* to museums but is rather *created*, in part, through museums and other related institutions. In India, museums need not worry so much about finding their publics as about making them.

There is, of course, a vast body of literature that is about art in relation to museums. This literature is not very relevant to the Indian situation because, except for a small minority in India and for a very short period of its history, and in very few museums there, art in the current Western sense is not a meaningful category. Art continues to struggle to find a (bourgeois) landscape it can be comfortable in.¹⁰ In place of art, other categories for objects dominate, such as handicraft, technology, history, and heritage. Of these, the one on which we focus is the category of heritage.

History becomes heritage in various ways.¹¹ Artifacts become appropriated by particular historical agendas, by particular ideologies of preservation, by specific versions of public history, and by particu-

lar values about exhibition, design, and display. Tony Bennett's concept of "the exhibitionary complex"¹² and Donna Haraway's argument that natural history has the effect of naturalizing particular histories¹³ both remind us that museums are deeply located *in* cultural history, on the one hand, and are therefore also critical places for the politics of history, on the other. Ideologies of preservation might frequently conceal implications for transformation.¹⁴ For example, the effort to present vignettes of life from other societies often involves the decontextualization of objects from their everyday contexts, with the unintended result of creating aesthetic and stylistic effects that do not fit the original context. In other cases, objects that were parts of living dramas of warfare, exchange, or marriage become mechanical indicators of culture or custom. In yet other cases, the politics of cultural patrimony and political conquest are concealed in the technical language of ethnographic signage. All of these examples reveal a tension between the dynamic contexts from which objects were originally derived and the static tendencies inherent to museum environments. This is a valuable tension to bear in mind as we explore the context of museums in India, where the politics of heritage is often intense, even violent.

Among anthropologists, folklorists, and historians, there has recently been a spate of writing about the politics of heritage.¹⁵ Much of this work suggests (in some cases using non-Euro-American examples) that the appropriation of the past by actors in the present is subject to a variety of dynamics. These range from the problems associated with ethnicity and social identity, nostalgia, and the search for "museumized" authenticity, to the tension between the interests states have in fixing local identities and the pressures localities exert in seeking to transform such identities. The result is a number of contradictory pressures, some toward fixing and stabilizing group identities through museums (and the potential of their artifacts to be used to emblemize existing or emergent group identities), and others that attempt to free and destabilize these identities through different ways of displaying and viewing objects.

This body of literature is a reminder that heritage is increasingly a profoundly political issue and one in which localities and states are often at odds, and that museums and their collections are in the midst of this particular storm. Focusing on the politics of heritage in India brings out the place of Indian museums in these politics, and problematizes the cultural modes of viewing, traveling, experiencing, and learning in which heritage is negotiated.

THE CULTURAL AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

The public sphere in contemporary India, as in the rest of the world, has emerged as part of the political, intellectual, and commercial interests of its middle classes. In India in the last century, this public sphere has involved new forms of democratic politics, new modes of communication and transport, and new ways in which class, caste, and livelihood are articulated. We are concerned with one dimension of this evolving public sphere, which we call public culture. By public culture we mean a new cosmopolitan arena that is a "zone of contestation."¹⁶ In this zone, private and state interests, low and high cultural media, and different classes and groups formulate, represent, and debate what culture is (and should be). Public culture is articulated and revealed in an interactive set of cosmopolitan experiences and structures, of which museums and exhibitions are a crucial part.

On the surface, museums as modern institutions have only a short history and appear to emerge largely out of the colonial period:

The museums started under British rule had been intended mainly for the preservation of the vestiges of a dying past, and only subsidiarily as a preparation for the future. Museums were the last haven of refuge for interesting architectural fragments, sculptures and inscriptions which saved them from the hands of an ignorant and indifferent public or from unscrupulous contractors who would have burned them to lime, sunk them into foundations or melted them down. Into the museums the products of the declining indigenous industries were accumulated, in the vain hope that they might serve as models for the inspiration of artisans and the public. Mineralogical, botanical, zoological and ethnological collections were likewise started, though rarely developed systematically: often they did not grow beyond sets of hunting trophies.¹⁷

As a consequence, until recently most museums in India have been moribund and have not been a vibrant part of the public cultural life of its people. One early analysis of this "failure" of museums in India comes from Hermann Goetz. The factors he identifies as reasons for this failure include the fragmentary nature of many collections, the failure of industrial art to inspire capitalist production, and the lack of response to natural-history collections by a public "still living in the world of myths."¹⁸

The ambiguous place of museums in India is partly a result of longstanding cultural and historical factors: first, India still has a

living past found especially in its sacred places and spaces, so there is little need for "artificial" conservation of the Indian heritage; second, the separation of sacred objects (whether of art, history, or religion) from the objects of everyday life had not really occurred; and third, the separation of human beings from the overall biological, zoological, and cosmological environment in which they lead their ordinary lives had barely begun.

More recently, museums have begun to play a more vigorous role in Indian public life. In part this is because of a renewed concern with education as one element of social and economic development; in part because private commercial enterprises have begun to use an exhibition format for displaying their wares; and in part because museums have become plugged into a circuit of travel, tourism, pilgrimage, and leisure that has its own distinctive history and value in Indian society.

Here it may be useful to make a historical contrast. Museums in Europe and the United States have been linked to department stores through a common genealogy in the great nineteenth-century world's fairs. But in the last century, a separation of art and science and of festivity and commerce has taken place in these societies, with the objects and activities in each category fairly sharply distinguished in terms of audience, curatorial expertise, and visual ideology. In India, such a specialization and separation is not a part of either the past or the present.

This is not to say that there are not department and chain stores in contemporary India. There are, and they are clearly distinguishable from public festivities as well as from permanent exhibits in museums. Rather, there is a gray zone where display, retailing, and festivity shade into one another. It is precisely because of this gray zone that museums have taken on fresh life: objects in India seem to flow constantly through the membranes that separate commerce, pageantry, and display. The two major forms that characterize the public world of special objects in contemporary India are the exhibition-cum-sale and the ethnic-national festival. The exhibition-cum-sale is a major mode of retailing textiles, ready-to-wear clothing, books, and home appliances. These merchandising spectacles (which recall the fairs of medieval Europe) are transient, low-overhead, mobile modes for transporting, displaying, and selling a variety of goods. In them, in contrast to department stores, ordinary consumers have a chance to combine gazing, longing, and buying. This combination of activities, which is at the core of the informal schooling of the modern Indian consumer, is bracketed between two other, more permanent poles.

One pole is the modern museum—whether of art, craft, science, or archaeology—in which the Indian viewer's visual literacy is harnessed to explicitly cultural and nationalist purposes. The other pole is the newly emergent, Western-style department store, where gazing and viewing also go on but buying is the normative goal. In our usage, *gazing* implies an open-ended visual and sensory engagement tied up with fantasy and desire for the objects on display, while *viewing* implies a more narrowly framed, signage-guided visual orientation.

Framing these three display forms and contributing most actively to the regeneration of the museum experience is the festival form, especially as it has been harnessed by the Indian state in its effort to define national, regional, and ethnic identity. Such festivals are on the increase throughout the world¹⁹ and everywhere represent ongoing debates concerning emergent group identities and group artifacts.

In India, the museum-oriented Festival of India, first constructed in 1985 as a vehicle for the cultural display of India in foreign nations and cities, quickly became indigenized into a massive internal festival called *Apna Utsav* (Our Festival), which began in 1986 and now has an elaborate national and regional administrative structure. Part of a vast state-sponsored network for local and interregional displays of art, craft, folklore, and clothing, these spectacles of ethnicity are also influencing the cultural literacy and visual curiosity of ordinary Indians in a manner that gives further support to the reinvigoration of museums, on the one hand, and the vitality of exhibition-cum-sales, on the other. What is thus emerging in India, and seems to be a relatively specialized cultural complex, is a world of objects and experiences that ties together visual pleasure, ethnic and national display, and consumer appetite. Museums, marginal in the eyes of the wider Indian public in the last century, have taken on a new role in the last decade as part of this emergent constellation of phenomena.

This constellation, which may be called the "exhibition complex" (museum-festival-sale), is further energized by new technologies of leisure, information, and movement in contemporary India. Cinema and television (and the landscapes and stars that they display), packaged pilgrimages and tours (which take thousands of ordinary Indians outside their normal locales as part of "vacation" experiences), and the growing spectacularization of political and sports events (especially through television) all conduce to a new cosmopolitan receptivity to the museum, which would otherwise have become a dusty relic of colonial rule. It is these new contexts of public culture that are now transforming the Indian museum experience.

The photographs in this essay constitute a narrative parallel to the text. They provide a representative visual sample of the archive of visual experiences that Indian visitors bring to museums. They are meant to convey the points of contact between different segments of Indian visual reality, which range from film and television images to mythic and political scenarios, and constitute the "interocular field" within which the museum experience operates and to which we refer in the conclusion.

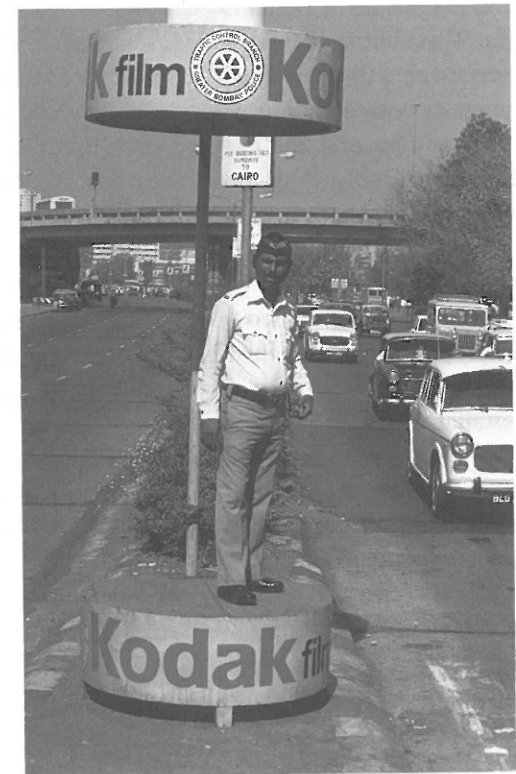


Fig. 1-1. The visual promise of Kodak film frames the disciplinary gaze of a traffic policeman. Bombay, 1989. Photo by the authors.

Museums in India have to be seen in tandem with exhibitions of several sorts, and as parts of a larger cosmopolitan world of leisure, recreation, and self-education for wide sectors of the Indian population. Nothing of this emergent cosmopolitanism can be grasped without also understanding the impact that modern modes of communication have had on Indian public life. Print media, especially newspapers and magazines, have a history going back over a century in India (as in the West) but the last decade has seen an explosion of magazines and newspapers (both in English and in the vernacular languages), which suggests both a quantum leap in Indian readers' thirst for news, views, and opinion and the eagerness of cultural producers to satisfy this thirst profitably. Film (both documentary and commercial) has a history in India that clearly parallels its history in the West, and remains today the dominant medium through which large numbers of Indians expend time and money allotted to entertainment. Television and its sister technology, video recordings, have entered India in a big way and constitute a new threat to the cultural hegemony of cinema, while at the same time they extend the reach of cinematic forms to the smaller towns and poorer citizens of India.

Though Indian television programming is controlled by the state (just as radio programming is), it already has a very large component of privately produced soap operas, docudramas, and other forms of televised entertainment. This is, of course, in addition to a fairly large amount of state-sponsored and state-controlled programming, which ranges from news programs (which are still largely state-controlled) to live sports programs, "cultural performances," and informational programs on everything from birth control to new farming techniques. In general, though a number of the most popular serials on Indian television are variations of the Hindi film formula, many television programs have a historical, cultural, or documentary dimension. In television above all, it is the Indian heritage that is turned into spectacle. The most striking examples of this process are the three most popular television series of the last few years: *Buniyaad*, which concerned the trials and tribulations of the partition of India as experienced by a large Punjabi extended family, and the television serializations of the two great Indian epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, for the weekly broadcast of which the whole television-watching audience of India apparently dropped everything. Thus, museums are part of a generalized, mass-media-provoked preoccupation with heritage and with a richly visual approach to spectacles.



Fig. 1-2. The discourses of health, leisure, and thirst form a consumption vignette. Madras, 1989. Photo by the authors.

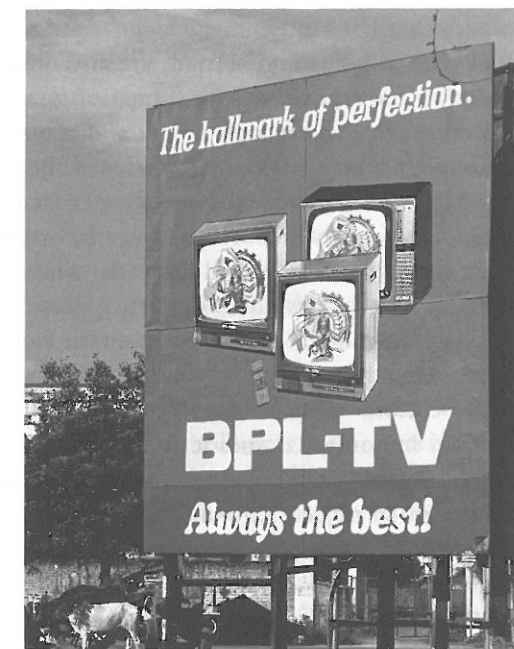


Fig. 1-3. Classical images underwrite the mechanical excitement of television and lend archaism to the space of the billboard. Madras, 1989. Photo by the authors.

MUSEUMS AND PUBLIC CULTURE

In countries such as India, the challenge of training skilled teachers, the rudimentary resources available for primary and secondary education, and the bureaucratization and politicization of higher education all mean that education outside formal settings has continued to be crucial to the formation of the modern citizen. Such education—which involves learning the habits, values, and skills of the contemporary world—happens through a variety of processes and frameworks, including those of the family, the workplace, friendship networks, leisure activities, and media exposure. Museums and the exhibition complex in general form an increasingly important part of this nonformal educational process, the logic of which has been insufficiently studied, especially outside the West.

Museums are also a very complex part of the story of Western expansion since the sixteenth century, although they are now part of the cultural apparatus of most emergent nations. Museums have complex roots in such phenomena as cabinets of curiosities, collections of regalia, and dioramas of public spectacle.²⁰ Today, museums reflect complex mixtures of state and private motivation and patronage, and tricky transnational problems of ownership, identity, and the politics of heritage. Thus museums, which frequently represent national identities both at home and abroad, are also nodes of transnational representation and repositories for subnational flows of objects and images. Museums, in concert with media and travel, serve as ways in which national and international publics learn about themselves and others.

Museums provide an interesting contrast with travel, for in museums people travel short distances in order to experience cultural, geographical, and temporal distance, whereas contemporary tourists often travel great distances in short spaces of time to experience "otherness" in a more intense and dramatic manner. But both are organized ways to explore the worlds and things of the "other." In the public cultures of nations such as India, both museums and tourism have an important domestic dimension, since they provide ways in which national populations can conceptualize their own diversity and reflect (in an objectified way) on their diverse cultural practices and histories. Such reflexivity, of course, has its roots in the colonial experience, during which Indians were subject to a thoroughgoing classification, museumification, and aestheticization in the museums, fairs, and exhibitions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²¹ Fi-

nally, both museums and travel in India today would be hard to imagine apart from a fairly elaborate media infrastructure, as has been suggested already.

The media are relevant to museums and exhibitions in specific ways. For example, verbal literacy affects the ways in which people who come to museums and exhibitions are able to understand the objects (and signage) that are at the center of them. Thus, the issue of the ability to read is critical. Media are also important in the form of advertising, particularly through billboards, newspaper advertisements, and television coverage, which in many cases inform people about exhibitions (especially those associated with national and regional cultural representations). Literacy (both verbal and visual) is also relevant to the ways in which pamphlets, photographs, and posters associated with museums are read by various publics as they travel through different regions, visit various sites, and purchase inexpensive printed publicity materials associated with museums, monuments, and religious centers. Exposure to the media affects as well the ways in which particular groups and individuals frame their readings of particular sites and objects, since media exposure often provides the master narratives within which the mininarratives of particular exhibitions and museums are interpreted. Thus, for example, the National Museum in Delhi and its various counterparts in the other major cities of India offer specific narratives of the colonial, precolonial, and postcolonial periods (for example, the classification of the tribal as "primitive").

Viewers do not come to these museums as cultural blanks. They come as persons who have seen movies with nationalist themes, television serials with nationalist and mythological narratives and images, and newspapers and magazines that also construct and visualize the heroes and grand events of Indian history and mythology.

In addition, it is important to reiterate that the museum experience is part and parcel of learning to be cosmopolitan and "modern." This learning process has a consumption (as well as a media) dimension. Whether for city dwellers or for villagers, the experience of visiting museums is always implicitly connected to the consumption of leisure and pleasure. As regimented as many groups visiting Indian museums may seem, visits to museums and exhibitions are part of the pleasures of seeing, and visual pleasure has a very deep and special logic in the Indian context. In the annual traveling commercial exhibition known as the Ideal Home Exhibition, for example, the mastery of

modern modes of domestic technology and lifestyle is the key to the exhibition experience, even for those who do not actually buy anything.

There is a complex dialectic among the experiences that Indians have in ethnic-national museums (that is, museums where national heritage and ethnic identity are key concerns), in art museums, and in commercial exhibitions. In each case, they are being educated in different forms of cultural literacy: in the first case, they are being educated in the objectified narratives of nationality and ethnicity; in the second case, in the experience of cosmopolitan aesthetics; and in the third case, in the habits and values of the modern, high-tech householder. These three forms of cultural literacy play a central role in the construction of the modern Indian, who is drawn into the visual and auditory narratives of modern citizenship by his or her experiences in museums and exhibitions. The outstanding question is, how does the museum and exhibition experience help create such cultural literacy?

A major theoretical cue comes from what has been called "reception theory,"²² a body of ideas developed largely out of postwar German neo-Marxism, but now modified by interaction with reader-response theory and associated approaches to problems of audience analysis in mass-media studies. From this rather diffuse and developing body of theory, four hypotheses can be suggested as especially relevant to those postcolonial societies outside the Euro-American axis, such as India, in which nationalism, consumerism, and leisure have become simultaneous features of contemporary life for important segments of the population. We see these hypotheses as particularly applicable to societies such as India, since in them the connoisseurship of "art" as a distinct category is relatively undeveloped, the visiting of museums is not sharply separated from other forms of leisure and learning, and the idea of expert documentation and credentials in the interpretation of objects has not displaced the sense that viewer groups are entitled to formulate their own interpretations.

The first hypothesis is that sacralized objects and spaces generate specialized modes of viewing and interaction, which are likely to be rooted in historically deeper modalities of seeing as a cultural practice. In the Indian case, there is a considerable literature showing that the mutual gaze (*darsan*) of sacred persons or objects and their audiences creates bonds of intimacy and allegiance that transcend the specifics of what is displayed or narrativized in any given context.²³ The faculty of sight creates special bonds between seer and seen. Museum viewing



Fig. 1-4. A street hawkker's gendered anthology of cinematic, political, and religious images of stardom. Madras, 1989. Photo by the authors.



Fig. 1-5. Old tech and new gloss in the world of the kitchen. Madras, 1989. Photo by the authors.



Fig. 1-6. Epic horizons, superstars, and the seduction of the theater. Madras, 1989. Photo by the authors.



Fig. 1-7. Coffee and the wish-fulfilling cow in a mythic Hindu landscape. Madurai, 1989. Photo by the authors.



Fig. 1-8. Cinematic superdramas frame the microtraffic of the street. Madras, 1989. Photo by the authors.

may be expected, therefore, to display some transformation of this longstanding cultural convention.

The second is that the reception of specialized sites and spaces is a profoundly communal experience, and the objects and landscapes of museums are viewed by "communities of interpretation"²⁴ in which the isolated viewer or connoisseur is a virtually absent type. Thus, in any museum or exhibition in India (with the possible exception of certain museums devoted to "modern" art) the lonely and private gaze that we can often observe at places such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York is absent. Viewing and interpretation are profoundly communal acts.

The third hypothesis is that viewers are not likely to be passive and empty receivers of the cultural information contained in exhibitions and museums. Rather, as in all societies, they come with complex ideas of what is likely to be seen, and share this knowledge in highly interactive ways among themselves and with those few "experts" who are cast in the role of explainers. Thus museums and exhibitions are frequently characterized not by silent observation and internal reflection, but by a good deal of dialogue and interaction among the viewers, as well as between them and whoever is playing the role of guide. Here the museum experience is not only visual and interactional, it is also profoundly dialogic; that is to say, it is an experience in which cultural literacy emerges out of dialogues in which knowledge, taste, and response are publicly negotiated among persons with very diverse backgrounds and expertise. In many cases, the near-absence in Indian museums of docents and the underdevelopment of the idea that exhibited objects need to be explained (either by signage or by guides or docents) create a much wider space for discourse and negotiation among viewers: viewers are left free to assimilate new objects and arrangements into their own prior repertoires of knowledge, taste, and fantasy. Such freedom characterizes a great many Indian museums, even those in which there is a strong effort to determine viewer interpretations, but is true only of smaller, less intensively curated, less well funded museums in the contemporary United States and Europe. There is thus a profound tension between the museum or exhibition as a site of defamiliarization, where things are made to look strange, and the viewer-dominated process of dialogue and interpretation, which familiarizes cosmopolitan forms and narratives into larger master narratives from other arenas of public life, such as travel, sport, and cinema. Thus, the museum experience has to be understood as a dialogic moment in a larger process of creating cultural

literacy, in which other media-influenced narratives play a massive role.

Fourth, the responses of viewers, gazers, and buyers vary significantly, along at least two axes: (1) the type of exhibition or museum to which they are exposed, and (2) personal characteristics, such as the class, ethnic group, and age group to which they belong. These differences create significant variations within a larger common structure that is predictable from the previous three theoretical assumptions. Since the study of reception is in a general way not highly developed and is especially poorly developed for the study of readerships outside Europe and the United States (and even less so for reception in contexts such as museums), further examination of the exhibition complex could make a significant contribution to more general methodological debates.

Much of the structure, organization, taxonomy, and signage strategy of Indian museums is colonial in origin. Thus while the *contexts* of current museum viewing may require new applications of reception theory, the *texts* contained in many museums (that is, the collections and their associated signage) require the analysis of colonial modes of knowledge and classification.

CONCLUSIONS

Like many other phenomena of the contemporary world, museums in contemporary India have both internal and external logics. As far as the rest of the world is concerned, there is no denying that museums constitute part of an "exhibitionary complex"²⁵ in which spectacle, discipline, and state power become interlinked with questions of entertainment, education, and control. It is also true that museums everywhere seem to be increasingly caught up with mass-media experiences.²⁶ Finally, museums everywhere seem to be booming as the "heritage industry"²⁷ takes off.

In India, each of these global impulses has crosscut a particular colonial and postcolonial trajectory in which new visual formations link heritage politics to spectacle, tourism, and entertainment. In making this link, it seems that older Indian modes of seeing and viewing are being gradually transformed and spectacularized. While the investigation of the museum experience in India is only in its infancy, we would like to suggest that it will need to focus especially on the deep interdependence of various sites and modes of seeing, including those involved in television, cinema, sport, and tourism. Each of these sites

and modes offers new settings for the development of a contemporary public gaze in Indian life. The gaze of Indian viewers in museums is certainly caught up in what we would call this interocular field (the allusion here, of course, is to intertextuality, as the concept is used by the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin). This interocular field is structured so that each site or setting for the disciplining of the public gaze is to some degree affected by viewers' experiences of the other sites. This interweaving of ocular experiences, which also subsumes the substantive transfer of meanings, scripts, and symbols from one site to another in surprising ways, is the critical feature of the cultural field within which museum viewing in contemporary India needs to be located. Our effort in this paper has been to argue for the importance of such an interocular approach to museums in India, and perhaps everywhere else in the contemporary world where museums are enjoying a fresh, postcolonial revival.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Arjun Appadurai, "The Global Ethnoscape: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology," in R. G. Fox, ed., *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present* (Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research, 1991).
2. For a more recent work, see Carol A. Breckenridge, "The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting: India at World Fairs," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 2 (1989), 195–216. Earlier efforts include Ray Desmond, *The India Museum, 1801–1879* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1982); Hermann Goetz, "The Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery," *Museum* 7, no. 1 (1954), 15–19; and Grace Morley, "Museums in India," *Museum* 18, no. 4 (1965), 220–50.
3. Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Burton Benedict, ed., *The Anthropology of World's Fairs: San Francisco's Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915* (Berkeley: Scholar, 1983); James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988); Virginia R. Dominguez, "The Marketing of Heritage," *American Ethnologist* 13, no. 3 (1986), 546–55; Nelson H. H. Graburn, ed., *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

4. Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
5. Dominguez, "The Marketing of Heritage."
6. Michael Ames, *Museums, the Public, and Anthropology: A Study in the Anthropology of Anthropology* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986); Douglas Cole, *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1985); Neil Harris, "Museums, Merchandising, and Popular Taste: The Struggle for Influence," in Ian M. G. Quimby, ed., *Material Culture and the Study of American Life* (New York: Norton, 1978); Masatoshi Konishi, "The Museum and Japanese Studies," *Current Anthropology* 28, no. 4 (1987), S96–S101; Mark P. Leone, Parker B. Potter, Jr., and Paul A. Shackel, "Toward a Critical Archaeology," *Current Anthropology* 28, no. 3 (1987), 283–302; Ian M. G. Quimby, ed., *Material Culture and the Study of American Life* (New York: Norton, 1978); George W. Stocking, Jr., *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, *History of Anthropology*, vol. 3 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).
7. Leone, Potter, and Shackel, "Toward a Critical Archaeology."
8. W. S. Hendon, F. Costa, and R. A. Rosenberg, "The General Public and the Art Museum: Case Studies of Visitors to Several Institutions Identify Characteristics of Their Publics," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 48, no. 2 (1989), 231–43; Kenneth Hudson, *Museums of Influence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Leone, Potter, and Shackel, "Toward a Critical Archaeology"; Michael H. Frisch and Dwight Pithcaithley, "Audience Expectations as Resource and Challenge: Ellis Island as Case Study," in Jo Blatti, ed., *Past Meets Present: Essays about Historic Interpretation and Public Audiences* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987); Elliot W. Eisner and Stephen M. Dobbs, "Museum Education in Twenty American Art Museums," *Museum News* 65, no. 2 (1986), 42–49; Danielle Rice, "On the Ethics of Museum Education," *Museum News* 65, no. 5 (1987), 13–19; Sheldon Annis, "The Museum as Staging Ground for Symbolic Action," *Museum* 38, no. 3 (1986), 168–71.
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