

GUGLIELMO B. TRICHES: *Ringrazio le due giovani collaboratrici per l'interessante intervento che ci illumina un aspetto normalmente trascurato dall'Amministrazione che io vedrei addirittura istituzionalizzato per approfondire delle ricerche per la raccolta di dati che servano anche allo scopo di individuare una collocazione diversa delle collezioni, delle iniziative collegate ai musei. Dó la parola a Renée Dreyfus del Fine Arts Museum di San Francisco.*

RENÉE DREYFUS

### *Museum interpretation: the obligation of the 80s*

One of the criticisms directed at the current political administration in the United States is that projected budget cuts would exclusively affect low-income people. By way of a reply, the American public was informed that no, indeed, the cutbacks had not all been directed at this segment of the population since it is clearly the more affluent who are affected by reductions in support of the arts and humanities.

The appreciation of the arts, of course, has long been considered the prerogative of the privileged; but, I had thought that this image of an elitist world of the arts or, more to the point here, the museum as an "ivory tower", had been crushed by the endless crowds clamoring for a glance at the fabulous exhibitions and acquisitions that have become part of today's museums. My reaction against an elitist view of the arts is quite strong and has led me to a re-examination of the main function of an art museum and a self-evaluation to see if we, in San Francisco, are directing our efforts properly.

As we all know, museums are concerned with the acquisition, preservation, and presentation of works of art. We have already heard in this conference that scholarship and interpretation relating to these collections are also crucial factors. The basic goal of museum professionals is to bring art to as many people as possible. This can be achieved by promoting direct access to objects in such a way as to encourage the enjoyment and understanding of art. In order to encourage a broad public to utilize the museum as a resource, it is necessary to present diversified programs and offer a variety of approaches to exhibitions.

As museums are increasingly recognized as learning institutions, educational programs both within and related to museums are becoming more stimulating and thought-provoking. Museums offer an unlimited resource for learning. In their use of visual encounters for learning experiences, they can present what other educational systems cannot, namely authentic objects. Objects are often insufficient by themselves, however; and the type of learning that takes place in a museum can be an elusive one. The well-conceived, properly placed label can give the visitor information that he or she might not otherwise possess, and it can generate interpretive flashes here and there as well. But the variety of orientation and interpretive programs used to enhance museum experiences should be designed to help the visitor focus on the art, not detract from it. Labels and wall panels should be unobtrusive and able to fade into the background.

Art can often make a greater impact when some basic concepts are presented. A diversified education program can provide a myriad of materials that facilitate the appreciation of works of art on many levels of

understanding, for everyone from the art specialist and scholar to the preschooler on his or her first museum visit.

The interpretive programs that are prepared at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco to supplement the permanent collections and temporary exhibitions take the form of labels, wall-panels, brochures and handouts, recorded tours, audio-visual presentations, school and community programs, docent tours for children and adults, as well as slide-illustrated lectures in the museum and the community and special materials and presentations for the disabled. These are in addition to public programs designed to present a cultural context surrounding the visual art and courses utilizing collections and exhibitions. The installation of the works themselves, can also have an interpretive impact through the placement of these objects to show continuity, comparisons, and total effects.

Educational programs do not stop at the museum buildings but extend into the community. The Fine Arts Museums have a dedicated group of volunteer docents who are a basic and vital part of the educational services provided. Besides conducting traditional gallery tours, docents may also choose to assist in other areas: community lectures, school tours and presentations, and special programs for the disabled. The docent volunteers service schools, libraries, community organizations, hospitals, and senior citizen groups. Those docents who choose further advanced training can deliver slide-illustrated lectures, signed for the deaf when necessary. Through the community lecture program they help to make the collections and exhibitions known throughout the region of the museums and beyond. The tremendous need for this program of lectures on special exhibitions is evident from the number of requests for it from the community. This outreach program also has the potential to build the museum's membership organization by broadening its base.

One of the areas in which the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco have taken a special interest is student education. Working directly with teachers and school administrators we are producing school programs of high quality that complement the curriculum materials prepared by the local boards of education. Schools are more aware of the potential for teaching basic skills outside the classroom, and administrators are now looking to museums as a resource to implement programs that accomplish this type of informal education. By providing participatory gallery tours, in-school presentations, written materials, slide presentations, teacher-training workshops, and actual objects from our study collection, we can present to school children the basic art education that has now been effectively cut from many of the American school districts due to budgetary constraints.

Through workshops, the teachers are prepared to assist their students and encouraged to utilize the Fine Arts Museums as a resource. We have several workshops each year to orient the teachers to art on permanent display in our two museums and to introduce them to special temporary exhibitions that supplement our own holdings. We have learned that it is important to educate teachers about the museum's own collections as well as the more publicized special shows in order to convince them to visit the museum with their students whether or not there is a temporary exhibition on display.

This year we are planning a new school program carried out by high school students trained in museum practices, art history, aesthetics, and teaching techniques. They will bring study collection art and other visual materials into schools to present the material to other students. Children tend to respond in a positive fashion in a peer teaching situation, and they certainly respond more readily to objects that they can see and touch than they do to slides or printed material.

Our programs for the disabled are comprehensive and present alternatives to the more conventional forms of interpretative materials. In these programs an attempt is made to provide experiences that are, as much as possible, similar to those prepared for other museum visitors. For the blind and visually-impaired, Braille and large print versions of printed material are provided, as well as presentations of objects that can be touched (including selected works on exhibition), raised line maps, three-dimensional models of the buildings, Braille numbers on doorjamb, free recorded tours of the collections, and special presentations that relate to current exhibitions.

Special programs and exhibitions have also been developed for the deaf and other disabled groups. Our Docents for the Deaf program started over a decade ago as the first in the western United States. By using total communication, that is, simultaneous speech, sign, and mime, these docents have brought an entirely new group of dedicated visitors to the museum — and have inspired

many other similar programs throughout the country. We have been able to present exhibitions of important deaf California artists to encourage pride, hope, and understanding among the deaf and hearing alike.

Brochures have been prepared that describe these programs and presentations for the disabled, and they also are available in Braille, large print, and audio-cassette forms. A special museum newsletter and calendar for the disabled and our museum brochure, the *Gallery Guide*, are also available in various formats.

The U.N. World Organization has proclaimed 1981 as *International Year of Disabled Persons* with its theme *Full Participation and Equality*. Physical access to museums is only the first step in bringing art to these visitors. In San Francisco we expect to be broadening our programs still further in this coming year.

These varied educational programs for a wide audience increase the visibility of our museums and attract to exhibitions people who might otherwise not come. The positive responses from the general public, and educational and disabled groups have convinced us that we are successful in our endeavors.

An art museum should not be an 'ivory tower'. Its social value does not lie only in the accumulation of material treasure. It lies also in the enrichment of thought and refinement of sensibility that an appreciation of the fine arts can stimulate. Art objectifies the most earnest thought and feeling of the artist, who speaks not only individually but for his or her culture. The history of art is the history of ideas and of aesthetic and moral values. Our social institutions and mental and moral make-up are built upon the variety of philosophies expressed through objects preserved and displayed in art museums. One may come to the study and appreciation of art at any time in life and with any sensitivities.

Museums in the 80s should not be elitist organizations, they should be devoted to assisting people of all ages, all degrees of acquaintance with the subject — as well as those with disabilities that have traditionally excluded them from museums — to find a richer appreciation of art.

GUGLIELMO B. TRICHES: *Ringraziamo Renée Dreyfus per l'acuta ed esaustiva analisi di un approccio particolare che tende all'espansione delle funzioni del museo, come elemento attivo nella società, e delle notevoli esperienze del Museo di San Francisco nella sensibilizzazione tecnica di docenti, studenti e altre speciali categorie sociali nei confronti del patrimonio permanentemente conservato nel museo, nonché delle mostre.*

*Dó senz'altro la parola al dott. Zorzi della Società Olivetti di Milano che parlerà dei Contributi dell'industria italiana all'attività dei musei: il caso Olivetti.*

RENZO ZORZI

### *Contributi dell'industria italiana all'attività dei musei: il caso Olivetti*

La collaborazione fra industria e musei — dobbiamo infatti limitare a questo singolo aspetto l'osservazione di un fenomeno, quello della parte esercitata dall'impresa nella formazione e nello sviluppo della cultura moderna, che ha dimensioni molto più estese e complesse, toccando praticamente ogni settore di attività intellettuale, e comunque di attività nel campo delle arti — è un fatto

non proprio recente, ma che ha conosciuto, soprattutto negli ultimi vent'anni, sviluppi assai interessanti: alcune delle maggiori mostre dell'ultimo periodo (per citare solo qualche episodio particolarmente significativo, la mostra degli ultimi anni di Cézanne a New York e a Parigi, la quasi sterminata mostra del post-impressionismo a Londra, la mostra dei cavalli di San Marco a Londra, New