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CONFERENCE

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Panel Discussion
Museum and Community

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Christopher Steiner, Associate Professor of Art History and Director of Museum Studies, Connecticut College

Moderator: Lisa Graziose Corrin, Director of the Williams College Museum of Art

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John Weber: Let me open with an announcement. I am sad to say that Allan Kaprow passed away two days ago. He was one of my professors and someone a lot of us learned a lot from, whether directly or indirectly. As many of you may know, he was the person who theorized and to some extent invented—and certainly made widespread—the notion of the Happening. His articles on education and the artist in the 1960s and early '70s had a major impact on thinking about what art might be, how differently it could operate in the world, and what the role of the artist might be. And of course, his famous article, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," set the stage for that. I just want to take this time to remember Allan and the great teacher he was and the great artist he was. Allan Kaprow.

And now I am pleased to pass the day along to Lisa Corrin, long-time friend and colleague and someone whom I deeply respect. I was happy when she moved into the neighborhood to become director of the Williams College Museum of Art, having come from the Seattle Art Museum. Before that she was in London at the Serpentine [Gallery], and before that at the Contemporary [Museum] in Baltimore, where she worked together with Fred on *Mining the Museum*. Lisa, thank you and welcome.

Lisa Corrin: Thank you, John. I want to start off by saying that I have many new colleagues here on the East Coast and you have all been awesome about welcoming me back home, and I really appreciate it. I am glad to be a part of what you do, and I have just been adjusting to my new life as a director at a college museum, my first college museum job.

I was wondering why I in particular was asked to moderate, besides the fact that John and I were old friends. I am actually a huge admirer of his. The exhibition that Janet and George talked about earlier, curated by John, I hold up as a model to my curators at the Williams College Museum of Art. That exhibition showed how the voice of the artist—the voice of the maker—can be reinserted into the object and reach out to many people who would find contemporary art very challenging because it is so unfamiliar, that language. So I feel privileged that it was John who invited me to be here. I am guessing that part of it is because perhaps my history as a curator has been so unusual: I started off with a museum that was a concept and not a building; then I went to a European *Kunsthalle* at the epicenter of the British art scene as it began to invent this thing called Cool Britannia; and then to a general museum, the Seattle Art Museum, which is a museum in three sites. When I was there, I was just beginning to take on the mantle that had been thrown down by my predecessor Patterson Simms. He had been groundbreaking in terms of connecting art to life and thinking about its role as a truly civic institution—*civic* as Ivan Karp says, who uses that word so often and so well. And then of course I went from Seattle to Williams, where, when I asked what the job of the director would be, they told me it was to be a public intellectual, and I said, "Where's my contract?" I thought that was about the best definition of what a museum director could be that I had ever heard, so though I was a reluctant applicant, I was very quick to agree.

These different kinds of institutions all have very, very different definitions of community. When we speak of community, we are speaking of how individuals and collective groups access the museums, and the ways that they connect or do not connect to our institutions. How often do we look around us and ask how our context shapes, how we interpret, collect, preserve, study, and exhibit the objects in our care? Museums, as Elaine Gurian has reminded us, are not just objects, but also relationships and spaces for questioning and defining who we are individually and indeed collectively. Now each of us works in a very different kind of museum. Some of us are the only show in town; maybe people have to travel several hundred miles to see another work of art, and if they are on a fixed income they really look to us as the principal access that they have to visual culture. Others are lucky to be in places like Williams—where we have wonderful synergies with other institutions or other kinds of missions—or are in big cities.

These contexts radically alter how we define this word *community*. Is it just the college, the faculty and the students? Is it our relationship to a small town where we live, or to a region? Or do we play a very active role in our metropolitan area? I think right away of the museums at

UCLA and what they have done for Los Angeles: with this plethora of museums, they stand out as shining examples—both the Fowler and the Hammer—of how college museums can add a very necessary dimension to what other museums are doing that wouldn't exist otherwise. We are often asked to compensate for the deplorable state of art education in our country. One of the questions I often think about is: can and should the college museum be democratic, and in what ways? Not to take that word *democratic* for granted; our administrations certainly don't. How often does the administration see us for their exclusive use? Are we just a place for staging college agendas? For example, as a showplace for alumni, how do we create a sense of community with the campus, a place for gathering, for discussing, for the secret dialogue that education is supposed to be about, and also give students a sense of their responsibility for what lies beyond the campus? College museum have a very special role, at a time when the idea show is becoming less and less frequent, particularly in large museums. Our role as a lightning rod, as an arena for discussion, has become ever more important.

I want to tip the hat to Ivan [Karp] in particular. I was looking at *Museums and Communities* this week when I was preparing to come here; that conference was in 1990, and I am amazed at how relevant that book still is. It is rather extraordinary. If you haven't read it, I don't think there is any better text available that outlines these issues. We are very lucky that he is here with us.

One of the other things that we have seen that museums can do with regard to communities is that they can make accessible for the general public the big questions that underlie the critique of representation. They can give people a toolbox for analyzing the way images work in our culture and help them think critically as a result. Today's panel is going to look at a number of particular issues. One of the questions that certainly will be raised is who speaks for the community and what models are out there to encourage greater participation and multiple voices. I think we are going to hear about that, particularly from Doran and Christopher. Elaine is going to talk about the notion of democratization of meaning so that all people have access to complex, self-reflexive, and meaningful experiences when they are in the museum. I think of Fred's important contribution, *Mining the Museum*, perhaps more than any other one, which was to ask the question: "Where am I in the museum?" I think that this panel will inevitably bring up the changing role of the director and curator, and it will also look at how the attitudes, or the shift in attitudes in general museums, are beginning to be translated in unique ways at the college museum.

Finally, we will ask: How are the expectations for a college museum with regard to community different, and how does this affect every aspect of what we do, all of our strategies for connecting to individuals and even to ourselves, to our own staffs? How can there be an utter and complete change of ethos that makes us feel really integrated into the world we live in? With whom do we collaborate, how, and why? How do we involve interdisciplinary thinking in these collaborations? And where does this all fit in, in terms of art museums and changing terrain, or movement from art history to a more visual studies centered curriculum (which is something I really hope that we get to today)? We are going to start with Elaine.

Elaine Gurian: Thank you. To be transparent: I never knew about the Tang. [*Laughter.*] I do now, though. I am a practitioner in the wider museum arena who writes; I am not a writer who practices. Today you are going to hear a part of a much larger paper proposing a wide-scale change, including substantial power-sharing strategies and individuals as owners of their own learning experiences. This paper has taken me a year and a half to write, and if your response is,

"Geez, she is onto something, but she is wrong about this or that or the other thing," you share with all my colleagues who have made that comment before.

In her new book *New Museum Theory and Practice*, Janet Marstine, who is here in the conference, writes, "University museums are perfectly situated to embrace conflicting ideas about museums and confront these ideas for didactic purposes." She also writes, "The founding purposes of most university art museums give them an all-university educational mission and a penchant for experimentation." And I would add the further obvious observation: the university contains a rich mélange of intellectual pursuits with a seemingly easy access to crossdisciplinary thinking within a small geographic location. I underline *seemingly* because I know that it is not always easy.

With that in mind, what if we created a university museum in which visitors could comfortably search for answers to their own questions, regardless of the importance placed on such questions by others? I contend today that most museums are *important* but not *essential* establishments. I acknowledge that the conventional museum continues to be valuable for some, beloved by its audience, and defended against transformation by those who understand and celebrate its value. I suggest we leave the great national omnibus encyclopedic museums alone to continue on their valued way. Nevertheless, I propose there is room for another kind of museum alongside the museums we already have, one that arises not from organized presentations by those in control, but one that by broadening its intellectual basis puts control into the hands of the user. And what better hands to put it in than the students who understand the inquiry method and use it in other parts of their lives? I suggest that while some useful experimenting with such control shifts within museums is already underway, most especially within resource centers and in the study storage embedded within galleries—let me stop here to tell you to go upstairs the mezzanine to see this installation's foray into lateral thinking and other professions—there is no current category of museum in which the visitor is intended to be the prime assembler of content based on his or her own need.

I am interested in transforming how users think of museum visits from an occasional day out to a drop-in service. I believe university museums and small local museums are the best candidates for enabling this transformation, because on the one hand they can program more nimbly and with less fuss than can these highly visited larger establishments, and on the other hand their community is generally small enough to be potentially known and understood. Proximity—that is access to the local museum—is relatively easy. If and when these museums come to be regarded as useful and often repeated stops in the ordinary day of the student and the local citizen, I believe that like the library in the very same community, the museum will have become essential. I am proposing that this change will change the dynamic for the citizen as well as the student and will begin to soften the barriers to use.

We know that many potential visitors have not felt interested, welcomed, or included by traditional museums and have demonstrated their indifference by not attending. I believe there is a correlation between the intellectual control by staff and the lack of relevance seen by many of our citizens.

The essential museum would begin with four assumptions: One, all people have questions, curiosity, and insights about a variety of matters, large and small; two, satisfaction of internalized questions is linked to more than fact acquisition and can include satisfied intellectual curiosity,

aesthetic pleasure, social interaction, and personal validation; three, museums can be useful places to explore these; and four, visitors can turn their interest into satisfied discovery if the appropriate tools are present and easy to use. Unfettered borrowing of objects will be the main organizing motif of this museum. To facilitate that, either the majority of the museum's objects will be on view, or the exhibition will be organized much like today so that the frame will be considered only one starting point among many. However, additional information, as broadly collected as possible, will be considered almost as important as the objects themselves. Thus a database with a branching program of multiple topics within as broad a crossdisciplinary base as possible will be available and within easy reach. To access the database, a technological finding aid will be on hand so that visitors can successfully sort through the multiplicity of the available data. Visitors in this new museum, once satisfied with their own search, can leave evidence of their investigation or their queries to subsequent visitors, because technology will permit it. Everyone who enters has the possibility of becoming both investigator and facilitator. The overt exhibition content therefore will be only the jumping-off point—the light frame, if you will—to relevant additional information. Thus it will be not an art museum, where art is not integrated into other curricula, but a true multidisciplinary museum offering art as one of its interpretations. It will become a true teaching museum, though using the definition of teaching as a site for personal or even guided exploration on a broad range of avenues. The basic mediating role of the curator will have to be changed: the curator will not limit the information or in some cases even the objects from view. Instead, the broadest possible array of information and objects will be made available, and the user will ultimately combine them as he or she sees fit. In the university setting, the museum will become the place for as varied, quirky, and multidisciplinary an intellectual stew as possible. No topic will be off-limits, and no idea will be rejected by the staff as unworthy. The museum will grow with the input of its users.

Lisa: Which planet is that, so I can take a rocket ship?

Elaine: Since they don't have to tell you what they are doing, you'll never know! Before the reader finds this model too novel, consider that this is not dissimilar to the basic organizational structure of the Internet, of libraries, and of the shopping mall. I wish to align these new essential museums with these models. Why create a new kind of museum? In part, because surveys have continued to show that museum visitors remain a narrow segment of our society. To enlarge the audience beyond the ongoing, relatively static profile, many have previously encouraged additional approaches. These include collections created by underrepresented people, adding exhibition subject matter to appeal to specific disenfranchised audiences, utilizing exhibition techniques that appeal to many ages, thoroughgoing community liaison work, and free admission. Reluctantly, I now can see these measures, while good, will not permanently expand the audience very much. I am newly convinced that the potential for broadening the profile of the attendees visiting the traditional museum is limited. I have come to this very slowly and very sadly. So I propose that the museum of inclusion may be possible only if the object-focused mission is separated from the equally traditional, but less well understood, intellectual control of staff, and a new mission is substituted that satisfies a range of personal motivations by facilitating individual inquiry. I am not advocating that all museums need to change in this way. I concede that the public wants and even needs these time-honored, often iconic museums. Instead I am saying that the role, potential relevance, and impact of the traditional museum—however useful it may still be—are more limited than I had formerly believed.

What is the special reason one would go to a museum at all, you might ask? The museum's comparative and competitive advantage remains the visual and sometimes tactile access to special physical things; the museum remains one of the few places where one can come face-to-face with hard-to-find, sometimes beautiful, and potentially intriguing stuff. It is the physicality, the reality, that makes museums special. While current technology makes it possible to see almost any item on the computer screen, the computer cannot accurately reproduce the nuance, especially the scale and texture, that individuals absorb in the actual presence of the objects. It is the evidence in its tangible form that the public values.

I am proposing that we couple the power of the physical presence within encyclopedic nature with the speed of the Internet, and I am suggesting that the result will encourage the visitor to find out more than just information the museum has about the subject. I am eager for the proprietary information held within individual museums to be combined with related information from other sources. It is the availability of linked and often unexpected information connected to the physical objects, made readily available on the spot through the electronic search engine, that will make the museum fully interesting to the visitor. The object becomes the fulcrum of the information. In collecting stories as relevant and useful data, in addition to the information that is hard data, the museum will have become comfortable with transcribing seemingly antagonistic, competing, or overlapping knowledge systems often described as differing worldviews. This is done on the Internet; it is done by Wikipedia.

To transform the museum, those in leadership positions will have to take delight in helping patrons learn what they wish. They will require staff to rethink their role, their passion, and their skill set. I am respectful of the scholarship the curators have amassed and do not suggest that they discard it; but I am recommending a change in their role from teacher and transmitter to facilitator and assister. Having struggled for decades to get museums to see education as a priority, I am now suggesting that the word needs a changed definition from one that implies the interrelationship between teacher and student to one that clearly denotes the facilitation of individual inquiry. This proposal turns museums upside down, transferring authority to the visitor, and transforming the staff—who have been knowledge accumulators, preservers and translators—into knowledge brokers and sharers. Some museums have experimented with bits and pieces of this in the past; I am certain that this new system could and should be created wholesale in the future. Thank you.

Lisa: Thank you, Elaine. Doran Ross was, for many years, at the Fowler Museum. He now professes to be retired, but he is in fact in no way retired. His work in the area of African art set the standard for many of us in this country interested in that field. When I went to the Seattle Art Museum, he was held up by our Africanist as being the most innovative thinker, particularly not only in how to use objects, but also how to just involve disparate communities in a broader appreciation of those objects. He is going to give us a series of case studies today of projects at the Fowler that involved working with various constituencies in Los Angeles.

Doran Ross: Let me preface my remarks by emphasizing that I am speaking from the perspective of a former director of a university museum in a large metropolitan area, where the ivory tower is alive and well and is still surrounded by a large moat that is only crossed when the drawbridge is lowered after payment of an eight-dollar parking fee. Indeed, additional fortifications protecting the university from its many communities are found in the bumper-to-bumper freeways and boulevards that make the average trip to UCLA about 50

minutes. If you come to the Fowler Museum of Cultural History, you must really want to see what's there. The fabled strategy—"If you build it, they will come"—simply does not work in Los Angeles.

Since the Fowler has a wide-ranging mission statement, and cultural history encompasses a range of disciplines in humanities, the museum regularly attracts students and faculty from art history, ethnomusicology, anthropology and archeology, world arts and cultures, history of course, and especially the various area study centers on campus, such as the African American and Latin American study centers. Indeed, fully two-thirds of our exhibitions are curated by faculty and/or students—sometimes in combination, sometimes alone—mostly from those disciplines. We do a good job of attracting people in the humanities. It appears that we actually repel the sciences. I think there was a recorded instance of a chemical engineering major coming to the museum, but that was back in 1987, and it did make the front page of the *LA Times*. She came only because she was dating a guy who was studying African art history.

I am going to direct my subsequent comments to strategies for engaging the diverse communities outside the UCLA campus. We are all aware of the various freedoms that are employed to draw audiences to museums. Here I mean freedoms in the broader scope of the word, i.e. the absence of hindrance and restraint. These include free parking, free admission, free public programs, free school tours, free food at receptions, of course, and occasionally even a venue for free speech. With the exception of parking, the Fowler Museum offers all of these. Of course, these freedoms cost the museum money, but other than the hard work of raising money—indeed it is hard—these strategies for enhancing community engagement are comfortably passive.

I want to outline three interrelated proactive strategies that the Fowler has used with significant degrees of success to bring various segments of the Los Angeles public into the orbit of our museums, exhibitions, and programs. None of these are particularly new, but what distinguishes them is the commitment of substantial resources and their execution. I am going to use most of these slides simply as window dressing so that you will have some sense of the projects that I am talking about. The first of these three strategies is museum partnerships.

After being closed three years while the new building was under construction, the museum reopened in 1992 with the exhibition *Elephant: The Animal and its Ivory in African Culture*. This first opening title panel here is a 10-foot-high life-sized silhouette of an African elephant: hated by most designers, loved by all the kids. This exhibition dealt with the representation and the use of the elephant as image and material in a wide variety of African cultures. A key component of this project was an NEH-funded partnership with the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History and the Los Angeles Zoo. The initiative was called *Elephant Tracks* and had four key features. Before I go into those I will give you a taste of what the show was about. It dealt with the image of the elephant in wood, metal, and textiles as you see here; it dealt with the material of the elephant; and then of course a lot of ivory. We wanted to balance this—and this is another set of partnerships—with how the Anglo American use of ivory came about or played itself out, so we had a whole separate section exhibiting pool balls, piano keys, a Victorian parlor we set up. And then we finished the exhibition with a bare skeleton, tuskless, of an elephant, with small photographs along the side of poached elephants, butchered in Africa. On the far right-hand side, you see a life-sized elephant eye as you walk out, eyeing you, a little trite, but effective.

Our partnership here, again, was with the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History and the Los Angeles Zoo. The initiative called *Elephant Tracks* had four key features: codevelopment of a 100-page K–12 curriculum resource unit for classroom use prior to museum visits; secondly, a daylong teacher program for points or credits (this was tied to subsidized busing); number three, determination that classes visited all three of the venues; and four, additional partnerships with animal rights groups such as PETA and the World Wildlife Fund and others. The benefits of these partnerships are perhaps obvious: coordinated educational objectives, shared mailing lists and community contacts, and multiple and mutual marketing campaigns. While *Elephant* was a temporary exhibition at UCLA, it involved existing installations and programming at our partner institutions.

A second more ambitious set of partnerships involved two other institutions, and it involved the installation for a period of seven to eight months in three different places: the Fowler, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and the California African American Museum (CAAM). These were relatively large exhibitions, 6,000 or so square feet each. The Fowler Museum looked at music in the context of Africa; LACMA focused on musical instruments as works of art; and CAAM centered its exhibition on the African American experience in music. You see their respective titles on the screen and the dates. This partnership had all the same features as the previous one, except the busing was more heavily subsidized. We set it up so that if you bought one bus trip, usually for two classes, you got two for free; and we offered 100 of these, and they sold out completely on the first day they were offered. So, at least 100 schools with two classes each visited all three exhibitions. The major component of all three exhibitions was an ensemble of professional-quality percussion instruments, which at UCLA involved instruction from ethnomusicology graduate students. This was also available to our adult visitors, who readily embraced the opportunity.

Moving to the second strategy for engaging the communities of LA, it centers on the development of companion exhibitions to larger exhibitions, sometimes traveling ones, sometimes ones we mounted ourselves. These took two forms: juried art exhibitions, and more conventionally curated ones. The first juried art exhibition was mounted in its own gallery for six weeks towards the end of our exhibition of African neck rests, called *Sleeping Beauties*; you are seeing the title panel of that. For the companion exhibition we solicited submission in four different divisions: primary, middle, high school, and an open division. The challenge was to create a neck rest that reflected your own family or cultural history. The then senior art critic of the *Los Angeles Times* juried the exhibition along with two UCLA art professors. Unfortunately, I really didn't know what I was doing when we did this, which is often the case. We advertised too widely, we offered too much prize money—we had $12,000 to hand out to 12 winners—and we didn't limit the geographic areas that submissions could come from. Ultimately we were inundated with 917 submissions of actual objects, including three from males in South Africa. I hid from our collection staff and registration staff for two weeks, taking the professional approach. But the show went on; 12 works from each of the four divisions were selected for an exhibition adjacent to *Sleeping Beauties*. We held an opening reception with a formal award ceremony in our auditorium with virtually all the families of all the winners attending. In the East African section, we had a "heads-on" component, with a series of neck rests that you could try on this bed. The exhibition was African, but actually it had Asian and Oceanic neck rests as well. The companion exhibition was in about 2,000 square feet with 48 objects on display, and you are seeing some examples in these images.

We repeated this process with our 1997 exhibition, *Isn't She a Doll: Play and Ritual in African Sculpture*. We don't have any more slides for either one of these, but we toned down the advertising, we toned down the prize money, and limited submissions to Los Angeles County. We still received 874 submissions, this time via photographs. Variations on the juried art exhibition at the Fowler include a whole series of class quilt competitions that were submitted by classrooms as a collaborative effort; we would make a selection of about 35, and the five top winners would receive free bus trips to future Fowler exhibitions.

Other companion projects were more conventionally curated. When we hosted *Recycled, Reseen: Folk Art from the Global Scrap Heap,* organized by the Museum of International Folk Art, we actually mounted three different companion exhibitions. One was a photo exhibition by a visiting professor in architecture, dealing with makeshift shelters of the homeless in Los Angeles; a second by a UCLA folklore graduate student on metal recycles in Tanzania; and the third by two other folklore students in a 4,000-square-foot gallery called *Muffler Men, Muñecos, and Other Welded Wonders. [Slides.]* This is the *Recycled Reseen* entry, a couple of shots from the exhibition itself, and then *Muffler Men, Muñecos and Other Welded Wonders.* Muñecos is actually the word for dolls. They are objects largely produced by muffler-shop welders, most of whom are Latino, made of spare parts that are discarded or broken parts that are discarded after repairing cars, and then they are put together in various configurations. I especially love this lady with the vacuum cleaner in the center here. All three of those exhibitions were involved with a book accompanying them, and the graduate students and professors were all contributing substantial essays, three different views of muffler men. The opening was fascinating. Most of the welders had never been in a museum before, and many of their families had not visited museums, so it was quite an enlightening experience.

The second example of the graduate student-curated companion exhibition accompanied the traveling exhibition *Bicycles: History, Beauty, Fantasy*. It is a very enthusiastic bicycle culture in Los Angeles, despite rumors to the contrary, and so we were confident that this would attract a large number of residents. Indeed, many of the touring bicycle clubs made this a destination over the run of the exhibition. We decided to mount a complementary exhibition called Cruisin', Stylin', and Pedal-Scrapin': The Art of the Lowrider Bicycle. This again is primarily a Chicano art form; most of the objects came from East Los Angeles, and in the case of the lowrider show, the curator's task was not so much to select the bicycles as to select the lowrider clubs that regularly identified their own current award winners. The clubs identified the rig that was to be included, and each club was empowered to install their own bike generally complete with flooring materials, rotating bases, trophies, and thematic accoutrements that accompanied the bikes, and their airbrushed artwork. You will see three examples here. They are required to move, but the pedals aren't necessarily required to make a complete circle. Trophies were usually part of the display, and in this case some skeletons were added by the kids in back.

Let me finish with a quick run-through of my final example. The last strategy we need to touch on is just this kind of involvement of community members and the curation of an exhibition as seen in the lowrider project. Empowerment and collaboration can take many forms, of course. For the exhibition *Wrapped in Pride: Ghanaian Kente and African American Identity*, co-organized with the Newark Museum, we had two goals. First, we wanted to bring the study of kente cloth up to the present to include contemporary products and all their myriad forms. And secondly, we wanted to examine how the kente phenomenon has manifested itself in African American

communities in the United States. (This was not the subject of my research. I had worked in Ghana extensively; I could of course have done the work myself, but better to involve someone else.)

For *Wrapped in Pride*, my basic idea was to enlist a class of seniors from a predominately African American high school and challenge them with a substantial part of the identification, documentation, and collection of objects for the exhibition and publication. This was structured around a yearlong course at Crenshaw High School, identified as "Museum Studies" in their schedule. We had a class consisting of 15 African American students and four Latino students. Most sessions were cotaught by myself and Betsy Quick, the Fowler Museum director of education. The last Thursday exhibition we put in the hands of these students. We called it the *Calendar of Cloth*, which traced the use of kente throughout the calendar year: Christmas, Kwanzaa, Martin Luther King Day, Black History Month, and so forth, through graduation and June ceremonies. We purchased six 35-mm cameras, four tape recorders, 200 rolls of film, etc.—all the things they needed to go out and record for the project. We divided the yearlong class into three sections, and began with interviewing and photographic techniques so they could get to work right away documenting. Indeed there is kente on Thanksgiving and Christmas, and the second part dealt with the introduction to African systems of adornment and styles of dress. The final section was actually the museum studies part. The students came to the museum 10 or 12 times and went through sessions on registration, conservation, curatorial responsibilities, etc. A guest slide lecture by Fred Wilson on his exhibition *Mining the Museum* was a highlight of this part of the course; he came and talked to this high school class for an obscenely low honorarium, and I am much grateful for that still.

The scheduling of all interviews and their direction were solely the responsibility of the students, although we did develop a sample set of questions collectively, with a few suggestions from myself and Betsy Quick. The students interviewed people who wore or displayed kente, who made things from the cloth, and who sold these projects. Among those interviewed were Maulana Karenga, founder of Kwanzaa; Cecil Murray, head of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church in Los Angeles; Willie L. Williams, former police chief of both Philadelphia and Los Angeles; and many, many others. A total of 96 interviews were conducted and over 2,000 slides taken. We published 62 student photographs in the book accompanying the exhibition and 109 quotations drawn from the interviews. The exhibition featured 30 of the students' photographs and 21 objects actually collected and documented by the students. Each student was given a $100 budget to buy objects for the exhibition, and then they could write an argument for a higher price if they thought it was a compelling object. That's just the *Wrapped in Pride* exhibition.

All three of these strategies involved relinquishing control, handing it over to members of the local community in one way or another. In the case of the music project, it meant taking our $350,000 NEH grant and dividing it three ways, so we ended up giving over $100,000 each to the other two institutions. But I think in all cases it drew in more people than we would have ever had a chance to bring to the museum, and it gave a considerable amount of gratification to those visitors and a sense of belonging to the museum. Thank you for your attention.

Lisa: Thank you, Doran, for being so respectful of dialogue in every point of view. Christopher Steiner is going to talk about the Lyman Allyn Museum and about political and institutional

flip-flopping. He didn't exactly go nuts, but now he has taken an interest in a nut collection and he is going to talk about that as well.

Christopher Steiner: What I am presenting is a case study. I am going to go into a fair amount of detail just about the history of the museum, to give you some context for understanding the relationship that can develop when a community museum happens to have been built on a college campus. It is a fairly unusual situation, and in our case it led to some controversy. I will talk about three things: first, the history of the museum itself; secondly, the museum's relationship to the college on whose campus it is built; and then thirdly, some of the lessons that I have learned from my different involvements with the museum, which I am calling a museum on the fringe, both geographically and conceptually.

The Lyman Allyn was founded with a bequest of $1 million in 1926 by a former citizen of New London, Harriet Upson Allyn, and named after her father, Captain Lyman Allyn, who made his fortune in whaling in the city of New London. The museum thus had a central historical component and was tied to the economy of New London. In her will, Harriet Allyn left it "for the people of New London for their benefit and enjoyment of art and natural history." Now, I have tried to do some research to figure out where the natural history went, but apparently it never had natural history in it, so the probate court didn't quite catch that sentence. It was a museum of art. The architect was Charles A. Platt, who was commissioned to design it in 1931, and it was probably based on his building of the Addison [*laughter*] Art Gallery at Phillips Academy, which he completed in 1931. The museum opened in 1932 on March 2nd, Harriet's birthday, and hired its first director, a man named Winslow Ames, who was 24 years old and fresh out of the Harvard museum studies program.

Interestingly, the museum was built without a collection. Harriet did not leave any objects; she simply had a wish for a museum to be built. So Winslow Ames walked into the Charles Platt building and then had a small amount of money to begin buying art to actually put something in the building of which he was now in charge. And what he bought, because the budget was fairly low, were primarily prints and drawings, rather than trying to go after one or two key paintings or sculptures. By graduating from the Harvard program under the direction of Paul Sachs, Winslow Ames joined a whole network of museum directors in the Northeast in the 1930s who had all graduated from the same program, including Jere Abbott, who was the director of the Smith College Museum; Josiah Marvel, director of the Springfield Museum; Francis Henry Taylor, who was at the Worcester Museum before he went on to the Met; Henry Russell Hitchcock, who founded the Art Department at Wesleyan; and, most notably, Chick Austin, who was the director of the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford and who was also a very close friend of Winslow Ames. From the beginning, then, the museum was focused within this network of other museum directors and really saw itself as part of the burgeoning museum scene in the Northeast and in southeastern Connecticut.

You may have noticed I haven't mentioned Connecticut College yet, because it really didn't factor into the founding of the museum. Harriet Allyn never mentions the college in her will; it really had no bearing on the museum, except for the fact that it was built on the campus, or at least what appears to be the campus. Legally it was land owned by Mrs. Allyn, which you can see in this aerial shot in 1968. You can see the museum. Her house is that structure to the far left at the bottom, and then the campus is above in the top part of the photograph with the Long Island Sound behind it. It was really purely by geography that it became connected to

Connecticut College, rather than by a plan by its founder. The connection was made even clearer later in its history, in the 1980s. This is a satellite photograph, and you can see there is a little driveway that was built connecting Lyman Allyn to campus in the 1980s. So everything was making the museum seem like part of the college even though technically it never was.

At the same time it was not very close to the town of which it is a part. You can see on this satellite photograph that downtown New London is about 10 miles away from the museum, so the museum is isolated from the community that it was meant to serve, and it is *de facto* part of a community which it was not founded to serve, that is, the college. In 1942, the museum closed and was used as an air-raid shelter, because the U.S. Naval submarine base was right on the other side of the river (it is still there). It was thought that New London and Groton were prime targets for attack, so the museum was shut and Winslow Ames left to join the Quaker Relief Service and never returned. The museum went through a period of interim directors after Winslow Ames left. Finally, in 1950 they hired a director, Edgar Mayhew, who remained director of the museum for 38 years, which may set a record for the length of a director.

During this period, Edgar Mayhew and the college began to communicate with each other. Edgar Mayhew was made a tenured professor in the Art History Department. At museum events, both the college faculty and students apparently would come and a certain relationship developed. And I would argue that, although it was the beginning of some intellectual connections between the museum and the college, it was also the beginning of some of the problems that revolve around funding. The museum had its own endowment, and the college has its endowment, and they are dealing with a limited body of potential groups from which to fund-raise. They were put in the awkward position of competing with each other, even though intellectually they were trying to work together. So this is where I see the beginning of the problem in which both the president of the college and the director of the museum are competing for scarce resources. Edgar retired from the college in 1982 but remained part of the museum until 1989. That led to a shift in the other direction. Now that he was retired from the college, he was seeking to withdraw and to build up his own support before he finally retired from the museum as well.

The museum board hired a woman named Penny Knowles; she was charged to bring money in and reinvigorate the program. She said quite optimistically when she was hired, "Our premise was that if we had an exciting schedule of exhibitions and other programs, and that if we had good publicity, that we would galvanize a community. People would come flocking here, and money would come pouring in. I have to say that hasn't happened." She was dismissed in 1994.

At that point the museum was threatened with closure; it had virtually no income other than what came from a trust, which was about $200,000 a year. Connecticut College stepped up and said that they would take over as trustee of the museum, making it formal that what had been a community museum would now legally become the property, or rather come under the trusteeship, of Connecticut College. In the community, the college at this point was seen as the savior. They were going to bankroll the museum, they were going to hire their own director, and things were going to be really good, so we thought. A director was hired indeed. He was given a mixed signal: the museum's identity wasn't clear. Was it a community museum or a college museum? No one quite knew. On the one hand, his mission was to bring art to the people, as it says in the headlines of this article, and he really wanted to go out into the community. On the other hand, the college saw the museum now as a showplace to bring alums, to raise money, to have dinners for potential funders—it was seen as part of their

campaign to develop capital for the college. The new director was pulled in two very different directions.

During the period that the college controlled the museum, the budget went from $400,000 to $2 million in 1999; it grew from three staff positions to 10 staff positions; and the college used the museum as the centerpiece of its capital campaign. In 2003 things were not going so well at the college. A new president came to the college in 2002-2003, and the first thing he did was to order the museum to be separated again from the college because the college could not afford it anymore. I was appointed interim director to oversee this divorce, as they were calling it, and was given the task of being in charge for one year, while a new board was formed from members of the community who would then hire a new director to bring the museum back to the community. So I put on a tie, I put on a fancy belt, and did what I thought a museum director was supposed to do.

About two months into my tenure, we were all hit with the news that not only was the college separating, but by the way, it would like the $4 million back that it had invested in the Lyman Allyn during that 10-year period. That was a surprise to everyone. The dispute played out in the local newspaper. The board of the museum claimed that the college had mismanaged them and was now trying to take their assets, and the college said, "We helped improve the museum;" and they did write off $1.9 million right off the bat that they were kindly going to take off the books. The dispute went on. I was caught in the middle. It turned out nobody was going to give money to the museum because they felt that any money they gave would go to the college. Some people in town were so mad at the college that fund-raising came to a halt. It was an untenable situation, and was resolved ultimately by the attorney general's office. The attorney general concluded with the obvious point that we had all made: there were no loan documents, so there couldn't be a loan, so the college should drop its claim, which it did.

The saving grace of having been the interim director during this difficult time was that I was allowed to do any exhibit I wanted. It was the first time in my life I didn't have to ask anyone. There was a museum in Old Lyme, Connecticut, called the Nut Museum, which was built in 1972 in Elizabeth Tashjian's home. It was a museum devoted to nuts. She had collected nuts, she had painted them, she sang songs about nuts, she took her nuts on Johnny Carson. I thought, "What better moment to do this show at the Lyman Allyn than in the current predicament that we are in?" I had just come back from consulting at the Tang, and I was impressed with their drive for interdisciplinary exhibits. This did indeed bring in psychology students. We took Elizabeth's concept of the Nut Museum and we recreated it, and we had the highest attendance at any opening of the museum. I did ask permission from the dean's office, and they said, "Well, it will have to be American art." Okay, well, she is American.

It was very interdisciplinary. We had students from media studies and film studies coming in to talk about nuts and visual culture; students from botany working with the actual nuts; students from art history working with the paintings. My idea of what museum studies should be at the college happened in that one year when I was there.

In preparing for this talk I found a lecture by James Cuno when he was still director of one of the Harvard museums, in 1994. This was before any of the fiasco happened at Connecticut College, but it reads as though he knew it was going to happen. "My point is simply that deans, provosts, and presidents come and go and with them come and go their vision for the art

museums and galleries under their supervision. One president may see the art museum as a perfect vehicle for improving town relations and thus encourage broad outreach into the community; another president might think the art museum a beautiful place in which to host development-related events, entirely unrelated to the fund-raising needs of the museum. But when a subsequent president arrives and finds herself facing a mounting deficit and a call from all quarters to cut costs without sacrificing the core activities of the academic enterprise, the externally active art museum will find itself on the wrong side of the fence." As indeed we did.

To conclude, I want to raise three points, which are really more questions than answers. The first has to do with the problem of identity: can a museum shift identity midcourse through its history from a community museum to a college museum and back to a community museum, or are museums tied to a certain core identity? The second is the problem of finances: can one rely on the local community as well as on college alums to support both institutions at the same time? In the case of Lyman Allyn, we couldn't. And finally the question of museum studies, which I have asked myself a couple of times during the course of all this. I was hired to start museum studies when I thought we had a museum, and we've lost the museum since I was there. Can museum studies be taught at a college without a museum? In our case, the answer arises because the museum happens to be on campus, and no one really knows whether it belongs to the college or not. We can go with the fiction that it is still there, and we use it and we do have a good relationship with the museum today. Thank you.

Lisa: Some of us were talking last night about the pecking order of college administrations: you have the president and the provost and the vice president of this and that and the museum director. And just underneath the president by a hair is the parking czar. Christopher, those great satellite photographs showed the importance, for the campus museum, of proximity to the campus itself. And Doran, you spoke about having to come up with all kinds of innovative ways to get people to come to the Fowler, because it costs $8 to park; and LA being as sprawling as it is, it is hard to convince people that the museum is actually close to them and they can actually get there. In Elaine's case, we are talking about the virtual spaces of the museum. It could be interesting to get into this whole issue of architecture and access, not only about issues of parking and proximity, but also psychologically and also in terms of the architecture itself. In a museum that is actually focused on the teaching of students, how do you create an environment which says immediately that it is accessible and welcoming, not only to the campus but also to the community that's beyond the campus?

Elaine: I wasn't talking about a virtual museum; I was talking about an actual museum. I have written a lot about access and architecture and I think it has to do with subtle as well as overt things. I have concluded that the most important thing is that your museum should be free. Then, where is your admissions barrier? Is it the first interaction that a novice user has? If you look at the models that I talked about, the shopping mall and the library, they are designed by architects, as are we, and you will see that both of them are organized so that the mandatory interaction with human beings is at the end, not the beginning of the experience. Browsing: that is the interaction that allows you to check out how the place works; it is allowed by free entry before you are required to interact with an official human being. Jane Jacobs, who wrote *The Death and Life of Great American Cities,* talks about lurking as an important function in becoming comfortable with city streets and urban places. Whether we design lurking capacity or not has a lot to do with architecture.

Doran: The Fowler had an interesting situation when it came to designing our new building, which opened in 1992. The site was designated and it was placed on the access to the original six buildings on campus, which were built in very familiar collegiate Romanesque style. In fact the architect was not a terribly inspired one. The two principal buildings are Royce Hall, which is a performing arts center that seats about 2,000 people, and the undergraduate library. The architect simply took a northern Italian church, chopped it in half, and put the facade of the church on one side of that access in the center and put the apse end of the church facing it on the other side of this access. Very uninspired, but by putting the Fowler in that space, they dictated that it had to conform to the architecture of the original six buildings. Rather than create something distinctive, something that would set us apart, they virtually disguised the museum in this anachronistic situation, which further hampers our ability to distinguish ourselves just by that kind of conservative architectural gesture.

Christopher: I will just add to that, at the Lyman Allyn the board has been talking constantly for the last eight years—since I have been involved with the museum—about the architecture of the building, which they see as imposing. It has a neoclassical design with marble steps. They always say, "If we had any other kind of building, people would come." In a sense, architecture gets used as a mask for the reality that there are ethnic and class barriers that are stopping people. It is not the 10 marble steps that are hard to get up.

Elaine: One of the things that you want to look at is the individual motivation to overcome what I refer to as the threshold of fear. The commitment to enter into an unfamiliar building is a big, not little, commitment. Under what motivation are people willing to do that? It is part of the reason that I have written this paper. Are there trusted social pioneers from your community who are willing to bring along people into your building and point out that it's an okay place? So the staffing issue of who knows about your building and who wants to recommend it in your community as safe is every bit as important as the architecture.

Lisa: The challenge is to get past the perception that a college environment by its very nature is private. They sense that they have to pay to go; it is not necessarily part of the overall community. We have been talking about how the community perceives the museum. Another question relates to how the college art museum sees itself, and that is traditionally as a place of scholarly activity on a par with what is going on in the other academic buildings. What is happening to that role on the part of the curator? What happens to the role of scholarship in the college museum in light of these proposed changes in our relationship to community?

Elaine: There is a wonderful role for the includer and disseminator. It's a role I find interesting and thrilling. It is a role played by people on the Internet who are recreating knowledge bases. That change would seem less threatening if you recreated the role from one wonderful thing to another wonderful thing. At the moment I think institutions were not made for the comfort of the curators and their scholarship. Not to demean either of them, but these are institutions with perceived social good, and so we have to figure out both a useful position for the curators and their scholarship and a new definition of what curation means in the context of a civic environment.

Lisa: And perhaps even a new sense of what the word scholarship means.

Doran: At UCLA, there may be a little bit better integration of the academic community. We regularly have roundtables in the museum; we regularly pitch exhibition ideas to the faculty. One that we ultimately didn't do was based on the dissertation work of a graduate student who wrote about gang graffiti—not the lovely graffiti that is related to lowrider bicycles, but the marking and tagging by some of the more powerful gangs in West Los Angeles. We had 15 or 20 faculty there debating the merits of this as a potential exhibition. Some people simply were afraid of it. We have done that kind of consultation consistently. We certainly see our curators as academics—to see curators as anything else is a grave mistake. It is just not a big issue at UCLA.

Charles: At the Lyman Allyn it's a different issue in the sense that we don't have a curatorial staff now. We did when things were looking good with the $2 million budget. But because of what happened, because of economic necessity, the current director realizes that he has no money for curating. Now he is reaching out to the college and using faculty to curate shows, which is what we wanted all along. Desperation leads to good things.

Lisa: Why don't we open it up to the audience for questions?

Audience member: Do you find it a challenge to get students involved in every aspect of your museum work?

Doran: Yes, of course, it is hard to get some students involved on some levels on some projects. The elephant show had some contributions to the book by six or seven graduate students and three different faculty; there were 19 significant essays in the book. Students were involved with researching subsections of the exhibition, some parts of it in seminars, some parts as paid employees of the museum. There are some exhibitions where that simply doesn't work particularly well. We have done half a dozen exhibitions that were the product of five graduate student seminars and one undergraduate student seminar. Integration of students needs to play out as much as possible, though sometimes it doesn't work.

Lisa: From what I have seen, the Tang is actually doing that with students, involving them at all levels. The one area that poses major problems is just the discrepancy between the academic schedule and calendar and the museum calendar. If I am teaching a course and I want to involve students in an exhibit during that course, sometimes the exhibit is not planned out until two or three years later, so it is hard to coordinate that and involve students with every phase of a project. But that's certainly the goal.

Doran: Even in the docent area at UCLA we don't have volunteer docents. Our in-gallery teachers are graduate students who are paid to do the teaching on whatever exhibition happens to be up.

Elaine: If you look at the model of community museums and how they discuss and refer to their constituencies, their community, the answer would be, for example, that there is no Native American collection which does not have live human advisors from the community itself. Those advisors have all kinds of roles, depending on how the institution is organized. There is some direct conversation between users, descendants of the objects' makers, and the institution. This can be meaningful, power-sharing dialogue.

Audience member: How do you get people to come back to your museums?

Doran: I think the idea that people have to come back to the museum is a rather greedy one. It is a nice idea. We certainly hope people come back. We can do an exhibition on Mexican cultures, which we do a lot of exclusively, and we could have a Mexican audience exclusively. But we try to mix it up as much as possible: in terms of geography, in terms of intellectual content, in terms of the exhibition's theme. We are as interested in getting the people into the Fowler who have never been there as we are in getting people to come back.

Audience member: Do the challenges for curators in reaching their public apply to faculty as well?

Elaine: For faculty there is an analogous responsibility. They are teachers; they have a public constituency that they need to be responsive to, and that tension has always been in existence. The question is whether the museum can be shared space for more than one discipline, not by invitation, but by actuality. We are not yet in a technologic place to allow the kinds of things we are imagining—we are almost there, but not completely there. But since the dialogue and forum are important in museums, the notion of crossdivisional sharing of intellectual content seems especially interesting within the university setting.

Lisa: There is a strong parallel between the kind of changes that Elaine is suggesting for the museum and what is actually going on in the classroom: we have moved away from linear lectures and have created a mode of learning which is more oriented toward the consumer rather than the producer. So there are parallels.

Elaine: There is one thing I want to add. I showed this paper to my 24-year-old godson who is in the museum business and who is the son of a museum educator. When he read it, he said to me, "What took you so long? People my age learn like this, and if the museum doesn't want to learn how to respond to the way we currently learn using technology, then the museum will be left behind." Take iPods, for example: people are making iPod tours in museums, but what is also happening is that kids are making guerrilla iPod tours, which they hand to each other, so that the traditional authority is no longer in the control of the institution.

Doran: Let me say one thing that we do that works very well for us and that may be useful to someone else. Unfortunately, university museums exist in the minds of many as a kind of eye candy or window dressing for the university. The university needs one, because where else are you going to hold your receptions? Museums have to do everything they can to counteract that. At UCLA, we have a running document called the Academic Agenda of the UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History. It keeps track of every relevant statistic: the number of classes that have been assigned exhibitions (it is up in the 600s now); the number of students and/or faculty that have done research on the collections (those are recorded); the number of graduate student papers that have been published; the number of faculty papers that have been published; the number of books by faculty, by graduate students, and so forth; the number of student employees that work in the museum; the number of internships and scholarships the museum has given to students. We keep this compiled on a regular basis. It is a document we can hand in at budget time, saying, "This is what we are doing for the university aside from the eye candy and window dressing."

Christopher: This also gets to the point Elaine made about museums being essential. The Lyman Allyn was not perceived as essential by the administration.

Elaine: But Christopher, then how does it play into the last question that you had up on the PowerPoint, which was: "Is a museum necessary to a museum studies program?" What's the college's position now with this museum studies program?

Christopher: Well, I think they are convinced the program is going to continue just because geographically it is on campus. When I was hired, I had to make a case for museum studies as a good fit with liberal arts. There was some faculty resistance to it as a preprofessional program. The argument I made was that it was part of the liberal arts in the sense that every graduating student should know how to read a museum in the same way that they know how to read a text or a film, and that it is part of the liberal arts education. It was a good argument, but it didn't save the museum in the end.

Audience member: Elaine, could you talk more about working with native communities, and how to do that right?

Elaine: If people of good will are willing to present parallel realities within a framework of equality, that goes a long way. What I am talking about is multiple dialogues without prejudice. In many countries, for example, there is shared ownership or agreed-upon ownership of objects, in which an object resides in a different place than the owners. There may need to be hand-crafted protocols about the way in which the object will or will not be displayed, and about the intellectual content that will or will not be revealed. And curators and museum directors may have to become more comfortable with the notion that a show may have outcomes that are not on their list. Maybe we can learn to do that.

Lisa: I think that note is a beautiful place to end.