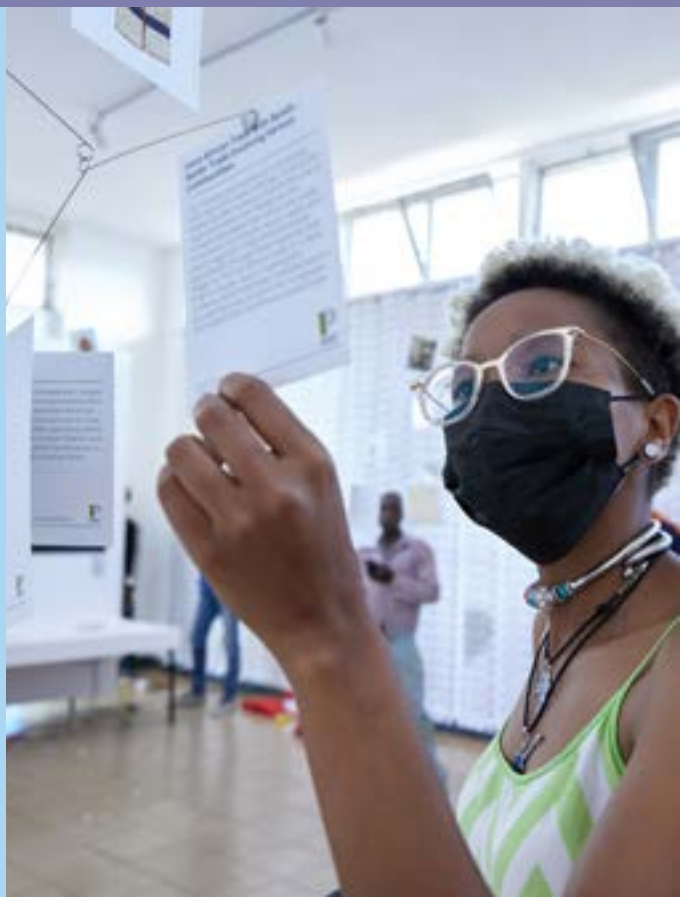
CORINNE A. KRATZ

Rhetorics of Value

Exhibition Design & Communication in Museums and Beyond



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Cover art: (*Left*) Chairman Mao Memorial Hall, Beijing, China, 2013. Photograph by Julie Livingston. Courtesy of the photographer. (*Right*) *Invisible Inventories* exhibit, Nairobi National Museum, Nairobi, Kenya, 2021. Photograph by Lameck Orina. Courtesy International Inventories Programme.

For IVAN,
always

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Acknowledgments

Books take time, some more than others. This one was slow, gestated in fits and starts over the last fifteen years; some parts began even earlier. Life intertwines with book writing, so a lot of events, happenings, travels, connections, changes, losses, and beginnings shaped and surrounded and infiltrated the work that became *Rhetorics of Value*. Many people and organizations were involved and contributed along the way, in many different but vital manners.

I've had three home bases over that time, with long friendships and sustaining support in each. In Atlanta, the Coven have been stalwart friends and colleagues as together we weathered many ups and downs. My sister-friend Lisa is always there, always listening, always smart, wise, and challenging, always ready for walking, wine, and music. Her steadfast support also saw me through the copyediting crunch. Friends-neighbors-colleagues Carolyn and Clark Hulse are anchors in Santa Fe, with Felicia Katz-Harris and Lillia McEnaney as museum-based sounding boards and Marni Sandweiss setting the pace and keeping company in the final stages as she saw her own book to completion. I am much enriched by over twenty-five years of discussion, exchange, joint projects and workshops, shared writing retreats, dinners, walks, runs, outstanding Hermanus weekends, and more with friends in Cape Town and elsewhere in South Africa, sometimes meeting up across the world. A lot of this happened in the orbits of the Center for Humanities Research, the History Department, and various incarnations of Museum and Heritage Studies at University of the Western Cape, in the company of marvelous people associated with them over the years. From the start and always central are dear friends and colleagues Josi Frater, Patricia Hayes, Premesh Lalu, Brett Pyper, Ciraj Rassool, and Leslie Witz. I talked through central parts of chapter 7's analysis with Leslie and Ciraj while hiking the Perlemoen Trail in 2023. Others elsewhere have been constant

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Most chapters were initially developed as public lectures or keynote addresses, though all have been significantly revised from early versions and I have enhanced their integration and analytical connections. Early versions of chapter 2 were discussed at the 2002 American Anthropological Association meetings, the School of American Research, the Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis, and the 2009 Heritage Disciplines Symposium at University of the Western Cape before being published in *Visual Anthropology Review* (Kratz 2011). Chapter 3 was delivered in the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities lecture series "How Museums Came to Display the History of Art" (1991) and at seminars sponsored by the Anthropology Department at Northwestern University and the Art History Department at Emory University. It was later revised and published in Hallam and Street 2000. Chapter 4 started as a keynote at the University of Oxford at the conference "The Future of the Ethnographic Museum" (2013) of the European project on Ethnography Museums and World Cultures and was also presented at Harvard University. A brief, early version of chapter 5 began as a 2014 keynote address for the conference "The Museum in the 21st Century—Africa Beyond Africa," co-hosted in Atlanta by the Royal Museum of Central Africa, Tervuren, and the Georgia Institute of Technology. Chapter 6 was first written for the 150th-anniversary lecture series "Race, Representation and Museums" at the Peabody Museum at Harvard University in 2017 and also presented at the Wits City Institute Seminar Series at the University of the Witwatersrand, the University of New Mexico, and the Pressing Matter research program coordinated from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Heartfelt thanks to the many people who facilitated these events and presentations and to all involved for warm hospitality and engaging discussion.

Only two chapters in this book were written when Ivan Karp was in the world and in my life as an essential and cherished interlocutor and life partner. Two others were originally written in the years soon after his death, when I was still finishing his in-progress papers, finishing our joint in-progress papers, and organizing his research material to create the Ivan Karp Papers at the National Anthropological Archives. In the midst of that, it sometimes still felt like we were in conversation, even if I was developing new ideas and analyses. Our decades together mean that his presence and perspectives somehow perdure, despite physical absence. I believe that is true for others as well because Ivan was larger than life—brilliant, generous, curious, provocative, irascible, playful,

and funny—and touched many people. In Kenya, at the December 2011 memorial held for him in Amukura, where some two thousand people attended, the praise poem performed by Pancras Otwani asked, "Who will engage us in those propelling, insightful debates?," enjoining those gathered, "Weep not all you people of good will, But rejoice and boast of Ivan Karp." In the spirit of those debates, I dedicate this book to him.

I

Looking into the Void

EXHIBITION DESIGN AND COMMUNICATION

Exhibitions . . . tell three-dimensional stories. The words, graphics, design, architecture, media and interactives all work together to create an immersive environment to engage and delight our visitors . . . moving through a physical, informal learning environment.
—*The Smithsonian Institution's Guide to Interpretive Writing for Exhibitions*

Grounded in Clay shifts traditional exhibition curation models, combining individual voices from Native communities . . . into a uniquely Indigenous group narrative. . . . [The exhibit's] focus on personal and community meaning emerges as a conversation expressed in prose, poetry, and the visual language of pottery . . . ground[ing] viewers in a powerful sense of people and place. [Figure 1.1]
—SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED RESEARCH, "Community-Curated Exhibition Prioritizes Pueblo Indian Knowledge and Experience"

The 1934 Exhibition constructed a narrative of movement from traditional to modern. . . . [It] not only displayed this narrative, but also encouraged its attendees to actively participate. . . . [B]y the end of the 1930s, this general pattern—of holding exhibitions that were both demonstrative and embodied . . . had become increasingly common. . . .

Ugandan publics were encouraged to physically and affectively engage with these, and to (literally) work towards them. [Figure 1.2]
—RICHARD VOKES, "Photography, Exhibitions and Embodied Futures in Colonial Uganda"

Immersive exhibition experiences and interactive storytelling remain the flagship of [our] collective goals . . . [to] transport audiences of all ages into fantastic realms of story and exploration. . . . Our mission is to inspire creativity through art, exploration, and play so that imagination will transform the world. [Figure 1.3]
—MEOW WOLF, "Our Philosophy"

It is a total experience. First of all, it is time out of time. It is this oasis of calm reflection. It is an experience of architecture, of space, of exhibition in physical, three-dimensional, 360-degree space. . . . It is an embodied experience, *and* it is a social experience, *and* it is a highly curated one that is very differentiated.
—BARBARA KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT, "The Future of Museums in a Post-pandemic World"

Exhibitions are grounded in communication, whether they be blockbusters at major urban museums, community-generated exhibits at local cultural centers, colonial agricultural and industrial exhibitions, or immersive entertainment experiences. The observations and mission statements above emphasize narration, immersion, and interaction as central to exhibitions—all communicative dimensions forged in good part through exhibition design. They also highlight those with whom exhibits seek to communicate—variously characterized as visitors, viewers, attendees, publics, or audiences. This book examines exhibition design as central to constituting exhibit communication and visitor interaction, considering just how design fosters those communicative dimensions by orchestrating the multiple media and varied affordances of exhibition communication. At the same time, exhibit design provides ways to create, convey, and sometimes debate what I call *rhetorics of value*. I say "rhetorics" because exhibit design works most effectively through persuasion and suggestion (not control or coercion), with experiential appeals to visitors' interests, memories, and emotions. Visitors interpret exhibits in ways that may be guided by design techniques and approaches but nonetheless remain autonomous. Rhetorics of value, then, are persuasive frameworks and evaluative meanings that suggest ways of seeing the world, produced through visitors' interactions with diverse communicative resources combined in an exhibition's designed space (see chapter 2).

In 2022, for instance, *Grounded in Clay* opened on Santa Fe's Museum Hill (figure 1.1). Exhibit design helped convey in many ways the spirit, meanings, and stories pottery holds for Southwest Pueblo communities as well as the exhibit's complex community curation process (School for Advanced Research, n.d. b). Textual

FIGURE 1.1. *Grounded in Clay* (2022) was created through extensive collaborative community curation, incorporating individual and community perspectives in ways that revise notions of curatorial voice. Video clips explained personal connections and memories involved in object selection. Photograph by Corinne A. Kratz.

voice combined perspectives of the curatorial Pueblo Pottery Collective—many of them artists themselves or from potter families—with members' personal comments, reactions, and reminiscences as they selected and commented on pieces. Different fonts echoed comments' individuality. Video clips made while selecting objects for exhibition developed this further, as members of the collective described their emotional and sensual connections with pots as beings and their connections with potter relatives-friends-teachers. Boutique lighting within cases highlighted the pottery's formal elegance and beauty, while large images of the objects being held and touched, almost caressed, were accompanied by brief text panels that identified broad uniting themes across commentaries: "Utility," "Elements," "Ancestors," and "Connections through Time and Space." Visitors might have expected previously conventional didactic third-person texts with taxonomic, iconographic, aesthetic, or historical analyses of Pueblo pottery traditions and a few isolated masterpieces on display, but *Grounded in Clay* foregrounded different values, perspectives, and ways of thinking about and experiencing the pottery and exhibits themselves (Brown 2023). It did so partly through design.

FIGURE 1.2. Uganda's colonial Photography Section used exhibits as part of its pedagogical mission, shaping visitor expectations about exhibits at the same time. Photograph: Uganda Broadcasting Corporation.

A few miles away, Meow Wolf's *House of Eternal Return* (opened 2016) welcomed visitors into an immersive fantasy exhibition (figure 1.3), the brainchild of what began in 2008 as a small collective of young artists. Here design crafted a maze-like warren of spaces behind a two-story facade of a home, creating a multiverse encouraging visitors to wander, explore its looping and intersecting paths, step through portals, identify clues to pursue an open narrative about the home's family, touch anything, and pass from one whimsical space to another, as if dropping into other lives, other times, or other worlds. Bright, sometimes neon colors punctuate spaces. Often dim lighting adds to the sense of mysteriousness and allows other multicolored lighting accents to stand out and attract visitors. Interactivity rules, with areas offering a laser harp or musical mastodon ribs to play, a light show within a vertical bus, and other fanciful installations to play with. The artist cooperative has since turned start-up and then become a corporation with multiple venues, aiming to be the "Disney of the experience economy . . . a new kind of entertainment empire, one that carved out space for weirdness and discomfort" (Monroe 2019). The values and experience offered emphasize play and creativity, but design also led the way to entrepreneurship for Meow Wolf. In both cases, exhibit design is central to fashioning worlds,

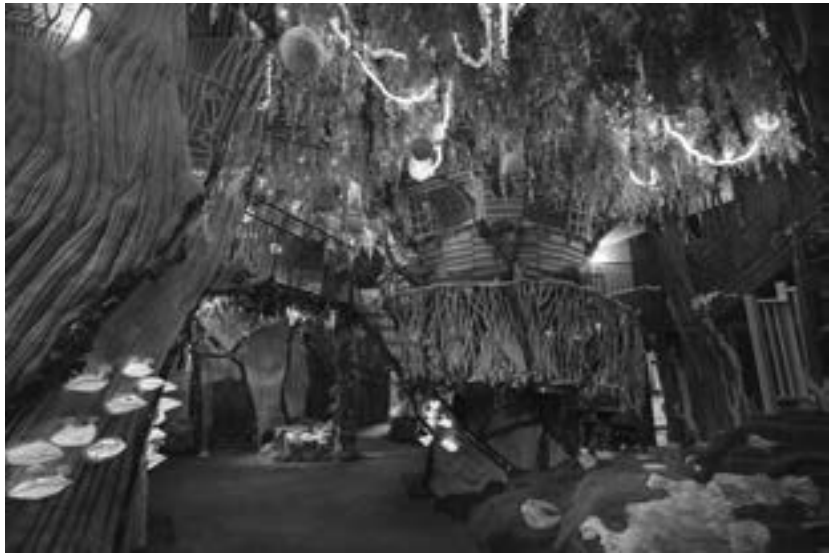

FIGURE 1.3. Meow Wolf opened *House of Eternal Return*, its first commercial immersive exhibition experience, in Santa Fe in 2016. Creative lighting and labyrinthine space help create its narrative experiences. By 2023 Meow Wolf had sites in four states. Photograph by Kate Russell. © Meow Wolf, Inc. 2016.

understandings, and exhibit experiences, while subtly suggesting ideas, principles, and orientations that matter.

Like all communication, exhibitions are also grounded in many contexts and circumstances: diverse histories, social relations, political economies, and power relations, to name a few. Critical museum studies has paid a great deal of attention to these aspects of exhibitions but focused less on how the communication undergirding exhibition experience is shaped and how it works.[1] Exhibition design is fundamental to understanding those communicative processes and to the "production of material acts of imagination through which certain categories, meanings, and narratives become imaginable and thus real" (Domínguez Rubio 2020, 250). It is an essential means of exhibit communication, bound up with value creation on the part of both exhibit makers and visitors.

The process of exhibit development and design involves discussions and collaborations among diverse actors, choices within institutional and material conditions and constraints, and working with various media and modes of communication that are arranged in space and experienced through time when visitors eventually move through the exhibit. Today that process might include curatorial teams; community members; topic specialists; education

staff; internal designers, writers, and fabricators; outside design firms and fabricators; and others. But just as ideas about exhibition styles and genres have changed over time, so have approaches to exhibit design and the design process.[2] These genealogies sometimes differ across kinds of museums, with history museums, art museums, ethnographic museums, science museums, and encyclopedic national institutions having varied trajectories in approaches to exhibit design.[3] These different histories also influence the ways exhibit genres and design approaches have blended and developed over time.

Designing exhibits has come to encompass an increasing number of specialized positions and skills, even as it brings people together to work across disciplinary and media boundaries. Some museums today work with centralized design and fabrication enterprises that operate across museum consortia.[4] Studies of exhibits opened from about 1990 through the 2010s sometimes mention that the museum in focus had recently started using outside design firms instead of in-house design departments. This move to working with exhibit design firms for major exhibits, however, has been underway for fifty years or so, going along with increasing emphasis on the narratives exhibits tell as well as the rise of blockbuster exhibits (Grimes 1994; Bradburne 2001; Lawrenson and O'Reilly 2019). The firms became larger and developed great international reach over that time.[5]

Along with these histories, the negotiations and politics involved in exhibit development and design are also of significant interest, and several studies consider them.[6] My analytical focus here, however, is less on that design process per se than on its product, the designed form that emerges to become the interpretive interface with visitors. That persuasive form, crafted from multiple media, mediates between the curatorial-design team and visitors' expectations and experience. It proffers encounters in which values and identities are created, confirmed, and challenged, and come into dialogue and debate. Elsewhere I described this mediating, interactive role of exhibitions in relation to the "double-sided nature of exhibition experience: . . . exhibition experience [and effects] rely both on what visitors bring to exhibitions and on what exhibitions bring to visitors (already the outcome of the complex processes and decisions that shaped the exhibition)" (Kratz 2002, 94).[7] Exhibition form is not static but rather is given life and meaning as visitors encounter its designed contours, textures, juxtapositions, pacings, and narratives. Yet while exhibit design is essential, it is oddly invisible; often visitors and scholars alike do not recognize or realize just how much it actually does.

Exhibit design presents something of a riddle: fundamental to exhibit communication and experience, yet somehow largely under the radar, receiving little sustained attention in either museum studies or scholarship on design history, design thinking, or design anthropology (see appendix A). To be sure, curators who

regularly mount exhibitions work closely with designers on how best to convey an exhibit's content and ideas. But attention is often focused quite practically—on specific aspects of the project at hand, technical issues in designing for a particular gallery, and constraints of space, budget, conservation, and schedule.

A handful of insightful curators, scholars, and designers have written about design decisions and challenges, at times highlighting projects that sought to introduce and display non-Euro-American object ontologies, epistemologies, or display philosophies.[8] But as with most museum studies work, design is typically considered through isolated examples and passing references, rarely examined systematically for how the elements deployed—light, color, texts, fonts, spatial arrangements, timings, and other ways of directing attention—combine to communicate meanings and values and to facilitate engaging rhetorical effects. Exhibit designer Dinah Casson (2021) remarks that exhibit design is by nature an invisible profession: "You're . . . not supposed to be noticed. . . . [E]ssentially you're there as a . . . discreet backup to support whatever's going on." Others have made similar observations, underlining what cultural critic Walter Benjamin called "reception in distraction," where active viewers/visitors appraise and internalize meanings without necessarily focusing directly on presentational form (Ross 2014, 93). Working in sometimes latent ways, on the margins of attention, exhibit design calls to mind the subtle social workings of a myriad of linguistic forms and variations, which also can fly under the radar of explicit awareness even as each "tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life" (Bakhtin 1981, 293; see also Silverstein 1981; Kratz 1991, 2000, 2010; Agha 2003; Ahearn 2021; and see chapter 2). It may be that the mark of a successful designer is to be invisible, but exhibit design is doing things even if we don't notice it. Our lack of attention to design, which is experienced as if unmediated and transparent, contributes to design's power.

Whether it arises from a taken-for-granted invisibility, a confounding multimedia nature, simple lack of interest, or other factors, the perplexing lack of analytical attention to exhibit design in museum studies and a range of design-related fields means that its significant influence and role in how exhibitions work, how they communicate, and how visitors engage with exhibits remain only patchily explored. Design doesn't expose its own making, and we don't necessarily think of design's structure, since it is experienced not just aesthetically but also somewhat intuitively. It is not actually invisible, but visitors don't necessarily see it or apprehend it as visible, perhaps because they are focused more on exhibit content or fellow visitors, perhaps because they are not practiced in a "museum literacy" that would engage design critically, perhaps because they reach "limits of awareness" of design pragmatics and effects (cf. Silverstein

1981).[9] Paradoxically, this can enhance an exhibition's aura of reliability and increase its pedagogical and rhetorical value since visitors don't interrogate how it came to be thus, or the kinds of institutional authority that underwrite exhibits (see chapter 3).

Recognizing the communicative heart of exhibition design can help bring these aspects to light. Elsewhere I characterized the communication facilitated by exhibit design as relatively open, enabling multiple visitor interpretations and meanings, yet simultaneously contained and shaped through pertinent politics of representation and visitors' own expectations and experiences (Kratz 2002, 213–14). That relative openness is related, in part, to the nature of exhibit design, structured through juxtapositions and gaps that visitors bridge with their own interests and experience, going beyond the sum of its parts (see chapter 7). Those structures and interpretive dynamics can also build connections with other cultural institutions involved with value creation, as well as broader cultural shifts and related forms of social action.

Thinking about Visitors: From Transmitting Information to Diverse Encounters

"The museum experience may well be . . . a continually revised set of transactions between exhibitor and visitor, with constant renegotiations of meaning and value. . . . But the impact or the intensity of [museum experience] . . . remains, perversely enough, mysterious" (Harris 1990c, 53). Mysterious though it might be, exhibit design provides the nexus through which those transactions and negotiations occur, creating the interface between visitor and museum and perhaps shedding some light on the mystery. As exhibit designer Tom Hennes puts it, visitors are encountering "the unseen people who made the exhibition," with exhibit meaning co-constructed by visitors and makers "through an asynchronous, intersubjective encounter via the medium of the exhibition" (Hennes 2010, 26). So how have ideas about visitors and such encounters informed exhibit design?

Exhibit encounters are shaped by expectations that go both ways: expectations about visitors (who they are, what they want, how they should/do behave) and visitors' own expectations about exhibits and museums (what they do, why go there, what they're like, etc.). Just as visitors' expectations have changed over time, so too have ideas about visitors and the ways museums have sought to learn about them. But ideas about who visitors are and what their experience should be like have consistently intertwined with assumptions about museums' goals and how communication with visitors works. This means museum and exhibition histories are in part molded by debates about and interconnections

among ideas about visitors, communication, education, and design approaches. Museum educators and those working in visitor studies and reception studies have tried to plumb such interpretive dynamics for decades. Yet even though visitors are critical participants in exhibit communication, they remain something of a black box in much museum studies work. Tracing ideas about visitors over time clarifies how they have featured in design's workings as a means of exhibit communication and value creation and suggests how contemporary understandings of visitors developed.

Helen Rees Leahy's history of museum visiting shows how rules about who was allowed to visit newly emerging public museums, what a visit was like, and expectations about visitor comportment were taking shape in nineteenth-century Britain, even as they helped shape expectations visitors themselves began to develop about museums and art galleries (Leahy 2012).[10] She notes growing interest in museums' educational capacity after 1850, with some displays reorganized on pedagogical principles; a related interest in how to attract and sustain visitor attention also shaped aspects of exhibit design (Leahy 2012, 59–60).

Learning became seen as one paramount goal of museums, and connections between museums and schools developed both through visit programs and partnerships and in defining museum education programs and exhibit evaluations. School museum visits began in the United States in the 1870s and were championed in the early 1900s by progressive educators like John Cotton Dana and John Dewey, whose educational theories emphasized learning through doing—not unlike the "three-dimensional . . . immersive . . . physical, informal learning environment" invoked by the 2021 Smithsonian manual quoted at this chapter's start. Museum field trips became more central in the 1960s, along with reassessments of both public education and museums that brought increasing emphasis on measuring learning outcomes in schools and museums alike. This fueled the growth of visitor studies and exhibit assessment, as described in appendix B (Bitgood and Shettel 1996, 6; Pekarik 2010, 106; Schiele 2016, 333, 338–39; Dussel 2020).

Notwithstanding theories like Dewey's, more common models undergirding those efforts saw learning as transmitting information, with a basic sender-receiver model of communication. Visitors, in that view, were mainly information receivers. As museums tried to determine how to shape effective pedagogy and learning in exhibits, early visitor studies led to guidelines on exhibit texts' structure (e.g., length, reading level, information hierarchies) and similar conventions that influenced exhibit design. Simple surveys and visitor timing studies also produced some misapprehensions, such as that visitors don't read labels (later contradicted by McManus 1989; Cleveland Museum of Art 1993, xiii; Daniels 2020, 143, 148;

and others).[11] Along with similar shifts in media studies and reception studies, the 1990s saw more active notions of museum visitors, including John Falk and Lynn Dierking's (1992) "interactive experience model" centering the visitor's perspective. Similarly, Zehava Doering and Andrew Pekarik declared, "Museum visitors are not 'blank slates' on which we write" (1996, 20), drawing attention to the prior knowledge and experience visitors bring as "entrance narratives" that shape their understandings (see below). Recent decades brought greater recognition of the social and interactive nature of museum visits and efforts to develop more complex, varied senses of exhibition experience and meaning-making. Some designers and exhibit teams helped develop this synthetic understanding, incorporating it into their own work.

Greater attention to visitor experience underlined the wider range of things exhibits might do through their designed presentations, beyond transmitting information. Museum exhibits craft experiences that convey information; tell stories; present images; introduce people, places, and objects; explain ideas; create, introduce, and explicate categories; suggestively stage affective experience; and, as Meow Wolf suggests in one of this chapter's opening quotes, "transport audiences . . . [and] inspire creativity" (figure 1.3). They do this through designed space that orchestrates a range of media, paths, juxtapositions, atmospheric elements, and more. Rhetorics of value are embedded in that designed form as part of the interface between exhibits and visitors. Remarking on this broader orientation in visitor studies, Tom Hennes, a designer explicitly working with Dewey's theory of education as self-formation, observed: "Regarding exhibits as three-dimensional textbooks in which museums transmit knowledge to a receptive, attentive public ignores much of what is going on in museums. Exhibits are environments in which complex interactions occur among visitors, objects, environment, and meaning. They are places of experiences as unpredictable and idiosyncratic as the individuals who visit them" (2002, 109). He adds to Neil Harris's transactional view of museum exhibits a slight but essential reframing: "Exhibits aren't actually experiences—rather, they are *platforms* for experiences" (Hennes 2010, 25). And as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett emphasized at this chapter's start, the exhibit "is a total experience . . . embodied . . . social . . . [and] very differentiated."

Even if a certain unpredictability and openness are inherent in exhibit communication, as visitors bring their own interests, knowledge, and experience to exhibit encounters, visitors and exhibit makers alike usually have some sense of exhibit genres that helps bridge and orient their expectations. This works to establish a certain common ground about what an exhibit is and what kinds of exhibits there are. Leahy invokes this in terms of embodied habits, "knowing

the exhibition script": "Knowing how to look also involves knowing how and where to stand, where and how fast to walk, what to say and what not to say, and what not to touch. Different modalities of display produced different object-body relations, but knowing where to position your body in space has always depended on knowing how to read the exhibition 'script'" (2012, 5). Such basic bodily exhibit habits were in play, for instance, when Uganda's colonial government began creating public exhibitions in the early 1900s (figure 1.2). It sought to establish such common ground with African subjects to create "scripts" for other domains of practice and imagined "embodied futures" (Vokes 2018).

Leahy emphasizes physical comportment in art exhibits, but visitors, curators, and designers often have a differentiated sense of exhibit genres—different types of exhibit—that maps roughly onto topics and might include art, history, ethnography, science, and natural history. Each genre has its own history of design conventions, yet each has changed, intersected with, and blurred into other genres over time and space. The notion of exhibition genres figures in multiple chapters in this book because such genres are part of the communicative framework through which visitors and exhibit makers come together, shaping the interface in ways that help make exhibits interpretable to visitors (see chapters 4–7).

Ideas about genre forms and conventions may be aligned only loosely and provide resources for imaginative alteration and challenge, yet they remain part of the "way in which knowledge is built up in museums by their visitors, who create their own connections, while simultaneously following established narratives and curated pathways" (Geismar 2018, xix). To adapt William Hanks's formulation, "genres consist of orienting frameworks, interpretive procedures, and sets of expectations that are . . . [part] of the ways actors relate to and use" exhibits (1987, 670). They should be treated "as historically specific elements of social practice" (Hanks 1987, 668), seen as emerging, being produced and reproduced, blurring, shaping reception, and changing through social interaction and over time and space (Fabian 1974; Bauman 1992; Briggs and Bauman 1992; Marsilli-Vargas 2022, 38).[12] The exhibition *Grounded in Clay* (figure 1.1), discussed earlier in the chapter, challenged approaches to curatorial voice, recasting and merging aspects of history and art exhibits.

As visitors came to be seen as differentiated interpreters, visitor studies began considering "entrance narratives," expectations, and prior experience that individual visitors bring to exhibits (Doering and Pekarik 1996; Pekarik, Doering, and Karns 1999; Pekarik and Schreiber 2012). But ideas about exhibit genres are another facet of those expectations, one that speaks to how visitors encounter and come to understand exhibit design, where exhibit makers' own ideas about genres are materialized. Visitors and exhibit makers alike have personal histories

with museum exhibits and other cultural displays, some stretching from childhood, that can create genre resonances or dissonances when they encounter new exhibits (see chapter 4), though these aspects of genre have received little attention. "Critical museology needs to develop a genre theory of exhibition history to better understand the limitations and politics of established practice and guide new and innovative responses" (Shelton 2019, 140).

With a more varied sense of active visitors who produce meaning and values through exhibits, scholar-practitioners who study visitors looked for patterns in the diversity, proposed ways to categorize visitors beyond demographic groups (e.g., different interests and learning styles), and more recently sought to incorporate such differences into exhibit design processes. One of the best-known visitor typologies—strollers, streakers, and students—is based on how long visitors spend in exhibits, on the assumption that dwell time correlates with how much information they want (MacDonald 1992, 165–69).[13] This underlined the benefit of designing tiered presentations and using techniques suitable for different visiting styles (cf. Cole 2019).

Taking this further, Andrew Pekarik and his Smithsonian collaborators began developing the IPOP model, differentiating visitors according to four primary but nonexclusive experience preferences:

Ideas—an attraction to concepts, abstractions, linear thought, facts, and reasons
People—an attraction to human connection, affective experience, stories, and social interactions
Objects—an attraction to things, aesthetics, craftsmanship, ownership, and visual language
Physical—an attraction to somatic sensations, including movement, touch, sound, taste, light, and smell

Obviously everyone is drawn to all four of these experience domains in varying degrees. Yet for most of us, one of the four preferences appears to be dominant (Pekarik et al. 2014, 6).

Based on visitor surveys, design prototype experiments, and visitor tracking, IPOP's categorization of visitor expectations and experience has significant implications for exhibit design. IPOP orientations, researchers argue, shape both visitor expectations and what they do when visiting—where they stop, what they pay attention to, what they avoid, "individual decisions that have occurred at subliminal levels of choice-making" (Pekarik et al. 2014, 6–7). They suggest that especially compelling exhibit experiences likely not only satisfy a visitor's key preference but also engage the visitor through one or more other

foci, surpassing expected interests. They characterize such visitor-exhibit interaction as "attract, engage, flip" (Pekarik and Mogel 2010, 472), with "flip" being a "strong reaction to a different type of experience than the one that generally drew them. . . . A 'flip' can energize visitors and give them exhibition experiences that are special, significant, memorable" (Pekarik et al. 2014, 9).

The IPOP model began with "open-ended inquiry into meaning making," including exhibit creators as well as visitors (Pekarik 2010, 111).[14] Going beyond outcome-based evaluations and simpler visitor categorizations, it started exploring factors and processes involved in how visitors experience and interpret exhibits. A related strand in visitor studies, also interested in interpretive process, developed in the late 1990s and 2000s, and later came to be called the "meaning-making paradigm."[15] Lois Silverman (1995) heralded this as a "new age" that sees visitors as interpretive agents who make meaning about themselves, not just about the topics presented. It replaced the sender-receiver transmission model of communication with one of communicative interaction through which knowledge is constructed and co-created (Rounds 1999; Silverman 1999, 10–11). This shift happened decades earlier in media and cultural studies;[16] critical museum studies had been addressing exhibition representations and museum-community relations since the 1980s, but apparently such concerns made their way into visitor studies only in the 1990s, raising questions about their underlying concepts of visitors. Notably, in asking how visitors make meaning in and through exhibits, Silverman (1999, 11) recognized communication's central role and began recording and studying visitors' talk, identifying general interpretive moves in visitor conversations.[17] Others turned to conversation analysis to identify the "moment by moment learning that characterizes learning in museums" (Allen 2002, 260; Leinhardt, Crowley, and Knutson 2002). This turn to visitor discourse in the 1990s–2000s significantly expanded visitor study methods, bringing to conventional visitor tracking and surveys a world of nuance and possibility that continues to offer insight into how visitors experience and make sense of exhibits through conversation and other modes of interaction (Christidou 2013). Still, connections with exhibit design have not been foregrounded.

While this meaning-making work began providing a better sense of visitors' interpretive processes, visitor studies generally continued to focus on specific design components, comparing effectiveness in relation to learning (Allen 2002). In essence, scholar-practitioners using this model continued work on tweaking details and adjusting design components and variables, like their behaviorist colleagues who rely especially on experimental and correlation research and on tracking and timing visitors (Bitgood 1988). The IPOP model's more comprehensive

approach to exhibit design suggests that exhibit makers include and distribute throughout an exhibit elements addressing each IPOP orientation and consider how to balance and combine them to facilitate potential "flip" experiences. It also suggests more prototyping in exhibit development.[18]

Designer Tom Hennes also developed a more holistic recasting of exhibit design philosophy by rethinking exhibit goals in terms of Dewey's theories about education through experience and interaction with the world. Hennes noted that despite "much discussion of 'creating experience' and becoming more 'visitor-centered' . . . there is remarkably little evidence in practice that the purposes of visitors and those of institutions have actually come closer together" (2002, 109). Too often, creating exhibit "experience" can be a kind of veiled manipulation, so Hennes turned to Dewey for a broader, creative sense that can "actively support visitors' purposes in exhibits" and that "de-centers the exhibition from a more-or-less rigid definition of 'education' toward the various processes of self-formation and meaning-making" (Hennes 2002, 110–11; 2010, 27).

In design terms, this means Hennes seeks to spark conversations in exhibits, to "find ways of calling attention to things that are interesting, unusual, contradictory, counter-intuitive, or otherwise challenging" so that visitors will want to explore (2002, 116; see also 2010, 24). He is also receptive to potential emotional contours that exhibit design can help shape (2014a, 2014b; see also Doering and Pekarik 1996, 21; Kirchberg and Tröndle 2012, 441–42; Pivnick and Hennes 2014; Kratz 2018). Hennes contends that "the space of an exhibition is an extraordinarily fertile environment for these workings of mind, emotion, and *being*" (2010, 24) and that exhibit design may be more effective if freed of "an experiential structure that mirrors knowledge taxonomies" and seeks chiefly to deliver facts and messages (2002, 120).

At the same time, Hennes recognizes a certain ineffable quality of exhibitions, which are simultaneously directed and diffuse because they bring together so many intentions, expectations, personal experiences, and constituencies (cf. Karp 2012). This leads him to see exhibits as encounters and as platforms for experiences (Hennes 2010, 24–25), and led me, in an earlier book, to observe that "exhibitions are always interpretively in process," to emphasize the mediating role of exhibitions noted earlier—relying "both on what visitors bring to exhibitions and on what exhibitions bring to visitors"—and to characterize exhibition communication as simultaneously open to a range of meanings yet contained by visitor experience and relevant politics of representation (Kratz 2002, 94, 213–14). I think the significant, memorable "flip" experiences that the IPOP model's creators identify and seek to facilitate also relate to this hard-to-describe quality of exhibit communication and experience (Pekarik et al. 2014, 9).

The National September 11 Memorial and Museum, where Hennes was lead designer (with a larger team and Thinc Design colleagues), is a complex example of how such ideas play out (see Thinc Design, n.d.). Billie Pivnick and Hennes (2014) recount its development and design process, along with debates and disputes that arose. They anticipated "not only that people coming into the museum will have experienced 9/11 in wide-ranging ways, but also that a measure of that experience lies in sensory impressions outside conscious awareness . . . creat[ing] the potential for unexpected responses" (Hennes 2014a, 32). Thinc Design's team began "by considering the ways different kinds of people might respond to and use the museum" (Hennes 2014a, 32). They also took account of the structure of memorial rituals, considering how to adapt them for an event whose implications were still unfolding, in order to provide a coherent journey through complex emotional terrain via the exhibit.

The exhibit structure presents unified entrance and exit paths, with diverse potential routes to explore in between. The descending entry ramp's initial sequence draws upon "processional aspects of public memorialization . . . to create a consistent beginning for virtually everyone" (Hennes 2014a, 33). The processional sense is created through varied representations of the day and "reminiscences by hundreds of people about where they were when they first heard about the attacks" (Pivnick and Hennes 2014, 336). The "ending sequence helps people bring closure to the narrative arc of their encounter with history" (Hennes 2014a, 33). Varied exhibits on the base level offer multiple narratives and perspectives. Their wide range of information, objects, images, and audio spans scales from enormous objects to intimate details, expanding possibilities for encounters and empathy with others' experiences of the events, while incorporating ways for visitors to pause to assimilate their experience and feelings. Late in exhibit development, another designer was recruited for further work on the historical section, making it denser and more immersive, building walls that disrupted planned orienting sightlines, "collapsing a diverse narrative into a more structured, definitive history," and, according to Pivnick and Hennes, potentially interrupting an experiential and emotional ecology carefully planned to prevent re-traumatization (2014, 344–45).

Museum visitors may not know how an exhibit's current design differs from the original plan, but Pivnick and Hennes's comments suggest what can be at stake in design decisions and details and how exhibit design shapes exhibit experience and the values and identities communicated. If exhibit encounters with narratives, objects, and other materials "can allow for the interpenetration of . . . [an] other's experience into our own internal experience" and expand our sense of the world and of who we are (Hennes 2010, 24), then it behooves us

to better understand how exhibits communicate through designed space and how people craft meanings and values through exhibition encounters. This book is more about the former, the mediating designed exhibition interface as a key communicative resource. But whenever possible I have been attentive to visitor responses to exhibits in the case studies I discuss, since they offer windows into how exhibit design helps shape meanings and experiences. Most had no formal visitor studies I could access, but I worked with available exhibit reviews, talked with some curators involved, and observed other visitors and spoke with them informally. In some cases, material was also available online or in publications about work with community members and their responses.

It's almost futile to consider exhibit design and communication without also giving thought to the diverse visitors for whom exhibits are created and what they make of them. The two are entwined on many levels, as this section makes clear. Exhibit design integrates many aspects of visitor experience. It is partly about managing visitor bodies and traffic flow—for example, defining space and distances by using protective glass or "nudges" created through lighting (Leahy 2012; Domínguez Rubio 2020, 281–85). Designer Dinah Casson (2021) notes that "part of our task is to keep people awake." It's also partly about key details that have received much attention from museum educators and behaviorist visitor studies: label length and style, font choices, object density, exhibit paths, and so on. But those details are about more than efficient transmittal of information. In choreographed combination with other design aspects, they also contribute to overall mood, voice, and genre, which help shape exhibit meanings and experience (see chapter 2). Designers need to "expect that every detail of how people interact with your project will alter the quality and quantity of stories that result . . . [and] to create a system that draws out unanticipated stories" (Barton 2007, 128–29).

This book delves into how all that works—how multimodal design lays the groundwork for exhibit communication and visitor encounters. It builds on current understandings, discussed above, that recognize active visitor interpretation and the diversity of visitor types, interests, and visit scenarios (Smithsonian Institution 2021, 13–23). That recognition has had implications for exhibit design, such as incorporating visitor voice components, creating different interpretive paths with layered exhibit texts, thinking about questions of voice, and using IPOP's approach to diverse visitor orientations.[19] Yet visitor studies and exhibit design seem to have intersected chiefly in ways that focus on particular exhibit components and the content structure of specific exhibit parts. What seems to largely fall between stools is trying to understand the overall workings and effects of exhibit design and communication: the integrating coalescence of all the details that make up exhibit design, their juxtapositions and

combinations, and the gestalt that emerges from their orchestration. This would get at how narratives, genres, pacing, contours of potential intensity, and a combined orchestration of affect and content are produced, portrayed, and activated through the alchemy of visitor engagement with an exhibit's designed form. These come together in the persuasive rhetorics of value exhibits can provide—frameworks for dialogic relations between exhibit design and value creation processes. This is also where the power of design's seeming invisibility comes to bear. Exhibit design's many aspects and details synthesize into a complex communicative platform that mediates between exhibit makers and visitors as they mobilize the exhibit to create their own meanings, values, and experiences.

Rhetorics of Value seeks to look into the current void around exhibition design to consider these dynamic processes and dimensions of exhibit communication. It works with a semiotically grounded analytical model to consider the communicative potential of design's multimedia repertoires, and it considers key enabling aspects of the wider communicative contexts of exhibits, such as exhibitionary and institutional/cultural authority, genre expectations, and the histories of display that get written into exhibits as design techniques and strategies move between settings and contexts. The book also develops an expansive sense of ethnographic exhibits, one that foregrounds a central interplay of identity and difference and related forms of knowledge production rather than being defined by a set of topics or kind of museum. Such a sense brings out historical and contextual variations, seen especially sharply perhaps in settings with different colonial histories. While chapters feature examples and analyses of particular exhibits to provide insight into the interweaving of exhibit communication and design in creating visitor interfaces, together they also sketch larger trends and shifts. Long seen as edifying, educational, entertaining, and engaging, exhibits can be forms of social action as well, with techniques and approaches to exhibit design and communication bound up with broader trajectories of change in bodies of knowledge, conceptual categories, and social values and practices. These constitute the broader settings in which exhibit encounters enabled and shaped by exhibition design and communication take place.

Sources and Structure of the Book

The chapters in *Rhetorics of Value* explore different facets of exhibition communication, design, and the rhetorics of value offered in visitor encounters.[20] In addition to sources noted earlier about visitors, the book builds on research with specific exhibits as well as my decades-long work with museums, exhibits, and diverse aspects of culture and communication. The detailed exhibit

analyses that begin with chapter 3 are based on multiple visits with extensive documentation—field notes recorded in the exhibit, photos when possible, collected ephemera, and so on. Recorded notes facilitated the transcription of label texts so that I could later analyze precise terms and language and consider other patterns, shifts, and sequences across the exhibit. In effect, I treated the exhibit as a field site or cultural event, like doing field research anywhere. Only repeated visits made it possible to pay systematic attention to exhibit design, to work around that flickering sense of invisibility and visibility that makes it effective. This sometimes made me a conspicuous visitor—spending very long times, walking through galleries repeatedly and sometimes in several directions, mumbling into my voice recorder. This created opportunities to speak with gallery guides and guards, to let them know what I was doing and also talk with them about the exhibit where they, too, spent many hours (far more than I did) and observed hundreds of visitors.

I consider exhibitions of many sorts in this book, from national to community museums as well as non-museum settings where cultural displays are presented. Nonetheless, I work particularly with exhibits that address social and cultural themes, history, and art, looking at the varied ways these themes have blended in exhibits in the last forty years or so, defining new common practices and blurring exhibit genres. Though the book addresses mainly North American and African exhibits, cases from different countries and continents provide contrasting perspectives on questions of exhibit design and communication.

This exhibit-focused research builds on my lifetime as a museum and exhibit visitor, sometime curator, sometime exhibit consultant, sometime museum employee or affiliate, and friend and colleague to many museum professionals whose projects I have followed and discussed with them. In the course of this, I wrote a book called *The Ones That Are Wanted*, a detailed case study of a photographic exhibit that I created in Kenya and which traveled through the United States; co-edited *Museum Frictions*, a book on museums and globalization based on a three-year series of international workshops; wrote articles and organized other workshops on exhibits and museums; taught related courses; and collaborated on related programs with colleagues in South Africa since 1999 (Kratz 2002; Karp et al. 2006; Kratz and Witz 2007). I did some of these activities and visits with Ivan Karp, my research and life partner for several decades, and discussed them all with him until his 2011 death. In addition to my own description and observations, for instance, recorded notes for chapter 3's exhibit case studies include brief observations from Ivan and short conversations with him.[21] Chapter 3 is based on a co-authored paper we published in 2000, significantly revised and updated for its incorporation here.

I provide this background to clarify the book's epistemological underpinnings, to situate myself as a visitor-viewer, and to give a sense of my own exhibit encounters. This is cumulative work, in several senses. Individual chapters address specific issues and examples, but synthesize into a broader argument. At the same time, the book integrates focused exhibit research with my accumulated history as an attentive museum/exhibit visitor and my direct and indirect involvements with creating exhibits and thinking about museums and exhibits. Different facets of this history surface more saliently at times: while a professional/scholarly voice predominates, my voice as visitor comes forward responding to particular exhibits, and occasionally I voice the stance of personal experience on projects or research. I hope these combine smoothly, though of course they are not actually separable. My professional/scholarly voice does not come from a disconnected "outside" position but is imbued with the other positions and experiences. Similarly, my professional background is part of my "entrance narrative" as a visitor. In a sense, a grounded combination of these different roles and perspectives hints at the integrating communicative interaction of exhibition-making and exhibition-going. To foster the book's readability, though, I relegated detailed engagements with specialist scholarly literature to the endnotes (making them fairly extensive sometimes).

Rhetorics of Value is richly illustrated to show design features and settings discussed. Exhibit design is an amalgam of media, but visual components are both essential and most readily conjured in absentia through images, as recognized in the photographic genre of the installation shot, where the camera typically takes a visitor's viewpoint. Most images in the book are installation shots, along with a few object images. About half the photographs are my own; the rest are sourced mainly from other photographers or display institutions themselves. Most follow genre conventions for installation shots, initially developed in the mid-1800s.[22] While I include a few panoramic gallery views, most are from the visitor's perspective, at the "approximate eye level of a standing viewer" (Floyd 2019, 95). The majority (roughly 80 percent) show scenes without visitors.[23] When included, visitors model appropriate behavior (Floyd 2019, 106). Exhibit detail close-ups and entry thresholds, invoked in particular analyses, are all images I created as photographs or through cropping.

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical framework underlying exhibit analyses in later chapters, approaching exhibitions as multimodal, multimedia communication to consider how exhibit makers combine and choreograph diverse options from each medium's repertoire to produce displays with potential to touch, educate, and engage visitors. I take two examples, exhibit lighting and texts, to illustrate the range and possibilities each design medium holds. I've

been thinking with this general model since the 1990s, extending and adapting for exhibitions the communicative approach I initially developed to analyze how ritual efficacy is produced in ceremonial performance through multiple orchestrated media (Kratz 2010).[24] My earlier articles about exhibits used this framework mostly implicitly, as did my book about creating the exhibition *Okiek Portraits: A Kenyan People Look at Themselves* and traveling it to several sites (Kratz and Karp 1993; Karp and Kratz 2000; Kratz 2002; Kratz and Karp 2003). I later explained this framework for exhibit analysis explicitly in an article, now updated and expanded as chapter 2 (Kratz 2011).

Chapter 3 considers modes of authority that undergird exhibits and museums, a vital premise for their communicative work, before examining cultural identity and difference as an abiding exhibition concern. It introduces the broad sense of "ethnographic" used throughout this book, taking exhibits that foreground cultural meaning and/or difference as ethnographic (Kratz 2013a, 64–65; see chapters 4 and 5). Two extended analyses—a long-term natural history exhibit and the museum-like display featured at a Hawaiian resort hotel—use the framework outlined in chapter 2 to analyze their representation and the values and hierarchies of cultural difference conveyed through exhibit design.

Chapters 4 through 7 address further issues related to exhibit design, communication, and critical museum studies. The first two foreground the shifting notion of genre, central in both design and communication. The final two chapters consider how exhibit design and communication can be part of broader changes in values and societies. These topics are best explored through specific exhibits, and each of these chapters analyzes case studies that consider design's role in fashioning a mediating interface with visitors, creating and transforming exhibit genres as well as cultural and historical understandings through affecting exhibit landscapes.[25]

Chapter 4 looks directly at how designed form helps create, blur, cross, and/or transform exhibit genres and expectations, asking, "What makes exhibitions ethnographic?" It explores the question through a traveling exhibit about the sociopolitical world of Indian royal courts from the eighteenth century to the 1940s, including extended colonial encounters. Mounted by the Victoria and Albert Museum and sent on tour in North America, *Maharaja: The Splendor of India's Royal Courts* was shown in museums of art and natural history alike and was in part developed collaboratively with contemporary maharaja families. The chapter also considers how visitor expectations are built over lifetimes and how exhibit design can echo and reverberate into other exhibits, in part through visitor expectations and experience.

Chapter 5 relocates those questions to the African continent, looking at how design-based genres are adapted and redefined while traveling in different postcolonial settings. Considering exhibitions in South Africa and Kenya, the chapter suggests that dynamics between ethnography and history in exhibits and related design resources play out differently in the two countries, as do visitor expectations and understandings.

Chapter 6 brings questions of history to the fore, asking how exhibitions and exhibit design might help rewrite popular histories and the values and assumptions with which they are enmeshed. Continuing the comparative lens, it considers this question in the postapartheid South African context and in the History Galleries of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, opened in 2016. Tensions and contradictions involved in both settings emerge in exhibitions both thematically and in design. The chapter also considers emotional pacing through exhibit design and the potential affective power that design techniques bring to exhibit experience by considering massing techniques in the History Galleries (Kratz 2018, 240–46).

Chapter 7 wraps up with a synopsis of the structures, processes, alchemies, and encounters of exhibit design and communication and then considers exhibits as markers and means of social change and cultural transformation. With a final case study analyzing the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama, opened in 2018, it looks beyond individual exhibits to the kinds of social significance and effects that might emerge from exhibit clusters and series and how design synchronies and counterpoints might set them in dialogue. At the Legacy Museum, massing techniques are central not just in crafting emotional contours but also as an overall design approach to communication.

Exhibit design provides a way to craft material, experiential, and imaginative communication through which people construct, ponder, and debate values, identities, and exhibit encounters. This book brings overdue attention to exhibits as performative designed space, platforms constituted through artfully orchestrated media, in order to elucidate those processes and the foundational workings of exhibition communication. It offers frameworks for analyzing how designed form helps shape the ways we know, the stories we tell, and our contours of meaning and engagement. With luck, paying better attention to all that is bound up with exhibit design will help us know more about exhibit experience and how to make provocative and effective exhibits.

Notes

1. LOOKING INTO THE VOID

1. Three major strands in museum studies have addressed questions of representation, relations between museums and communities, and institutional histories and analyses. Analyses of exhibit themes, content, silences, and missing/dominant perspectives sometimes included close readings of particular texts or display cases as diagnostic, but there has been little consistent analytical attention to other media, to how they are combined and paced in overall design, or to larger exhibit structures, narratives, and effects and how they are produced. Chapter 2 summarizes this work.

2. McCarthy's (2007) history of Maori cultural display from 1865 to 2000 is excellent testimony to and analysis of such changes. McLean (1999) reviews changing approaches from the 1970s to the 1990s.

3. Scholars writing about changing approaches to exhibit design in particular institutions include Staniszewski (2001) on the Museum of Modern Art (focusing on the period 1929–1992), Arnoldi (1999) and Marsh (2019, 189–208) on the Smithsonian Institution, and Jacknis (2015) on innovations in exhibit styles at the American Museum of Natural History (focusing on 1905–1930). Others have written about histories and debates about particular exhibit components, particularly in relation to social roles exhibits were seen to play: Bennett (1998a, 1998b) on labels and object arrangement in the late 1800s; Jacknis (2015, n.d.) on dioramas, life groups, and murals (see chapter 4); and Griffiths (2008) on "immersive" display and spectatorship ranging from cathedral and planetarium to panoramas and IMAX. Some critical museum case studies touch in passing on historical aspects of or shifts in exhibit design approaches and processes relevant to their particular focus, but not as their central concern (Macdonald 1998; MacLeod 2005; Phillips 2011b; Golding and Modest 2013). Many articles on the politics of representation in exhibits brought attention to what might be conveyed through particular aspects of exhibit design, including Haraway's (1984) early, masterly discussion of animal dioramas at the American Museum of Natural History in the early 1900s.

4. For instance, Exhibit Services within the Museum Resource Division of New Mexico's Department of Cultural Affairs works with state museums in Santa Fe and

elsewhere and includes 3D exhibit designers, 2D graphic designers, preparators, and fabricators (Felicia Katz-Harris, personal communication, January 4, 2023). Likewise, at the Smithsonian Institution, Smithsonian Exhibits works across museums and on outside contracts. Staff positions include exhibits specialist, model and mount maker, graphics specialist, exhibits developer/writer, exhibition designer, project manager, and exhibits specialist cost estimator (Smithsonian Institution, n.d. d).

5. For example, Ralph Appelbaum Associates, founded in 1982, now sprawls around the globe with four offices and work in over forty countries. Similarly, coming from theater design a decade later, Tom Hennes founded Thinc Design, which has done major exhibit commissions and also works globally. Mansudae Overseas Projects, an influential design firm based in Pyongyang, North Korea, is the international branch of Mansudae Art Studios and has designed social-realism-style monuments and nationalistic museum exhibits in over seventeen countries, particularly in Africa (Kirkwood 2011; Winter 2013; Schulz 2017).

6. My earlier book *The Ones That Are Wanted* (Kratz 2002) traced the development of a photographic exhibit, including design choices and changes as it traveled internationally. Other works follow the making of a particular exhibit with behind-the-scenes ethnography of specific projects (Macdonald 2002; Morphy 2006; Shannon 2014; Marsh 2019). While these studies discuss some design decisions and briefly note the general process of crafting narratives across space with objects, texts, and other media, they focus more consistently on the collaborative process, divisions of labor, and debates about key themes and content in exhibit development. Some consider the wrangling involved in creating new museums and their initial semipermanent installations, setting them within larger social debates and sometimes assessing their early years (Linenthal 1995; McIntyre and Wehner 2001; McCarthy 2018; Bunch 2019). Of several about the Musée du quai Branly, Clifford 2007 and Price 2007 provide the most description of actual installation design. Still others focus on overall workings of a museum, featuring particular exhibits as examples (Handler and Gable 1997; Bunzl 2014; Domínguez Rubio 2020). O'Hanlon (1993) and Rodgers (2012, 115) consider a particular exhibit's "design rhetorics," though O'Hanlon's account is primarily a thematic and strategic walkthrough written before the exhibit was finalized. Examples of collaborative projects that went beyond jointly developed themes to address design questions include exhibits at the Gallery of Conscience at the Museum of International Folk Art from 2000 to 2017, which "designed with" community groups and used a deliberately unpolished aesthetic (Lau, Scott, and Seriff 2017; Seriff and Bol 2017; Seriff 2018); the *Interpretive Wonderings* project's (2015–2016, New South Wales) workshops and scenographic design approaches to different exhibition galleries (Drake et al. 2019; Mehzoud 2019); and *Grounded in Clay: The Spirit of Pueblo Pottery* (2022, Museum of Indian Arts and Culture), whose exhibit designer and graphic designer read commentaries and texts produced by the curatorial Pueblo Pottery Collective and participated in meetings with them (Poon 2022).

7. McCarthy (2007, 8–10) emphasizes that "the nexus of the culture of display is the subject-object interface"—that is, the way people and exhibits come together.

8. Examples include Goswamy 1991, 76; Roberts, Vogel, and Müller 1994; Porto 2007; Hennes 2009; Pivnick and Hennes 2014; Paul Tapsell 2015, 2019; Shelton 2019; and Paora Tapsell 2020. See also chapter 2. Speaking of contemporary art exhibits, Felix

Vogel notes that elevation of the curator figure and curatorial studies has gone hand in hand with an absence of attention to "the material exhibition itself" and that "exhibition history" often treats "exhibitions as singularities," unconnected to one another (2013, 48–49). Both tendencies undercut critical understandings of exhibit design's communication.

9. Thanks to Ray Silverman and Ivan Karp for discussions about museum literacy and visual literacy.

10. Several other studies trace histories and social processes through which Euro-American conventions of comportment in public places and performances were shaped in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (e.g., not touching objects in museums, being quiet during concerts), including Levine's *Highbrow/Lowbrow* (1988), Johnson's (1995, 2) cultural history of "aesthetic and social expectations," Elkins's (2004) account of crying in response to paintings, and Bennett's (1988) work on the "exhibitionary complex." Closely related are works about how social-political-aesthetic conventions shape perceptions and interpretations of artworks—for example, Baxandall's (1972) notion of the "period eye" and modes of attention Martin Jay (1988) calls "scopic regimes."

11. Daniels (2020, 153) says her exhibit's solo visitors spent about a third of their time reading, but also counters the assumption that reading is "a solitary activity whereby individuals absorb information/knowledge in silence . . . [M]any of our visitors employed the texts we provided to create sociality while enjoying a day out with family or friends."

12. Extending beyond artistic genres, Marsilli-Vargas (2022) considers genres of listening, and Negro, Hannan, and Olzak (2022, viii) explore how wine genres were established "as shared understandings among producers and the public" through branding and market dynamics, affecting "how wines are interpreted and valued."

13. Similar groupings were proposed in the 1980s and 1990s (Kelly 2015). A very early visitor study (late 1800s) also classified visitors: students (1–2 percent), observers (78 percent), and loungers (20 percent) (Hein 1998, 42). MacDonald underlines the economic side of such groupings, both audience segmentation and market segmentation (1992, 166).

14. The exhibit-making team's IPOP orientations were sometimes identified in order to have all four represented in the process of exhibit design (Pekarik and Mogel 2010, 473; Léger 2014). The IPOP model has been used internationally and in training visitor service specialists (Léger 2014; Office of Policy and Analysis 2015; Hoffman 2019).

15. Presenting it as a new way of understanding exhibition experience, *Exhibitionist* devoted a 1999 special issue to the "meaning-making paradigm," with a second in 2013 in which Silverman (2013) assessed its "adolescence." Serrell, Sikoa, and Adams (2013) grouped visitor responses into categories strongly echoing IPOP's first three orientations.

16. Cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall's ([1980] 1992) influential encoding/decoding model of communication, for instance, was developed in the 1970s, published in 1980, and revisited by Hall in 1994.

17. She was following Perin's (1992) work on communication in museums and McManus's (1989) study of text-echo in visitor interactions (see chapter 2).

18. The year-long study through which IPOP's framework was initially formulated dealt with reinstalling part of the permanent collection at the National Museum of the American Indian, a project with time and resources to mount repeated visitor studies of

various possibilities (Pekarik and Mogel 2010). The multiyear Cleveland Museum of Art (1993) study also focused on permanent collection reinstallation, with external funding for repeated trials. Lessons from those extended studies can be incorporated elsewhere. Smithsonian Institution 2013, Léger 2014, and Pekarik and Mogel 2010 report on cases incorporating IPOP into exhibition development and design.

19. It also drew attention to visitors' "basic physical and psychological needs" with a 1996 "Visitors' Bill of Rights" and 2016 "Hierarchy of Visitor Needs" (Smithsonian Institution 2021, 18–19).

20. I focus solely on physical exhibits, not virtual ones presented digitally or online, which first appeared in the 1990s but proliferated during the COVID-19 pandemic years. See Geismar 2018 for smart commentary on the digital age in museum exhibits and collections. Kratz 2016 considers digital and physical versions of the same exhibit. An earlier plan for this book included a chapter analyzing exhibit audio tours, now a separate paper.

21. The archive of recordings and transcriptions from our joint research—in Hawai'i, Florida, England, and elsewhere—will be held at the National Anthropological Archives.

22. Installation shots saw significant growth in the 1980s and 1990s along with development of exhibition history as a subfield in art history, growth in the number and ease of creating installation shots and exhibit selfies as cellphones proliferated, and an explosion of places where they are shown—"catalogues, books, magazines, newspapers, and archives . . . websites. As well as online publications . . . and social media accounts" (Floyd 2019, 94, 97–98).

23. Sketches and paintings of exhibition galleries that preceded photographic installation shots often did include visitors (Sheldon 2018, 129).

24. Others consider general parallels between ritual and museums (Duncan 1991, 1995; Bouquet and Porto 2005; Macdonald 2005; Fraser 2007), but not in terms of detailed performance analysis.

25. Phillips (2011b, 21) endorses another form of case study for training museum professionals and teaching critical museum studies: exhibit microhistories tracing all phases of exhibit development and adaptation, as well as the breadth of people involved.

2. RHETORICS OF VALUE

1. The Met's trustees revised this mission statement in 2015 to read, "The Metropolitan Museum of Art collects, studies, conserves, and presents significant works of art across all times and cultures in order to connect people to creativity, knowledge, and ideas" (Metropolitan Museum of Art 2020a). Both statements were presented as supplements to the institution's 1870 founding statement, whose emphases on developing the study of art, applying arts to "manufacture and practical life," advancing knowledge, and providing instruction were also affirmed.

2. The *Disegno* article cited here has apparently been removed from their site, but the full text appears on the website of a scholar who collected museum statements at the time to preserve them for research: "Black Lives Matter," Musesphere, accessed August 23, 2024, https://www.musesphere.com/black_lives_matter.html (searching for "Disegno" will lead to the full text of the article, incorporated into a text block at the bottom of the blog post).