

ADULT EDUCATION IN THE ART MUSEUM: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF  
ACOUSTICAL GUIDES IN AMERICAN ART MUSEUMS

by

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## Chapter 1

### THE PROBLEM

#### BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Art museums have been in existence in the United States almost since the beginning of the Union, and although their importance has rarely been challenged, until relatively recently they were not seriously analyzed either as institutions for education or delight. In recent years, due to a variety of societal pressures, a more focused interest has developed in the art museum as a cultural resource with distinctive responsibilities and potentialities in respect to the general population.

Because there are various interpretations of what constitutes the essential responsibility of the art museum to its public, there are many approaches to the implementation of these different values in programs which attempt in various ways to satisfy the diverse educational and recreational needs of heterogeneous audiences. There has been little systematic examination of museum education programs, either from the point of view of content or of affect.

There is an extensive and varied literature which describes aspects of the museum environment, visitor behavior, and educational philosophy and methodology. There are, however, no formal, focused analyses of the content provided in educational media which aim to help the individual museum visitor relate to--or understand, learn

from, enjoy, be involved with, or experience--art objects on exhibit. There are no studies which explicitly characterize the kinds of messages, cues, information and attitudes which dominate gallery talks and lectures by museum professionals, guided tours by museum volunteers, written informational or interpretive materials or recorded exhibition tours--all of which media are intended to facilitate viewers' appreciation of museum resources.

American art museums in major population centers acknowledge their educational functions and are concerned to varying degrees with the needs and preferences of their audiences. Although each art institution conceptualizes and operationalizes its responsibility to the public in different ways, all museums employ a variety of methods to enrich the individual's experience with art.

Very little is established about the specific educational content carried by any of the commonly used art museum media. Educational materials are available but generally unexamined, a situation not unique to museum education (Kerlinger, 1973:533).

Education has suffered from a lack of analysis of the educational information people absorb from the press and other media of public communication. Educational news articles, editorials, and special features . . . might well be content analyzed.

This study examined one important method of museum adult education, the acoustical tour guide, which has been used in some American art museums since 1960. The aim was to characterize recent and current practice with recorded tours and to explore possible assumptions justifying these practices. The intention was to

identify and to describe the prevailing content emphases in acoustical tours among major American art museums.

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study was concerned with identifying, describing, and analyzing the specific content of selected transcripts of acoustical guides which are used in major American art museums to aid adult audiences in interpreting or enjoying the art on exhibit. The study posed two principal questions:

1. What are the content components of selected acoustical tour guides in major art museums in the United States?
2. What patterns of content are present in acoustical tour guides among major American art museums?

Several subsidiary questions were also posed:

1. For what audiences are recorded tours designed?
2. Who writes acoustical guide scripts?
3. What is the basis for decisions about script content?
4. How are scripts prepared and produced?
5. How available are recorded tours in major American art museums?
6. How widely utilized by museum visitors are recorded tours?

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The principal objectives of this study were to characterize the content of acoustical guides and to analyze patterns of content emphasis among museums.

Secondary objectives were to ascertain the general availability and use of recorded tours, the audiences for which they were designed, the authorship of scripts, the basis for decisions about script content, and the script preparation and production processes.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The art museum is generally acknowledged to be an important and unique adult educational resource in society. Some scholars, like Lindeman (1926:106), believe that the highest function of adult education may be the discovery and release of qualities of sensibility among the many. The art museum has always been associated with the development of aesthetic sensibility, however that term was defined, and many hours and dollars have been and are expended in planning and executing museum education programs. To date there has been little systematic study of the content of such programs.

Many visitors to major art museums find themselves both overwhelmed and under-prepared to "make contact with," "make sense of," or "understand" the treasures on exhibit. Art museums employ several devices, principally lectures, docent tours, written materials, and acoustical guides, to mediate between visitors and works of art, offering various kinds of information, stimulation, or interpretation.

Although many adults visit art museums without benefit of lecture or tour assistance, a very large number join docent tours or rent acoustical devices. The content of docent tours, typically prepared by museum-trained volunteer teachers, varies substantially

in message and delivery style. These tours are offered in many museums, but they are ephemeral and have not been the subject of published research. Acoustical tours can be analyzed because, in most cases, both scripts and cassette recordings are available for study. Since scripts are deliberately and carefully prepared, it can be assumed that their contents reflect prevailing attitudes of individuals or institutions relative to what is important or useful to tell the visitor in order to maximize his aesthetic experience.

Considering the brevity of the average adult's museum visit and the general pattern of infrequent attendance, it is important that the visitor's brief exposure to the art experience be as satisfying as possible, leaving him, if anything, more interested and receptive than before contact with the museum.

There is little published material concerned with the content of written or verbal messages, live or recorded, used in museum education programs. The implications and consequences of presenting various kinds and modes of content is largely speculative at present, since no serious research has addressed itself to the issue. This study contributes to that literature by identifying and quantifying the dominant content emphases of a substantial sample of audio tapes used by major American art museums. The findings of this study are important because they reveal the characteristics of the content in a form which provides a basis for critical evaluation and program improvements in accordance with the educational objectives, cognitive or affective, of the art museum. Although this research was limited to a detailed

analysis of one educational medium, the acoustical guide, it was expected that the study would provide useful, more general insights into adult education in the art museum.

#### DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions apply. Some of these terms are substantially amplified in later discussions.

Acoustical guide -- audio equipment of several types which carries recorded messages about an art exhibit and is available for rental or without charge at many American art museums. These guides are provided as educational aids to visitors while touring the galleries. The term is used interchangeably with audio guides, taped tours, and recorded tours.

Adult educators -- teachers and other professional practitioners who plan, implement, and evaluate continuing education programs for adults.

Aesthetic experience -- refers to the experience one has in the course of appreciating art.

Art appreciation -- refers to the activity of perception, understanding, and enjoyment of art.

Art educators -- teachers and other professional practitioners who are concerned with the development of aesthetic sensibilities and art appreciation.

Art Museum -- a permanent, non-profit institution, essentially educational or aesthetic in purpose, with a professional staff, which acquires objects, cares for them, interprets them, and exhibits them to the public on some regular schedule.

Audience -- art museum visitors.

Content analysis -- a technique of documentary research in which units of content are categorized and quantified.

Docent tours -- live, as opposed to recorded, guided tours for art museum visitors conducted by museum trained volunteers.

Exhibition types -- museum exhibitions whose dominant principles, as designated for this study, are artist, period, collection, nationality, theme, medium, or orientation.

Museum educators -- art museum personnel whose special responsibility is the planning and execution of educational programs in museums.

Visitor -- an individual who attends an art museum.

#### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although the content of acoustical tours is believed by the researcher to have a close relationship to the content of other museum lectures and tours, it was not within the scope of this study to examine other media.

This study analyzed a stratified sample of tape transcripts. While every effort was made to achieve a fully representative sample,



it is not claimed that results can be generalized to all recorded tours, present or past.

Another limitation of the present study is attributable to the enormous complexity of language itself. As Krippendorff (1969:5) says, "Since messages can be viewed from an indefinitely large number of legitimate perspectives, unqualified references to THE content of documents . . . are unacceptable." For example, an entire book has been devoted to an analysis of the first five minutes of a psychiatric interview (Pittenger, et al., 1960). The content attributes of acoustical tours are as complex as all verbal messages. Content units to be coded almost always require more than mechanical placement in categories. It is possible to categorize the content of acoustical tapes using dimensions other than those the researcher has used, but the content categories developed for this study reflect particular research objectives and are both sensitive enough to provide meaningful discriminations and gross enough to minimize ambiguity of categorization.

Because the very sense of words can be affected by the nuance of delivery style, it is difficult to characterize the richness of the content without considering the manner in which the message is delivered to the receiver. In this study, nonetheless, content analysis was made of typewritten scripts rather than recorded narration.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The first chapter presents a statement of the problem, its background and significance. This chapter also identifies a series of research questions and discusses the limitations of the study. Important terms employed in the study are defined.

Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature in one methodological and five substantive areas. First, in order to establish a context for analysis of acoustical guides as part of museum education programs, a brief survey of the literature on American art museums is reviewed. Next the literature areas of principal concern to this study--museum education, art education, and adult education--are reviewed in greater depth. The sparse literature specific to acoustical guides follows. Finally, a survey of the literature of content analysis is presented.

Chapter 3 presents the design of the study, including a description of the population and sample; instrumentation; and methods of data collection, treatment, and analysis.

In the fourth chapter, results of the content analysis are presented. Conclusions and recommendations will be provided in the final chapter. The report will conclude with appendixes and bibliography.

## SUMMARY

One of the educational methods used in American art museums is the acoustical tour guide, a device which a visitor uses to listen to recorded tour narration. The content of taped tour commentary has

not previously been formally studied. The content analysis of tour transcripts should contribute specifically to understanding the role played by this particular medium of adult education and may, more generally, suggest dominant content emphases in other adult education programs in the art museum setting.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There is almost no literature specific to the nature or use of museum acoustical guides, but there is a large and diversely scattered literature concerned with art educational content. Because this study is devoted to description and analysis of the content of acoustical tour guides as used by adult audiences in American art museums, the literature in several areas of substance was felt to be relevant. General questions considered in this review include:

1. What do museums profess to value?
2. How do museums operationalize these values?
3. What image do museums project to their various publics?
4. What is known about the adult audience in terms of motivation, background, needs, and desires? Who attends art museums?
5. What do art museums think their audiences should know or learn?
6. What do museums do to help visitors learn?
7. What problems result from planning educational programs for heterogeneous audiences?
8. What are the characteristics associated with voluntary adult learners that may be significant in planning and executing taped tours?
9. What is the appropriate level of materials and presentations in museum educational programs?

10. What assumptions do museums make when they prepare scripts for recorded tours about what people are interested in, like, expect, find worthwhile, understand, are curious about, and need help with? What assumptions are made about what is actually learned or experienced? What information is available about adult learning in art museums?

This literature review is presented in six sections, each of which is important to the purpose of the study: (1) American Art Museums, (2) Museum Education, (3) Adult Education in Art Museums, (4) Art Education, (5) Acoustical Guides, and (6) Content Analysis. The first of these sections is brief; its purpose is primarily to establish the general context in which the education of adults in art museums occurs.

## AMERICAN ART MUSEUMS

### Social and Historical Context

Although many of them seem ageless and forever, the oldest American art museum is scarcely a century old, and the vast majority of museums have been in existence less than fifty years. Art treasures were not even displayed in permanent quarters until after the middle of the nineteenth century, when, in 1870, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston were formed, followed by the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1876 and the Art Institute of Chicago in 1879. The prestigious, even venerable National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. was founded in 1941.

Art museums in the United States developed in a different tradition from museums in Europe, where collections were formed from the holdings of the wealthy or noble. The first American museums were formed "by associations organized to promote learning and to provide a cultural base in a society largely cut off from established European institutions" (Taylor, 1975:34-40). The classical pattern underlying the creation of art museums in the United States begins with a group of devoted enthusiasts, both artists and amateurs, and not with a collection. The rationale of these associations, which were formed throughout the country from the 1870's through the 1890's, has "almost always been couched in educational terms, with a wide public seen as the association's audience" (Taylor, 1974:40).

In the early years of the American republic, a number of impulses nurtured the national concern with art. Taylor identifies two: "The necessity of providing a repertory of great works of art to elevate the public taste," and the desire "to create art that would bring lustre to the nation" (p. 35). The American art museum, like the public library, was regarded as an important seat of learning; it was an important manifestation of the self-improvement theme expressed in the Lyceum and Chautauqua movements. In those early years of the Republic, however, museums were criticized by some citizens on the grounds that they were public institutions which existed only for ephemeral pleasure.

With the Industrial Revolution developed a movement to rationalize the importance of art by justifying its utility to industry

and practical life, but this movement met strong opposition from those who fervently believed that works of art have as their primary usefulness their capacity to be enjoyed. A vigorous and continuous conflict in ideology existed and is still apparent between those who believe the museum to be "aesthetic in primary purpose" (Gilman, 1918:98) and those who regard it as "the midwife of democracy" (Taylor, 1945:24). The latter emphasis is based on a strong cultural history tradition, which rests on the basic belief that a museum should use art to teach a broad understanding of society and values, the purpose being "the increase of intelligence and sympathy" (Taylor, 1945:16). Whatever their particular philosophical orientation, however, sympathetic Americans have generally "believed in the regenerative force of art in our society and in the potential of the art museum somehow to make such regeneration possible" (Newsom, 1970:59).

Historically, public interest in art was tied to interests of other kinds (Hamilton, 1975:102-103).

The special character of visiting an art museum was only slowly separated from other intellectual activities such as religious veneration, curiosity about natural phenomena and about human history as exemplified by works of art--portraits of eminent or notorious personages, objects such as arms and armor, furniture, clothing, and utensils associated with them.

In the early years of American museums, exhibitions and educational programs tended to be directed to an already educated audience. Through the years and into the present, art museums have been accused of being elitist and concerned more with specimens than with people. Substantial interest and support developed gradually for the education

of a larger and more generally representative public, and by the end of the 1930's, many in the museum world felt that the balance had shifted in favor of education from a custodial emphasis. Increasingly the question became not who to serve in the art museum, but how. Although educational programs were important museum concerns from the start, there was little agreement on what should be taught, to whom, or for what purpose. There still is no consensus.

Since World War II, however, art museums have been concerned more and more with public involvement. Financial pressures, combined with expansive tendencies, have forced a close examination of museum programs and philosophy and a more urgent concern for public support. Special exhibitions have been increasing in number and elaborateness, outreach programs have been expanding, and various innovations of exhibition and education have been developed to capture the attention of the audience by intensifying the total experience of viewing works of art.

As defined by the Association of Art Museum Directors (1973:

3) an art museum is:

a permanent, non-profit institution, essentially educational or aesthetic in purpose, with a professional staff, which acquires objects, cares for them, interprets them, and exhibits them to the public on some regular schedule.

The 1975 Official Museum Directory lists more than 800 American art museums, many of which are small specialized museums. A more selective list is that of the membership of the Association of Art



Museum Directors, which includes most museums with operating budgets of over \$250,000, of which there are about 110 (Parkhurst, 1974:70).

According to a 1973 study conducted for the National Endowment of the Arts, more than two-thirds of art museums are governed by private, non-profit organizations while 21 percent exist under educational institutions. Only 10 percent of art museums are fully operated by city, state, or federal government (Parkhurst, 1975:73). Art museums enjoy certain tax benefits in their status as educational institutions.

### Museum Philosophy

In order to establish a context for the content analysis and interpretation of selected acoustical tour transcripts, it is necessary to review the principal philosophical orientations or rationales which, consciously or not, provide the basis for various educational practices in art museums, including the preparation and presentation of content for acoustical tours. Depending on the particular philosophical position taken in respect to goals, tasks, purposes, functions, mission, and responsibility of art museums, interpretive or informational programs and services will differ in important dimensions.

The following selections from the extensive literature reflect important differences of philosophy and of emphasis found among professionals in the art world. In this section of the literature review, major philosophical positions will be presented in response to two questions: What are museums? and What should museums be--and not be? There are many and often conflicting views among experts and interested

lay people concerning what are the most appropriate and significant roles for art museums to play in a societal context or in the more specialized art education context.

On the most obvious and abstract level, art museums are cultural institutions. But they are cultural institutions of considerable complexity, as is reflected in various descriptions in the literature. Museums are meeting places, both physically and symbolically. Various kinds and levels of values meet, among them those of the specialist vs. the public; children vs. adults; protection vs. display (Harrison, 1967:ix).

Museums are strange, marginal places: concerned with education, yet they are not schools; concerned with research, yet they are not universities; concerned with scarcity value, yet they are not shops or banks; concerned with therapy, yet they are not hospitals; concerned with leisure and enjoyment, yet they are not playgrounds.

Museums are informal educational institutions which have no academic prerequisites and are available to all persons regardless of age or association with formal programs (Patterson, 1968; Grove, 1969; McCabe, 1968; Rabinowitz, 1973). As such, they are "educational resource centers and tools just as much as are the libraries and other sources of information and inspiration" (Taylor, 1969:102). Screven (1969:7) describes museums as "free choice public-access environments of immense richness unencumbered by the sterile classrooms, fixed schedules and curricula, lockstep pacing and grades, which characterize most formal public schools."

The American art museum has a multidimensional identity.

A museum is inherently a combination of repository, theatre, classroom, research center, activity center, side show, and home for an art elite; while it cannot be all things to all men, it can provide something for everybody (Parkhurst, 1975:96).

Historically, art museums have had three basic functions: acquisition and preservation of objects, the advancement of knowledge through the study of objects, and the diffusion of knowledge for the enrichment of people (Grove, 1969; Hayes, 1968). A large part of the museum literature is concerned with the priorities which various writers assign to these functions and their inter-relationships. The following represent significant and representative points of view and emphasis, which can be characterized by their dominant preoccupations with teaching or learning, personal growth of museum visitors, the art experience, the social responsibility of museums, and the conservation and diffusion of the cultural heritage.

Rebetz (1964) says that museums have four educational and cultural functions: to teach something; to develop the personality of the individual; to integrate the individual into the human community; to provide a place for leisure activities. Some verbalize the goal of the art museum as the enlightenment of the public, "the building up of a better, more thoughtful and happier public" (Allan, 1960:24). Silver (1972:74) believes the goal is "to bring the student and the work of art into an intimate relationship by helping each open up to the other." The International Council of Museums, in concluding remarks of a 1964 symposium on the educational and cultural role of museums, similarly

took the position that the goal of the art museum should be to train the taste and aesthetic receptiveness of the visitor, in order to encourage maximum contact between the visitor and the work of art (Zetterberg, 1969:47). An earlier UNESCO report asserted that the development of the emotions is "an important element in the individual's education and the art museum could achieve much in this field by encouraging sensibility, response, and inspiration" (quoted by Marcou  in Zetterberg, 1969:58). In order to accomplish this, Allan (1960:24) suggests that the museum curator needs first to arouse a feeling of wonder in the audience and then an intense curiosity which once aroused he must satisfy with the best possible answers. As many authors point out, art museums are concerned with objects as primary sources, but they are concerned ultimately with getting people to look at things.

The purpose of an art museum is "to promote public appreciation of certain visible and tangible creations through which the fancy of man has bidden his sense follow its flight" (Gilman, 1918:89). The museum cannot avoid influencing the mores of the society in which it is situated, and, according to Adam (1939:8), "The public duty that must always confront it is to make its influence intelligent, open, and purposeful, instead of accidental and irresponsibly sportive."

The art museum is not an educational institution having art for its teaching material, but rather an artistic institution with educational uses and demands (Gilman:98). In a more recent statement, Lee (1969:67) insists that:

The art museum is not fundamentally concerned with therapy, illustrating history, social action, entertainment

or scientific research. By now, I hope the art museum's fundamental responsibility of preserving, displaying, and elucidating the works of art as such is clear.

In yet another formulation of the goals of an art museum,

Harrison (1960:81) says:

Its goal is the fullest development of the whole human being and among its major means it must neglect neither the factual evidence of real, tangible objects nor the evocative, imaginative impact of things of beauty and worth . . . . (Museums are) custodians of quality and merely looking at things of beauty and interest can stimulate and foster an awareness of both truth and beauty.

Zetterberg (1969:16) expresses the controversial position that the main task of any museum is to interpret, explain, and provide background for the understanding and enjoyment of the objects within its walls.

To McGrath and Robbins (1969:1-2), art museums have as their primary purpose to provide the aesthetic and emotional pleasure which great works of art offer. They say:

It is assumed that a majority of the people who come regularly to art museums come to be delighted, not to be taught, or preached at, or "improved" except by the works of art themselves. An art museum, especially, is--or ought to be--a place where one goes to be refreshed.

"A museum is above all a bountiful source of primary experiences, rather than coded messages" (Farr, 1969:80). In the words of Lee (1969:67), "The museum is . . . a primary source of wonder and delight for mind and heart."

## MUSEUM EDUCATION

The Nature of Museum Education

The charter of almost every major American museum established in the last hundred years declares or implies that "education" is to be one of its prime purposes (Newsom, 1970:3). In the early years, education was a constant byword of the founders, but practical exigencies rather than educational concerns dominated the art museum world. When active education was finally recognized in the early 1900's as one of the important functions of museums, their staffs consisted primarily of research scholars with little or no interest in popular education. Furthermore, when public education did slowly take its place as a central museum function it was concerned almost exclusively with the education of children (Low, 1948:236).

Since 1906, when the first museum guide service was inaugurated, museum education has spread widely, but until very recently, "the subject content of museum education was determined on the basis of staff knowledge of collections, without reference to the unspoken needs and desires of the community" (Low, 1948:236). Although museums were from the first formally committed to popular education, in practice diffusion of knowledge to the masses was not always a value (Adam, 1939: 181).

Particularly since the 1920's, American art museums have been developing departments of education in order to help museums make contact with their publics. In recent years there has been an unmistakable surge of interest in museum education. As Hamilton (1975:108-

109) points out, however, attitudes toward museums vary with individuals, and "in a free country the right of the majority, who may number all those who do not want to go to a museum, should be respected." These rights, he says, tend to be ignored by "most educators whose ecumenical mission will not allow one child to struggle free."

What is museum education, and how should it serve the needs and desires of the millions who do and will visit art museums?

Harrison (1960:82) says, "without exception, everything that a museum does is educational, even when this is not the intention."

She believes that exposure is itself education. Ripley (1968:183-185) feels that a museum is primarily a center for exposure rather than education, or pedagogy. A museum is an educational experience, he says, if not an educational institution. To Zetterberg (1969:17), however, education requires a planned sequence of learning. He admits that education implies novel experience but emphasizes that every novel experience cannot properly qualify for public support as educational experience.

Joshua Taylor believes that education, in the largest sense, means acquisition of knowledge, a moving of the mind, a way of becoming alive. The museum provides and is education, Taylor says, because it keeps the mind stimulated and alive. In the view of Marcoué (1969: 58), museum education should:

encourage sensibility . . . in effect to create greater visual awareness and general aesthetic perceptiveness, so that the mind is stimulated to fresh understanding of things seen.

In his important discussion of "Popular Education in Fine Art," Benjamin Gilman (1918:48-50), one of the earliest and most eloquent spokesmen for museum education, states that the word "education" in museum circles conveys the general idea of a modification of personality in three senses, which he calls, respectively, the loose, broad, and narrow senses. In the loose sense, education is synonymous with influence, in the broad sense with improvement, and in the narrow sense with teaching. Further, each of these three has a primary and secondary meaning, the primary meaning being that of process, the secondary that of product.

Certainly influence, improvement, and teaching have been dominant emphases in various art museum programs as each museum through its curators and educational directors has responded to the challenging question, "What is it possible to accomplish with the casual visitor within the short exposure of a single visit?" (Thurman, 1968:144). Other questions raised in the literature are, "What kinds of human beings are we trying to produce by museum education?" and "Should the museum have an important role in the leisure time of the public?" As Richardson (1968:30) puts it:

The questions are whether a museum should be a collection of objects, a settlement house, or a three ring circus put on in the hope of attracting immense, indiscriminate crowds.

It is clear that whatever their connection with the principles and practices of art education, museum educational activities "have to work simultaneously with and against the grain of contemporary American society" (Silver, 1972:73). By extension, the art museum has to work



with and against the grain of the individual visitor. What kinds of stimulation and assistance does and should the art museum provide to its viewers?

There is general agreement that the educational process is, to differing degrees, an important function for art museums and "that they cannot and should not avoid it" (Lee, 1969:67). But there are various modes of education and more or less appropriate times for their application. Oppenheimer (1967:213-214) believes that one of the things that both art and science do is teach people to be aware of their surroundings, which they do to a large extent by forcing them to pay attention to things they have learned to ignore. Marcou   (1969:58) feels that the museum educator's role is to encourage awareness of individual response, which implies awareness of and confidence in personal reaction to the exhibit. The important thing is to train the individual to look, to discuss and judge for himself. With a similar perspective, Buechner (1969) believes that museums are like graduate schools of visual perception, and as such should be concerned with the development of visual perception and qualitative judgment.

Some authors wonder if art education is not properly the obligation of schools rather than art museums. Many authors disagree about the degree of responsibility the museum should take for the edification of its patrons. Bunning (1974:60) looks at the museum with the perspective of Malcolm Knowles, and asserts that, "the museum should urge the individual to explore the content for himself and assist him in organizing his knowledge and in building patterns of

learning." "The person can be educated, can be made wise and more informed by instruction and experience, but ultimately and properly he is on his own" (Lee, 1969:27). Evans (1969) and Spock (1971), among many others, consider the bored visitor to be the responsibility of the museum, which tends, they say, to be more absorbed with objects than with people. Cook and Gerard (1969), however, believe it is not the museum's job to pander to mental laziness. Disinterested viewers are either ignorant or idle, they say, but in either case, they are responsible for themselves. In the words of Sherman Lee (1969:67), "The museum cannot assume responsibility for the artistic education of 200,000,000 citizens or even 2,000,000 persons."

Whether the museum is or is not ultimately responsible, however, "Nothing can be done by the museum without the visitor's desire for knowledge" (Owens, 1969:101). He quotes French poet Valéry:

It depends on who passes through  
 whether I am a tomb or a treasure,  
 whether I speak or remain silent.  
 It depends only on you,  
 so do not come without desire.

#### Problems and Issues in Museum Education

A substantial portion of the museum literature is concerned with identification of problems or deficiencies in the art museum. In overview, these issues principally concern:

1. Identity Problems. Cameron (1971:20) refers to the schizophrenia and identity crisis of the museum:

Many institutions cannot decide whether they wish to be a museum as a temple or wish to become the public forum. Some have tried to bring the forum inside the temple.

Cameron believes that the museum cannot effectively integrate these two discrete sociological functions because, "The forum is where the battles are fought, the temple is where the victors rest. The former is process, the latter is product" (p. 21).

2. Quantity vs. quality issue. Cameron (1968) claims that museum success is measured in terms of traffic volume, without consideration of the possibility that meaningful experiences are qualitative, not quantitative. As Taylor (1969:21) sees it, museums have followed the principle that "if you can't lick them, you join them." Washburn (1964) also is concerned that museums are becoming too consumer oriented, concerned primarily with visitor attendance. As Hausman (1966:1) observes, "It simply will not do to open the doors wider, increase the numbers, and enlarge the facilities without a more thorough-going re-examination of the qualitative dimensions of the problem."

3. Relevance to individuals. This complaint is expressed by Newson (1970:76):

Beyond its generally recognized belief that art is good and knowledge of it is good, too, the Museum does not often give evidence to the public of why it is good and what connection art might have with a more satisfying private and public life. How the world looks does make a difference to people, but few are able to sense this fact directly and far fewer still have any idea of what to do about it.

4. Audience heterogeneity. Many authors refer to the heterogeneity of the casual museum visitor population, which is so great that no program is likely to be optimum for more than a small proportion.

5. Educational techniques. The principles of popular education in art appreciation were in a chaotic state throughout the museum world in the early years of the twentieth century, according to Adam (1939:153). There were, he said, few historical precedents to serve as examples of how a great industrial society could be introduced to alien art forms. Thirty years later, Borcoman (1969:44) asserted, "Museum educational techniques are virtually in the stone age."

The continuing challenge to art museums is to help make art accessible to the adult public without making galleries into school-rooms. For a large part of the audience, some educational aids are helpful or even necessary in the view of most museum professionals. As Oppenheimer (1967:214) put it, "One cannot plunge into the inaccessible right away and have it be meaningful."

6. Scholarship vs. education. One of the problems which is frequently addressed in the literature concerns the balance between scholarly and educational activities. Especially when funds are scarce, O'Doherty (1972:3) notes that the museum's traditional conflict between scholarship, conservation, and education becomes exacerbated. "Many feel there has been an erosion of scholarly responsibilities, and a capitulation to the demands of education, or what the critics would call entertainment."

7. Accountability and impact. There is little evidence in the museum literature of serious efforts to measure the educational impact of programs. Some authors, like Washburn (1964:38), insist that

educational directors ought to be required to produce results as scholars and advertising men are.

8. Atmosphere. One of the issues frequently discussed in the literature concerns the museum environment and the experience of museum visiting. Basically, according to Harrison (1967), the trouble with art museums is that they are large, impersonal, and overwhelming; they show too much and say too much. They have unwelcoming entrances and frequently intimidating attendants, and, in general, show more concern for things than people. The subject of the museum experience is more fully examined later in this discussion.

#### ADULT EDUCATION IN ART MUSEUMS

There is a relatively sparse literature specifically concerned with adult education in museums and even less devoted to adult education in art museums. The priorities in adult education have been, and are, elsewhere. However, the adult public which the art museum serves is enormous, especially in the major population centers with which this study is concerned. Although there is a significant increase of interest on the part of museums in how the public can most effectively be informed and enriched in cultural dimensions, this interest has not yet been reflected in accelerated publication. The literature is composed primarily of journal articles of a philosophical, somewhat impressionistic nature; there is a dearth of hard studies in the field.

This portion of the literature review covers museum adult education, museums for recreation and leisure, the museum experience, art museum audiences, and learning in the museum.

### Museum Adult Education

Like public libraries, museums developed in the United States during the "great cultural surge" of the early and mid-nineteenth century (Monroe, 1970:250). Museums lagged far behind most other institutions in differentiating their adult education function (Knowles, 1962:172). Although museums increased greatly in numbers after World War I, the education of adults was not typically considered a central museum function.

When a museum did undertake to conduct an active program of education, it was likely to be a program that would please the staff and reflect their professional interests rather than please the public and take into account their interests . . . The dominant spirit of the program usually tended toward stiffness and formality, with guided tours and lectures organized according to academic principles. (Knowles, 1962:130)

The educational concept behind the public art museum of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was

that the visitor could develop his appreciation and understanding of art through contemplation of the best examples. The weakness of this concept lay in the fact that the layman, lacking knowledge of artists and their development, art history or art techniques, had no tools to aid his understanding and confronted art as pure experience. (Monroe, 1970:257)

Exhibitions were planned with various organizing principles, among them cultural areas, schools of painting, an artist's work, art periods, or a specific art medium. To supplement exhibitions, various kinds of tours were organized and conducted by professionals and volunteers. Tours and catalogues were the earliest museum educational techniques.

In recent years, the potential of art museums to contribute to continuing education on a great variety of topics in an infinite

variety of ways has frequently been asserted (Wittlin, 1968), but many authors agree that museums have served organized groups such as school children and knowledgeable visitors best and have done the poorest job with the casual adult visitor.

Goldman (1966:67) calls education of the adult audience a central role in higher education, one which is important for the full enrichment of the individual and for good effects for art and society. She recommends comprehensive programs which help adults move toward "cultivated commitment." Since the art museum receives substantial tax benefits, it has certain public responsibilities, says Tjerandsen (1962:28). It should try to preserve and extend the common culture and to fill constructively the "huge number" of leisure hours available. The expansion of adult education with the expansion of leisure has been a mixed blessing, according to Zetterberg (1969:15):

On the one hand, it permits the enormous scope and potential for the programmes of adult education. On the other hand, it dilutes the quality of adult education . . . . The concern is too often to fill the empty hours of leisure with activities that are pleasant rather than instructive. Adult education thus has been viewed as an equivalent to watching television, going to a ball game, taking a ride in a car, in short, as a mere consumption of leisure time. In such a context, the content of adult education is relatively unimportant; the major requirement is that it be interesting enough to compete with other demands on adult attention. This has led to a certain contempt for adult education among intellectuals, including many museum curators.

Monroe (1970:259) acknowledges that there may be some substance to the charge that there is danger of deterioration through the popularization of the arts, but she believes that the great activity and interest in the arts--a product of leisure, technology, and educational

effort--have "moved the public taste to greater sophistication than ever before."

Whether it is called popularization or not, museum education programs should be student centered rather than subject oriented, according to adult educators who believe that the needs of the audience must have the highest priority in program planning. Museum educators are mass educators. "The really important thing is to define mass education not as learning geared to the lowest common denominator, but the greatest variety of demoninators" (Clay, 1960:140).

Hans Zetterberg, a sociologist with special interests in the cultural and educational role of museums in American and Swedish communities, wrote Museums and Adult Education in 1965 as a report to the Division of Adult Education of UNESCO. Unrevised, it was published four years later, with additional essays. In his book, Zetterberg identifies certain aspects of museum adult education which distinguish it from educational activity in other types of settings.

1. Adults come to museums with "relatively stable perceptions" (p. 18) . . . "adults, if taught at all, must be untaught and retaught" (p. 19).
2. Educational experience in the museum is incidental, not central.
3. Attendance is voluntary and therefore capricious.
4. The teacher-pupil relationship is vague.
5. Adults come to the museum with unequal academic preparation.
6. The audience is heterogeneous in all ways.



7. Adults who participate in guided tours or other educational activities are generally strangers to others engaged in those activities.

In assessing the status of adult education philosophy in the basic orientation of the museum profession, Monroe says that there is essentially none. Until recently, museum workers specializing in educational services found no programs or courses devoted to learning adult education work within the museum context, but in the past five years, short conferences and workshops have been offered occasionally in various locations. In 1974, a special curriculum leading to the Master's degree in museum education was instituted at George Washington University. In general, adult education activities in major art museums appear to be growing in scope and support. In many museums, volunteers carry much of the responsibility for guiding tour groups through the galleries. These activities are usually supervised by art museum educational directors or curators.

What can be said of current educational activity in American art museums in relation to the principles of adult education as expressed in the literature?

As Knowles (1970) describes the processes of planning comprehensive programs of adult education and managing specific learning objectives, the androgogical process involves the following phases: the establishment of a climate conducive to adult learning; the creation of an organizational structure for participative planning; the diagnosis of needs for learning; the formulation of

objectives; the development of designs for activities; the operation of activities; and the rediagnosis of learning needs.

Perhaps most important to this study are the adult educational principles of audience diagnosis and formulation of objectives. The adult learner, even in a situation unlike the museum which is unambiguously a learning situation, demonstrates certain behaviors which have been generalized by adult educators. The voluntary learner characteristically expects immediate satisfaction rather than delayed rewards for his efforts; further, he expects to feel comfortable, competent, and respected as he engages in informal or formal learning experiences.

Adults visit art museums voluntarily; they spend or invest varying amounts of leisure time and energy in the process. Their reasons for attending museums have been the subject of considerable speculation and little research.

#### Museums for Recreation and Leisure

Cameron (1968) feels it is important to acknowledge that adult museum visitation is a social activity. The social nature of going to museums should be combined with the art educational stimulus to provide a unique educational experience, he says. Loomis (1974) believes that museums present a dissonant situation if they are viewed both as educational institutions and as leisure activity, but Allan (1960:24) says that museums in their unique ways effectively offer education combined with recreation. Museum activities, in his view, should be directed toward "the broader education of the user so that he or she

may lead a fuller life and be a better member of the community."

Allan believes that the museum helps to enlarge the emotional response of the individual to his environment, at the same time easing him of everyday worries and constraints by offering rich distraction or recreation.

In still another perspective, some writers have been interested in the institutional identity of museums, in the characteristics that distinguish museums from other cultural or leisure-oriented organizations. Cameron (1971:22) refers to an unpublished study of leisure conducted in 1961 in Canada by Abbey, in which museum visitors and those attending sports events were found to be much alike. They attended each event not for their deep interest in either, but rather because they had certain habitual patterns of leisure time use. The study revealed that some people are not mobile in the use of leisure and tend to rely heavily on TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, books, records, and tapes; others are highly mobile and seem to "go everywhere to see everything and do everything." Habitual museum visitors tend to be in the latter class.

A distinction is made in the museum literature between visits and visitors. According to Zetterberg (1969:37), statistics reflecting the repeating patterns of visitors in institutions such as churches, ball parks, and department stores show that in comparison with these, museums rank low, "indicating that the public's museum habits are not as strong as their religious habits, sports interests, or shopping habits."

Leisure activities require different levels and types of involvement and concentration. Museums are more demanding than "bingo and the television screen" on a person's own resources (Carter, 1969:163).

The stress and uncertainty of modern life have made people less inclined for, though they need them more, leisure pursuits which require calm contemplation.

The American museum visitor generally is "still controlled by the active rather than the reflective type of intellect" (Zetterberg, 1969:54).

Whatever the visitor's orientation to the museum experience, with more leisure, defined simply as "free time" (Morris, 1962), there is more opportunity for museum visits if the potential audience can see "there is something in the museums for them" (McCabe, 1968:312).

What does--or can--the art museum have to offer?

The arts . . . are the best means we have to close the "leisure gap." They have become a bargain compared to other forms of entertainment. As a leisure resource . . . the arts are still significantly underexploited. (Larrabee, 1973:94)

Furthermore, according to Larrabee, the arts are potentially usable by a leisure-time public in ways that other outlets for their energies are not. "Leisure time compels people to ask questions about who and what they are. Self-discovery, after all, or the revelation of the inner life, is what the arts are about" (p. 95).

When people have leisure and choose to attend an art museum rather than participate in some other activity, why do they make that choice? Why art for people? Toffler (1964:46) lists "money, leisure,

and education" as the obvious preconditions of the cultural explosion in America. Even though the new millions in the culture public are not devoting themselves exclusively to the arts and art remains for most of them a relatively minor concern fitted into their lives along with tennis, travel, and other activities, it is present in their lives. This is so, Toffler suggests, because art can assuage "more effectively than almost anything else" because it meets contemporary psychological needs:

If life is gray, art is vivid. If life is clock-bound, art is spontaneous and, at least in appearance, uninhibited. On a very superficial or sensuous level, art brings color, variety, and "differentness" into life. (p. 50)

He quotes psychologist Rudolf Arnheim:

Much of the so-called emotional experience of daily life is very thin. It occurs within a very narrow band ranging from a pleasant tickle to mild irritation. These are, in a sense, retail emotions. But in art you are exposed to genuine emotional experience that reaches far beyond the ordinary. . . . To be profoundly moved is one of the most healthful sensations a human can experience. Art adds color to the emotional palette. It gives one a sense of being alive. (p. 51)

The arts at both the sensory and emotional levels are an antithesis to the standardization of contemporary life; they are also an antidote for conformity. Toffler notes that:

In the matter of mobility, too, art offers certain special gratifications. In a world in which objects, events, and even values are increasingly transient, millions of deracinated individuals yearn for some sense of stability, certainty, and rootedness. Whether this yearning is healthy is an issue that might be debated at length. But the fact that it exists is indisputable. In colloquial, if cliched, terms, the

question is put: "What can a person hold on to?" For a variety of reasons, the arts are one answer to this question.

In a seemingly chaotic world, they possess and represent order. Even when the subject matter of art is antitraditional, the act of appreciating it remains traditional. People have been doing it for millenia. (p. 52)

Finally, Toffler says,

Art assuages the hunger for stimuli. Art is different from other forms of experience because it involves symbolism. And it is in the nature of symbols, it is the power of symbols, to engage the human psyche on multiple levels simultaneously. An effective symbol in a work of art sends out a storm of stimuli, emotional, intellectual, sensory. It is the symbolic content of art that arouses those ineffable emotional states that almost nothing else seems able to produce. (p. 52)

In another response to the question of why people respond to art, Taylor (1971:22) says that one of the great functions of art is to free oneself from oneself, from the limits of self. In Newsom's words, "People do believe there is still some magic in art, that art holds out the possibility of enlarging life and ordering it" (1970:78). Somehow art, as Fischer (1963:9) puts it, "is the indispensable means for . . . merging of the individual with the whole." The literature is abundant with descriptions of how art provides meaning, release, edification, and inspiration--among countless other possible benefits. It clearly is a rich resource for leisure and recreation.

### The Museum Experience

Many writers have addressed themselves to the task of characterizing the museum experience, which they represent as distinctively different from other kinds of leisure or learning

experience. Every museum has its own "air", which Fine (1963:37) describes in part as the atmosphere of the church, in part of the college, in part of holiday sightseeing, in part of the theatre. John Updike (1972:12) feels that what we seek in museums is the opposite of what we seek in churches, which is the consoling sense of previous visitation. "In museums . . . we seek the untouched, the never-before-discovered; and it is their final unsearchability that leads us to hope, and return."

To some writers, the museum experience is a less positive one. "For most people, the word museum is synonymous with mausoleum; some kind of consecration of the especially gifted dead is sensed" (Robertson, 1972:81). Evans (1969:108) observed this behavior:

There was only one thing amiss. The visitors, numbering perhaps a couple of dozen, showed little or no sign of interest in the display. They were wandering aimlessly about the gallery with slightly dazed expressions. Occasionally a specimen seemed to catch their eye, they bent to take a closer look, straightened themselves without any visible sign of enlightenment or comprehension, continued their rather random circuit of the gallery and left.

Evans feels that such behavior is the rule rather than the exception in many museums. A similar cynicism is apparent in the observation by Washburn (1964) that the one millionth visitor to Canada's National Gallery, honored with a reproduction of an oil painting, confessed that he had gone in to use the gallery's cafeteria.

However extreme these observations may be, it seems safe to say that for most museum visitors, education is unlikely to be the principal reason for visiting an art museum. "In the non-academic

situation in which most adults find themselves, a trip to the museum for "education" purposes is about as appealing as three hours of algebra homework," according to Gerald (1973:127), who recommends that the word "education" is a poor word to use if the museum wants to attract visitors.

### Art Museum Audiences

The content of acoustical tours can be expected to relate to some degree to characteristics of the expected audience. This portion of the literature review presents a picture of what is known, assumed, or guessed about the typical art museum audience.

Wittlin (1949) notes that it is easy to record facts about visitor attendance but difficult to learn about the degree of visitor satisfaction or dissatisfaction experienced or about the motives which caused some persons to stay away. As Zetterberg (1969:39) says, it is difficult to estimate "just how much wonder and curiosity is aroused by an exhibit and how much of it is satisfied." The literature is replete with characterizations of the museum audience, substantiated to varying degrees. In the most general way, people visit art museums "to see the thing-units, the art objects, which sometimes tell stories but only as bonuses" (Thurman, 1968:142). It is assumed by most observers that the adult initially visits an art museum "strictly for the enjoyment and intrinsic value he gains from the experience" (Bunning, 1974:61). Hayes (1967:50) estimates that more than 75 percent of total art museum visits are for exposure, 20 percent related to classroom concerns, and only 5 percent "for the sake of



heightening artistic understanding and taste, or learning about art history." The vast majority of museum visitors do not come as students with a definite purpose in view, but rather to be amused or interested (Lucas, 1963:203). A former chairman of the Metropolitan Museum's education department in a 1945 Annual Report called "the people who wander aimlessly in the galleries" the "great untilled field." Writing in 1918, Gilman felt that, "The publicity that brings visitors willy-nilly yields a minimal harvest of real comprehension and a maximal by-product of the familiarity that breeds contempt and dulls vision" (p. 381).

Many observers of the contemporary scene would assess the current situation in similar terms. Various authors have characterized the audience as passive and relatively unwilling or unable to invest much concentration in the activity of looking at art. Screven (1969) believes that the museum needs to plan strategies for involving people in interaction with museum exhibits in order to make them less passive. Zetterberg (1969:17) cautions that a passive audience is not necessarily an inactive one:

The mental stimulation given by a new approach to a subject, the incentive to reading provided by a good lecturer, and the emotional response which is stirred by looking at works of art are just as much a form of activity as the painting of a picture or a heated argument. Simply because a person's mouth and hands are still does not mean that his learning capacities are dormant.

"What looks like passivity may actually be a kind of imaginative participation," says Taylor (1971:21).

Many writers speculate on how people feel after visiting art museums. "Emotionally exhausted," "intellectually saturated," "confused," "inspired," "overwhelmed," and "refreshed" are among the most often mentioned descriptors. However accurately these words may describe the contemporary situation, it is known that many visitors come to the art museum because the trip is initially suggested by someone they know, and typically they attend with at least one other person.

In an effort to present a typology of museum audiences, Morris (1962:17-21) offers these generalizations. He characterizes the museum public grossly as the art elite, who are experts and true art lovers; the prospective elite; the conformists; and the prestige catchers. Further, he characterized particular museum visits as intended, prepared, repeating, or resulting from chance. The principal motivations, in his view, are curiosity, social ambition and prestige, interest in becoming a better educated person, and enthusiasm.

Only six or seven museums attract more than a million visitors a year, but most draw over 25,000 persons. The total annual art museum visitation has been estimated by the National Endowment for the Arts as 43,024,000 for the year 1971-1972. Five percent of the nation's largest museums account for 34 percent of the total attendance.

A 1965 survey of museum use made by the American Association of Museums found that museums were conducting formally organized classes and lectures for 8,000,000 school children, 4,500,000 adults, 56,000 art students, and 14,000 undergraduate students engaged in joint

museum/university projects in art history and science. About 14 percent of all museums reporting had educational programs specifically for adults.

The Associated Councils of the Arts published, in 1974, Americans and the Arts, presenting highlights of a full survey report. As of January, 1973, 48 percent of the adult U.S. public over sixteen years, or about 69.8 million out of a possible 145.5 million, had attended an art museum. Education and place of residence were among the most important determinants of cultural attendance, with an overlap notable between education, income, and age. The greatest concentrations of non-attenders (51 percent) were found in the South (Parkhurst, 1975:93-94). In general, various research studies have shown that art museum attendance and support are associated with higher educational and occupational level as well as age, with people over fifty slightly less likely to attend. Sex and race are not key factors influencing attendance.

Nash (1974) reports on a recent survey whose purpose was to determine what images people held of the Whitney Art Museum in New York City. Potential visitors were asked if they would go to the museum if given free admission. The overwhelming majority of respondents said they would definitely or probably go. It was learned that past attendance was a major determinant of attitude toward attending and that people have generally positive attitudes toward the art museum. Nash noted that positive answers were not associated with feelings or emotions, but instead referred to objective aspects of

the facility or exhibition. In contrast, negative expressions did revolve around feelings and perceptions, which Nash interprets as indication that art museums are not valued by average adults as potential satisfiers of important needs. The terms "boring" and "cold" were the most frequently offered negative responses generated by open-ended questions.

An unpublished study in 1973 by the National Research Center of the Arts, presented to the New York Council on the Arts, reflects the attendance patterns of 1500 carefully sampled residents from a variety of areas in that state. Almost 60 percent reported having attended an art museum within the year, and 12 percent had attended four or more times.

Bunning (1964:62) subjectively assesses the attendance picture in overview:

The most frequent participation is by the individual with advanced levels of education, while the individual with less education, who needs it the most, is less likely to become involved.

Bunning's opinion would not be universally shared, since there is no evidence to support an assertion that some particular persons or groups of people particularly "need" the art museum. Museum educators may wish that this were true, however, and in recent years many major metropolitan museums have made substantial efforts to attract audiences which previously had been disinterested.

There is no information available about the kinds of visitors who elect to take acoustical tours and only a few unsystematic surveys of museum visitors who choose not to use them. It is not known whether

they are more or less academically prepared, more or less learning-oriented rather than entertainment-oriented, better motivated, more affluent, or more committed to the arts than people who neither rent tours nor accept them when they are available free of charge.

Although the museum experience is inadequately understood, it is clearly a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon. According to Cameron (1967), who has assessed the progress of visitor behavior research, the best research carried out in the United States and Canada remains unpublished and relatively unknown. There have been few serious investigations accomplished to date, partly because properly executed research studies are expensive and art museums have typically had more urgent financial needs, and also because museums are reluctant to disturb visitors by asking questions or closely observing behavior. Another factor may be museum resistance to making marketing-type inquiries of the public. In his article, "How do we know what our visitors think?" Cameron (1967:31) explains that the word "think" includes what they think and know about the museum, what they like and dislike about it, as well as what previous knowledge and misconceptions they have, and what they are learning--or not learning.

Much research to date on visitor behavior has been characterized by Loomis (1973:11) as the kinds of demographic and attendance data which fit the format of an annual report and are purely descriptive. Generally, Loomis reports, visitor surveys are deficient due to unrealistic expectations, non-professional design and execution, lack

of follow through, unclear audience for the studies. Also, questions are too broad, samples not careful, and cost, including inconvenience to visitors, is not adequately considered. Most surveys are concerned with access and decision to visit; open ended questions to assess attitudes and perception of museums as social institutions; direct questions to measure knowledge about activities and services museums perform; comparison of museums to leisure/recreational institutions; comparison of museums to educational/research institutions; direct assessment of the perceived value of a museum visit; measurements of comprehension or specific content knowledge; requests for judgments of attractiveness and preference; recall of exhibits or objects looked at; rankings or ratings of favorite exhibits; assessment of attitude change because of exhibit attendance; desire for supplemental information; requests for criticism; general services and management topics; and educational services measures (Loomis, 1973:11-16).

In summary, rigorous scientific studies have been rare in the museum world (Daifuku, 1960:73), and there is little theoretical work available that attempts to integrate what is known about museum behavior. Nonetheless, between 1923 and 1971, more than 100 references dealing with some aspect of the behavior of museum visitors were recorded (Elliot and Loomis, 1972). Only a few of these were experimental studies designed to measure visitor learning (Screven, 1970).

The research on visitor behavior began with a study by Robinson published in 1928 as an American Association of Museums project. He followed a small sample of individual art museum visitors in an

inconspicuous manner and recorded the total time visitors spent looking, how long they spent looking at particular objects, and which museum areas were visited. He found that people in an exhibit tended to stop less and less frequently and to stay a shorter time with each work of art. The more pictures displayed, the less time on average was spent with any piece.

A few years later, another more intensive study by Melton (1935:396) produced additional generalizations about visitor movement and attention span in art museums. Again, the procedure was controlled observation in a totally unobtrusive manner; no visitors were interviewed. Melton found that people attend to things on the basis of their color, size, and subject matter, and not because they have aesthetic quality. Different classes of art objects get different amounts of attention, and people generally prefer pictorial art. The position of the art in the gallery, left or right of the entrance, and the position of objects in the whole exhibit, were found to be important determinants of what people looked at. Because every object competes with every other in the museum environment, "the drawing power of an object is highly dependent on this characteristic of the display situation, whereas the holding power of the object is not." Melton described the phenomenon of museum fatigue, which he said is characterized by lower responsiveness. Fatigue begins to happen immediately after the visitor starts touring and not late in the visit, as had been assumed. He discovered that visitors were strongly drawn toward the gallery exit, that it actually attracted people, and

recommended research on the psychological problems associated with museum architecture.

In a recent study of visitor behavior at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the questions of where art museum visitors spend their time and why were again considered. O'Hare (1974) found that some objects were more than 500 times more "used" by the public than others. The question of whether the most popular galleries should be located closest or farthest away from museum entrances, thus insuring new exposures for visitors, is still debated in museum circles. Other studies have provided important if sketchy data which has resulted in innovations in design and layout of exhibits and more realistic assumptions about the habitual looking patterns and typical attention span of average visitors.

#### Learning in the Museum

As has been evidenced in this review of the literature, there is considerable disagreement about the degree and type of education--and learning--which occurs in the art museum. The content of acoustical guides can be expected to reflect a range of assumptions and biases about what is desirable to communicate to museum visitors. Certainly museum education is an informal kind of education, with special attributes, potentialities, and problems.

The principal resources of museums--actual objects of cultural, historic, and artistic value--hold great potential for integrating affective/experimental with cognitive learning outcomes. This is particularly true when the objects are works of art. Unfortunately, this premise is not currently being realized in either domain.



Studies which have attempted to measure visitor learning resulting from exposure to existing museum exhibits have consistently failed to find any significant changes. (Lakota, 1973:2)

Educationally, an art museum is unlike a school of any type, even an art school; it is different from other kinds of museums in terms of the kinds of learning it offers and the ways these are best induced (Thurman, 1968:104). Museum education is concerned with visual perception, non-verbal learning, and informal incidental education (Newsom, 1970:91). Screven (1969:8) calls the museum an exploratory learning environment which "probably does change the beliefs, sensibilities, and interests of many persons who enter it." Grove (1967) even attributes to the museum the invention of discovery learning. Ripley (1969:367) regards the museum as distinctively special because it stimulates people to be interested in the world about them. He feels that museums are the greatest available laboratory for studying the problem of how to develop interest in people. Potentially, art museums are also laboratories for aesthetic education, which ideally could be "the strongest countervailing force against the superficiality of so much of people's experience" (Reimer, 1972:105).

Is the museum functioning in these ways for the general population? "The museum, in some places, has become a country club for culture," according to Washburn, who notes that until a few years ago no one seriously asked whether anyone was benefiting from the exhibits. It was simply assumed the public was learning (undated, unpublished paper, p. 4). Unfortunately, there are almost no studies that reveal with adequate methodology the extent of a museum's immediate educational

impact (Zetterberg, 1970:38). Most people involved in museum education naturally believe in their accomplishments, but it is not known "how much visitors gained or lost in the course of a museum visit--in terms of knowledge, stimulation, self-confidence" (Wittlin, 1949:108). As Newsom (1970:89) puts it, "How does the museum know whether it is creating interest--the genuine, durable, real thing--or just a spectacle?"

Any assessment of the effectiveness of the art museum as a learning environment is inevitably concerned with a discussion of learning objectives, and these are rarely formulated specifically in museum educational programs.

Museum people have strong feelings that something is happening, but have difficulty defining exactly what it is, much less measuring it. It is known that museums generate a good deal of exploratory and investigatory behavior in most people, but that most visitors spend less than 40 seconds on the average at any exhibit and apparently gain little substantive knowledge. It is possible that museum visits may change "beliefs," aesthetic sensitivities, interests and perspectives. But we do not know the nature of these changes, their direction, their retention, or who is affected and how frequently. What changes may take place are uncontrolled, random, and for the most part unknown. (Screven, 1968:8)

Cameron (1968) believes that all exhibits should begin with a written statement of intent prepared by a curator or exhibitor, in which key ideas of facts to be communicated are identified. A contrary point of view is expressed by Eisner (1966:156), who recommends the use of expressive objectives which "describe an encounter the student is to have" rather than specific learnings or behavior. From that encounter, hopefully, positive consequences will flow. The positions taken by

Cameron and Eisner need not be conflicting. A visitor's contact with art on the emotional level does not automatically preclude his benefiting from the presentation of objective material.

Several writers have developed specific criteria which they propose have potential utility both in planning learning sequences in the art museum and in assessing their effectiveness. Cameron (1961:61) suggests some or all of these criteria: retention (facts), comprehension (ideas), organization (relationship of facts), incorporation (assimilation of facts and ideas with regard to biases), communication (ability to communicate the "message" to others). The important consideration is not the particular kind of learning or behavior that results from the interaction of the art museum visitor with the educational medium, tour, or exhibit, but rather the clear identification of criteria for effectiveness, according to Cameron. If the exhibit was designed to teach, learning should be measured; if it was designed to create a desired attitude, attitudinal shift should be assessed. Screven (1970:9) argues that the objectives of an art exhibit may not be measurable in behavior terms, and that defining exhibits in that manner would limit them to factual and informational materials. For him, exhibit objectives could include "the recognition of lawful relationships; developmental trends with age; working functions; and critical distinctions among art forms." Other possible criteria are "the acquisition of new sensitivities, new 'attitudes' towards certain kinds of art, and recognition of prejudices."

Lakota (1973:3) offers another set of possible objectives, based on the premise that art museums are, in a sense, history museums. These objectives would involve:

The development of visual discriminations which would enable visitors to correctly identify paintings of various periods and the characteristics of those periods. In addition, affective objectives might include the development of qualitative judgments concerning the value placed on viewing the works of art.

The assumption is generally held that the majority of visitors in large metropolitan art museums are "uninitiated into the rules or mysteries of art and are grateful to have some assistance in understanding (Stites, 1963). The museum literature reveals that museum educators have little knowledge of what and how much the visitor would actually like to "learn."

A good part of the limited research on learning in museums is not specific to art museums, but since these studies are frequently mentioned in the literature, they are briefly reviewed here. In recent years the most disciplined in-depth research on museum learning has been conducted by Screven who applies principles of programmed learning to audio-visual techniques in order to direct and focus visitor's attention on art objects so that specific learning outcomes can be facilitated. In a paper in 1970, he pessimistically summarized what was then known about visitor learning behavior: the visitor spends little time in the exhibit; he learns little; and what he learns if anything is different from the exhibitor's intention. Even though the museum audience is a particularly difficult one in respect to concrete

learning objectives, Screven believes learning can be accomplished. It is difficult to "reach" a voluntary audience while it is moving freely, because the educator can't control the order in which visitors view exhibits. This is a problem when simple ideas are intended to precede more complex ones. Screven has explored methods of enhancing the museum as a learning environment, building on advances in programmed instruction. His experiments have had four foci: specifying exhibit objectives; monitoring visitor performance; responsive exhibits; and motivation. Screven's experiments use audio-tape cassettes as part of a visitor response system, but no lectures are given; the audio is supportive only, with the major content responsibility left to the exhibit itself. In discussing the task of motivating museum visitors, Screven (1969:8-9) reviews an important behavior principle:

the chances of an action recurring or continuing depends on whether or not its immediate effect is "rewarding." Attention, learning, or voluntary activity of any sort will be sustained only if the immediate consequences of such activity is "rewarding" (in the visitor's terms). The museum's task is to arrange things so that selective attending to, interacting with, and learning from exhibits is distinctively more "rewarding" than not doing so. Careless answers, misinterpretations and superficial viewing should be made less "rewarding" than more constructive learning activity.

Following on Screven's work, Lakota (1973) worked with developing and evaluating learning systems to enable casual museum visitors to attain cognitive and affective objectives in the area of modern art. He had three specific objectives:

1. When given the picture of a painting, or the characteristics of a period, subjects will identify correct period.

2. When given a period, subjects will identify the appropriate painting or statement of characteristics for that period.

3. Subjects will identify the correct chronological order to periods.

In this study, learning was evaluated on the basis of visitors' responses to 100 five choice multiple choice questions. In his summary of the museum behavior literature, Lakota (1973:22-24) says that throughout the last fifty years of museum research, much of which has varied greatly in method and rigor, several general principles have been consistently supported:

1. Exhibits without the benefit of external learning support are generally ineffective environments for producing learning or attitude changes.

2. To be effective, exhibits must have clearly stated objectives.

3. The entrance to the exhibit is the area of greatest visitor attention and interest.

4. To take advantage of that interest and attention, some pre-exhibit preparation is most advantageous.

5. This preparation may take many forms including a lecture presentation on exhibit content, the statement of visit objectives to the visitors, instructing visitors to learn, or informing visitors that they will be tested. The most effective preparation involves the presentation of exhibit related questions.

6. For maximum effectiveness, exhibit preparation should occur in the closest possible proximity, temporally and physically, to the exhibit and should be as short as possible to allow the greater proportion of the visitor's time to be spent in the exhibit.

7. Once in the exhibit, some form of visitor participation is advantageous, whether in the form of pamphlet and/or map, or as part of a responsive display.

8. The most consistently effective form of active participation is through the use of questions: on cards as part of investigation-discovery games, in recycling game machines, in the form of question labels in the exhibit, or in an audio tour.

## ART EDUCATION

### Art Appreciation

The term "art appreciation," used here only in reference to the visual arts, is commonplace but nebulous. In some circles it has come to mean the ability "to tell the difference between Raphael and Titian" (Taylor, 1971:19), but clearly the concept is substantially more complex. Since the one most critical function of museum education and of acoustical tour guides is the cultivation of the viewer's ability to appreciate the art on exhibit, art appreciation is one of the focal issues in this literature review. Although the terms "art appreciation" and "aesthetic experience" are used somewhat interchangeably in the literature, as they are in this report, "art

appreciation" is a term in the general vocabulary, whereas "aesthetic experience" is more technical, with roots in philosophical analysis.

What is a work of art? What is appreciation? How does it occur? What does it require in background, attitude, experience? How does appreciation manifest itself? How do we know when an individual is "appreciating"? How is appreciation different from enjoyment? The literature is abundant and largely impressionistic; it considers the topic at many different levels of abstraction and specificity. Relatively few sources attempt to identify particular components of the process of appreciation.

To begin this review, some dictionary definitions of "appreciation": "The act of estimating the qualities of people and things," "A judgment or opinion," "Awareness or delicate perception, especially of esthetic qualities and things" (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 1973:64).

The terms "art" and "work of art" can be defined in as many terms as there are people willing to try. There have been many willing, even anxious to try. Talking about art can be as fascinating as art production or perception, as the following excerpts suggest.

Briefly, a work of art is a record of experience made in order to acquaint others with the artist's experience (Gilman, 1918:84). To Larrabee (1970), self-discovery, or the revelation of the inner life, is what art is about. Sontag (1961:146), however, believes that "art is not about something; it is something . . . art is a mode of nourishment."



Feldman (1965:35-36), in describing the nature of aesthetic experience, speaks of "vividness, intensity, distinctness, or precision of quality," and of awareness of connectedness of feelings, the fusing or accumulating of meanings--of becoming aware of a multitude of meanings in a short time. Aesthetic experience "promotes clarity and sudden and remarkable understanding," he says. "The arts are unlike most material things in that the values they convey, being intangible, are therefore inexhaustible" (Larrabee, 1973:94).

Although aesthetic experience is considered to involve the intuitive faculties importantly, many authors contradict the notion that the visual arts are solely the province of subjective intuition. Visual expression is the product of highly complex intelligence, insists Dondis (1973:17-19), who points out that "some individuals, some museums, some artists, and even some educators have a bizarre but vested interest in propagating the idea that art has nothing to do with the mind." The activity in observing a work of art is much more cerebral than that in watching a ball game, in the opinion of Stites (1963:30).

Appreciation belongs to a particular set of skills which Osborne (1970) calls mental skills, which involves perceiving certain kinds of qualities with a certain attitude, the aesthetic attitude. It is qualitative intelligence that is called for, the kind of intelligence which is concerned with metaphorical and affective dimensions, as distinct from discursive intelligence (Eisner, 1972:156).

Vision involves more than just seeing or being shown. It is an integral part of the communication process which encompasses all considerations of fine art, applied art, subjective expression, response to functional purpose. (Dondis, 1973:7)

The distinction is made between art appreciation and enjoyment or pleasure. Othanel Smith (1966:50-51) states the distinction:

To appreciate is to recognize the worth of something, to value it highly, to appraise or estimate its worth. Appreciation is not the same thing as enjoyment. To enjoy is to like something, to feel the pleasure of it, to respond to it positively . . . appreciation involves judgments or conclusions; judgements and conclusions are logical matters, requiring evidence for their support . . . . Enjoyment is a psychological process or state, not something that rests upon proof.

In suggesting the handling of art appreciation in terms of logic, Smith does not believe he is calling for a return to "the old academic tradition in art--substituting understanding for intuition, reason for imagination, facts and rules for happiness and pleasure, logic for feeling" (p. 54).

Enjoyment in art is acquired through experience, and that implies some form of education. Thomas (1953:93) thinks the word "enjoy" may be misleading, "because at first glance it suggests the idea of easy pleasure . . . in actual experience enjoyment demands expenditures of considerable effort." He quotes Joyce Carey:

Without education, it is not possible for a man even to appreciate art. For education does not give only knowledge, but taste; it qualifies the feeling as well as the judgment.

Appreciation is clearly a complex verbal construct which reflects elements of awareness, involvement, and judgment in the process of

perceiving things. Art educators in schools and museums are charged with the responsibility of developing faculties of appreciation in their publics. The critical issue in museum education is how this is to be accomplished.

There are many and diverse viewpoints concerning what constitutes the necessary conditions for art appreciation. Some writers believe that we learn to respond to qualities because we have learned to associate certain forms with experiences that have had particular emotional meaning to us. Others argue that the character of the form itself determines the quality of feeling we experience. As Eisner (1972) explains, if we believe that responses to visual forms are exclusively a function of association, the problems of instruction in critical aspects of art become primarily those of associative learning. If we emphasize the intrinsic character of visual form, believing that visual qualities elicit particular states of feeling, then the task is to help people learn to perceive the qualities displayed by the work. His own position, one shared by many experts, is that how we respond to a visual form depends on the characteristics found in both the forms and the viewer.

In the most general way, appreciation of art requires that the viewer open himself up to reception (Morris, 1965). Fundamental is the need to re-experience formal or artistic relationships by bringing appropriate parts of past experience to bear on immediate perceptions. In illustration, Feldman (1965:37-38) explains that lines, shapes, colors and textures can become meaningful in a work of art because they have

been previously experienced in life as movement, weight, hardness, wetness, brilliance or distinctness.

The organization of such qualities in an art object obliges us to recognize them in new contexts and then to consider their meaning and value under altered circumstances.

In further explanation of the act of appreciating, Sontag (1961:146-147) says:

What art gives rise to, properly, is excitation, a phenomenon of commitment, a state of thralldom or captivation. Art is seduction. To become involved with a work of art entails . . . detaching oneself from the world. But the work of art itself is also a vibrant, magical, and exemplary object which returns us to the world in some way more open and enriched.

In the view of many authors, aesthetic experience requires a "staying with," an absorption of the individual in the particular event. What distinguishes the appreciation of professionals, as contrasted with laymen, is that professionals are able to "stay with" the art experience more intensely and can trace their aesthetic pleasure or displeasure to certain features of objects (Gardner, 1973). The untrained museum visitor ("I don't know anything about art but I know what I like") may not understand or be interested in why he has a particular aesthetic response.

The ability to appreciate art, to have rich aesthetic experience, increases with age, maturity, and experience as perceptual differentiation, the process of being able to perceive, compare, and contrast qualities, becomes better established (Eisner, 1972). Artistic learning is not, however, an automatic consequence of maturation. It can be facilitated, in the view of most writers, but not simply by acquiring

knowledge. Osborne (1970) believes artistic learning requires guided practice and trial and error. In the view of many authors, intensive exposure in childhood is a significant factor in predisposition of the adult to aesthetic experience. "Usually we find that the more ready the looker, the longer he has been at such things" (Thurman, 1968:150). Smith (1966:52) believes that appreciation can be taught, and that teaching students how to handle questions of appreciation is not essentially different from teaching them how to deal with questions of valuation in any field of learning. When teaching in the domain of valuation is performed thoroughly, it involves three things, he says: a set of criteria, rules or standards for judging; a set of facts; and a judgment of how well the facts satisfy the criteria or standards. Obviously, Smith is speaking of a deeper and more thorough kind of appreciation than is at issue with the general adult audience of the art museum, but analysis and discussion of the content of acoustical tours will inevitably be concerned with such criteria.

#### Barriers to Art Appreciation

Art educators in schools and museums identify certain attitudes and conditions which are not conducive to the appreciation of art and which may be barriers to aesthetic experience. "Major handicaps facing most museum visitors are ignorance and awe," according to Gardner (1973:3). Further, the public may have been oversold the idea of assimilation of art without effort (O'Doherty, 1972; and Funke, 1969). One explanation of what some call visitor apathy is offered by Evans (1969), who argues that people get from a museum visit pleasure or

information in proportion to the amount of knowledge they bring to it or to the extent they are prepared to read and try to understand labels or other available educational materials.

Another factor which impedes art appreciation is perception fatigue, which Thurman (1968:145) says "necessarily precedes foot fatigue, causing severe aesthetic overload, if not aversion or even antipathy." Morris (1965:29) is among those writers who feel that the museum situation is not conducive to putting an audience into a desirable state of creative passivity. In most cases, he says, two things happen:

. . . if we 'know' much of art (intellectually) we throw our knowledge bucket-wise at the work of art, not suspecting that thus we silence it and kill any communication with it, or if we have no knowledge or data about the respective work, we try to 'understand' it by intellectualizing, e.g. by approaching it with the questions, "what is it?" (meaning what is its subject matter?) and, "what does that mean?" In this way we cut off our stream of sensibility and potentiality for aesthetic enjoyment.

Specific barriers to art appreciation are also described by Eisner (1972:70), who speaks of visual generalizations or stereotypes that tend to interfere with a more qualitative and analytical perception of particular elements of particular things. Though useful in other contexts, stereotypes are dysfunctional in art appreciation. Eisner refers to the dominance of certain cognitive structures or frames of reference or sets, which affects profoundly what we see in a visual field. "What we expect art to be will hamper perception of what belongs to the category 'art'." A viewer needs to perceive relationships and not just particular forms or aspects of form. Instead of focus vision, contextual vision is necessary, according to Eisner,

and museum visitors are not necessarily facile in looking at wholes and perceiving relationships among parts.

Another barrier to seeing is what Marcou<sup>é</sup> (1966:13) calls the "predominantly conceptual" character of our general education. Because adults are trained to perceive life through words rather than images, "the aesthetic experience is often lost in an onslaught of words and historical information which are the basis of so much teaching and expertise."

Feldman (1965:38) points to another problem, that of art appreciation instruction:

. . . which has often been ineffectual because it consisted of the transmission of authoritative opinions and value judgments. It would be better if students were fortified by personal and direct experience as well as historical study to prepare them for the complex task of appraising works of art.

However, Morris (1965) feels that "understanding" gained by knowledge from third sources such as history and aesthetic analysis is not useful before the individual first encounters the work itself.

Gilborn (1968) feels that society prevents or discourages its members from exploring the world by denying them a need to do so. He feels that the trend toward inductive or discovery learning is promising because it regards all human learning as an interaction between the individual and some part of his environment.

In a more practical criticism, O'Doherty (1972:4) blames the large art museum crowds, which, he says, deprive the individual of the opportunity to relate to pictures in a meditative and leisurely fashion. There is a point, which he feels has been reached in the

most popular American museums, when sheer numbers of people subvert the experience for which they have come.

As many authors point out, not everybody cares particularly to be educated in the visual arts, and when they do care, their reasons are various. Many people are either intimidated by the idea of art or have never been awakened to the possibility of meaningful visual experience. Visitors frequently seem to be looking for literal meanings or practical explanations to reduce their uneasiness in the presence of unfamiliar art. Various kinds of description, explanation, and interpretation are offered to museum visitors to assist them in understanding what works of art "mean," since the conviction persists that works of art are 'saying' something and often something important (Broudy, 1966:23). According to Gilborn (1968:26):

The art object frequently is the bearer of a number of adherent meanings, none of which inheres in the object itself; one expression of adherent meaning is the artist's intentions, and through its lifetime the object gradually acquires meanings, variously ascribed by former owners, dealers, the popular imagination, and curators and art historians. Art objects are the most difficult of manmade things to perceive objectively because their possible meanings are seldom represented in the perceptible qualities of the object itself.

In the words of Parr (1969:80):

An object has something to tell to anybody who sees it, regardless of age, education, personality or intelligence, and it is these unarticulated qualities of objects that are the greatest assets of our museums.

Even if it is not possible to state definitively what a work of art "means," it is still possible for museum educators to say a



great deal, either about art in general or about particular art objects, which can help to enhance the aesthetic experience of the visitor. Although "appreciation" is complex, multi-dimensional, and ultimately, perhaps, inexplicable, there is substantial agreement that it can be facilitated to varying degrees.

#### Kinds of Knowledge About Art

The content of acoustical guides can be expected to reflect the kinds of knowledge about art that museum educators or script writers believe are relevant and helpful to adult visitors. Because the central interest of this research is the categorization of content components, this portion of the literature review focuses on various formulations of the types of knowledge about art which to varying degrees provide the content of taped tours.

On the most general level, Hamilton (1975:99) makes a distinction between the kind of knowledge supplied by verbal sources and comprehended by the conscious, rational mind, and the kind of knowledge which grows from artistic experience, conveyed through the senses when confronting a work of art. Broudy (1966:37) characterizes three basic types of knowledge about art: knowing the subject, knowing technique, and having historical knowledge. It is possible, he says, to make intelligible and defensible judgments about a work of art with respect to sensory elements, formal elements, expressive elements, technical competence, general perceptual interest, and extra-aesthetic functionality. Broudy is not suggesting that the general, untrained audience will entertain the work of art at all of these levels, but only that

knowledge along these dimensions contributes to the richest and deepest experience of art objects.

Gardner (1973:323-324) admits that the ability to understand works of art, to decipher symbols, can enhance appreciation, but he believes that the cultivation of feelings and impressions should be the central concern of the individual who participates in the aesthetic process as a member of the audience.

The business of the consumer is to consume, that is, to enlighten and enrich his life through seeing and hearing, not to dissect the formal means by which such enlightenment is accomplished.

In his discussion of the dimensions of artistic learning, Eisner (1972:110) claims that adequate perception of works of art requires attention to:

1. The contextual dimension, in which the relationship of a work of art to others that preceded it is considered.
2. The experiential dimension: how it makes one feel.
3. The formal dimension: seeing the whole composition and how the work is assembled.
4. The symbolic dimension: when works of art contain such symbols, adequate experience with the work requires that they be recognized and decoded.
5. The thematic dimension: concerned with appreciation of the underlying general meaning of the work.
6. The material dimension: concerned with how the material affects the expressive content of the work. This is a focus "on the

particular way in which the material sets limits, provides opportunities, and contributes to the nature of the visual experience."

Knowledge about art includes insight into the ways that various visual elements function in determining the character of art objects. In the most simplified form, dots and lines, shapes, directions, tones, colors, textures, scale proportions, dimensions, and motions constitute the basic components from which all varieties of visual statements, objects, and environments derive (Dondis, 1973:15). These elements, manipulated with shifting emphasis by artists depending on the aesthetic problem being explored, provide one kind of basis for discussion of art objects. The content of acoustical guides includes references to the characteristics of visual messages, which Dondis (1973:16-17) considers as contributory to either contrast or harmony in works of art. Visual elements associated with contrast include exaggeration, spontaneity, accent, asymmetry, instability, fragmentation, economy, boldness, transparency, variation, complexity, distortion, depth, sharpness, activeness, randomness, irregularity, juxtaposition, angularity, representation and verticality. Elements contributing to harmony in works of art include understatement, predictability, neutrality, symmetry, balance, unity, intricacy, subtlety, opacity, consistency, simplicity, realism, flatness, diffusion, passiveness, sequentiality, regularity, singularity, roundness, abstraction, and horizontality.

#### Approaches to Art Education

However they try to attract broad audiences, museums are unlikely to appeal to everybody. The minority that attends, whatever its size,

is the concern of museum educators. Of people who come to museums,

The vast majority . . . come with a varying if marked degree of interest, but with relatively slight knowledge of or acquaintance with the arts. Almost inevitably, therefore, one finds a situation wherein a specialist is confronted with a lay group. (Zetterberg, 1968:16)

The question is, how do specialists confront lay groups in order to facilitate meaningful, satisfying art experience?

Three leading methods govern the arrangement of objects in art museums, and these have parallels in the content of many lectures and tours, including recorded tours. Adam (1939:55) characterized them as (1) the chronological method, revealing growth and meaning of historical culture on a wide scale; (2) the technological method, relating industrial civilizations to aesthetic qualities; and (3) the native or patriotic method, which employs the symbols of art to deepen the citizen's understanding of his land.

There is considerable disagreement among experts about the most effective approaches to the content of art museum exhibits and tours. A number of dominant orientations or emphases to museum art education are apparent in the literature; these are summarized below.

Promoting contact, involvement, and focused looking. Museum users must be attracted, persuaded, and encouraged to look at things. If the purpose of a museum and of museum education is to stimulate viewers to look more carefully at objects, any strategies that encourage looking are important (Gardner, 1973). The physical existence of the work of art is the primary fact about it, says Hamilton (1975:117).

"The thing itself, and not its bearings, is what the artist is interested in and wishes us also to admire" (Gilman, 1918:326). As Larkin (1969:11) puts it,

Any method that opens one's eyes, develops one's sensibilities, and stimulates one's awareness of the qualities and the expressive powers of the artist's language is sure to be helpful. Any approach to art that substitutes factual knowledge for perception and discrimination may do more harm than good.

Marcou<sup>é</sup> (1969:58) believes that the inability to "see" and to be aware of what we see is very widespread in our culture.

What we see, the emotion aroused, the associations induced; these make up our experience. It is immediate but it is not simple. The process has many implications; it is related to our tactile sense, to visual memory, to imagination, to past experience, to our predilections, to the ability to discriminate and to our sense of values.

Learning to see, cultivating skills of appreciation is ". . . like acquiring new powers of perception, like the awakening of a sense that was dulled . . . . It is the opening up of a new dimension of awareness" (Osborne, 1970:15). The principal concern is with achieving and maintaining a relevant kind of attention. "Looking at pictures," Sir Kenneth Clark (1960:15-17) tells us, "requires active participation, and, in the early stages, a certain amount of discipline." Intellectual devices can help to keep the senses engaged, but the work of the eye is primary. Clark describes his own process in looking at pictures:

. . . . Quite soon my critical faculties begin to operate, and I find myself looking for some dominating motive, or root idea, from which the picture derives its overall effect.

In the middle of this exercise my senses will probably begin to tire, and if I am to go on looking responsively I must fortify myself with nips of

information. I fancy that one cannot enjoy a pure aesthetic sensation (so-called) for longer than one can enjoy the smell of an orange, which in my case is less than two minutes; but one must look attentively at a great work of art for longer than that, and the value of historical criticism is that it keeps the attention fixed on the work while the senses have time to get a second wind. As I remember the facts of a painter's life and try to fit the picture in front of me into its place in his development, and speculate as to whether certain parts were painted by an assistant or damaged by a restorer, my powers of receptivity are gradually renewing themselves, and suddenly make me aware of a beautiful passage of drawing or colour which I should have overlooked had not an intellectual pretext kept my eye unconsciously engaged.

A strategy suggested by Gardner (1973) is that audiences should be encouraged to actively compare, choose, or evaluate works of art. He believes that perhaps all human learning ultimately depends on processes of contrasting and comparing, and consequently, activities which require these functions of viewers should be helpful in facilitating focused looking.

Minimizing chronological and technological elements. Joshua Taylor (1971) feels that galleries can be so didactic that they're not enjoyable. He believes that the arranging of collections on the basis of period or chronology has created some very dull museums. His sentiments are shared by Parr (1963:31), who hopes one day to find himself:

. . . in an exhibit that does not primarily aim at increasing my awareness of the passage of time, or my mental saturation with the works of a particular school or individual, but simply tries to help me reach a higher communion with all art and a deeper insight into its meaning, without regard to time, place, name or cost.

Oppenheimer (1967:213-214) asks, "Is it not the duty of a museum to provide for its visitors the most fundamental aesthetic experiences within its power, rather than exercises in historical introspection?"

In 1918, Gilman presented his approach to popular education in fine art, which is primarily concerned with the development of comprehension in the museum viewer. He suggested that educational programs include a modicum of technical instruction, but only if it brings to the visitor's attention "elements in a work for which his eyes are too dull. It is at the same time a hindrance by diverting his mind from the work itself." Gilman believed that historical knowledge, like technological knowledge, "offers a crutch to observation" (p. 64). A more recent criticism is offered by Cameron (1971: 18), who says:

The academic systems of classification, which constitute an undecipherable code for the majority of museum visitors, must either be replaced, or better, be supplemented by interpretation of the collections that is based on the probable exposure and awareness of the museum audience.

Bridging adult experience. As catalysts between the viewer and the work of art, museum educators need to employ a variety of means to reach their heterogeneous audiences.

A museum must keep in mind the vital need to link whatever it aims to teach with something already familiar to its visitors. One must always proceed from the known to the unknown, sometimes step by step and sometimes by imaginative and exhilarating leaps as circumstances offer. (Allan, 1960:25)

Once in the art museum, adult visitors must find some way to relate museum exhibits to their own experience. Bunning (1974:61) feels that,

in general, special themes are most likely to engage the interest of adult visitors and, "since humans tend to repeat experiences causing change and growth and to avoid experiences causing boredom or arousing little curiosity," educators should determine what visitors like in educational programs and plan them accordingly. Even though many in the museum world are critical of some institutional efforts to amuse the potential audience, Gardner (1973:324) argues that entertainment principles such as the come-on, the surprise, and the puzzle can and should be effectively exploited to assist in educating the general art museum public.

Developing visual awareness and independence of artistic judgment. Cameron (1968:32) believes that education in museums should concentrate on acquisition of visual skills in a manner akin to learning a language. Art education should not, says Feldman (1965:42), lay down canons of excellence or beauty" but rather should involve people in artistic problems that oblige them to hypothesize and test personal criteria and standards of excellence.

Stimulating wonder and questioning. Fine (1963:40) recommends a kind of learning which is rooted in "wonder," and which has two aspects: one generates awe and astonishment with objects and the other provokes the question "why?", which encourages the process of critical examination. This process of education, he says, encompassing both the emotional and the intellectual in a unique co-presence, may well be the unique advantage of the museum as an educational tool.



Providing educational programs at appropriate levels. One of the most pressing problems in museum education concerns the level of information or attitude most appropriate for the general audience. Basically, there are two approaches to educating public taste, according to Adam (1939:55): the intensive approach, which is concerned with the "careful education" of selected groups; and the extensive approach, which requires a museum to simplify its instruction both with regard to the time required for the mastering of aesthetic standards and the intellectual effort needed for initial understanding. "A simple lure is the most practical one for the fisherman who seeks to catch every variety of fish with a single hook."

Exactly what that simple lure should be poses a serious problem for museum educators. Coleman (1939:321) was an early exponent of a position held by many today who feel that the most efficient course is to provide offerings to the public "at different levels of interest and preparedness, so that every visitor can have something suitable." Museums must offer discreet popularization, in Rebetz' view; the curator should give his visitors the impression they have understood and arouse in them the desire to know more (1970:21). Parr (1962:44) cautions that it is particularly important to avoid the risk of reaching only the 'imaginative' or only the 'unimaginative' members of the audience, while merely boring or disturbing other groups. However it can be made to happen, most writers agree that to some degree it is necessary for museum educators to "de-mystify" art and to identify in their planning with audiences whose backgrounds in the visual arts are minimal.

In seeking to establish the proper level for educational programs, however,

. . . museums should just put on the best they can and buy the best things that they can and people will come up to them. The moment a museum or gallery thinks it is going to go down to the people, that is insulting and degrading, and ruins the museum. (Clark, 1973:15)

Offering psychological studies of art. Still another orientation to the content of museum education programs is suggested by Parr (1963:30-31) who hopes the day is close

. . . when art museums will include, as normal features of their program, the psychological study of esthetic experience and artistic expression, of its affective, cognitive, sociological and biological determinants of our sense of beauty, of the logic and analytical geometry of abstraction, and many similar facets of man's relationships to art.

He asks, "Could there not be some places where one could simply be in love with art as with a woman, without always having to be reminded that after all she did descend from a hairy ape?"

Sharing expert experience with audiences. This approach, which appears to be a dominant influence in the preparation of some acoustical guides, found early and eloquent expression in the words of Gilman (1918:67), who recommended that audiences be led "into the presence of noble art in the company of those who themselves delight in it." This approach is treated at greater length in discussion of the content of acoustical tour guides.

### Summary

Speaking generally and ideally, educational approaches should attempt to consider the mental, emotional, and physical characteristics of the individual museum visitor (Coleman, 1939:321). In Borcoman's view, the museum educator's role is unusually difficult because he is primarily concerned with stimulating thought and feeling rather than with increasing knowledge (1969:41). Kuh (1955) is among those who argue that the emphasis should be on why and how rather than on when and what. The object is not to train specialists who will recognize names, dates, or isms, but rather, she says, to help audiences look "with greater understanding and pleasure at all art" (Introduction). Many other professionals in the museum world believe that audiences need factual information to help them establish appropriate contexts for viewing art. This disagreement underlines basic questions of adult education strategy in art museums: What supplemental information or stimulation do museum visitors require to maximize their aesthetic experience? How is this to be provided?

### Communication in Art Museums

This study of the content of acoustical tours in major art museums is intrinsically concerned with various dimensions of the issues of communication, and there is considerable material in the museum literature concerning various communication relationships among people, objects, and institutions.

Morris (1965:27-29) sees the museum as a cluster of communication problems. He defines communication as:

. . . the process of sending and receiving, hence exchanging, messages through the use of signals to which a symbolic meaning is attached whereby the messages are mutually and correspondingly understood in the same sense.

Morris says that to achieve effective communication, five different channels must be cleared: communication between works of art and the public as a whole; between works of art and individual viewers; among viewers as a group; between experts and trustees; between management of museums and the public; and between the museum and the whole community. Too often, he believes, art is presented to the public through the medium of the museum and seems to exist in a vacuum, isolated from life. Dewey had years earlier made that assertion in an eloquent plea for a closer connection between art and life (Art as Experience, 1934).

Cameron (1968:31-35) applies the simple communication systems model to the art museum. Both the museum collections and the curatorial or academic staff are the source in this system. The interpreters and the exhibits are the medium of communication; the visitors are the receivers. There is also the noise or interference which can alter messages in transmission. Described in this way, the museum is a one-way communication system, in that there is no feedback loop. Because the exhibitor knows that the museum visitor doesn't share his specialized knowledge, and that without some aids to translation his medium will be an unfamiliar language with little likelihood of

being understood, he uses subsidiary media, including print, recorded voices, diagrams, photographs, and film. The important thing about these devices, stresses Cameron, is that they should not be translation but should only aid it.

According to Evans (1969), there are three principal forms of museum communication: lecture (in which category can be included the acoustical guides with which this study is concerned); the printed word; and exhibits, the least scholarly because they make the fewest specific demands on the viewer. Evans considers museum exhibits themselves as communication forms and makes a distinction between primary display, intended for the public as a whole, and secondary display, intended for an informed public and students. He believes that any interpretation in the primary display must relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor and that the primary display should be conceived as a dialogue between curator and visitor. Evans believes that communication between curator and visitor should stimulate observation and inquiry as well as provide information. To achieve this, he recommends that exhibits should not be limited in scope by the observance of traditional subject boundaries.

According to Wittlin (1949:103-104), an exhibit contains two simultaneous messages: "the intellectual content and the communication arising from shapes, spaces, lines, colors, and light, and of course from the interrelationships among all those aspects." Learning the language of the museum is an educational task as much as learning any

language, and the only reward for the visitor's effort is the intrinsic reward of the experience itself. In order for communication to be most effective in the museum setting, the structure of information input is important, says Wittlin. A greater quantity of items presented in a structured way is a lesser information load than fewer items unstructured. Furthermore, people require integrity in visual communication segments, and a context, set, plan, program, field, system, or organization which is apparent. For best communication, it is advisable to reduce uncertainty and to provide a certain measure of redundancy.

Morris (1965:29) addresses himself to the personal contact between visitor and work of art. Because it is difficult for some viewers to focus on a single art object, a deliberate effort must be made to effect a relationship.

The paintings are on the walls, and we, the viewers, are passing by. A wall invites one to walk along it and thus to see the pictures hanging in a line, in a receiving line. The wall does not encourage us to do the only right thing, for example, to turn towards the single painting, to confront it.

Ultimately, as Cameron (1968:34) says, "the museum as a communication system depends on the non-verbal language of objects and observable phenomena." In Gilman's words, a work of fine art, "is an open letter, addressed not to particular individuals, but to any who can read it" (1919:55).

Unfortunately, however, large numbers of people find that art does not always speak for itself, fully and distinctly (Coleman, 1939: 324). The question is how to facilitate communication of the work of art to the audience which desires access to it, to one degree or

another. The next portion of this review will concentrate on the particular relationship between spoken language and art appreciation, a relationship which is central to the subject of this dissertation.

A central issue in the art museum world is the question of how explicit or implicit educational programs ought to be. Some experts believe that the gallery experience itself constitutes the educational medium. In this view, the audience should be on its own, without benefit of "crutches" or "cues" from labels, lectures, live tours, or acoustical guides. At the other extreme, some feel that the language of art is a foreign language, one which needs translation and interpretation by the museum in order to be intelligible to untutored audiences. If it is assumed that some people need and desire help in viewing art objects, the question at issue is what kind of help they need. There are various arguments which support or oppose the use of verbal language to aid interpretation and understanding--but if it is agreed that "talk" can be useful to the art museum visitor, what should its content be--and not be?

Marcoué (1969:59) identifies a very difficult problem in museum teaching:

. . . that the lecturer shall not allow his enthusiasm and knowledge to get out of hand--that he shall be able to inform, to open up exciting vistas without unduly imposing his point of view, his personal, and possibly limited, image on others less formulated, fragile, but infinitely more meaningful to the individual concerned, because it represents what he sees, what stirs him aesthetically, and brings fresh understanding of the object and the period it represents.

Borcoman (1969:43) cautions that in using words to explain visual forms of communication, we translate from one medium to another. Translations are never equivalents, but:

There is something in the nature of words as we use them, and as they are understood by our listeners, that can give a dogmatic character to spoken or written ideas. Words lack the infinite subtlety of the vocabulary of visual communication.

Some of the content of museum lectures and tours is concerned with interpretation of works of art. In her critical essay, Against Interpretation, Sontag (1961) claims that interpretation can negate sensory experience altogether by taking for granted that such experience happens and moving on to more easily discussable, but not more important matters.

The question of whether and to what extent works of art can stand alone, without verbal interpretation, has been loudly and hotly contested by experts. The answer clearly depends somewhat on the audience, on "each person's previous experience, formal education, innate sensitivity, or casual curiosity" (Hamilton, 1975:109-110). Hamilton feels that the verbally oriented character of American education has created a generation of museum visitors who are, to some degree, form-blind. They see what they are looking at only, he says, "if it is a tour de force of craftsmanship and anecdotal subject matter, the more pleasurable when recognized with the least difficulty." Hamilton believes that the task of a museum educator is difficult because works of art have primarily nonverbal substance, but society puts a premium on knowledge verbally conceived and exchanged.



Even the most up-to-date audio-visual devices designed for the explication of works of art are merely extensions of the work, cover-ups, as it were, for the fact that the irrational nature of the work of art will forever elude those who are condemned to talk about it. (p. 99)

As Sontag (1961:63) says, "We are always aware of the abundance, in the greatest art, of what cannot be said." Verbal interpretation can only imperfectly convey the essential character of a visual experience, its quality and impact on the sense and spirit of the observer. "A translation of the reality, however vivid, is not the reality itself" (Larkin, 1969:8). In the words of Gilman (1918:25):

. . . the objects that comprise our world--the sources for most of our sensations--possess properties for which there are no exact verbal equivalents. The properties cannot be apprehended in any other than their own terms.

Rosenberg (1970:28) believes that the basic service of a museum is to provide an opportunity for individuals to be alone with creations of the past and with their responses to them.

. . . the less whispering in the ear the better. When the individual is ready to exchange wonder for information, he ought to be able to find sources of knowledge--but he should be allowed to seek them a bit and ought not to be rushed.

Newsom (1970:70) has a similar view. She says:

. . . words have a way of blocking vision, and most adults are victims of them. In the belief that we should remember names, dates, social origins, styles, influences, we turn to the label or the printed guide or the recorded tour--anything to reduce our visual helplessness before a work of art.

Newsom recommends less reliance on the verbal, more on the visual and believes the museum should work harder on the visitor's eyes and less on

his ears, in order to capitalize on what the museum uniquely offers and to avoid turning the museum back into a school. The lecture, she feels, may have outlived its usefulness.

Marcou<sup>é</sup> (1969:59) believes that one does not create visual awareness or aesthetic enjoyment by talking too much about an exhibit before the students have themselves looked at it, for this can blunt visual awareness. Kuh (1951) is another critic/educator who believes that art itself should explain art. In her book, Art Has Many Faces (1951:xi), she recommends that educators avoid conventional adjectives and technical terms, because "the private language so often associated with art is sometimes more confusing than revealing." She believes that words can have enormous power but can also act as barriers, stifling understanding and response. When words play a secondary role, art can be better understood in terms of itself, Kuh insists. The unassisted freedom to look first, without the immediate prop of words, can result in "illuminating personal discovery" but only when understanding has not "been frozen by previous opinions." She recognizes the need for words, but only as corollaries, "aiding" not "directing" the eye.

Although language is never a substitute for experience, it is capable of acting as mediator or catalyst. The question is, what constitutes "aiding" and not "directing" the eye?

Borcoman (1969) feels that words are most effective when they are used to formulate questions rather than answers. Others believe that questions should be posed only by works of art and not by verbal prompting.

In defense of the use of language, Smith (1966:48) asserts that teaching the history and appreciation of art is like the teaching of history and literature; it is largely a verbal activity which cannot be carried on without the use of language. The question, again, relates to specific content. What should be said--or asked? What is the nature of the manifest content of art museum acoustical tours?

### ACOUSTICAL GUIDES

Although there is a substantial volume of miscellaneous published material on various aspects of communication in the museum, relatively little is available dealing with the specific content of messages or the technology of transmission. Literature specific to acoustical tour guides is fragmentary and tends to be incidental to other discussions.

The following outline of the technology of acoustical tour guides is adapted from Cutler (1975), who describes three basic types of audio systems used in museums: random access interpretation (wireless, nonlinear); tours in continuity (linear, progressive); and ambient sound.

#### Random Access Interpretation

Random access interpretation is of two basic types, listening stations and magnetic induction. At listening stations, the visitor hears a message via a tape playing unit. The tape can be activated by the visitor, in which case the message is heard once and then automatically stops; or, the tape can play a continuously repeating

message. When taped messages are activated by the museum visitor at listening stations, several stations with individual speakers are required at each exhibit in order to accommodate several visitors simultaneously.

The other type of random access, wireless, non-linear tour, sometimes called the magnetic induction system, broadcasts a continuously repeating message from radio transmitters into a tightly defined exhibit area. The message runs continuously and is heard on individual headsets worn by the visitor, who may listen to as much of the message as he likes. The advantage of this flexibility is somewhat offset by the fact that the message is almost always received at some point other than its beginning, which is irritating to some users. In general, random access systems are best used when continuity is unimportant, when the visitor requires maximum flexibility, and when the educational process is not dependent on building logical content development into the narration.

#### Tours in Continuity

There are two kinds of tours in continuity, or linear progressive tours. One system allows visitors, individually or in groups, to listen to a recorded tour played on portable cassette players. The other system, used primarily in heavily visited exhibit areas other than art museums, involves a moving train or beltway on which visitors stand while hearing a recorded tour which is synchronized to movement through the exhibit.

The kind of acoustical guide that accounts for most recorded tours in art museums presents a progressive taped tour with a specific start and end. Eight of the ten museums whose acoustical guides were content analyzed in this study use this technology. With this system, the user carries a portable cassette recorder and listens to the tour via a headset. Since the visitor is carefully and sequentially directed, the scriptwriter can make assumptions about what the visitor has seen and heard and can build on previous messages. Supporters of this system consider this control an important educational advantage, but others believe the viewer's freedom is substantially curtailed when he is directed to see an exhibit in arbitrary sequence in a fixed time period. In most of these tours, however, the visitor is encouraged to turn off his cassette player in order to remain longer with exhibits that interest him or to examine exhibits other than those discussed in the tour.

#### Ambient Sound Systems

This technology, which was not used in the museum with which this study was concerned, provides sound throughout a room, hall or area; it constitutes the third type of acoustical equipment used in museums. Ambient sound systems are rarely used in art museums.

#### Attitudes Toward Recorded Tours

Although there is not universal support for the use of audio guides in art museums, many people consider them potent and attractive aids for adult visitors. The literature specific to the subject of

recorded museum tours is sparse, but experts make frequent indirect reference to the use of supportive interpretive media in the museum. "Exhibitions of high standard, by their quiet presence, can more actively arouse response and excitement in the visitor than formal tuition" (Cook and Gerard, 1969:117). Supporting their point of view, Gilborn (1968:29) says that "electronic communication may not liberate but rather further serve to restrict and banalyze experience." As reported earlier in this review, many authors believe that the museum's presence is primarily a visual one, and some feel that audio aids interfere with the visitor's visual experience.

In a seminar on McLuhanism (1968:14), a discussion of the value of auditory tape recordings in front of exhibits generated this opinion from Parker:

Some of them are terrible because . . . they're working on the basis of data assimilation. Instead of explaining anything about the painting, they're telling you about when the painter was born, etc. If you did a really intelligent job, and illuminated the objects, I think it's an added dimension to the experience.

In characteristic support of those processes that demand active involvement of viewers, McLuhan said that the audience must become part of the team engaged in discovery. "In order to create involvement, you have to take out the story line." He means that the listener or the viewer must become "co-producer, co-creator."

Zetterberg (1969:31) makes only brief reference to "electronic guiding systems." He reports that no research on their effectiveness and on the public's acceptance of them is as yet available, but

. . . informal observation suggests that some visitors, particularly older ones, find them strange and frightening, while others, especially teenagers, take great delight in them.

Zetterberg personally favors the fixed listening station, at which visitors lift receivers to hear a recording. He disapproves of the linear progressive tour:

Intellectually least adequate are the portable tape recorders that direct the visitor through the museum hall at the irreversible and inevitable pace of the tape. More adequate are the broadcasts that can only be heard in front of a particular display counter or picture.

Although Thurman (1968:15) feels that the predigestion of art for its audience is actually anti-educational, she believes that "educative experience can be aided via excellent, individualized commentary." The leading company producing museum acoustical tours in 1975 maintains that they "demonstrate that popular art education needn't be tedious and condescending." According to a review in The New Yorker:

Walking around the museum with Hoving is like having an agreeable and valuable friend at one's elbow--his easy, personal, impressionistic observations are very different from the unreal stiff spiel of the guided tour.

The word 'look' crops up in his talk more than any other--look at this, look at that, he repeatedly urges the viewer--and what he has to say about each work is interesting because he himself has looked at it so hard.

Support for this distinctive style of tour narration can be found in the words of Gilman (1918:68-69):

Chosen companionship in beholding is the cornerstone as yet left aside in our educational system . . . the opportunity to contemplate works of art in the companionship of persons to whom these particular creations make special appeal . . . . Not by technical

training beyond the rudiments, nor by the history of art; but by leading them into the presence of noble art in the company of those who themselves delight in it.

Little is known about the experience of visitors who use acoustical guides. Questionnaire inquiries have been conducted by a principal producer of acoustical tours, but methodology has been informal and samples have been small. Approximately one hundred persons were questioned after completing audio cassette tours in the Metropolitan Museum (for the Impressionism exhibition in 1973 and the Tapestry Exhibition in 1974). In both cases, visitor response was overwhelmingly favorable to the recorded tours. Informal surveys were executed by the same tour producer in 1971 at the Guggenheim Museum and at the Museum of Modern Art for the purpose of determining both visitor awareness of the availability of recorded tours and visitor attitude generally towards acoustical guides in art museums. Questions were asked to about one hundred visitors who had passed the dispensing desk but not elected to rent the service. In the Guggenheim study, it was learned that only 70 percent of non-users questioned were aware of the availability of tours, but attitudes towards taped tours were 79 percent favorable, 14 percent negative, 7 percent neutral among non-users. Forty-three percent of all non-users interviewed said they were not using the service because they felt they "already knew enough about Mondrian," or words to that effect.

A recent research project in California investigated public reaction to electronic interpretation in use at a historical monument. More than 350 visitors were interviewed and asked to say which they



preferred: self-guided tours using a pamphlet and signs; guided tours with a group; or audio headset tours. The headset tour was rated first by tourists because, they said, they could proceed at their own pace, could listen rather than read signs or pamphlets, and could gain more information by listening than they could read in a comparable time. Although the art museum touring experience is certainly not comparable, it reflects what many feel is an accurate generalization about audiences: they prefer to be talked to rather than to read informational material on their own (Ball, Dunn, Fite, Marshman, McLane, and Preston, unpublished paper, California State University, Sacramento).

Another study focuses on what visitors prefer in the content of certain exhibits. Washburne and Wagar (1972:248) studied visitor interest in four "visitor centers," which are defined as outdoor recreation areas, interpretive services, and facilities widely used "to enrich visitors' experiences and to educate and inform the public about natural and historic resources." Again, although art museums are not analogous to visitor centers, this study reflects audience preference patterns--and these may be similar to some museum preferences. Strategies of communication used in exhibits were ranked on the basis of visitor interest. It was found that visitors liked, in order of preference, cause and effect relationships; parts making a story; seating provided; relating to immediate surroundings; isolated facts and identification; superlatives; reinforcements or rewards; and participation relating to common knowledge. Visitors preferred dynamic, animated, changing stimuli, and violent subjects, which the authors

suggest seems to parallel the trend in entertainment media. Inert media for which visitors showed the least interest were also the stimuli most associated with traditional educational methods. An holistic approach to interpretation was best liked, and themes helped visitors organize and summarize information. The researchers also learned that sitting increases general receptivity, a finding not very helpful in the art museum setting, where only token seating is generally available.

There are many studies of the dynamics of oral delivery, but these are not within the province of this study. Among other topics, research has considered audience sensitivity to emotions conveyed by speakers; audio style as an influence to attitude change; speaker dynamism, which correlates positively with learning; monotonous lecture delivery, which decreases audience comprehension; and the effects of monotonous delivery on intelligibility. The use of audio equipment in conventional school settings does not have sufficient bearing on this study to justify review of that literature.

It is apparent that publication is very sparse on the subject of acoustical tour guides. This study is designed to contribute to the literature in the increasingly important area of adult education media in art museums.

#### CONTENT ANALYSIS

The history of content analysis as a research technique dates from the beginning of the twentieth century, although scattered studies going back as far as the 1740's have been cited. In recent times, the

trend has been toward both increased frequency of use of content analysis and greater variety of research application. More content analysis research was published between 1950 and 1958 than during the entire first half of the twentieth century (Holsti, 1969:20). Perhaps as much as any other research method available to social scientists, content analysis has been marked by a diversity of purpose, subject matter, and technique. The result of the trend toward analysis of more diverse data has resulted in "softening of rigid boundaries between content analysis and other techniques of social research. An example is the coding of open-ended questionnaires, which overlaps both content analysis and survey research" (Holsti:23).

According to Barcus' studies, content analysis research in sociology, anthropology, general communication, and political science accounted for almost 75 percent of all empirical studies from 1900-1958. Using more detailed categories, he found that the study of social values, propaganda analyses, journalistic studies, media inventories, and psychological-psychoanalytic research accounted for 60 percent of the work accomplished (cited in Holsti:20-22).

At a National Conference on Content Analysis in 1967, the twenty-five papers represented more than a dozen fields, including linguistics, communication, political science, mathematics, psychology, sociology, social psychology, English, music, medieval and renaissance studies, advertising and marketing, psychiatry, information science and computer science (Holsti:23).

Content analysis has been the research technique used in recent studies of pottery fragments, segregation, children's drawings, gestures and facial expressions, photographs and cartoons, music, postage stamps, dreams, and the mental health content of media, among many, many applications.

The bibliographical entries in both Holsti and Gerbner et al. (1969) number more than 500 each, and the lists are not the same. Only a few studies are concerned with the visual arts at all, and none is concerned with documentary analysis of the content of media which explain, describe, or interpret works of art.

#### SUMMARY

A survey of the literature related to American Art Museums, Museum Education, Adult Education in Art Museums, Art Education, Acoustical Guides and Content Analysis discloses a lack of focus on the educational implications of museum acoustical guides which are used by a very large number of adults. There appears to be no consensus about the most appropriate or effective approaches to art education for adults, but general agreement exists that art experience, and more specifically the museum visit, is an important means of enhancing the development of sensibility in adults.

Chapter 3 presents a more detailed description of the particular content analysis methodology which constitutes the substance of this study.

## Chapter 3

### METHOD OF THE STUDY

This project, a descriptive study of the content of selected art museum acoustical tour guides, primarily "describes and interprets what is" (Kerlinger, 1964:290) relative to specific content components of recorded exhibition tours and to the patterns of incidence of dominant content emphases among audio tours of major museums. However, in order to establish an appropriate context for analysis and interpretation of data, the researcher collected information on prevailing practices, points of view, attitudes held, and processes in progress from relevant sources in art museums and in the acoustical guide production industry.

A mail questionnaire survey was conducted among forty-eight leading art museums for the purpose of developing background information and identifying the sample population for the study.

Field interviews were held with experts in the cities of New York, Los Angeles, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Milwaukee, and Minneapolis. Data collection in the field was guided by inquiries concerning the history of acoustical guide use in art museums; the acoustical tour guide business; the technology, or hardware, associated with message transmission and reception; the technology, or software, associated with determination of script content and the writing, editing, and production of scripts; and problems associated with marketing acoustical guides to museums and to museum audiences.

Interviews were conducted with executive personnel of the principal companies producing art museum guides and with art museum professionals. Selection of interviewees was not systematic. The researcher interviewed individuals who were accessible and were generally interested in and knowledgeable about recorded tours in art museums. The intention was not to provide specific information relative to any particular museum or transcript, but rather to develop a general picture of this adult educational medium in the larger context. Appendix M lists interviews held in connection with this research.

This chapter presents the methodology employed in this study in four parts: (1) population and sample, (2) instrumentation, (3) data collection and treatment, and (4) data analysis.

## POPULATION AND SAMPLE

### The Sample

Before this study was undertaken, there were no collected data reflecting the extent of art museum use of acoustical guides. To initiate the project, therefore, a survey questionnaire was designed and dispatched to major art museums. The survey, which elicited responses from all museums questioned, had two general purposes: to establish the overall picture of use of acoustical guides in metropolitan art museums; and to establish the population from which a sample of transcripts would be selected for detailed analysis. Specifically, the survey was to ascertain which museums use or have used acoustical guides (the target population) and which of that number

would cooperate in the study (the accessible population). Additional data generated from survey responses is summarized and discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

### The Target Population

The population was defined as all acoustical tapes used currently or in the past ten years in art museums located in the forty largest American cities, as identified in the 1970 U.S. Census. These museums were listed by city in the 1974 American Museum Directory and identified therein as art museums rather than history and art museums. The total number of museums in the target population was forty-eight rather than forty, because some cities support more than one major art institution. Appendix C lists the museums surveyed.

### The Accessible Population

The accessible population was defined as all acoustical tour tapes from the forty-eight art museums in the forty largest American cities which (1) use or have used acoustical tour guides for either permanent or special collections; (2) had transcripts on file; (3) were willing to make transcripts available for analysis.

### The Sampling Problem

The object of this study is to fill an existing gap in knowledge about the educational content of one important educational medium for adult audiences in art museums. Ideally, the researcher might have studied the entire universe of acoustical guide transcripts, but practical constraints dictated that a sample be selected to represent

the attributes of content relevant to the study. As Holsti (1969:128) said, sampling is more than a process of data reduction, because the possibility exists that missing data may be qualitatively different from available documents in terms of the problems at hand. Although it was not claimed that the results of this content analysis would generalize to the whole universe of acoustical tapes produced in the last ten years, it was believed that certain patterns of content emphasis would emerge even though each recorded tour was unique. The data developed from the sample should be descriptive of the general practice and should consequently provide valuable information about patterns which have not yet been identified but which are important to the education of adults in the art museum setting.

All forty-eight museums responded to the survey, but only ten met the three criteria specified. These museums are:

The Museum of Modern Art

The Guggenheim Museum

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The National Gallery of Art

The Baltimore Museum of Art

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts

The Milwaukee Art Center

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art

The Philadelphia Museum of Art



To establish the feasibility of analyzing all available transcripts of the accessible population, the researcher determined the number of each museum's available transcripts. In order to estimate the time required for analysis of typical transcripts, several were analyzed using the content analysis instrument developed specifically for the study. The following considerations also influenced the sample design:

1. Demographic factors, such as regional location of museum; size of city in which museum located; relative wealth of museum, measured by operating budget and/or endowment; size of museum staff; public or private ownership; museum age; and size and composition of typical audiences, were not felt to be significantly related to the particular content emphases in the various transcripts analyzed. More significant than their differences, perhaps, were their similarities, in that each museum was located in an urban population center and served a heterogeneous audience.

2. The researcher had planned to classify available museum tapes along three dimensions: type of exhibition which the taped tour accompanied (characterized by emphasis on artist, period, collection, nationality, theme, medium, or gallery orientation); type of technology used (whether linear, progressive cassette, non-linear, magnetic induction, or fixed location equipment); and authorship of scripts (volunteer, professional scriptwriter, or professional museum staff). However, the survey revealed that distinctions in content emphasis based on type of audio equipment used would not be testable, since eight of

the ten participating museums used the same basic technology--the linear progressive cassette--and each of the other audio systems was represented by only one museum. Furthermore, all museums except two prepared their scripts similarly, using a collaboration of professional scriptwriter and museum curator or education director. Only one museum of the ten in this study used volunteers as scriptwriters. In the judgment of the investigator, differences in content emphasis on the tapes were more likely related to the personality and philosophy of individuals writing the scripts than to their professional roles as scriptwriters or museum educators.

In summary, this study did not attempt to establish relationships either between professional identity of scriptwriters and the content of tapes, or between type of audio equipment and content of tapes, but did investigate possible relationships between the content of acoustical guides and the type of exhibition toured.

Since it was impractical to examine all available scripts from all museums in the accessible population, the options of analyzing some transcripts of all the museums, all transcripts of some museums, or some transcripts of some museums were considered. The researcher elected to analyze some full-length transcripts from each of eight art institutions and all of the short transcripts available from the other two museums. This conclusion was reached after the following sampling options were considered and rejected: (1) a random sample, not considered sensitive enough to reflect the population; (2) a convenience sample, using those transcripts most readily available; (3) a systematic

sample with every k'th case from a list of the population studied, also considered too gross a sampling technique; and (4) a cluster sample, requiring that clusters be chosen at random from a population of clusters (museums) and that all tapes of each museum be analyzed. This last option, in the researcher's judgment, would lose potentially rich research data, since the single most distinctive difference in content emphasis may be found to exist on the basis of the particular educational philosophy and practice of individual art museums, as reflected in the content of their taped exhibition tours.

#### The Sampling Design

Ten museums satisfied the requirements for inclusion in the study, but eight of those museums had substantially different transcripts than the other two. Accordingly, two different sampling designs were utilized in generating the research sample. A sampling design often used in analytic studies, the stratified random sampling procedure, was the basic design used with eight of the ten museums in the study; the whole population of available scripts from the other two art museums was studied.

For museums using full-length transcripts. The accessible population--all transcripts from eight cooperating museums--was divided into strata based on the researcher's judgment that certain subclasses of a larger class might contain certain types of content which should be represented in the sample. The stratification criteria in this study were exhibition types and museums. "Exhibition Types" refers to

art museum exhibitions whose dominant organizing principles are one of the following: (1) artist, (2) art period or movement, (3) collection, (4) nationality or place, (5) theme, (6) art medium other than painting, and (7) gallery or museum orientation. "Museums" refers to eight of the ten art museums whose acoustical tour transcripts are the subject of this content analytic research. A different procedure, described below, was used with the other two.

The sampling procedure employed with the eight museums required that one transcript be randomly selected from the total available from each museum in each stratum. With eight museums in the accessible population to be treated with a stratified sampling technique, and seven different exhibition types, there were fifty-six transcripts possible in the research sample. However, some museums had no transcripts in certain categories while other institutions had several in each (Appendix D). In the latter case, one transcript was chosen at random from all available scripts in a particular category. With this sampling method, all accessible museums were represented with at least a few specimen tapes, each of which described a different kind of museum exhibition. Distinctive differences in content emphasis based on exhibition or museum type were expected to be reflected, if they existed. Systematic selection of sample scripts produced thirty-eight full-length tour transcripts from a total number of 119 available to the researcher (Appendixes D, E).

For museums using short transcripts. The Milwaukee Art Center and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts were the only two museums in the

sample which used other than the linear progressive cassette technology. Milwaukee offers free tour commentary at fixed locations or acoustical listening posts. Museum visitors select some particular information they desire from a choice of messages in a kind of information retrieval system. They receive the desired commentary via hand-held receivers while seated at a console. Minneapolis offers the magnetic induction, random access technology to its visitors, who receive tour commentary in particular exhibit areas which are wired to transmit recorded narration.

Because these art institutions use different technologies from those employed in the other eight museums, their scripts have a different format and were treated differently for sampling and analysis. These transcripts are one to five minutes in length rather than thirty to forty-five minutes each, as is the case with linear progressive cassette tours.

Short transcripts which were subjected to content analysis represent the whole population of scripts from each of the two midwest museums that utilize them (Appendix F). In both cases, scripts were only recently completed; some are still to be recorded. Both the Milwaukee Art Center and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts have recently enlarged their galleries and expanded their educational services, including recorded tour commentary among the interpretive facilities available to adults.

Although the short and long tours are clearly not comparable in many respects, the phrases and sentences which comprise their

recorded commentary in both cases can be analyzed using the content categories developed for this study. The short tour narrations, which represent alternative acoustical tour technologies in common use, were therefore considered important to include in the study. Because the number of available short transcripts from these two art museums was limited and their length so short, all available transcripts from Milwaukee and Minneapolis were subjected to content analysis. Content was unitized using the same thirteen categories of content analysis employed with long transcripts. A total of 1105 units were analyzed in these short transcripts, of which 747 units were from the Milwaukee Art Center scripts and 358 from the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

Transcripts from Milwaukee and Minneapolis were not categorized or analyzed by exhibition type, however, since that differentiation was not considered analogous to the characterization of full-length transcripts according to the kind of exhibition with which they were associated. To recapitulate, short taped transcripts were analyzed only in respect to categories of content represented in their scripts. Transcripts of this kind represented the whole population of transcripts made available to the researcher by the museums.

#### INSTRUMENTATION

Two instruments were developed to collect data for this study: a preliminary questionnaire to identify the accessible population and a content analysis instrument to analyze the data.

### The Survey Questionnaire

This one-page form (Appendix B) was dispatched by mail to forty-eight art museums in the forty largest American cities. A cover letter (Appendix A) describing the museum adult education research project was enclosed. The principal purposes of the questionnaire were to identify those art institutions which: (1) use or had used acoustical guides, (2) had transcripts on file, and (3) would make transcripts available for analysis. Other background data collected in the survey are reported in Chapter 4. Responses were received from all forty-eight solicited museums. These returns provided the basis for identifying the research sample.

### The Content Analysis Instrument

This study, like most content analyses, describes the attributes of messages; it is not formally concerned with the source, channel, recipient, or decoding process of the communication transaction. The content analysis instrument, the fundamental research tool of this documentary or content analytic study, provides the basis for categorizing the diverse content of acoustical tours.

Because no standard schemes of classification developed for other content analytic studies were applicable to this research, categories were developed to reflect the various modes of content found in recorded museum tours.

There are as many possible schemes for classifying content data as there are questions which may be asked of the data. For this project, categories were developed to reflect the purpose of the

research, which was to characterize the manifest content of a sample of acoustical tour guides used in major American art museums. To develop appropriate categories, two scripts which were not to be included in the research analysis were carefully studied in order to identify characteristic kinds of recurrent content. Categories were tentatively established and then repeatedly modified and redefined using the criteria suggested by Kerlinger (1964:606). In general, categories were designed to be exhaustive, mutually exclusive, independent, and derived from a single classification principle. Categories were supported with both conceptual and operational definitions.

The generality or specificity of categories had to be determined. The intent was to make the content analysis instrument as sensitive as possible without making it impossible to clearly separate or categorize the content units. As Holsti (1969:98) cautions, "Every advantage of using more and narrower categories is counterbalanced by some costs." The objective was to identify characteristic kinds of content in terms neither too gross to be informative nor too subtle to permit reliable assignment to categories.

Thirteen component content emphases or dominant elements were identified which provided the basis for the content analytic instrument (Appendix G). These categories are: (1) The Experience of Art; (2) Socio-Cultural, Art Historical Context: Overview; (3) Art Historical Context: Detail Central to Artist, Artifact, or Medium; (4) Anecdotal: Detail Peripheral to Artist or Artifact; (5) General



Description or Explanation; (6) Specific Description or Explanation; (7) Interpretation: Unqualified Judgment or Opinion; (8) Interpretation: Qualified Judgment or Opinion; (9) Evaluation: Unqualified Judgment or Opinion; (10) Evaluation: Qualified Judgment or Opinion; (11) Touring Directions; (12) Reference to Exhibit Contents; and (13) Personal Reflections/Questions by Narrator.

### Validity

Of the several types of validity with which research is normally concerned, content validity "has most frequently been relied upon by content analysts. If the purpose of research is a purely descriptive one, content validity is normally sufficient" (Holsti, 1969:143). Content validity is usually established exclusively "through the informed judgment of the investigator" (Holsti, 1969:143), but in this case, the experts who subsequently tested the researcher's reliability as coder were asked to comment on the face validity of the instrument. Suggestions made by these experts enabled the investigator to clarify certain category definitions, and the content analysis instrument was judged to be appropriate and responsive to the research requirements of the study (See Appendix H for Roster of Experts).

### Unitization and Quantification

After defining the categories of analysis to be used in examining the content of acoustical guide transcripts, the sentence or phrase was designated as the unit to be coded. When a sentence in a transcript was compound, with clauses carrying different content

characteristics from one another, each phrase was considered a content unit.

To quantify the content analysis, the number of content units in each category was counted after assigning each unit to its proper category (Kerlinger, 1973:530). The most widely used method of measuring characteristics of content in content analysis research is frequency, in which every occurrence of a given attribute is tallied. Although there is some disagreement about the validity of frequency measures, their use in this study seems amply justified. It was assumed that the frequency with which an attribute appears in taped transcripts is a reasonable indicator of concern, focus of attention, intensity, value, importance, and interest. Further, each unit of content--phrase or sentence--was given equal weight, permitting aggregation and direct comparison.

#### Coder Reliability

The use of a single researcher as the exclusive coder of content is common in content analysis research when project size permits. For one reason, the consistency of categorization that can be expected to result is an important advantage in content data analysis. For another, content analysis is tedious, demanding, and specialized; it requires that coders be experienced and meticulous and immerse themselves in the material to be systematically examined. As Holsti (1969:135) points out, even if coders possess the skills necessary to make the judgmental tasks required of them, training is

usually necessary to insure that they are relying upon the same aspects of their experience as they make coding decisions.

In order to validate the reliability of the researcher as exclusive coder of the content of acoustical transcripts, the five experts who confirmed the content validity of analytic categories were asked to categorize a sample of thirty sentences (Appendix L) drawn at random from several tape transcripts, using the coding system presented in the content analysis form. Coders were given a set of conceptual and operational definitions, the latter being examples of kinds of responses to be placed in each category, as well as instructions on how to code the items (Appendixes I, J, K). Before administering the specimen statements to the experts for coding, the content categories were discussed with them, clarifying as required the operational definitions for each category.

Each coder's responses were compared to the researcher's categorizations, using a widely used coefficient of reliability, the ratio of coding agreements to the total number of coding decisions (Holsti, 1969:140):

$$\text{Coding Reliability} = \frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2}$$

M is the number of coding decisions on which the two judges were in agreement, and  $N_1$  and  $N_2$  refer to the number of coding decisions made by judges 1 and 2 respectively. The researcher's reliability as coder

was high, as reflected in these agreements between judges and researcher on the test of thirty items:

Judge 1 and researcher: .83 (25 correct codes out of 30)

Judge 2 and researcher: .9 (27 correct codes out of 30)

Judge 3 and researcher: .9 (27 correct codes out of 30)

Judge 4 and researcher: .8 (24 correct codes out of 30)

Judge 5 and researcher: .87 (26 correct codes out of 30)

Before beginning the actual content analysis on the sampled transcripts, the researcher developed skill in use of the instrument by applying the analytic tool to the categorization of the content of five scripts not used in the study. The purpose of this preliminary work was to reduce the learning curve effect on subsequent coding.

In order to assure internal consistency in the standards applied to each museum and transcript, and to reduce the effect of the coder's growing maturity in categorizing content, transcripts from the ten museums were randomly chosen for analytical reading (Appendixes E, F).

The consistency of the coder in classifying content units was measured at the conclusion of the coding process. One page chosen at random was recoded from each of the thirty-eight full-length scripts in the study. A total of 456 units, on average twelve units in each page excerpt, were recoded. This resulted in 428 instances of concurrence with the original coding decision, or 93.3 percent agreement.

$$\text{Coding reliability} = \frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2}$$

M is the number of coding decisions on which the coder agreed with her own original coding decision.  $N_1$  and  $N_2$  refer to the number of coding decisions made on first coding and on recoding.

#### DATA COLLECTION AND TREATMENT

Each acoustical tape transcript was systematically unitized and coded using the content analysis instrument developed for this study. Data were tallied on collection forms which recorded content data for each tape analyzed. Most transcripts contained eighteen to twenty-five pages of typewritten copy, which corresponded to thirty to forty-five minutes of narration. Each transcript contained between 200 and 300 codable content units. It was expected that this content analysis research would categorize between five and ten thousand sentences and phrases. The actual sample included 10,477 items.

#### DATA ANALYSIS

Because of the descriptive nature of this research, the use of powerful statistical techniques was considered to be inappropriate. The data resulting from the study of acoustical tour content were analyzed statistically using frequency distributions to describe "what is" and tests of independence to determine whether there were statistically significant relationships among the principal variables-- museums, exhibition types, and kinds of content.

The descriptive analysis consisted of frequency distributions of content units classified by content category. The analysis

considered the distribution of content in each tape in relation to exhibition type for each museum, and the distribution of content in relation to exhibition type for all museums combined. These distributions were arrayed in order of magnitude of frequency for purposes of comparison. Summary tables were constructed to reflect the distribution of content units in each of the thirteen categories for all museums. In addition, tables showing the distribution of content units by exhibition type for each of the thirteen content categories were prepared.

This study used the chi-square test to test whether there were significant relationships among the variables of interest. Chi-square tests do not reveal the magnitude of relationships, but only their existence.

A number of chi-square tests of independence were performed to indicate whether exhibition type, museum and content were independent.

1. Considering each exhibition type separately, the independence of content categories and museums was tested.

2. Tests for independence of content categories and museums, ignoring individual exhibition types by summing across them, were also done.

3. Considering each museum separately, the independence of content categories and exhibition types were tested.

4. Tests for independence of content categories and exhibition types, ignoring individual museums by summing across them, were also performed.

As previously stated, this study had two primary concerns:

(1) the characterization of principal content categories in acoustical guides and the categorization of content units; and (2) the identification of patterns of content emphasis among museums. The purpose of the data analysis was to make visible the results of content analysis and to illuminate possible relationships among the variables.

In content analysis research, content data is generally compared with or reviewed in relation to some other data. The basic purpose of this study was to examine audio-tape communication content in terms of relevant content categories, but the distribution of content within those categories was also considered in relation to standards suggested by informed professional opinion from art education, museum education, and adult education. The relationship between content emphases and known characteristics of the audience for which the content was presumably produced is also discussed.

#### SUMMARY

The methodology employed in the study was content analysis. Acoustical tour transcripts from ten American art museums, including some of the most prestigious institutions in the country, were sampled from a population of forty-eight museums in the forty largest American cities. The data resulting from the content analysis were tabulated and are presented descriptively and statistically. Descriptive analysis consisted of frequency distributions of content units classified by content category; statistical analysis employed the

chi-square test for testing the independence of exhibition type and tour content as well as the independence of content distribution and individual museums.



## Chapter 4

### PRESENTATION OF DATA AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

This study was concerned with identifying, describing, and analyzing the specific content of selected transcripts of acoustical guides used in major American art museums. There were two major objectives: to characterize the content of acoustical guides and to analyze patterns of content emphasis among them. Minor objectives were to develop background information about the development and use of recorded tours in art museums.

The content of sampled recorded tours was subjected to content analysis using an instrument developed for the study which classified the content into thirteen categories in relation to dominant content emphases. Descriptive data were then treated statistically using chi-square tests of independence.

In this chapter, data generated from the content analysis of acoustical guides are presented and interpreted. Additionally, data collected from the preliminary survey questionnaire and from field interviews are presented in order to establish the context for consideration of the results of the study. The questionnaire established the population of art museums whose recorded guides would be analyzed and also solicited background information concerning the utilization of acoustical tours, their dominant technologies, and attitudes of non-users. Data collected in the field are presented as the final section of this chapter. Inquiries concerning the history of acoustical

guide use in art museums; the acoustical tour guide business; the technology, or hardware, associated with message transmission and reception; the technology, or software, associated with determination of script content and the writing, editing, and production of scripts; and problems associated with marketing acoustical guides to museums and to museum audiences provided the basis for field interviews.

#### FINDINGS OF CONTENT ANALYSIS

The content analysis instrument used to characterize the verbal content of acoustical tour guides according to thirteen component elements or dominant emphases was the fundamental research tool of this study (Appendix G). A total of 10,447 content units, consisting of sentences or phrases from taped tour transcripts, were categorized by the researcher. Data generated in this study are presented in two forms:

1. In respect to frequencies and relative ranks for each of the thirteen content categories in relation to museums (Tables 1, 2) and exhibition types (Tables 3, 4).

2. In respect to frequencies and relative ranks for nine collapsed categories in relation to museums (Tables 5, 6) and exhibition types (Tables 7, 8).

Each of the thirteen content categories developed for this analysis reflects a characteristic kind of content recurrent in art museum recorded tours. To facilitate discussion of results, each category is characterized by its nominal definition and by an operational

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages of Content Units  
In Categories for all Museums

Museum	Categories													Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
	Experience of Art	Socio-Cultural Art Historical	Art Historical: Details	Anecdotal	Gen'l. Description/Explanation	Spec. Description/Explanation	Interpretation: Unqualified	Interpretation: Qualified	Evaluation: Unqualified	Evaluation: Qualified	Touring Directions	Reference to Exhibit Contents	Reflections/Questions by Narrator	
	Content Units													
A Baltimore Museum of Art	0 0.0%	22 4.7%	67 14.2%	37 7.9%	134 28.5%	56 11.8%	6 1.3%	2 .4%	2 .4%	0 0.0%	76 16.1%	62 13.2%	7 1.5%	471
B Museum of Fine Arts, Boston	7 .5%	142 9.4%	311 20.6%	109 7.2%	327 21.7%	126 8.4%	32 2.1%	22 1.5%	16 1.0%	10 .7%	126 8.3%	193 12.8%	88 5.8%	1509
C Guggenheim Museum	5 .3%	44 2.7%	367 22.7%	38 2.3%	366 22.6%	163 10.1%	3 .2%	10 .6%	2 .1%	13 .8%	188 11.6%	369 22.8%	52 3.2%	1620
D Los Angeles County Museum of Art	3 .3%	70 7.5%	248 26.5%	78 8.4%	210 22.5%	78 8.4%	21 2.2%	4 .4%	14 1.5%	2 .2%	67 7.2%	116 12.4%	23 2.5%	934
E Metropolitan Museum of Art	22 1.0%	143 6.6%	299 13.7%	119 5.5%	700 32.2%	53 2.4%	3 .1%	29 1.3%	3 .1%	46 2.1%	260 11.9%	374 17.1%	132 6.0%	2183
F Museum of Modern Art	19 2.0%	28 3.0%	167 18.0%	87 9.4%	182 19.6%	87 9.4%	3 .3%	15 1.6%	0 0.0%	7 .8%	78 8.4%	163 17.5%	93 10.0%	929

Table 1 (continued)

Museum	Categories													Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
	Experience of Art	Socio-Cultural Art Historical	Art Historical: Details	Anecdotal	Gen'l. Description/Explanation	Spec. Description/Explanation	Interpretation: Unqualified	Interpretation: Qualified	Evaluation: Unqualified	Evaluation: Qualified	Touring Directions	Reference to Exhibit Contents	Reflections/Questions by Narrator	
	Content Units													
G National Gallery of Art	1 .1%	55 5.5%	175 17.4%	65 6.5%	228 22.7%	112 11.1%	59 5.9%	32 3.2%	26 2.6%	5 .5%	99 9.9%	147 14.6%	0 0.0%	1004
H Philadelphia Museum of Art	1 .1%	55 7.9%	142 20.6%	36 5.2%	210 30.4%	65 9.4%	8 1.2%	0 0.0%	5 .7%	1 .1%	72 10.4%	94 13.6%	3 .4%	692
AA Milwaukee Art Center	30 4.0%	26 3.5%	191 25.7%	42 5.6%	181 24.2%	56 7.5%	6 .8%	2 .3%	1 .1%	1 .1%	23 3.1%	63 8.4%	125 16.7%	747
BB Minneapolis Institute of Arts	15 4.2%	34 9.4%	74 20.7%	5 1.4%	173 48.3%	28 7.8%	2 .6%	5 1.4%	0 0.0%	1 .3%	2 .6%	14 3.9%	5 1.4%	358
Total	103	619	2041	616	2711	824	143	121	69	86	991	1595	528	10447
Percent of Total	1.0%	5.9%	19.5%	5.9%	25.9%	7.9%	1.4%	1.2%	.7%	.8%	9.5%	15.3%	5.0%	

Table 2

Rank Order of Content Units by Frequency of Occurrence  
In Sampled Museum Transcripts

Museum	Categories												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	Experience of Art	Socio-Cultural Art Historical	Art Historical: Details	Anecdotal	Gen'l Description/Explanation	Spec. Description/Explanation	Interpretation: Unqualified	Interpretation: Qualified	Evaluation: Unqualified	Evaluation: Qualified	Touring Directions	Reference to Exhibit Contents	Reflections/Questions by Narrator
	Rank												
A Baltimore Museum of Art	11	7	3	6	1	5	8	9	10	12	2	4	13
B Museum of Fine Arts, Boston	13	4	2	7	1	5	9	10	11	12	6	3	8
C Guggenheim Museum	11	7	2	8	3	5	12	10	13	9	4	1	6
D Los Angeles County Museum of Art	12	6	1	4	2	5	9	11	10	13	7	3	8
E Metropolitan Museum of Art	11	5	3	7	1	8	12	10	13	9	4	2	6
F Museum of Modern Art	9	8	2	6	1	5	12	10	13	11	7	3	4
G National Gallery of Art	12	8	2	6	1	4	7	9	10	11	5	3	13
H Philadelphia Museum of Art	12	6	2	7	1	5	8	13	9	11	4	3	10
AA Milwaukee Art Center	7	8	1	6	2	5	10	11	12	13	9	4	3
BB Minneapolis Institute of Arts	5	3	2	7	1	4	10	8	13	12	11	6	9

Table 3

Frequencies and Percentages of Content Units  
In Categories for all Exhibition Types

Exhibition Type*	Categories													Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
	Experience of Art	Socio-Cultural Art Historical	Art Historical: Details	Anecdotal	Gen'l Description/Explanation	Spec. Description/Explanation	Interpretation: Unqualified	Interpretation: Qualified	Evaluation: Unqualified	Evaluation Qualified	Touring Directions	Reference to Exhibit Contents	Reflections/Questions by Narrator	
	Content Units													
"a" Artist	3 .2%	59 3.5%	390 22.8%	187 10.9%	404 23.6%	155 9.1%	42 2.5%	16 .9%	19 1.1%	13 .8%	150 8.8%	204 11.9%	67 3.9%	1709
"b" Art Period or Movement	4 .2%	97 5.8%	429 25.5%	98 5.8%	354 21.0%	99 5.9%	23 1.4%	16 1.0%	14 .8%	5 .3%	159 9.4%	336 20.0%	49 2.9%	1683
"c" Collection	2 .2%	53 4.6%	233 20.3%	55 4.7%	304 26.5%	92 8.0%	6 .5%	9 .8%	10 .9%	11 1.0%	109 9.5%	209 18.2%	55 4.8%	1148
"d" Nationality or Place	1 .1%	159 13.1%	202 16.6%	31 2.5%	325 26.8%	94 7.7%	18 1.5%	27 2.2%	12 1.0%	13 1.1%	130 10.7%	195 16.0%	9 .7%	1216
"e" Theme	3 .2%	70 5.4%	158 12.2%	108 8.3%	288 22.1%	106 8.2%	27 2.1%	14 1.1%	4 .3%	18 1.4%	186 14.3%	201 15.5%	115 8.9%	1298
"f" Medium Other Than Painting	6 .6%	39 4.0%	179 18.2%	38 3.9%	248 25.3%	67 6.8%	1 .1%	21 2.1%	1 .1%	14 1.4%	100 10.2%	203 20.7%	65 6.6%	982
"g" Gallery or Museum Orientation	39 3.0%	82 6.3%	185 14.2%	52 4.0%	434 33.2	127 9.7%	18 1.4%	11 .8%	8 .6%	10 .8%	132 10.1%	170 13.0%	38 2.9%	1306
Total	58	559	1776	569	2357	740	135	114	68	84	966	1518	398	9342
Percent of Total	.6%	6.0%	19.1%	6.1%	25.3%	7.9%	1.4%	1.2%	.7%	.9%	10.3%	16.2%	4.3%	

\*NOTE: Museums (AA & BB) with short transcripts were not analyzed by exhibition type.

Table 4

Rank Order of Content Units by Frequency of Occurrence  
In Categories by Exhibition Types

Exhibition Type	Categories												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	Experience of Art	Socio-Cultural Art Historical	Art Historical: Details	Anecdotal	Gen'l Description/Explanation	Spec. Description/Explanation	Interpretation: Unqualified	Interpretation: Qualified	Evaluation: Unqualified	Evaluation: Qualified	Touring Directions	Reference to Exhibit Contents	Reflections/Questions by Narrator
	Rank												
"a" Artist	13	8	2	4	1	5	9	11	10	12	6	3	7
"b" Art Period or Movement	13	7	1	6	2	5	9	10	11	12	4	3	8
"c" Collection	13	8	1	7	2	5	12	11	10	9	4	3	6
"d" Nationality or Place	13	4	2	7	1	6	9	8	11	10	5	3	12
"e" Theme	13	8	5	7	1	2	9	11	12	10	4	3	6
"f" Medium Other Than Painting	11	7	3	8	1	5	12	9	13	10	4	2	6
"g" Gallery or Museum Orientation	8	6	2	7	1	5	10	11	13	12	4	3	9

\*NOTE: Museums (AA & BB) with short transcripts were not analyzed by exhibition type.

Table 5

Frequencies and Percentages of Content Units  
In Collapsed Categories for all Museums

Museums	Collapsed Categories									Total
	1	2&3	4	5&6	7&8	9&10	11	12	13	
	Experience of Art	Art History	Anecdotal	Description/ Explanation	Interpretation	Evaluation	Touring Directions	Reference to Exhibit Contents	Reflections/Que- stions by Narrator	
	Content Units									
A Baltimore Museum of Art	0 0.0%	89 18.9%	37 7.9%	190 40.3%	8 1.7%	2 .4%	76 16.1%	62 13.2%	7 1.5%	471
B Museum of Fine Arts, Boston	7 .5%	453 30.0%	109 7.2%	453 30.0%	54 3.6%	26 1.7%	126 8.4%	193 12.8%	88 5.8%	1509
C Guggenheim Museum	5 .3%	411 25.4%	38 2.3%	529 32.7%	13 .8%	15 .9%	188 11.6%	369 22.8%	52 3.2%	1620
D Los Angeles County Museum of Art	3 .3%	318 34.0%	79 8.4%	288 30.8%	25 2.7%	16 1.7%	67 7.2%	116 12.4%	23 2.5%	934
E Metropolitan Museum of Art	22 1.0%	442 20.2%	119 5.5%	753 34.5%	32 1.5%	49 2.2%	260 11.9%	374 17.1%	132 6.1%	2183
F Museum of Modern Art	19 2.0%	195 21.0%	87 9.4%	269 29.0%	18 1.9%	7 .8%	78 8.4%	163 17.5%	93 10.0%	929



Table 5 (continued)

Museums	Collapsed Categories									Total
	1	2&3	4	5&6	7&8	9&10	11	12	13	
	Experience of Art	Art History	Anecdotal	Description/ Explanation	Interpretation	Evaluation	Touring Directions	Reference to Exhibit Contents	Reflections/ques- tions by Narrator	
	Content Units									
G National Gallery of Art	1 .1%	230 22.9%	65 6.5%	340 33.9%	91 9.0%	31 3.1%	99 9.9%	147 14.6%	0 0.0%	1004
H Philadelphia Museum of Art	1 .1%	197 28.5%	36 5.2%	275 39.7%	8 1.2%	6 .9%	72 10.4%	94 13.6%	3 .4%	692
AA Milwaukee Art Center	30 4.0%	217 29.1%	42 5.6%	237 31.7%	8 1.1%	2 .3%	23 3.1%	63 8.4%	125 16.7%	747
BB Minneapolis Institute of Arts	15 4.2%	108 30.2%	5 1.4%	201 56.1%	7 1.9%	1 .3%	2 .6%	14 3.9%	5 1.4%	358
<b>Total</b>	103	2660	616	3535	264	155	991	1595	528	10447
<b>Percent of Total</b>	1.0%	25.5%	5.9%	33.8%	2.5%	1.5%	9.5%	15.3%	5.0%	

Table 6

Rank Order of Content Units by Frequency of Occurrence in Collapsed Categories  
In Sampled Museum Transcripts

Museum	Collapsed Categories								
	1	2&3	4	5&6	7&8	9&10	11	12	13
	Experience of Art	Art History	Anecdotal	Description/ Explanation	Interpretation	Evaluation	Touring Directions	Reference to Exhibit Contents	Reflections/ques- tions by Narrator
	Rank								
A Baltimore Museum of Art	9	2	5	1	6	8	3	4	7
B Museum of Fine Arts, Boston	9	1	5	2	7	8	4	3	6
C Guggenheim Museum	9	2	6	1	8	7	4	3	5
D Los Angeles County Museum of Art	9	1	4	2	6	8	5	3	7
E Metropolitan Museum of Art	9	2	6	1	7	8	4	3	5
F Museum of Modern Art	7	2	5	1	8	9	6	3	4
G National Gallery of Art	8	2	6	1	5	7	4	3	9
H Philadelphia Museum of Art	9	2	5	1	6	7	4	3	8
AA Milwaukee Art Center	6	2	5	1	8	9	7	4	3
BB Minneapolis Institute of Arts	3	2	6	1	5	9	8	4	7

Table 7

Frequencies and Percentages of Content Units in Collapsed Categories  
By Exhibition Types

Exhibition Type	Collapsed Categories									Total
	1	2&3	4	5&6	7&8	9&10	11	12	13	
	Experience of Art	Art History	Anecdotal	Description/ Explanation	Interpretation	Evaluation	Touring Directions	Reference to Exhibit Contents	Reflections/ques- tions by Narrator	
	Content Units									
"a" Artist	3 .2%	449 26.3%	187 10.9%	559 32.7%	58 3.4%	32 1.9%	150 8.8%	204 11.9%	67 3.9%	1709
"b" Art Period or Movement	4 .2%	526 31.4%	98 5.8%	453 26.9%	39 2.3%	19 1.1%	159 9.4%	336 20.0%	49 2.9%	1683
"c" Collection	2 .2%	286 24.9%	55 4.8%	396 34.5%	15 1.3%	21 1.8%	109 9.5%	209 18.2%	55 4.8%	1148
"d" Nationality or Place	1 .1%	361 29.7%	31 2.5%	419 34.5%	45 3.7%	25 2.1%	130 10.7%	195 16.0%	9 .7%	1216
"e" Theme	3 .2%	228 17.6%	108 8.3%	394 30.3%	41 3.2%	22 1.7%	186 14.3%	201 15.5%	115 8.9%	1298
"f" Medium Other Than Painting	6 .6%	218 22.2%	38 3.9%	315 32.1%	22 2.2%	15 1.5%	100 10.2%	203 20.7%	65 6.6%	982
"g" Gallery or Museum Orientation	39 3.0%	267 20.4%	52 4.0%	561 43.0%	29 2.2%	18 1.4%	132 10.1%	170 13.0%	38 2.9%	1306

\*NOTE: Museums (AA & BB) with short transcripts were not analyzed by exhibition type.

Table 8

Rank Order of Content Units by Frequency of Occurrences  
In Collapsed Categories by Exhibition Types

Exhibition Type	Collapsed Categories								
	1	2&3	4	5&6	7&8	9&10	11	12	13
	Experience of Art	Art History	Anecdotal	Description/ Explanation	Interpretation	Evaluation	Touring Directions	Reference to Exhibit Contents	Reflections/Que- stions by Narrator
	Rank								
"a" Artist	9	2	4	1	7	8	5	3	6
"b" Art Period or Movement	9	1	5	2	7	8	4	3	6
"c" Collection	9	2	6	1	8	7	4	3	5
"d" Nationality or Place	9	2	6	1	5	7	4	3	8
"e" Theme	9	2	6	1	7	8	4	3	5
"f" Medium Other Than Painting	9	2	6	1	7	8	4	3	5
"g" Gallery or Museum Orientation	6	2	5	1	8	9	4	3	7

\*NOTE: Museums (AA & BB) with short transcripts were not analyzed by exhibition type.

example. Additionally, each category is described in terms of the essential "flavor" of its characterized units.

In order to view more generally those patterns of content emerging from the content analytic data, the researcher collapsed the thirteen content categories into nine categories. The purpose in collapsing categories was to group certain kinds of content generically in order to provide another, more general view of the content components of art museum recorded tours. The original thirteen categories preserve the subtlety of more sensitive content differentiations. Categories were combined in the following manner:

Categories 2 and 3 merge and the combination is referred to as "Art History." Categories 5 and 6 merge and are referred to as "Description/Explanation." Categories 7 and 8 combine and are designated "Interpretation." Categories 9 and 10 combine and are designated "Evaluation."

Category 1: THE EXPERIENCE OF ART

Definition: This category includes general statements about art, artists, and creativity which concern themselves directly with the development of visual awareness and aesthetic sensibility in the viewer.

Statements in this category do not present factual material or describe particular content of an exhibit, but rather are concerned with art as an integrative, synthesizing, unifying experience which is qualitative and based on characteristic discriminations associated with aesthetic experience.

Statements in this category orient the viewer to the distinctive character of the experience of art, from the perspective of either the producer of art or his audience.

Example: "Looking at art requires suspending practical concerns temporarily and opening yourself to new experience."

Content units in Category 1 among the ten museums studied ranged from a high of 4 percent to a low of 0 percent. One museum, with 471 sentences and phrases categorized, had no content units represented in this category. It is interesting to note that the two museums whose transcripts had the highest representation, 4 percent, in The Experience of Art were the two museums which use short, non-continuous commentary either at fixed listening posts or in particular radio-activated exhibit areas.

Only one other institution had more than 1 percent of its content units in this category, and its involvement in Category 1 was only 2 percent of the total units categorized. Overall, only 1 percent of all content units occurred here.

The Experience of Art had this general orientation: it was subjective rather than objective, abstract rather than concrete; qualitative rather than quantitative; and general rather than specific.

Of special interest was the question of how substantial a contribution the Experience of Art made to the total content units examined. This category, which included general statements about art, artists, and creativity which were concerned directly with the development of visual awareness and aesthetic sensibility in the viewer, accounted for only 1 percent of all content units: only 103 phrases or sentences out of 10,447 units dealt directly with the distinctive character of the art experience from the perspectives of either the producer of art or the audience (Table 1).

It may be argued that any description or discussion of visual art is inevitably concerned with the cultivation of the sensibilities of viewers, whether or not there is explicit consideration of issues concerned with looking and seeing, with enhancing awareness or aesthetic sensitivity. However, the dearth of particular and explicit references of this kind of material in the transcripts analyzed is significant in view of the frequently expressed mission of the art museum to facilitate the development of visual awareness and aesthetic sensibility in viewers.

Category 2: SOCIO-CULTURAL, ART-HISTORICAL CONTEXT: OVERVIEW

Definition: This category includes statements which (1) establish the larger social and cultural context in which the art was produced, statements which may refer to political, economic, or social conditions or to the dominant philosophy of a people or era.

(2) describe, in global or general terms, particular art movements and sequences of art historical periods.

Example: "This painting was a product of its time: it reflects the war that was raging in Europe during that winter."

Content units in Category 2 among the ten museums studied ranged from a high of 9 percent to a low of 3 percent. Two museums had 9 percent of their content units in this category, but three had only 3 percent each. On the average, only 6 percent of content units for all museums were devoted to statements in Category 2.

The Socio-Cultural, Art-Historical Context: Overview category was concerned with establishing the larger social context in which cultural events occurred. It focused on demonstrating connections between the isolated art object under discussion and the larger

cultural tradition revealed by historical perspective. Its posture was detached objectivity; it was cosmic rather than detailed. Overall, entries in this category ranked sixth in frequency among the thirteen categories indicating that the content of recorded tours tends to be relatively specific and minimally concerned with establishing a broader, more general social context for the art being described (Table 9).

Category 3: ART HISTORICAL CONTEXT: DETAIL CENTRAL TO  
ARTIST, ARTIFACT, OR MEDIUM

Definition: This category includes statements about an artist, object, or medium which delineate specific characteristics of period, genre, technique, or style.

Example: "Albers has had an infatuation with the square for several decades, and he has done many studies of that subject."

Content units in Category 3 among the ten museums studied ranged from a high of 27 percent to a low of 14 percent. Six of the ten museums whose transcripts were analyzed had between 21 and 27 percent of their content units in this category. Category 3 was the second most frequently recorded content category, accounting for 20 percent of total content units.

With Categories 2 and 3 collapsed, "Art History" accounted for between 19 percent and 34 percent of each museum's total content units. Twenty-six percent of all content units occurred in "Art History," which represented the second highest frequency among collapsed categories.

It is interesting to note that the museum whose transcripts had the largest percentage of art historical content is the only museum in which taped tour scripts were prepared by volunteer docents.



Art Historical Context: Detail Central to Artist, Artifact, or Medium was concerned primarily with specific works of art as examples of general styles or distinctive idioms. The emphasis was on works of art as part of continuing and identifiable traditions of creative exploration. Artists or artifacts were labeled and symbolically filed in the great cultural bank of Art History, on the basis of their relationships to other creators or creations. A considerable volume of content units, 20 percent, was devoted to this orientation, which can be understood in light of the traditional emphasis on art historical research rather than the philosophy or psychology of art in the background and training of museum professionals.

Category 4: ANECDOTAL: DETAIL PERIPHERAL TO ARTIST OR ARTIFACT

Definition: Details concerning

(1) creation or acquisition of an art object or anecdotal material associated with its ownership or exhibition.

(2) personal dimensions of the artist's life, including habits, personality, problems, activities, associates, affinities.

Example: "When this waterscape is at home in the Chicago apartment of Mr. and Mrs. Block, it hangs over the fireplace in the living room."

Content units in Category 4 among the ten museums studied ranged from a high of 9 percent to a low of 1 percent. One museum had 1 percent; another had 2 percent. Eight museums had between 5 percent and 9 percent of their content units in this category. Overall, only 6 percent of total content units were devoted to anecdotal material.

Anecdotal: Detail Peripheral to Artist or Artifact was concerned with factual material not central to the art object's physical presence,

detail associated with the artifacts but not intrinsic to them. This anecdotal commentary, often in the nature of interesting "asides," is believed to help some museum visitors relate art objects to everyday reality, thus reducing emotional distance and presumably facilitating emotional contact with the art on exhibit. Some museum educators believe that the popularization of art through anecdotal commentary is counterproductive in terms of increasing aesthetic awareness. It is apparent from this analysis, however, that anecdotal material does not constitute a dominant content emphasis in recorded tours.

Category 5: GENERAL DESCRIPTION OR EXPLANATION

Definition: This category is limited to statements which (1) describe the contents of art objects in rudimentary physical terms without interpretation or evaluation

(2) explain aspects of art objects (relatively) objectively.

Example: "Recognizable in this Picasso are shells, a goblet, a pipe, and letters."

Content units in Category 5 among the ten museums studied ranged from a high of 48 percent to a low of 20 percent. Nine museums had between 20 percent and 32 percent of their content here. One museum had a significantly larger percentage, 48 percent, than the other museums whose transcripts were analyzed. This represented the highest concentration in any category in any museum. Overall, this was the category with the highest number of content units--26 percent of all sentences and phrases analyzed.

Narrative material characterized as General Description or Explanation was concrete, immediate, and directly related to the

physical presence of the work of art discussed. Descriptive commentary often appeared to paraphrase the apparent content of the art object; explanatory material covered a variety of issues. The generally objective posture of taped tour commentary is reflected in the large concentration of content units in General Description or Explanation. This category occurred most frequently in all of the transcripts examined, reinforcing the observation that most tour narration was predominantly concerned with description and explanation of the objects on exhibit.

Category 6: SPECIFIC DESCRIPTION OR EXPLANATION

Definition: This category includes

(1) specific references to constituent formal elements of the particular art object, such as line, color, shapes, and textures.

(2) statements about relevant considerations of balance, fragmentation, complexity, depth, sharpness, regularity, verticality, and distortion, etc.

Statements in this category are (relatively) objective and flatly descriptive; they do not appear to be either interpretive or evaluative.

Example: "Space, like the objects themselves, is presented in fragments which have been geometrically simplified or flattened out."

Content units in Category 6 among the ten museums studied range from a high of 12 percent to a low of 2 percent. All museums except one had between 8 percent and 12 percent of their taped tour content in this category. That museum was represented by considerably fewer content units than the next ranking institution, with only 2 percent of its content in this category.

Content units characterized as Specific Description or Explanation were even more concrete, immediate, and directly related to the physical presence of the works of art than those categorized as General Description or Explanation. The emphasis here was more technical, concerned with identification and description of the formal aesthetic dimensions of art objects. This category, represented by 8 percent of the total content, reflected the specialized vocabulary of aesthetics and art criticism more often than any other content category. It focused the visitor's attention on particular elements composing the work of art as a whole, often identifying specific criteria used by experts in art criticism.

With categories 5 and 6 collapsed, "Description/Explanation" accounts for between 56 percent and 29 percent of each museum's total content units. Overall, 34 percent of all content units occurred in "Description/Explanation," making this content, both general and specific explanation, the most frequently occurring content in the acoustical tour transcripts studied.

Category 7: INTERPRETATION: UNQUALIFIED JUDGMENT OR OPINION

Definition: This category includes statements which discuss the "meaning" of an art object or which characterize the mood of an object in what seem to be judgments of fact rather than of opinion.

The specific source of authority is unidentified in the interpretation, which seems to be offered as the interpretation rather than one of a number of possible interpretations.

Example: "The scene represents peace and tranquility."

Content units in Category 7 among the ten museums studied ranged from a high of 6 percent to a low of 0.1 percent. Only one museum had 6 percent of its content in this category; all other museums had 2 percent or less. Overall, only 1 percent of the total content units were categorized as unqualified interpretation.

Category 8: INTERPRETATION: QUALIFIED JUDGMENT OR OPINION

Definition: This category includes statements about the "meaning" of an art object which either  
 (1) identify the source of authority (artist, narrator, or other expert) or

(2) qualify the interpretation by explicit statement that it is only one of a number of possible interpretations

(3) are preceded by "some people believe," "perhaps," or other tentative remarks which indicate the subjectivity of the interpretation.

Example: "I think this painting is expressing the tenderness of a child's love for his mother, but you may see different things in it."

Content units in Category 8 among the ten museums studied ranged from a high of 3 percent to a low of 0.3 percent. Only one museum had as much as 3 percent of its content in this category; six museums had 1 percent or less. Overall only 1 percent of all content units occurred in qualified interpretation.

Taped tour content characterized as Interpretation, Qualified and Interpretation, Unqualified was concerned with the "meaning" of exhibited artifacts. A kind of translation of the art object from its own distinctive expressive medium to the medium of ordinary verbal language was attempted. Interpretive material was infrequently encountered in the transcripts analyzed. When categories 7 and 8 were

combined, "Interpretation" accounted for between 9 percent and 0.8 percent of each museum's total content units. Three museums had 1 percent or less; all museums but one had 4 percent or less. One museum had 9 percent of its content units in interpretative statements, but overall, only 3 percent of all content units were recorded in "Interpretation."

Category 9: EVALUATION: UNQUALIFIED JUDGEMENT OR OPINION

Definition: This category includes statements which offer judgments about the value or importance of a work of art without identifying the basis of judgment or authority.

An evaluative statement in this category is unequivocal rather than tentative; it presents the evaluation as fact rather than opinion.

Example: "The most important picture in the gallery is this small Rubens."

Content units in Category 9 among the ten museums studied ranged from a high of 3 percent to a low of 0 percent. Two museums had no entries in this category; seven had 2 percent or less of their content here. One museum had 3 percent in this category. Overall, only 0.7 percent of the total content units fell into unqualified evaluation, making it the least frequently used kind of content.

Category 10: EVALUATION: QUALIFIED JUDGMENT OR OPINION

Definition: This category includes statements which offer judgments about the value or importance of a work of art or artist but which either

(1) identify the source of authority or

(2) qualify the statements so they are not presented as absolute fact but suggest the possibility of other evaluative judgments or opinions.

Example: "Some experts believe that his influence on the artists of this century has been the greatest of any."

Content units in Category 10 among the ten museums studied ranged from a high of 2 percent to a low of 0 percent. One museum had no units in this category; another had 2 percent of its content here. All other museums had 1 percent or less of their narrative classified as Evaluation: Qualified.

Evaluation, Qualified and Evaluation, Unqualified included narrative statements whose intent was to assess the relative worth or importance of specific art objects, often without designation of evaluative criteria. It had been anticipated that Evaluations and Interpretations, both qualified and not, would constitute a very small part of the overall content of tour transcripts, and this was confirmed by the content analysis.

With Categories 9 and 10 collapsed, "Evaluation" accounts for between 3 percent and 0.3 percent of each museum's total content units. Overall, only 2 percent of all content units were recorded in "Evaluation."

#### Category 11: TOURING DIRECTIONS

Definition: This category is limited to specific directions for using the audio equipment and for locating objects to be discussed in the commentary.

Example: "Please turn off this instrument and return it to the desk after you finish touring the exhibit."

Content units in Category 11 among the ten museums studied ranged from a high of 16 percent to a low of 0.6 percent. The two museums which employed very short tour tapes had the least number of

touring directions; they offer self-contained short tours at the site of the described objects eliminating the necessity of directing users to the exhibit. All but these two museums had between 7 percent and 12 percent of their content devoted to tour directions to the audience.

Touring Directions were unambiguous; they were concerned with the mechanical problems of maneuvering the museum visitor to appropriate points in the gallery where exhibits would be described. Because linear cassette tours are programmed to a definite course, it is necessary to direct users repeatedly from point to point. Eight of the ten museums whose transcripts were analyzed used this technology, and this category accounted for 10 percent of the total content units examined.

#### Category 12: REFERENCE TO EXHIBIT CONTENTS

Definition: This category includes statements about the general scope of exhibit contents and reference to objects the viewer has seen or will subsequently see in the exhibit, in the form of titling of objects and of comparisons, contrasts, and statements of similarity or dissimilarity.

Example: "Compare the style of this painting with the others we have looked at."

Content units in Category 12 among the ten museums studied ranged from a high of 23 percent to a low of 4 percent. Again, the two museums with short transcripts had the fewest entries in this category, explained by the fact that their tour commentaries describe individual exhibits and tend not to be compared with other work in the gallery,



because it is not known which other art objects have previously been seen by the visitor.

Statements in the Reference to Exhibit Contents category were concerned both with focusing the viewer's attention on particular objects by naming their titles and artists and with reinforcing and integrating disparate parts of the tour commentary by allusion to differences and similarities among featured artifacts.

As anticipated, a significant proportion, 15 percent of the overall content of taped tours, qualified as Reference to Exhibit Contents. Many art objects were named specifically in tour commentaries even when they were not more fully discussed, which partially explains the substantial contribution of content units in this category. Additionally, tour narrators often directed visitor attention to various kinds of relationships among artifacts previously referred to in the commentary. The naming, comparing, and contrasting of art objects all helped to focus the visitor's attention on specific art objects isolated from the gallery context for discussion.

#### Category 13: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS/QUESTIONS BY NARRATOR

Definition: This category includes

(1) statements which are neither interpretive nor evaluative but which present the narrator's personal experience of an artist or art object.

(2) questions posed by the narrator to the viewer.

Example: "I like this piece as well as any in the exhibit, partly, I think, because it was so difficult to come by."

Content units in Category 13 among the ten museums studied ranged from a high of 17 percent to a low of 0 percent. Five museums

had 3 percent or less of their content units in this category. One museum had 17 percent; another had 10 percent.

Personal Reflections/Questions by Narrator, of all the thirteen categories of content differentiation employed in this study, established the most personal contact between narrator and audience. Entries in this category tended to be most nearly conversational and least pedantic of any of the others. If the recorded tour was at all interactive, content units in this category were most likely responsible. Only 5 percent of the 10,447 content units analyzed were in this category, which tended to support the researcher's impression that recorded tours in American art museums are more formal than informal, more impersonal than personal, and only minimally interactive in their approach to the adult visitor. In respect to the principles of responsive adult educational practice, the incidence of occurrence of content units in this category was disappointing.

Summary: Content Analysis Data in  
Relation to Museums

For thirteen categories. Of the aggregate 10,447 units of content examined, the overwhelming numbers were in categories 5, 3, and 12 (Table 9). General Description or Explanation (category 5) accounted for 26 percent of the total; Art Historical Context: Detail Central to Artist, Artifact, or Medium (category 3) represented 20 percent; and Reference to Exhibit Contents (category 12) reflected 15 percent of all content units.

Table 9

## Relative Frequency of Content Units in Tour Guide Transcripts

Category		Frequency of Response	
Number	Title	Percent	Rank
5	General Description or Explanation	26	1
3	Art Historical Context: Detail Central to Artist, Artifact, or Medium	20	2
12	Reference to Exhibit Contents	15	3
11	Touring Directions	10	4
6	Specific Description or Explanation	8	5
2	Socio-Cultural, Art Historical Context: Overview	6	6
4	Anecdotal: Detail Peripheral to Artist or Artifact	6	7
13	Personal Reflections/Questions by Narrator	5	8
1	The Experience of Art	1	9
7	Interpretation: Unqualified Judgment or Opinion	1	10
8	Interpretation: Qualified Judgment or Opinion	1	11
10	Evaluation: Qualified Judgment or Opinion	0.8	12
9	Evaluation: Unqualified Judgment or Opinion	0.7	13

Five of the thirteen categories each represented 1 percent or less of the aggregate number of content units; The Experience of Art (category 1); Interpretation: Unqualified Judgment or Opinion (category 7); Interpretation: Qualified Judgment or Opinion (category 8); Evaluation: Unqualified Judgment or Opinion (category 9); and Evaluation: Qualified Judgment or Opinion (category 10).

Five of the thirteen categories each contained between 10 percent and 5 percent of the total content units: Touring Directions (category 11), 10 percent; Specific Description or Explanation (category 6), 8 percent; Socio-Cultural, Art-Historical Context: Overview (category 2), 6 percent; Anecdotal: Detail Peripheral to Artist or Artifact (category 4), 6 percent; and Personal Reflections/Questions by Narrator (category 13), 5 percent.

Of the thirteen individual content categories in relation to the ten museums whose transcripts were analyzed, General Description or Explanation was the single most frequently represented category in all transcripts of seven of the ten museums whose taped tours were sampled. Art-Historical Context: Detail Central to Artist, Artifact, or Medium was next most frequently represented, with two museums in this group. Entries in Reference to Exhibit Contents had the highest frequency in one museum (Table 2).

There were several instances in which no content units were recorded in a particular content category:

1. Neither The Experience of Art nor Evaluation: Qualified were represented in any transcripts of Museum A (Baltimore).

2. Evaluation: Unqualified was absent from all transcripts of Museum F (Museum of Modern Art) and Museum BB (Minneapolis).

3. Personal Reflections/Questions by Narrator was absent from all transcripts of Museum G (National Gallery).

4. Interpretation: Qualified was not represented in any transcript of Museum H (Philadelphia).

Table 1 presents these summarized data in detail.

For nine collapsed categories. On the basis of this summary, these observations can be made:

1. "Description/Explanation" ranked first in frequency of occurrence in eight of the ten museums whose transcripts were analyzed.

2. "Art History" and "Description/Explanation" accounted for an equal number of content units in ranks one and two of the most frequently appearing content units among all ten museums.

3. Ranking third in relative frequency was Reference to Exhibit Contents.

4. Considering collapsed categories, the two categories with the least representation for all museums in the sample were The Experience of Art and "Evaluation." Table 5 lists these data.

#### Content Analysis Data in Relation to Exhibition Types

For this study, art museum exhibitions for which acoustical tour guides were provided were arbitrarily categorized into seven types on the basis of their dominant content emphases. Data reporting frequencies and relative ranks of content components in relation to exhibition types

are presented in Tables 3 and 4. Frequencies and relative ranks of content units by exhibition types for the nine collapsed categories are summarized in Tables 7 and 8. Summary observations provide the substance of the following section. In general, the content analysis did not reveal any striking patterns of content emphasis in relation to the particular exhibition types which audio-tours accompanied.

Exhibition type "a"--Artist. This type is devoted to the collected work of a single artist. This exhibition type accounted for more units in Anecdotal Detail than any other exhibition type. It also had the most units recorded in collapsed category "Interpretation." Looking at all the content units occurring in the eight transcripts of exhibition type "a", "Description/Explanation" ranked first, "Art History" second, and Reference to Exhibit Contents, third. Experience of Art and "Evaluation" had the fewest entries.

Exhibition type "b"--Art Period or Movement. This exhibition type has its primary emphasis in the survey of representative works of a single art historical period or movement. It had the highest percentage of any exhibition type in the collapsed category "Art History." Considering all six transcripts in type "b", "Art History" ranked first, "Description/Explanation" ranked next, and Reference to Exhibit Contents was third. Experience of Art had the fewest entries, followed by "Evaluation."

Exhibition type "c"--Collection. This exhibition type is devoted to the display of works of art owned by a single collector. This exhibition type registered the least of any other type in "Interpretation." Among the four transcripts in type "c", "Description/Explanation" ranked first, "Art History" was next, and Reference to Exhibit Contents was third. Experience of Art had fewest entries, followed by "Interpretation."

Exhibition type "d"--Nationality or Place. This exhibition type has as its dominant unifying element a focus on the art culture of a particular nation or specific locality. Of all exhibition types, this one accounted for the fewest units in The Experience of Art. Reflections/Questions by Narrator also had less than 1 percent of total contents here. Looking at all five transcripts in type "d", again "Description/Explanation" ranked first, "Art History" second, and Reference to Exhibit Contents was third.

Exhibition type "e"--Theme. This exhibition type describes museum shows which are devoted to some unique feature idea which unifies disparate works of art; nudes, children, flowers, or animals are examples of themes frequently used in art museum exhibitions. This exhibition type registered more content units in Touring Directions and Personal Reflections/Questions by Narrator than any other type. A study of the six transcripts in exhibition type "e" reveals that "Description/Explanation" ranked first, "Art History" second, and Reference to Exhibit Contents, third.

Exhibition type "f"--Medium Other Than Painting. This exhibition type focuses on examples of works of art in such media as sculpture, ceramics, paper, fabric, or other material. It accounted for more content units in Reference to Exhibit Contents than any other exhibition type. Of the four transcripts in exhibition type "f", again "Description/Explanation" ranked first, "Art History" next, and Reference to Exhibit Contents, third. Experience of Art had the fewest entries, followed by "Evaluation."

Exhibition type "g"--Gallery or Museum Orientation. This exhibition type has as its dominant unifying principle the sampling of a museum's permanent collections. Exhibition type "g"--Gallery or Museum Orientation had proportionately more than five times the content units in The Experience of Art than were recorded for any other exhibition type. This was only 3 percent of the total units counted for that exhibition type, however. Looking at the five transcripts of this type, "Description/Explanation" again ranked first, "Art History" second, and Reference to Exhibit Contents was third. "Evaluation" had the fewest entries, followed by "Interpretation."

Summary: Content Analysis Data in  
Relation to Exhibition Types

Of the thirteen individual content categories in relation to the seven exhibition types, these general observations can be made:

1. Exhibition type "g" (Gallery or Museum Orientation) used General Description or Explanation more frequently than any other exhibition type. One-third of its content units were in this



category. This finding is not unexpected because of the survey character of this kind of exhibition.

2. Each exhibition type had negligible units of content in four or five categories. The Experience of Art, "Interpretation," "Evaluation," and Anecdotal Detail were represented by less than 5 percent of units in each category.

3. All seven exhibition types had more than 20 percent of their content units in General Description or Explanation, which was also the case when content was considered in relation to particular museums.

4. Three exhibition types, Artist ("a"), Art Period or Movement ("b"), and Collection ("c") had more than 20 percent of their content units in the collapsed category, "Art History."

5. All exhibition types except one had most of their content units in collapsed category, "Description/Explanation." That exception was exhibition type "b", Art Period or Movement, in which museum transcripts reflected the highest frequency of content units in collapsed category, "Art History."

The analysis of content data in relation to exhibition type did not produce significantly different results from the analysis in relation to museums.

#### Statistical Tests

The four chi-square tests employed in the study revealed significant statistical relationships among the variables of interest,

indicating that relationships do exist among the variables of content, museums, and exhibition type.

1. The frequency of occurrence of acoustical tour guide content units in the thirteen categories was not statistically independent of particular museums. In testing the independence of the thirteen content categories and the ten museums, a chi-square value of 606.687 with 84 degrees of freedom was produced. This value was significant at the .005 level.

2. The frequency of occurrence of acoustical tour guide content units in thirteen categories was not statistically independent of particular exhibition types. In testing the independence of the thirteen categories and the seven exhibition types, a chi-square value of 459.4.0 with 72 degrees of freedom was found. This value was also significant at the .005 level.

3. The frequency of occurrence of acoustical tour guide content units in nine collapsed categories was not statistically independent of particular museums. In testing the independence of the nine categories and the ten museums, a chi-square value of 764.085 with 56 degrees of freedom was found. This value was significant at the .005 level.

4. The frequency of occurrence of acoustical tour guide content units in the nine collapsed categories was not statistically independent of particular exhibition types. In testing the independence of the nine categories and the seven exhibition types, a chi-square value of

640.905 with 48 degrees of freedom was found. This value was also significant at the .005 level.

Investigation of the contribution of individual cells to the overall chi-square values reveals that the previously reported frequency measures did indeed have enough variability to explain large deviations from expected values. This variability contributes to the lack of independence between both exhibit types and tour guide content, and museums and tour guide content. The fact that the chi-square values are large signifies a lack of statistical independence but does not indicate how the variables are related. From statistical analysis of the data it can be concluded that museums, exhibition types, and content are not independent--they influence each other in some manner.

#### FINDINGS OF QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

A questionnaire was dispatched to forty-eight art museums in the forty largest American cities. Its principal purpose was to establish the population of art museums which use acoustical guides in their adult education programs, but additional background information was also solicited regarding technologies in use and attitudes of museums toward use of recorded tours.

##### Utilization of Acoustical Tours

All forty-eight museums which were surveyed to ascertain their past and current use of acoustical tour guides responded to the questionnaire (Appendix B). Table 10 reports the results of this survey, which indicates that slightly more than half of those museums

Table 10

## Summary of Questionnaire Data

Question	Number of Respondents	Responses	
		Yes	No
1. Has your museum ever used any kind of acoustical tour guide for individual museum visitors? . . . . .	48	57%	43%
For special exhibitions? . . . . .	25	84%	16%
For permanent collection? . . . . .	25	64%	36%
2. Do you currently use acoustical tour guides? . . . . .	44	33%	67%
For special exhibitions? . . . . .	11	91%	9%
For permanent collection? . . . . .	11	91%	9%
3. What type of system do you use? . . . . .	29		
(a) portable cassette unit (linear-progressive tour) . . . . .		59%	
(b) magnetic induction (hidden wires, non-linear tour) . . . . .		21%	
(c) acoustic listening post (fixed locations) . . . . .		21%	
4. How many units do you have? . . . . .		Variable	
5. If you do NOT now use some acoustical guide system, would you like to? . . . . .	31	23%	53%
		(24% undecided)	

Table 10 (Continued)

Question	Number of Respondents	Responses	
		Yes	No
6. If you have decided not to use acoustical tour guides, why not? . . . .	41		
(a) We question their educational effectiveness . . . . .		55%	
(b) We can't afford them . . . . .		30%	
(c) We don't believe there would be sufficient visitor interest . . . . .		15%	
7. If you DO use an acoustical guide system, do you have statistics reflecting volume of use by visitors? . . . . .	19	63%	37%
8. Is the system profitable to your museum? . . . . .	15	47%	53%
9. Do you have transcripts of your acoustical tapes on file? . . . . .	24	50%	50%
10. Would you be willing to make transcripts available to me for my content analysis research? . . . . .	15	67%	33%
11. Would you be interested in seeing the results of this research? . . . . .	38	84%	16%

questioned have used some kind of recorded tour guide for individual museum visitors, but only a third currently use them.

### Dominant Technology

Although this study does not specifically examine the relationship between tour technology and the content of transcripts, certain limitations and opportunities result from the kind of equipment used, as noted in previous discussions.

Of the three major types of electronic tour guide systems employed by art museums, 59 percent of museums currently using acoustical guides use the portable cassette unit for linear progressive tours. Magnetic induction systems, offering non-linear tours, are used by 21 percent. The same percentage have acoustic listening posts at which art commentary is available to the museum visitor.

Depending on the particular requirements of an exhibit at a particular time, art museums report a variable number of message receiving units in use.

### Attitudes of Non-Users

Of museums not currently using some acoustical guide system, only 23 percent indicate a positive interest in the devices. Museums which are undecided account for 24 percent, and 53 percent are negatively disposed toward their use. Of the latter group, 55 percent question the educational effectiveness of acoustical tours; 30 percent believe their museums can't afford them; and 15 percent believe the devices would not attract sufficient visitor support. Other reasons

given for disinclination to use acoustical guides are (1) interference with other viewers, (2) they are "boring," (3) funds are needed to explore experimental uses of the devices, (4) "they militate against the primary purpose of the museum, the experience of original works of art by people," (5) "dislike their impersonality," (6) "docents can be more responsive," and (7) "collections rearranged too often to make them practical."

#### FINDINGS OF FIELD RESEARCH

As was indicated in Chapter 1, the use of audio tours as part of the adult educational programs of American art museums had not been investigated previous to this study. There was a dearth of background material available to describe this educational medium. Although the central focus of this research was the characterization and quantification of content attributes of acoustical tours, the study also collected soft data by means of field research to establish an appropriate context for interpreting results of the content analysis.

#### History of Acoustical Guide Use

After World War II, an isolated experiment was conducted in Holland with recorded tour commentary, but it was 1958 before Californian Val Burton, an Academy Award producer and screenwriter, gave the innovation another impetus. In touring major European cities, Burton visited several famous art museums. The presence of large crowds in the galleries of many of these museums prevented him from hearing the descriptive narrative of human tour guides. On

returning to the United States, he solicited investment capital to develop and market acoustical tour guides. The idea was received with considerable interest in the business community, but the recorded tour guides were marketed prematurely, before technical problems had been solved. As a consequence, early trials in various museums were largely unsuccessful, and this new educational medium acquired a reputation for unreliability, giving the promising business venture an unpropitious start. The legacy of that early unsatisfactory museum experience is still to some degree operative, because some museums still associate recorded tour guides with trouble-causing technical problems even though substantial improvements and refinements in the technology have been accomplished.

The Museum of Natural History in New York was the first American museum to offer recorded guides to its visitors, but the National Gallery of Art followed soon after and is credited with being the first American art museum to make them available. Recorded art museum tours have been in service continuously since 1960.

After Burton, who is credited with initiating the development of recorded art museum tours in the United States, the individual most responsible for their refinement is Budd Lesser, whose background had been in radio, TV, and motion pictures. Lesser is credited with the development of the "one to one" tour, widely used today, in which an art expert shares his expertise with the museum visitor through the medium of recorded commentary. In the early stages of taped narration, Lesser and others felt that tour commentary was most effectively



delivered by professional narrators. Many museums and tape producers now believe that the most effective tours are narrated by museum curators or directors in their own voices and syntactical styles.

#### The Acoustical Tour Guide Business

The production and distribution of acoustical tour guides is a small business which is currently dominated by three private companies. Only one of these, Acoustiguide, has a significant portion of its business involved specifically with recorded tours for art museums. This company has also had the longest continuous involvement with art museum tours.

All producers of art museum recorded tours provide a variety of other audio-interpretative services such as city walking tours; tours of historic sites, natural phenomena, and national park sites; natural history, science, maritime, and aquatic museums; zoos and botanical gardens; industrial plants; and even ships, trains, aircraft, and buses.

Manufacturers of recorded tours enter into several different kinds of arrangements with their clients. Art museums typically have the option of buying electronic equipment outright or of participating jointly with the producing company in various ways. The museum may pay a fixed rental fee or may participate with the company in profits accruing from visitor use. There is no evidence to suggest that companies using any of these arrangements are earning substantial profits from the business they receive from American art museums.

Interviews with executives of several companies indicate that the acoustical guide industry is considered to be still in its beginning phases. The consensus among those questioned was that growth will be steady but undramatic.

#### The Technology: Hardware

Electronic equipment for linear, progressive tour guides has three principal components: cassette players and a storage, recharging system; earphones; and the tape cassettes themselves. Since 1968, technological improvements have made the devices more efficient to maintain and more satisfying to use. Equipment has undergone considerable standardization to type. To use a portable cassette system, museum visitors wear or carry individual lightweight units; they receive tour commentary through earphones and can start or stop the message as desired.

Electronic hardware used with non-linear, magnetic induction systems includes a central transmitter and hand-held receivers, often called "wands." Pre-recorded programs produced on magnetic tape are simultaneously transmitted to pre-wired zones of sound, and as a visitor raises the receiving instrument to his ear, the message is automatically activated.

Acoustic listening posts, which offer recorded messages either continuously or on visitor signal, are fixed listening stations. One or more receivers at these locations are available to transmit taped tour messages either from a central location or from locally placed repeaters.

A museum's choice of hardware for acoustical tours is dependent on practical or physical conditions in the museum environment as well as on general educational goals for the tour. The hardware used in a taped tour to some extent limits or shapes the content. The linear type of tour tends to be more didactic than either the random access or fixed listening post, because it is able to deliver a continuous lecture, to utilize a teaching plan involving a prescribed path. Neither of the other two media have that option; they can only offer brief discrete messages which are largely independent of each other.

By-Word, one of the three largest producers of acoustical tour guides, is the one company which offers all three different kinds of technology to its potential clients. According to a company spokesman, the magnetic induction, random access system has the greatest technical reliability at present. This system is most useful in installations which serve a large volume of museum visitors. Initially, random access systems cost more to establish than cassette systems, because hidden wires must be installed in the museum. Cassette systems are self-contained and therefore require no electronic preparation in the building. For temporary exhibitions, cassettes are most practical. For permanent exhibitions, most art museums choose one or the other technology, but a few very large institutions use both types of hardware in very different kinds of interpretive tours.

### The Technology: Software

Script preparation process. Although some acoustical tour transcripts are written entirely by a museum's educational staff, typically scripts are prepared by museums in conjunction with freelance writers or acoustical tour producers practiced in the area of art content.

In one popular method developed by Budd Lesser, a "walk-through" occurs shortly after an exhibit is hung. The museum curator tours the writer through the exhibit, sharing with the writer important and interesting material about specific works of art which have been selected, sometimes jointly, to be discussed with museum visitors. This informal conversation is taped, often on several machines simultaneously to facilitate transcription; it becomes the basis of the final script.

After taped recordings are transcribed by the producing company, the transcript is reviewed by the editor, who tries to retain the distinctive quality of the director's or curator's narrative as well as most of the specific content. The editorial responsibility consists of checking facts, shortening curatorial expositions when they become too detailed, or making changes in sequence or emphasis in order to maximize the continuity and educational thrust of the commentary. The curatorial emphasis in some acoustical tapes is believed by many museum personnel to give the narrative a very desirable authority, but that posture of authority must not be allowed to distance the listener from the viewing experience. After judicious editing, the

modified script is submitted to the museum for approval. The curator or director who originally toured the editor through the exhibit then records the revised script in a recording studio session. The whole process, from "walk-through" to tape production, takes only a few days.

Another method used in writing tour scripts involves members of the museum's curatorial and educational staffs in group discussion of the desirable content emphasis and didactic tone of the commentary. Either a museum staff member or a free-lance script writer is engaged to reflect the planning group's preferences. A tentative script is prepared and presented for changes. When the script is approved, it is recorded either by outside professional voice(s) or by museum personnel.

In one museum in this study, tour transcripts were prepared entirely by volunteer docents, with the general approval of the education department. Volunteers also provided the voices used in tour narration.

Factors influencing script content. On the basis of interviews with practitioners in the field (see Appendix M), factors influencing script content were explored. Assumptions that museum curators or independent script writers make about the audience for taped tours were of particular interest, as were opinions concerning most appropriate and/or effective approaches to the content of tour scripts.

A general conclusion is that there is clearly no way to prepare a single optimum tour for all adult art museum visitors. Because the

museum audience is known to be heterogeneous, art institutions try to provide "something for everybody." In order to make contact with the varied audience, script writers make certain general assumptions which they know will not apply to their whole audience but which they hope will satisfy a significant portion of it.

Robert Cutler of Acoustiguide takes the position that the person for whom he is preparing the recorded tour message is "ignorant and relatively intelligent. You can talk to him but not down to him." Ted Lawson of the Hirshhorn Museum sees the general audience for acoustical guides primarily as adults who are not technically knowledgeable but who are "fairly intelligent"--"the man in the street with some knowledge of culture." His goal in planning scripts is "to stay away from facts but close to what is before people, what they're looking at." Acoustical guides can hardly be expected to tell all the facts about an art object; they are meant as introductions. Budd Lesser, of Picture-Sound Associates, characterizes the average person who might rent a recorded tour as someone with a public school education who "probably knows three or four artist's names, maybe half a dozen, and who may have had a field trip to a local museum."

In the view of most experts who were interviewed, the general goals of both acoustical tours and live docent tours are to pique curiosity, to introduce people to museum collections, to give insights and information to museum visitors which they lack regarding artists, materials, and art history and which could provide a basis for their individual aesthetic explorations. Recorded tours intend only to

present a "bare bones, skeleton framework," in the words of Lawson. Lesser believes that if a taped tour sustains a person's visit for an extra half hour, "giving that visitor two or three extra things to think about, we've done a tremendous thing." According to Lesser, the typical recorded tour performs a serious, important communication job, combining elements of art appreciation, anecdotal information, material on collecting as a pastime, art history, and a little biography. The objective of his taped tours is to increase visitors' knowledge and appreciation, to provide a primer for more serious art appreciation and expansion of the cultural side of their lives.

Robert Cutler thinks that the opportunity to learn how an artist grows and develops over time is perhaps the most important part of a tour. Barbara Fertig of Museum Education Roundtable feels that the ultimate goal of recorded tours should be to put people into communication with artists.

Judith Sobol, of the Minneapolis Institute of Art currently writes all the scripts for that museum. She hopes that adult visitors, after using recorded tours, will be left with the idea that works of art are multifaceted and can be used to view the culture or the maker's biography; to discover differences from style to style; to discover some formal ways an artist works; or to titillate a person's own sensibilities.

Budd Lesser describes his own posture in preparing tapes: he starts from the premise that he, the writer/producer, doesn't know very much about art. "If the curators can make me understand, putting

information in terms that are acceptable to me, that interest me, that stimulate me--those are the terms I pass along." Antonia Bryant, a free-lance acoustical tour script writer with more than thirty transcripts to her credit, feels it is important for the writer not to know too much in order to be able to identify with the tour guide user. Tours should seem personal and speakers should seem to be talking to the visitor, not lecturing.

Taped tour manufacturers who were interviewed responded to the charge that acoustical guides are superficial by asserting that it is impossible to make people art historians in forty-five minutes. Taped tours are necessarily smorgasbords of biography, art appreciation, art history, and analysis of aesthetic components, in the view of most experts. The mental or emotional process that prompted the artist, the "why?", is beyond the depth of a guided tour, in the opinion of Lesser, who feels that very subtle interpretations are difficult and perhaps not even desirable.

The substantial differences of viewpoint with respect to the appropriate content of recorded tours, on the part of experts interviewed in the field research, is reflected in the large variety of content components in the transcripts. In effect, most transcripts provide something for everyone.

#### Marketing to Museums and Museum Audiences

Statistics reflecting visitor use of acoustical guides in art museums are scant and inconsistent in form. Both museums and producing



companies agree, however, that the range of art museum visitor use is between 2 percent and 20 percent of total exhibit attendance. Twenty percent is regarded as extraordinarily high volume.

There are two issues involved in the marketing of recorded tours: one concerns possible reasons why more museums do not offer acoustical guides as part of their interpretive programs; the other concerns possible reasons for visitor disinterest.

Explanations of some museum resistance to adoption were offered by executives of companies producing taped tours.

1. Acoustical guides were initially "sold" incorrectly to art museums. They were promoted as income producing adjuncts to the educational program and were consequently assigned to museum sales departments rather than to curatorial or educational staffs. Some curators apparently considered them "declass ."

2. Acoustical guides "sold" poorly, as a result of inadequate promotion by museums and neglect by art exhibit reviewers. Recorded tours generally suffered from second-class status in museum educational programs, despite the enthusiasm that visitors who used them reflected overwhelmingly.

3. Some museums were and are not convinced that taped tour commentaries are important adjuncts to their educational programs.

The principal problems associated with attracting individuals to rent taped tours when they are available in art museums are:

1. Making the visitor aware that taped tour commentary is available.

2. Convincing the visitor that using a recorded tour will augment his understanding and enjoyment of the exhibit.

3. Overcoming the psychological resistance of some museum visitors to various aspects of instrumented tours. Factors contributing to this resistance were suggested in interviews with tour manufacturers and museum staffs:

a. The equipment itself, in the case of individual cassette systems which the visitor wears, makes the user conspicuous and perhaps self-conscious. His physical appearance is temporarily altered by earphones, and the change is not perceived as flattering.

b. Using a taped tour may seem to identify the visitor as a person who requires help in viewing art. This is an image which many adults are probably unwilling to project. Some museum visitors, both with and without art backgrounds, seem unwilling to appear dependent, unsophisticated, unknowing. This reluctance seems to be somewhat mitigated when potential users of taped tours see many other adults using them. This "sheep factor," as Robert Cutler of Acoustiguide calls it, provides an important encouragement to using taped tours.

c. Some museum visitors expect that recorded tour narration may be boring, charmless, and pedantic. They may expect a "lecture" and are not attracted by the prospect.

d. The cost of rental seems to deter some visitors.

e. Some museum visitors seem to fear embarrassment resulting from inadequate skill in operating the electronic equipment.

f. Visitors may be unwilling to commit themselves to between thirty and forty-five minutes of tour commentary, which is the length of linear progressive tours, or up to two hours of possible narration, with the magnetic induction system. Even when recorded material is not sequential, some visitors apparently feel compelled to stay in the exhibit area long enough to get full use from the commentary. Although self-induced, this reaction may produce an unwelcome pressure in some adult visitors.

There is, in summary, a developing awareness in the museum profession of the potential usefulness of acoustical tours. Museums which have used them successfully regard them as excellent sources of enrichment of educational programs. Many individuals who had previously not elected to use recorded tours have become consistent users after having a single exciting, satisfying recorded encounter which enhanced their museum experience. Although some art institutions continue to be disinterested in their adoption, for practical or educational reasons, the trend is toward gradually increasing use of acoustical tours and toward exploration of ways to enrich their content.

## SUMMARY

The content analysis categorized 10,477 units from thirty-eight full-length and thirty-three short art museum recorded tour transcripts. Thirteen mutually exclusive categories were developed to characterize the content of recorded tours. The predominant content emphasis was in General Description or Explanation, which accounted for 26 percent of the total units analyzed for all museums. This category also accounted for the highest frequency of occurrence for each type of exhibition except one, Art Period or Movement. The second most dominant content emphasis was Art Historical Context: Detail Central to Artist, Artifact, or Medium, represented by 20 percent of total content units. These two categories combined constituted nearly one-half of the 10,477 units studied.

Interpretation, Evaluation and The Experience of Art were the least frequently observed kinds of content in the museum transcripts. The category, The Experience of Art, which is concerned directly with the development of visual awareness and aesthetic sensibility in the viewer, was represented by only 1 percent of the content units. Field research reflected some opinion that this category of content was perhaps too abstract and sophisticated for the average art museum visitor. However, a substantial body of art education literature suggests that this kind of content may be critically important to the development of aesthetic sensibility in the individual.

Four chi-square tests of statistical independence were employed to ascertain possible relationships among the variables of content,

museums, and exhibition types. All four tests indicated a lack of independence among these variables; they influence each other in some manner.

A survey questionnaire disclosed that less than half of the major metropolitan art museums surveyed currently use acoustical tour guides in their museum education programs, although this educational medium is becoming more general. Resistance to adoption of acoustical guides is based primarily on scepticism about the educational effectiveness of the medium and concerns associated with cost and equipment maintenance. Field research indicates that recorded tour users are enthusiastic about the medium.

## Chapter 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter reviews the objectives of this study of the content of art museum acoustical guides, summarizes the principal findings, and presents conclusions and recommendations based on the research analysis and the literature review.

#### SUMMARY

This study has concentrated on identification and quantification of the dominant content emphases of a substantial sample of audio-taped tours used by major American art museums. Principal objectives of the research were to characterize the content of acoustical guides and to analyze patterns of content emphasis among them. Additionally, field interviews were conducted in order to ascertain the general availability and use of recorded tours, the audience for which they were designed, the authorship of scripts, the basis for decisions about content, and the script preparation and production processes.

The content components of art museum audio tours were classified into thirteen categories by means of a specially designed content analysis instrument, which was validated by experts. The thirteen categories were also collapsed into nine by combining classes which were generically similar, in order to obtain a more general perspective of dominant emphases. Category 5, General Description or Explanation, contained 26 percent of the content units; Category 3, Art Historical

Context: Detail Central to Artist, Artifact, or Medium, 20 percent; Category 12, Reference to Exhibit Contents, 15 percent. Category 11, Touring Directions, was represented by 10 percent of the content units; Category 6, Specific Description or Explanation, 8 percent; Category 2, Socio-Cultural, Art Historical Context: Overview and Category 4, Anecdotal: Detail Peripheral to Artist or Artifact, each accounted for 6 percent. Category 13, Personal Reflections/Questions by Narrator, accounted for 5 percent of the content units. Categories with the smallest representation, no one of which contained more than 1 percent of all content units, were The Experience of Art; Interpretation: Unqualified Judgment or Opinion; Interpretation: Qualified Judgment or Opinion; Evaluation: Qualified Judgment or Opinion; and Evaluation: Unqualified Judgment or Opinion.

Rank orders of relative frequency of content units by category were not significantly changed by the process of collapsing the original thirteen categories to nine.

Patterns of content in the recorded tours were predominantly concrete, specific, objective, and descriptive. There was relatively little material in the transcripts which was interpretive, evaluative, or abstract. Almost no reference was made either to the philosophy or psychology of art or to the various possible ways of approaching art experience.

When the content analytic data were examined on the basis of exhibition types rather than on the basis of inter-museum comparisons, similar patterns of content emerged, with a concentration in categories

which were concrete, specific, objective, and descriptive rather than interpretive, evaluative, or bearing generally and abstractly on the experience of art.

Considering the distribution of content units for the eight museums using full length transcripts and the two museums using short transcripts, few material differences were observed. However, the Milwaukee Art Center, one of the two institutions using short transcripts at fixed listening posts, had 17 percent of its content units occurring in Personal Reflections/Questions By Narrator, as contrasted with the overall museum average of 5 percent. This indicates a more interactive pattern of presentation than for any of the other museums. Furthermore, both the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and the Milwaukee Art Center had the highest percentage of narrative comments among all the museums in the Experience of Art. The fact that short tour commentaries were discrete rather than part of continuous tour narratives accounted for the small percentage of content devoted to both Tour Directions and References to Exhibit Contents. Along other dimensions, there were no striking differences in content emphasis among the ten museums in the study.

Statistical tests of the independence of the variables of content, museums, and exhibition types indicated that these variables were not independent but were in fact related. As indicated, chi-square tests did not reveal how the variables are related but only that they were not independent of one another.



## CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of this study can be summarized under three principal headings. One set is based directly on the content analysis of acoustical tour guides. A second set of conclusions is derived from the contextual data developed from field research and the questionnaire survey. The third set of conclusions is based on an assessment of the relationship between the principal approaches to adult education in the art museum setting suggested in the literature and the content and style which characterize the recorded tours.

### Content

The dominant emphasis in the recorded tours studied was on what, when, and where, rather than on why and how. Commentary was more objective than subjective, more pedagogical than andragogical, more declarative than interactive, more concrete than abstract. Tour commentary tended to be somewhat dogmatic. It was not explicitly respectful of the complexity of the art experience; awe and humility were rarely expressed or even implied.

In all the content analyzed, there was no instance noted in which a narrator commented on the basis by which certain objects were selected for discussion. Although visitors were urged to examine other works of art not specifically described in the recorded tour, no regret was expressed that other works could not also be discussed. A visitor could easily be left with the impression that the particular objects which had been described by the narrator were, somehow--with

the criteria largely unspecified--the most important objects in the gallery. In no case did tour narrators say that particular objects could be discussed at much greater length without exhausting their subjects. Visitors could conclude that what was said to them in the tour commentary was all that was important to say about a particular art object. No specific attention was given to statements, however brief, suggesting that there are different styles or ways of looking at art, and that art is uniquely suited to multi-dimensional perception.

In general, tour commentary was more concerned with transmitting facts and ideas than with facilitating discovery. Tour narration tended to explain rather than evoke or provoke. It told rather than asked, providing closure and matter of fact comments more often than it provided challenging questions or invitations to conjecture. In general, audiences were receivers of information. They were not encouraged to be actively involved in looking, seeing, and making independent judgments on the basis of their own observations. Viewers were not often encouraged to make independent judgments about the displayed objects on the basis of their own perceptions and experience.

No case was noted in which a narrator indicated that the works of art on exhibit could be rearranged repeatedly, with each changed setting offering new insights into the qualities of the objects themselves. The importance of the exhibit context to individual works of art was not mentioned in any of the transcripts analyzed.

Although comparisons were made frequently in tour commentary, no reference was made to the fact that other comparisons were possible

which might reveal additional points of similarity and dissimilarity and illuminate other important dimensions of the artifacts in discussion.

Narration tended to concentrate on aspects of the object--its parts--rather than on the character of the whole. The assumption seemed to be that museum visitors would experience the whole more intensely and immediately through fragmenting it by directing attention to component elements.

### Context

More than half of the forty-eight art museums in the forty largest cities which were surveyed had used acoustical tours; one-third of these institutions currently make them available. To varying degrees, recorded museum tours are regarded as adjuncts to other interpretive facilities, such as labels, written handouts, and live docent tours; they constitute one of several informational or interpretive options available as educational resources to visitors.

Most transcripts for acoustical tours are written and edited in an interactive collaboration of museum personnel and technical production staff. Content decisions are made primarily by museum curators, directors, or educators with the advice of technicians experienced in this communication medium.

A primary objective of museum acoustical tours is to mediate between visitors and works of art--to reduce distance and promote contact. The content of recorded tours is varied, complex, and difficult to generalize. It is impossible to reflect the distinctive

quality of each of the transcripts which were produced by the ten different art museums whose tours were analyzed, but a number of general observations and necessarily subjective judgments seem warranted on the basis of this research study.

Adult visitors who use recorded tours tend to be delighted with them, according to the evidence. But some visitors are reluctant to try the devices when a trial generally costs between \$1.00 and \$1.50 (except in the case of commentary available at fixed listening posts, which is free) and there is uncertainty about the kind of experience which can be expected. Other museum visitors are uncomfortable with machines and tend to avoid them, while still others prefer to wander through art galleries unassisted and unaccompanied by any type of tour commentary. Some visitors consider themselves knowledgeable and are reluctant to be identified with other touring adults who appear to need help in interpreting the art on exhibit. Somewhat surprisingly, many museum professionals with whom the researcher spoke in the course of the field research indicated they had never or rarely used a recorded tour while visiting other museums. Almost uniformly, they seemed embarrassed to make that admission.

Recorded tours are potentially valuable tools in art museum educational programs for adults. Most museum personnel feel they are less effective than live guided tours, because ideally and in principle, a live narrator can respond to the particular needs of the assembled visitors. In practice, docent tours vary in quality and style; they are not always responsive to the particular group or sensitive to the

nuances of the material in review. Live group tours have the advantage that they are social and therefore potentially more interactive than taped tours, a feature which is attractive to many adults. Some visitors prefer a private, personal recorded tour conducted by museum authorities.

It is known that the average adult audience in metropolitan art museums is not inclined to a scholarly approach to the museum. Most personnel involved in writing tour scripts assume their audience has no specialized art background but only a general, often limited, interest in knowing more about art. On the basis of current research, it is difficult to know what approach to tour commentary should be taken. The issue of what is most important to tell an adult visitor about the assembled works of art, and how, remains provocative, unresolved, and endlessly interesting to museum educators and others concerned with the cultural enrichment of the general population.

#### Literature Review

In reviewing the literature, eight distinct emphases in educational approaches to adults in the art museum setting were identified. These were characterized by their dominant concerns with (1) promoting contact, involvement, and focused looking; (2) minimizing chronological and technological elements; (3) bridging adult experience; (4) developing visual awareness and independence of artistic judgment; (5) stimulating wonder and questioning; (6) providing educational programs at appropriate levels; (7) offering psychological studies of art; and (8) sharing expert experience with audiences.

Recorded tours, particularly those that use the linear progressive cassette technology, seemed to be most strongly dominated by the last approach cited, the sharing of expert experience. This approach had early and eloquent expression in the words of Gilman (1918:67), who recommended that audiences be led "into the presence of noble art in the company of those who themselves delight in it." Many other approaches recommended in the literature were not conspicuously prominent in taped tours.

Promoting contact, involvement, and focused looking. Certainly tour commentaries were designed to be interesting and meaningful to visitors, but in the absence of appropriate visitor feedback, it is difficult to evaluate the success of efforts made in taped tours to bridge adult experience and to promote contact, involvement, and focused looking.

Minimizing chronological and technological elements. If it is assumed that a majority of people who go to art museums go "to be delighted rather than taught, or preached at, or 'improved' except by the works of art themselves" (McGrath and Robbins, 1969:1-2), it may be that too much of the content of taped tours has an instructional cast, concerned as it commonly is with chronological and technological elements. It has been estimated that 75 percent of total art museum visits are for exposure and only 5 percent "for the sake of heightening artistic understanding and taste, or learning about art history" (Hayes, 1967:50). The vast majority of museum visitors probably do

not come as students with a definite purpose in view, but rather to be generally amused or interested (Lucas, 1963:203). It may be that users of acoustical tours are more serious than most non-users in their pursuit of information or insight, but there is no research which reflects this to date.

Bridging adult experience. Museum personnel face two important and difficult challenges in facilitating aesthetic experience in adults: deciding what the heterogeneous public is interested in, likes, expects, finds worthwhile, understands, is curious about, and needs help with; and deciding how best to present art objects verbally in the very brief time available. It is difficult to assess museum performance on this score, because little is known about the impact of taped tours on the audience.

Developing visual awareness and independence of artistic judgment. As has been noted, there is little attention devoted expressly to the cultivation of the audience's sensibilities through exercises in looking with discrimination at the artifacts on exhibit.

Stimulating wonder and questioning. In general, based on both the content analysis of individual transcripts and the overall orientation to the museum visitor, recorded tours seemed neither to challenge nor inspire listeners in any deliberate way.

Providing educational programs at appropriate levels. Most museums still offer recorded tours for a single, undifferentiated audience because of limited resources. They establish the level of presentation to meet the assumed capacity of the "average" visitor.

Offering psychological studies of art. The educational medium of recorded tour guides is not yet developed to the point advocated by Parr (1963:31), when museums (and therefore recorded tours) include psychological study of aesthetic experience and artistic expression and "its affective, cognitive, sociological, and biological determinants of our sense of beauty" in its program. The infrequent occurrence of content units characterized as The Experience of Art supports this conclusion.

Sharing expert experience with audiences. Despite the relative paucity of content units in the categories devoted to Interpretation, Evaluation, and The Experience of Art, a consistently popular orientation in the full-length audio transcripts was the sharing of expert observations and enthusiasms with the general public.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

There appears to be a generally accepted convention that aspects of aesthetic experience which are difficult to verbalize should not be attempted in recorded tours or gallery talks. It is suggested that museum educators consider talking more subjectively,



more qualitatively, even more poetically to the adult audience. There is no evidence to suggest that it is necessarily more difficult for the museum visitor to grasp art commentary which is subjective and qualitative in nature. The difference between objective-quantitative and subjective-qualitative orientations is crucially important to art. The content of taped tours should not deny the particular idiomatic richness of the aesthetic language by merely dealing with art as yet another product of the practical world, describable in the practical terms of that world.

Overall, the content of many tour scripts tended to diminish the size and scope of questions which the viewer might entertain in the presence of works of art. Statements were made which were designed to reduce the ambiguity of works of art, making them more accessible to the audience; instead, because of their superficiality, these statements may subtly mislead the visitor. Superficiality is not justified on the basis of time restrictions or audience limitations. The depth of a subject can be implied even when the opportunity for highly developed, sustained discussion is unavailable.

Acoustical tour transcripts rarely touched on issues in the psychology and philosophy of art. It is recommended that allusions be made to these issues in tour commentary even though discussion is not practical within the time limits of the medium. Including philosophical and psychological questions, if only in passing, helps to characterize the universal interest and distinctive value of the visual arts.

There is a need for a more andragogical approach to the museum visitor. The focus in recorded tours is, reasonably enough, the subject matter content of art, but this does not preclude more direct attention to the audience receiving the message. As Knowles (1970:48) says,

. . . the adult educator must be primarily attuned to the existential concerns of the individuals and institutions he serves and be able to develop learning experiences that will be articulated with these concerns.

In the art museum setting, the "existential concerns" of the institution may not conform with those of the individual. In the view of some museum educators and audio-tour producers, museum directors and curators may not adequately appreciate the level of aesthetic insight, understanding, and experience which characterizes the average audience for recorded tours. They may assume certain interests on the part of the audience that are unjustified.

It is important to note that many museum educators believe they should challenge their audiences and not just entertain them. The museum should expand the experience of museum visitors without being insensitive to their requirements and preferences.

This study failed to disclose evidence of systematic attempts by art museums or the acoustical guide industry to evaluate the cognitive and affective needs of the user of audio-tours or the extent to which those needs were met. It would be worthwhile to identify the objectives of this educational medium so that its effectiveness might be measured. It would also be valuable to know, regardless of the intent of tour producers, what the effect was on

users in terms of insights, attitudes, and information acquired or deepened. A few studies have concentrated on evaluating visitor retention of facts presented in recorded tours, but there is a need for the formulation of affective objectives and the development of tests measuring their achievement in appropriate terms.

Alternate approaches to the communication of facts and ideas in recorded tours should be explored in order to maximize the potential of the medium. It could be helpful to visitors to hear more commentary in which the artist, in his own words, when those are available, explains himself, or talks about his perception of the art process or product. Offering alternative perspectives on a single object is both educationally more responsible and very likely more stimulating to the visitor than presenting a single point of view. Ideally, tour commentary should strengthen the picture but never make it seem final. It should expose the multidimensional richness intrinsic to the art object without prematurely reducing its complexity to a few arbitrarily stated observations.

Audio-tours warrant more active promotion within the museums that have them and reconsideration by museums that doubt their educational effectiveness. Although the medium has limitations, it has enormous potential as well. Despite the fact that the task of preparing recorded tour commentary is complicated by ambiguities arising from unclear objectives and difficulties resulting from technical limitations of the medium, recorded tours offer a rich educational option to the museum and its visitors. There is a need for more research on

the assistance adults need and desire in looking at art so that recorded tour guides can be made more potent and effective.

Perhaps the best way to dramatize the connection between art and life, between representation and reality, is to allow art to present itself most eloquently in its own language, assisted with sensitive, tentative, and undogmatic commentary. Translation of art into the terms of ordinary experience may, paradoxically, discourage rather than facilitate meaningful art experience. If art is "one of the last great mysteries," some sense of that mystery should be retained and projected in tour commentary.

Art education should not, says Feldman (1965:42), "lay down canons of excellence or beauty" but rather should involve people in artistic problems that oblige them to hypothesize and test personal criteria and standards of excellence. Adult education in the art museum should assist visitors in acquiring information or inspiration at levels and in forms appropriate to their needs and preferences as voluntary learners or leisure time users. The content of acoustical guides has an important influence on the attitudes of museum visitors toward the arts and toward reflection, contemplation, and the savoring of qualitative experience as an alternative or balance to practical, instrumental experience.

The art museum is not a formal, structured educational institution, but it does provide a distinctive and potent medium for transmitting the cultural heritage and for expanding and enriching the lives of millions of adults. The highest function of adult education

may be, as Lindeman felt, the discovery and release of qualities of sensibility among the many. The art museum, using communication media such as recorded tour commentaries, is uniquely suited to facilitating the discovery and release of these qualities.

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APPENDIX A

Museum Survey Cover Letter

MUSEUM EDUCATION RESEARCH  
BOX 881  
BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA 24060

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June 1975

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Dear Director:

One of the educational aids in current use to help individual adult art museum visitors "make contact with," "understand," "use," "relate to," or "enjoy" the treasures on exhibit is the acoustical tour guide.

I am presently engaged in a museum education research project whose intent is to analyze the content of selected acoustical taped tours used in major art museums. This study is being conducted in the Adult and Continuing Education division of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

In order to establish the context for content analysis, I am doing a preliminary survey to determine how widely used such acoustical guides are in American art museums in the forty largest cities. I solicit your help in developing this background information and thank you sincerely for what will be, I hope, your prompt response to this brief inquiry. Naturally, your responses will be treated confidentially.

Again, thank you.

Marilyn B. Shaw

---

APPENDIX B

Survey Questionnaire

MUSEUM EDUCATION RESEARCH  
 BOX 881  
 BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA 24060

---

1. Has your museum ever used any kind of acoustical tour guide for individual museum visitors? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
 For special exhibitions? \_\_\_\_\_ For permanent collection? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you currently use acoustical tour guides? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
 For special exhibitions? \_\_\_\_\_ For permanent collection? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What type of system do you use?  
 (a) portable cassette unit (linear, progressive tour) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (b) magnetic induction (hidden wires, non-linear tour) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (c) acoustic listening post (fixed locations) \_\_\_\_\_
4. How many units do you have? \_\_\_\_\_
5. If you do NOT now use some acoustical guide system, would you like to? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Undecided \_\_\_\_\_
6. If you have decided not to use acoustical tour guides, why not?  
 (a) We question their educational effectiveness. \_\_\_\_\_  
 (b) We can't afford them. \_\_\_\_\_  
 (c) We don't believe there would be sufficient visitor interest. \_\_\_\_\_  
 (d) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (e) \_\_\_\_\_
7. If you DO use an acoustical guide system, do you have statistics reflecting volume of use by visitors? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
8. Is the system profitable to your museum? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
9. Do you have transcripts of your acoustical tapes on file?  
 Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

10. Would you be willing to make transcripts available to me for my content analysis research? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
11. Would you be interested in seeing the results of this research? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE. THANKS FOR YOUR HELP.

---

APPENDIX C

Art Museums Surveyed

ART MUSEUMS SURVEYED

1. The Museum of Modern Art, New York
2. The Brooklyn Museum, New York
3. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
4. The Guggenheim Museum, New York
5. The Whitney Museum, New York
6. The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
7. The Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
8. The National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C.
9. The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
10. The National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.
11. The Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C.
12. The Art Institute of Chicago
13. The Los Angeles County Museum of Art
14. The Philadelphia Museum of Art
15. The Detroit Institute of Arts
16. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
17. The Baltimore Museum of Art
18. The Dallas Museum of Fine Arts
19. The Cleveland Museum of Art
20. The Indianapolis Museum of Art
21. The Milwaukee Art Center
22. The San Francisco Museum of Art
23. The Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego
24. The High Museum of Art, Atlanta
25. The Albright-Knox Gallery & Buffalo Fine Arts Academy
26. The Cincinnati Art Museum
27. The Minneapolis Institute of Arts
28. The Fort Worth Art Center Museum
29. The Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth
30. The Toledo Museum of Art
31. The Newark Museum
32. The Portland Art Museum
33. The Contemporary Arts Foundation, Oklahoma City
34. The J. P. Speed Art Museum, Louisville
35. The Oakland Museum
36. The Long Beach Museum of Art
37. The Boston Museum of Fine Arts
38. The Brooks Memorial Art Gallery and Memphis Academy of Arts,  
Memphis
39. The St. Louis Art Museum
40. The New Orleans Museum of Art
41. The Phoenix Art Museum
42. The Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts
43. The Seattle Art Museum
44. The Jacksonville Art Museum



45. The Frick Art Museum, Pittsburg
46. The Denver Art Museum
47. The William Rockhill Nelson Gallery & Athens Museum of Fine Arts,  
Kansas City
48. The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore

APPENDIX D

Population of Available Transcripts by Exhibition Types

Population of Available Transcripts by Exhibition Types

Code	Museum	Exhibition Types						Total	
		"a"-Artist	"b"-Art Period or Movement	"c"-Collection	"d"-Nationality or Place	"e"-Theme	"f"-Medium Other Than Painting		"g"-Gallery of Museum Orientation
*A	Baltimore Museum of Art	2	0	0	0	3	0	2	7
*B	Museum of Fine Arts, Boston	2	1	1	2	1	0	1	8
*C	Guggenheim Museum	10	1	2	2	2	1	2	20
*D	Los Angeles County Museum of Art	3	2	1	0	0	2	0	8
*E	Metropolitan Museum of Art	1	17	5	3	10	6	12	54
*F	Museum of Modern Art	4	0	2	0	0	1	1	8
*G	National Gallery of Art	2	1	0	1	2	0	1	7
*H	Philadelphia Museum of Art	5	1	0	1	0	0	0	7
	Total	29	23	11	9	18	10	19	119

\*\*A Milwaukee Art Center All 17 available short transcripts were analyzed for content components but not by exhibition types.

\*\*B Minneapolis Institute of Arts All 16 available transcripts were analyzed for content components but not by exhibition types.

\* full-length transcripts

\*\*short transcripts

APPENDIX E

Order in Which Full-Length Transcripts  
Were Analyzed

Order in Which Full-Length Transcripts Were Analyzed

Museum	Transcript	Transcript Number	Exhibit Type	Date
1. Metropolitan Museum of Art	Masterpieces of Tapestry From the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century	E-22	Medium	2/74
2. Museum of Modern Art	Galleries of the Edward Steichen Photography Center	F-29	Medium	1967
3. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston	American and European Impressionism	B-5	Period or Movement	6/73
4. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston	One Hundred European Paintings and Drawings From the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Leigh B. Block	B-9	Collection	1/68
5. Los Angeles County Museum of Art	Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage	D-19	Period or Movement	7/68
6. Museum of Modern Art	Four Americans in Paris	F-31	Theme	12/70
7. National Gallery of Art	The Far North Exhibition	G-33	Place	3/73
8. Metropolitan Museum of Art	The Metropolitan's Collection of Rembrandts	E-27	Artist	11/67
9. Guggenheim Museum	John Chamberlain Retrospective	C-16	Artist	12/71

Order in Which Full-Length Transcripts Were Analyzed (Continued)

	Museum	Transcript	Transcript Number	Exhibit Type	Date
10.	National Gallery of Art	African Art and Motion	G-34	Theme	5/74
11.	Museum of Modern Art	Masterpieces of the Museum-2nd Floor	F-28	Orientation	4/71
12.	National Gallery of Art	American Art at Mid-Century	G-32	Period	10/73
13.	Baltimore Museum of Art	Van Gogh	A-2	Artist	10/70
14.	Guggenheim Museum	1900-1970: A Tenth Anniversary Selection From the Guggenheim Museum Collection	C-14	Collection	5/70
15.	Baltimore Museum of Art	Blue Traditions	A-1	Theme	12/73
16.	Philadelphia Museum of Art	Art Treasures from Japan	H-37	Place	2/66
17.	Metropolitan Museum of Art	19th Century America	E-23	Period	4/70
18.	Guggenheim Museum	Selected Sculpture and Works on Paper	C-13	Medium	7/69

Order in Which Full-Length Transcripts Were Analyzed (Continued)

	Museum	Transcript	Transcript Number	Exhibit Type	Date
19.	Philadelphia Museum of Art	Gericault Show	H-36	Artist	4/72
20.	Metropolitan Museum of Art	The Art of Fashion	E-21	Theme	10/67
21.	Guggenheim Museum	Thannhauser Gallery	C-15	Orientation	6/73
22.	Los Angeles County Museum of Art	150 Years of American Printmaking	D-17	Medium	6/69
23.	Guggenheim Museum	Futurism: A Modern Focus	C-10	Period or Movement	11/73
24.	National Gallery of Art	John Sloan Centennial Exhibition	G-35	Artist	9/71
25.	Metropolitan Museum of Art	Art Treasures of Turkey	E-26	Nationality or Place	1/68
26.	Baltimore Museum of Art	The American Wing	A-3	Orientation	1973
27.	Guggenheim Museum	Architectural Tour	C-12	Theme	5/71
28.	Museum of Fine Arts, Boston	Masterpieces From the Metropolitan Museum of Art	B-6	Orientation	9/70

Order in Which Full-Length Transcripts Were Analyzed (Continued)

	Museum	Transcript	Transcript Number	Exhibit Type	Date
29.	Los Angeles County Museum of Art	Edvard Munch	D-18	Artist	1/69
30.	Philadelphia Museum of Art	Romantic Art in Britain	H-38	Period	3/68
31.	Metropolitan Museum of Art	Masterworks From the Museum of the American Indian Heye Foundation	E-24	Collection	10/73
32.	Metropolitan Museum of Art	Masterpieces of Fifty Centuries	E-25	Orientation	4/72
33.	Museum of Modern Art	Barnett Newman Retrospective	F-30	Artist	10/71
34.	Guggenheim Museum	Amsterdam/Paris/Dusseldorf	C-11	Nationality or Location	10/72
35.	Museum of Fine Arts, Boston	The Art of Wilhelm Lehmbruck	B-7	Artist	1/73
36.	Museum of Fine Arts, Boston	African Art of the Dogon	B-8	Place	7/73



Order in Which Full-Length Transcripts Were Analyzed (Continued)

Museum	Transcript	Transcript Number	Exhibit Type	Date
37. Los Angeles County Museum of Art	The Block Collection	D-20	Collection	9/67
38. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston	The Rathbone Years	B-4	Theme	6/72

APPENDIX F

Order in Which Short-Length Transcripts  
Were Analyzed

Order in Which Short-Length Transcripts Were Analyzed

<u>Transcript Number</u>	<u>Transcript</u>
1. BB-23	Brancusi
2. BB-33	Honore Daumier
3. AA-5	New Materials in Art
4. AA-17	Wassily Kandinsky
5. AA-2	Emil Nolde
6. BB-20	Ukiyo-E
7. AA-10	The Art of Toulouse-Lautrec
8. BB-31	Poussin: Death of Germanicus
9. BB-29	Delacroix
10. AA-6	Feininger
11. BB-18	Gope
12. AA-13	The Native Art of Haiti
13. BB-24	Beckmann
14. BB-19	Thorvaldsen
15. BB-21	Benin
16. AA-5	What is Realism in Art?
17. BB-27	Hiroshige
18. AA-11	Georgia O'Keeffe
19. AA-15	The People of Montmarte (Toulouse-Lautrec)
20. BB-25	Rembrandt Etchings
21. AA-16	Wassily Kandinsky
22. BB-26	Cycladic Figures

Order in Which Short-Length Transcripts were Analyzed (Continued)

<u>Transcript Number</u>	<u>Transcript</u>
23. AA-12	Stuart Davis
24. BB-30	Post-Impressionists
25. BB-32	Manet: The Smoker
26. AA-7	German Expressionism
27. AA-9	Marc Chagall
28. AA-14	Scenes of Paris (Utrillo, Vuillard, and Bonnard)
29. BB-22	Bundu
30. BB-28	Matisse Sculpture
31. AA-1	Fauvism
32. AA-8	Haitian Gallery: Religious Cultural Influence in Haitian Art
33. AA-3	The New Art Experience

---

AA identifies the Milwaukee Art Center

BB identifies the Minneapolis Institute of Arts

APPENDIX G

Content Analysis Instrument

Content Analysis Instrument

Transcript \_\_\_\_\_

Category Code	Category	Tally	Total	%
1.	THE EXPERIENCE OF ART _____			
2.	SOCIO-CULTURAL, ART HISTORICAL CONTEXT: OVERVIEW _____			
3.	ART HISTORICAL CONTEXT: DETAIL CENTRAL TO ARTIST, ARTIFACT, MEDIUM _____			
4.	ANECDOTAL: DETAIL PERIPHERAL TO ARTIST OR ARTIFACT _____			
5.	GENERAL DESCRIPTION OR EXPLANATION _____			
6.	SPECIFIC DESCRIPTION OR EXPLANATION _____			
7.	INTERPRETATION: UNQUALIFIED JUDGMENT OR OPINION _____			
8.	INTERPRETATION: QUALIFIED JUDGMENT OR OPINION _____			
9.	EVALUATION: UNQUALIFIED JUDGMENT OR OPINION _____			
10.	EVALUATION: QUALIFIED JUDGMENT OR OPINION _____			
11.	TOURING DIRECTIONS _____			
12.	REFERENCE TO EXHIBIT CONTENTS _____			
13.	PERSONAL REFLECTIONS/QUESTIONS BY NARRATOR _____			
	TOTAL UNITS ANALYZED			

APPENDIX H

Roster of Experts

Roster of Experts

, Free-Lance Acoustical Guide Script Writer,  
New York City.

, President, Acoustiguide, New York City.

, Director, Roanoke Fine Arts Center, Roanoke, Virginia.

, President, Picture Sound Associates, New York City.

, Artist and Lecturer, University of California  
at Los Angeles.



APPENDIX I

Category Definitions

### Category Definitions

#### Category 1: THE EXPERIENCE OF ART

This category includes general statements about art, artists, and creativity which concern themselves directly with the development of visual awareness and aesthetic sensibility in the viewer.

Statements in this category do not present factual material or describe particular content of an exhibit, but rather are concerned with art as an integrative, synthesizing, unifying experience which is qualitative and based on characteristic discriminations associated with aesthetic experience.

Statements in this category orient the viewer to the distinctive character of the experience of art, from the perspective of either the producer of art or his audience.

#### Category 2: SOCIO-CULTURAL, ART-HISTORICAL CONTEXT: OVERVIEW

This category includes statements which (1) establish the larger social and cultural context in which the art was produced, statements which may refer to political, economic, or social conditions or to the dominant philosophy of a people or era.

(2) describe, in global or general terms, particular art movements and sequences of art historical periods.

#### Category 3: ART HISTORICAL CONTEXT: DETAIL CENTRAL TO ARTIST, ARTIFACT, OR MEDIUM

This category includes statements about an artist, object, or medium which delineate specific characteristics of period, genre, technique, or style.

#### Category 4: ANECDOTAL: DETAIL PERIPHERAL TO ARTIST OR ARTIFACT

Details concerning (1) creation or acquisition of an art object of anecdotal material associated with its ownership or exhibition.

(2) personal dimensions of the artist's life, including habits, personality, problems, activities, associates, affinities.

Category 5: GENERAL DESCRIPTION OR EXPLANATION

This category is limited to statements which (1) describe the contents of an art object in rudimentary physical terms without interpretation or evaluation.

(2) explain aspects of art objects (relatively) objectively.

Category 6: SPECIFIC DESCRIPTION OR EXPLANATION

This category includes (1) specific references to constituent formal elements of the particular art object, such as line, color, shapes, and textures.

(2) statements about relevant considerations of balance, fragmentation, complexity, depth, sharpness, regularity, verticality, and distortion, etc.

Statements in this category are (relatively) objective and flatly descriptive; they do not appear to be either interpretive or evaluative.

Category 7: INTERPRETATION: UNQUALIFIED JUDGMENT OR OPINION

This category includes statements which discuss the "meaning" of an art object or which characterize the mood of an object in what seem to be judgments of fact rather than of opinion.

The specific source of authority is unidentified in the interpretation, which seems to be offered as the interpretation rather than one of a number of possible interpretations.

Category 8: INTERPRETATION: QUALIFIED JUDGMENT OR OPINION

This category includes statements about the "meaning" of an art object which either (1) identify the source of authority (artist, narrator, or other expert) or

(2) qualify the interpretation by explicit statement that it is only one of a number of possible interpretations

(3) are preceded by "some people believe," "perhaps," or other tentative remarks which indicate the subjectivity of the interpretation.

Category 9: EVALUATION: UNQUALIFIED JUDGMENT OR OPINION

This category includes statements which offer judgments about the value or importance of a work of art without identifying the basis of judgment or authority.

An evaluative statement in this category is unequivocal rather than tentative; it presents the evaluation as fact rather than opinion.

Category 10: EVALUATION: QUALIFIED JUDGMENT OR OPINION

This category includes statements which offer judgments about the value or importance of a work of art or artist but which either  
(1) identify the source of authority or

(2) qualify the statements so they are not presented as absolute fact but suggest the possibility of other evaluative judgments or opinions.

Category 11: TOURING DIRECTIONS

This category is limited to specific directions for using the audio equipment and for locating objects to be discussed in the commentary.

Category 12: REFERENCE TO EXHIBIT CONTENTS

This category includes statements about the general scope of exhibit contents and reference to objects the viewer has seen or will subsequently see in the exhibit, in the form of titling of objects and of comparisons, contrasts, and statements of similarity or dissimilarity.

Category 13: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS/QUESTIONS BY NARRATOR

This category includes (1) statements which are neither interpretive nor evaluative but which present the narrator's personal experience of an artist or art object.

(2) questions posed by the narrator to the viewer.

APPENDIX J

Operational Definitions

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

CATEGORY 1: THE EXPERIENCE OF ART

- EXAMPLES:
- "Ultimately, art has to do with values, with the perception of the qualities of experience."
  - "Let yourself feel into the work you are now looking at; try to become part of it."
  - "Looking at art requires suspending practical concerns temporarily and opening yourself to new experience."

CATEGORY 2: SOCIO-CULTURAL, ART HISTORICAL CONTEXT: OVERVIEW

- EXAMPLES:
- "This painting was a product of its time: it reflects the war that was raging in Europe during that winter."
  - "It represents the development of modern art from Impressionism through Post-impressionism, Cubism, Surrealism, to the Abstract Expressionism of the 1950's."
  - "During the period when it was painted, artists had only rudimentary knowledge of proportion, scale, and anatomy."
  - "The word 'Renaissance' refers to the fact that Italian artists, by the first decade of the 15th century, had revived the arts as they had been practiced by the Romans."
  - "The distress of the Spanish peasant is shown in this work of Rivera."

CATEGORY 3: ART HISTORICAL CONTEXT: DETAIL CENTRAL TO ARTIST OR ARTIFACT

- EXAMPLES:
- "He always worked from the top of the canvas to the bottom, completing one layer before starting the next."
  - "Here is an ancient theme in Chinese and Japanese painting and one frequently used by Buson: the scholar seated in a hut surrounded by a bamboo grove."
  - "In Cubist painting it is rare to find anything realistically portrayed."
  - "Albers has had an infatuation with the square for several decades, and he has done many studies on that subject."

CATEGORY 4: ANECDOTAL: DETAIL PERIPHERAL TO ARTIST OR ARTIFACT

- EXAMPLES:
- "This print of the massacre with the four bodies lying where they had fallen was used at the subsequent trial of Captain Preston."
  - "When this waterscape is at home in the Chicago apartment of Mr. and Mrs. Block, it hangs over the fireplace in the living room."
  - "Two weeks after this painting was completed, Van Gogh's suicide was recorded in this Town Hall."
  - "This painting was auctioned in New York in 1969 and brought the highest price on record for this type of work."

CATEGORY 5: GENERAL DESCRIPTION AND EXPLANATION

- EXAMPLES:
- "Recognizable in this Picasso are shells, a goblet, a pipe, and letters."
  - "The people in this painting are looking into the window of a little shop."
  - "These panels originally formed the sides of wooden chests, called cassoni in Italian."
  - "There are two large blue areas in this watercolor, the sea and the ski."
  - "All of the objects that you see in this still life have been distorted from their more natural shapes."

CATEGORY 6: SPECIFIC DESCRIPTION OR EXPLANATION

- EXAMPLES:
- "Space, like the objects themselves, is presented in fragments which have been geometrically simplified or flattened out."
  - "He didn't mix green but set down streaks of pure blue and yellow next to each other."
  - "There are hundreds of angular lines in this drawing."
  - "This painting is square, and all the elements in it are square."

CATEGORY 7: INTERPRETATION: UNQUALIFIED JUDGMENT OR OPINION

- EXAMPLES:
- "The scene represents peace and tranquility."
  - "The gentleman in this painting has an air of haughtiness about him."
  - "Van Gogh saw the countryside filled with ecstatic movement."
  - "This, of course, was Seurat's goal: to reach beyond Impressionism and apply to his art the results of scientific research in the field of physics."



CATEGORY 8: INTERPRETATION: QUALIFIED JUDGMENT OR OPINION

- EXAMPLES:
- "I think this painting is expressing the tenderness of a child's love for his mother, but you may see different things in it."
  - "The isolation of the figures in the background seems to imply that they, and perhaps all men, are alone and unconnected."
  - "Many art historians believe that these forms symbolize strength or courage."
  - "Probably they were a symbol of Van Gogh's tortured imagination."

CATEGORY 9: EVALUATION: UNQUALIFIED JUDGMENT OR OPINION

- EXAMPLES:
- "Braque is the master of still life in the 20th century."
  - "The most important picture in the gallery is this small Rubens."
  - "In each portrait, the quality of caricature is particularly good."
  - "This drawing is remarkable."

CATEGORY 10: EVALUATION: QUALIFIED JUDGMENT OR OPINION

- EXAMPLES:
- "As one famed expert put it, he is 'cooly exquisite!'"
  - "Some experts believe that his influence on the artists of this century has been the greatest of any."
  - "Perhaps the most inventive of the surrealists is Max Ernst."
  - "According to the artist himself, this portrait is the most fully realized of the whole series."

CATEGORY 11: TOURING DIRECTIONS

- EXAMPLES:
- "On your right as you walk down the gallery, find the small Daumier and we will discuss it."
  - "Please turn off this instrument and return it to the desk when you finish touring the exhibit."
  - "If you are not able to hear well enough, adjust your instrument by turning the volume control dial."

CATEGORY 12: REFERENCE TO EXHIBIT CONTENTS

- EXAMPLES:
- "You will see this theme repeated in other paintings in the exhibit."
  - "Compare the style of this painting with the others we have looked at."
  - "The exhibit covers sculpture produced in Finland between the World Wars."

CATEGORY 13: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS OF NARRATOR

- EXAMPLES:
- "The last time I visited with Picasso, I found him as vigorous as ever."
  - "I like this piece as well as any in the exhibit, partly, I think, because it was so difficult to come by."
  - "As a child, I always enjoyed being in the museum far more than being in school--or anywhere, really."
  - "What do you see when you look at that face?"

APPENDIX K

Coding Instructions

Coding Instructions

The attached list of content units, selected at random from the contents of six acoustical tape transcripts, is presented to you for coding. You are asked to assign each phrase or sentence on the following pages to one of thirteen possible content categories by entering the appropriate category number opposite each sentence.

Please review the coding key carefully before assigning each sentence unit to the category which seems most appropriate. The coding key explains the classification system and provides examples of each category. Each sentence must be placed in only one category, the one which you feel fits it best.

## CATEGORIES FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS

<u>Category</u>	<u>Code</u>
THE EXPERIENCE OF ART _____	1
SOCIO-CULTURAL, ART HISTORICAL CONTEXT: OVERVIEW _____	2
ART HISTORICAL CONTEXT: DETAIL CENTRAL TO ARTIST, ARTIFACT, OR MEDIUM _____	3
ANECDOTAL: DETAIL PERIPHERAL TO ARTIST OR ARTIFACT _____	4
GENERAL DESCRIPTION OR EXPLANATION _____	5
SPECIFIC DESCRIPTION OR EXPLANATION _____	6
INTERPRETATION: UNQUALIFIED JUDGMENT OR OPINION _____	7
INTERPRETATION: QUALIFIED JUDGMENT OR OPINION _____	8
EVALUATION: UNQUALIFIED JUDGMENT OR OPINION _____	9
EVALUATION: QUALIFIED JUDGMENT OR OPINION _____	10
TOURING DIRECTIONS _____	11
REFERENCE TO EXHIBIT CONTENTS _____	12
PERSONAL REFLECTIONS/QUESTIONS BY NARRATOR _____	13

APPENDIX L

Coding Validation Form

CODING VALIDATION FORMUNIT OF ANALYSISCATEGORY NUMBER

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 1. "Their culture was an agricultural one, and they were preoccupied with subjects which depicted their daily concerns."   | _____ |
| 2. "Without becoming extremely detailed or elaborate, the carving on these pieces is powerful and the workmanship superb."   | _____ |
| 3. "People have seen hopelessness or hopefulness in this complex painting, and the meaning is ultimately decided by the individual viewer."  | _____ |
| 4. "To my taste, this is the most beautiful piece in the collection."  | _____ |
| 5. "It's typical of Momoyama painting in the last years of the 16th century to create a surface design with a single tree silhouetted against a golden ground."  | _____ |
| 6. "Some purists feel Picasso's cubism ended when he departed from the straight line and regular plane."   | _____ |
| 7. "Miro, born in 1893 in Barcelona, attended the same art school as Picasso."   | _____ |
| 8. "This painting is titled VIVE LA FRANCE because one of the goblets standing on the table among the vases of flowers, playing cards, fruit, and bottles has, written on it, VIVE LA above the two crossed flags . . ." | _____ |
| 9. "The wood block was made by cutting away the background and areas that were to appear white in the print, and then inking the remaining raised design so that it appears in black."                                   | _____ |
| 10. "This exhibit covers the sculpture of the 18th century in France."   | _____ |

UNIT OF ANALYSISCATEGORY NUMBER

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|---|-------|
| 11. "In order to have the fullest experience in looking at paintings, try to put aside your doubts about the sincerity of the artist."  | _____ |
| 12. "He can either be resurrected Christ, surrounded by the round fence symbolizing the virgin, or the great free bachelor suitor who has been captured for love."                  | _____ |
| 13. "Even though artists continued to paint for churches, they came more and more to use classical or secular themes."  | _____ |
| 14. "Art is endless and continuous and relevant to the time and the people who produce it."   | _____ |
| 15. "You may have noticed in the preceding works on this tour, artists appeared to be less and less concerned with the naturalistic representation of objects."                     | _____ |
| 16. "Suddenly, in the center we see a solitary spot of yellow, the costume of a man who stares out at us in boredom, paying no attention to the frenzy around him."                 | _____ |
| 17. "In painting human figures Leger usually reduced them to robots, explaining that they were no more important to the artist's eye than other neuter objects such as drainpipes." | _____ |
| 18. "It depicts hunters chasing five bears into a net."   | _____ |
| 19. "Van Gogh, tortured by hallucinations, painted more and more compulsively."   | _____ |
| 20. "Note Picasso's use of vertical and horizontal lines."  | _____ |

UNIT OF ANALYSISCATEGORY NUMBER

21. "You will find that this entire exhibition reflects the taste of its owners, and it is not primarily intended as a documentary of the modern art movement." \_\_\_\_\_
22. "When you have entered this gallery, almost facing you on the right you will find a small painting by Daumier entitled PASSERS BY." \_\_\_\_\_
23. "He leads the horse along a way that is of no significance to him except that he should come to the end of it." \_\_\_\_\_
24. "Daumier's greatest triumph was his portrayal of the middle class." \_\_\_\_\_
25. "Note that his angular wedges or facets are shaded in a way that gives an ambiguous three dimensionality." \_\_\_\_\_
26. "Disillusioned by World War I, Dadaists became pessimistic about traditional social and esthetic values." \_\_\_\_\_
27. "If you wish to return to the gallery to study some more paintings which we have not discussed, please return this instrument to the desk first." \_\_\_\_\_
28. "While bronze was the most popular medium for sculpture in ancient times, few such sculptures have survived." \_\_\_\_\_
29. "The development of Cubism marked a turning point in the history of art." \_\_\_\_\_
30. "These works are influenced by the industrial revolution, which had profound consequences for the lives of the people at that time." \_\_\_\_\_



APPENDIX M

Schedule of Interviews

Schedule of Interviews

<u>Name and Affiliation</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>
Getty Museum	June 17, 1975	Malibu, California
National Gallery of Art	Feb. 5, 1976*	Washington, D.C.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art	June, 1975	Los Angeles
George Washington University	Oct. 10, 1975	Washington, D.C.
Milwaukee Art Center	Oct. 30, 1975 Feb. 5, 1976*	Milwaukee
Free Lance Scriptwriter	Sept. 4, 1975	New York City
Acoustiguide Corporation	Sept. 3, 1975	New York City
Los Angeles County Museum of Art	June, 1975	Los Angeles
National Endowment for the Humanities	Nov., 1975 Feb. 5, 1976*	Washington, D.C.
Telesonic Corporation	Feb. 4, 1976*	Fairfield, N.J.

Schedule of Interviews (Continued)

<u>Name and Affiliation</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>
Museum Educators' Roundtable	Aug. 12, 1975	Washington, D.C.
Baltimore Museum of Art	January 26, 1975	Baltimore
Roanoke Fine Arts Center	Oct. 23, 1975	Roanoke, Virginia
Smithsonian Institution	Aug., 1975	Washington, D.C.
Hirshhorn Museum	Aug. 11, 1975	Washington, D.C.
Picture-Sound Associates	Sept. 3, 1975	New York City
Baltimore Museum of Art	Feb. 5, 1976*	Baltimore
Philadelphia Museum of Art	Nov. 20, 1975* Feb. 5, 1976*	Philadelphia
Santa Barbara Museum of Art	July 4, 1975	Santa Barbara
Council for Education in the Visual Arts	May, 1975	New York City
National Endowment for the Arts	Feb. 5, 1976*	Washington, D.C.

Schedule of Interviews (Continued)

<u>Name and Affiliation</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>
Artist and Lecturer	Feb. 6, 1976	Los Gatos, Calif.
University of Wisconsin	Feb. 4, 1976*	Milwaukee
National Gallery of Art	Aug. 10-12, 1975 Sept. 29, 1975	Washington, D.C.
Minneapolis Institute of Arts	Feb. 5, 1975*	Minneapolis
Milwaukee Art Center	Oct. 30, 1975 Feb. 5, 1976*	Milwaukee

\* Telephone Interviews

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ADULT EDUCATION IN THE ART MUSEUM: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF  
ACOUSTICAL GUIDES IN AMERICAN ART MUSEUMS

by

Marilyn B. Shaw

(ABSTRACT)

This study was concerned with identifying, describing, and analyzing the content components of selected transcripts of acoustical guides used in major American art museums to aid adult audiences in interpreting or enjoying the art on exhibit. The principal objectives of the research were to characterize the content of these recorded tours and to analyze patterns of content emphasis among museums. Additionally, the study examined the general availability and use of recorded tours, the audiences for which they were designed, the authorship of scripts, the basis for decisions about script content, and the script preparation and production processes.

Acoustical tour guide transcripts from ten major American art museums, the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Guggenheim Museum, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the National Gallery of Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Milwaukee Art Center, and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, provided the material for content analysis.

A questionnaire to collect background information and to identify the accessible population was developed, mailed to, and returned by forty eight art museums in the forty largest American cities. A content analysis instrument was developed for the study which characterized the transcript content in thirteen categories reflecting distinct differences in content emphasis. In all, 10,477 sentence and phrase units from thirty eight full-length and thirty three short recorded tour transcripts from ten art museums were categorized.

Data resulting from the content analysis were tabulated and presented descriptively and statistically. Descriptive analysis consisted of frequency distributions of content units classified by content category; statistical analysis employed the chi-square test to test for the independence of content distribution and particular museums and exhibition types which the recorded tours accompanied.

Statistical tests of the independence of content, museums, and exhibition types indicated a lack of independence among them.

Patterns of content in recorded tours reflected a predominantly descriptive and specific orientation: commentary was generally more objective than subjective, more pedagogical than andragogical, more declarative than interactive, more concrete than abstract. General Description or Explanation and Art Historical Context accounted for the highest frequencies of content units. Relatively little transcript content was interpretive, evaluative, or abstract. Almost no specific references were made to the philosophy or psychology of art or to

multiple ways of approaching the art experience.

It was recommended that script authors consider writing more subjectively, more qualitatively, more poetically for the adult audience; that allusions be made to issues in the psychology and philosophy of art; that there be more interactive andragogical approaches to museum visitors; that objectives of this educational medium be clearly identified so that effectiveness can be measured; that alternative approaches to the communication of facts and ideas be explored; and that audio tours warrant more active promotion within museums that have them and reconsideration by museums that doubt their educational effectiveness.