Seducing the Eye: Contemporary Exhibition Design in France and Italy
James E. Traue

In 1401, Filippo Brunelleschi, the Florentine sculptor, made his first pilgrimage to Rome, accompanied by his friend Donatello, with the intention of studying antique sculpture. "While he was studying the sculptures," according to his biographer Manetti writing in 1480, "he observed the ancients way of building and their laws of symmetry. It seemed to him that he could recognize a certain order in the disposition, like members and bones, and it was as though God had enlightened him." [1]

In 1996, I made a similar pilgrimage from Paris to Lyon, Turin, Milan, Florence, and Rome, ostensibly to study recent developments in the art of the book exhibition, but the experience was similar to that of Brunelleschi: my eye turned constantly to the structure of exhibitions themselves, and like him, I began to recognize a "certain order" in their disposition, certain underlying structures present in exhibitions of books, manuscripts, paintings, and sculpture, and of objects in archaeological, anthropological, and science museums. This paper is deliberately structured as a pilgrimage,[2] and the reasons for this departure from the academic norm will become clear in due course. This account begins with Rome, the last city visited, and it is to Rome that it returns for its conclusion.

My interest in book exhibitions arose from the particular needs of the Alexander Turnbull Library, New Zealand's national research library, in the 1970s and 1980s. The Library had been forced, under the pressures of escalating public demand and shrinking resources, to redefine itself from being all things to all comers to a research library dedicated to serving those who used the library's resources to create new works. As the focus narrowed, it was obvious that something had to be given back to the general public. What was needed was a new kind of book exhibition appealing to the person in the street, which would please, stimulate, and also carry messages about the nature and purpose of the materials in a heritage institution dedicated to serving researchers. The traditional book exhibitions I had seen in Europe, North America, and Australasia were, with very few exceptions, dull, boring, and inappropriate to this need.

Similar thinking, arising from a perception that the research library had to reach out beyond its research users to communicate directly with the general public, had taken place in the United States

1   David Watkin, ed., *A History of Western Architecture,* 2d (London: Laurence King, 1996). A slightly more pedestrian translation is available in *The Life of Brunelleschi* by Antonio de Tuccio Manetti (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1970), 50.

2   For the significance of pilgrimage as a liminoid function, see Victor Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).
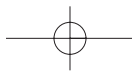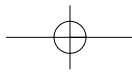
in the early 1980s. The "blockbuster" book exhibition, pioneered by Vartan Gregorian at the New York Public Library and Daniel Boorstin at the Library of Congress in the early 1980s, seemed to offer a possible solution. From a careful study of these exhibitions, the concept of the "minds-on" book exhibition was developed in 1988,[3] as a book exhibition designed deliberately to enable the viewer to uncover the underlying relationships between the objects on display.

The assumption made was that human beings are pattern-makers who instinctively try to fit experience into patterns or structures to give them meaning,[4] and that a book exhibition should be designed to allow the viewer to use, to the maximum, this passion for discovering structure. If the viewers participate in the exhibition by discovering new connections, new relationships and, thus, new meanings, they will experience a shock of recognition and have a truly minds-on experience. This minds-on experience is the same kind of thrill that children experience in the new hands-on children's museums. Essentially, it is the recognition of structure in the external world.

Books, manuscripts, and archival records are, in general, unlikely candidates for exhibition in a gallery or museum setting because of their lack of visual appeal. They are packages of meaning, and tightly wrapped packages at that, which take hours to undo and require the use of a special, linear technique called reading. To adapt Stephen Greenblatt's concepts of resonance and wonder, they, are in general, low on wonder. Wonder is "the power of a displayed object to stop the viewer in his or her tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted attention." [5]

The great medieval illustrated manuscripts such as Michelangelo's diaries, Gutenberg's Bible, and the Kelmscott Chaucer are all objects capable of evoking wonder and, as such, eminently exhibitable as isolated objects. But there was little in the Alexander Turnbull Library's collections of predominantly nineteenth and twentieth-century New Zealand books, manuscripts, and pictures that had that kind of power.
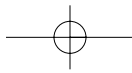
Michael King, the biographer of Frank Sargeson, commented that the most powerful object for him in the *Behind the Printed Page* exhibition of writers' papers in the National Library of New Zealand Gallery in 1996 was the handwritten draft of Frank Sargeson's story, "Conversation With My Uncle." Its power did not reside in its wonder, its arresting sense of uniqueness, its power to stop us in our tracks and to evoke an exalted attention, but in its relationship to what had gone before in New Zealand writing, the change in Sargeson's style that it signaled, and the impact of that vocabulary and sentence structure on future New Zealand writing: in short, to use Greenblatt's other term, its resonance.

3   J.E. Traue, "The Book Exhibition as a 'Minds-On' Experience," in *Committed to Print: Selected Essays in Praise of the Common Culture of the Book* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1991).

4   This assumption has a long pedigree. A useful beginning is Plato's observation in *The Laws* that only humankind has developed a sense of order, and Aristotle's notion in his *Poetics* of the pleasure of recognition. A useful summary can be found in the introduction to E.H. Gombrich's *The Sense of Order* (London: Phaidon, 1979). The more adventurous can sample G.L. Edelman's theory of cognition in *Neural Darwinism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

5   Stephen Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display,* edited by Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 42.
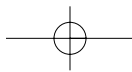
Books and manuscripts have a potential for resonance, "the power of the displayed object to reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged and for which it may be taken by the viewer to stand." [6] In a resonant exhibition, according to Greenblatt, the viewer is pulled "away from the celebration of isolated objects towards a series of implied, often half-visible, relationships and questions," [7] towards questions of how, of what, and of why, questions of relationships and meanings.

Greenblatt developed these concepts of wonder and resonance to distinguish between different approaches to the exhibition of works of art, the one emphasizing the uniqueness of a work of art, and the other the various contexts of a painting or sculpture; but, as one can readily appreciate, they are handy tools for thinking about the exhibition of books. For the exceptional, the *Book of Kells*, the Lindisfarne Gospels, and the Kelmscott Chaucer, the evocation of wonder is in order; for the run-of-the-mill exhibitions of books and manuscripts it is clearly resonance that the designer seeks to manifest. The kind of book exhibition that would meet the Turnbull's needs would, first of all, draw the viewer into recognizing connections between objects in the exhibition, and then set up resonances which would hint at wider meanings to be uncovered by the viewer.
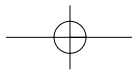
The objectives of the visit to France and Italy were to see as many book exhibitions as possible against which to test the principles developed for the "minds-on" book exhibition, and to catch up with recent developments in European exhibition design. The copious quantity of published literature on exhibition principles and techniques does not address the problems inherent in book exhibitions, and the available published analysis of particular exhibitions offers little of relevance.

Paris was the first choice because of the extraordinary number and range of first-class museums concentrated in one area, outranking even the richness and concentration of Washington, DC. In addition, the French, since the time of André Malraux, the first Minister of Culture under de Gaulle, had been investing heavily in museums and, recently, under Mitterand, had invested billions of francs in building new museums and refurbishing old ones. This created a bonus, something not anticipated, and that was an historical perspective on the evolution of contemporary exhibition design. The exhibitions in Paris dated from those created in the late 1940s to those of the mid-1990s, and the contrasts were a further stimulus to thought. Mitterand's demand that the new state-funded museums and libraries be more accessible to the public, abetted by substantial investment in research and development by the Ministry of Culture (the Ministry's annual budget is one per cent of the national budget) had created innovative approaches to exhibition design and a cadre of brilliant exhibition designers. But initially, the French had

6   Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder,"
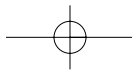   42.
7   Greenblatt, 45.
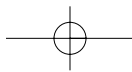
imported Italian designers such as Gae Aulenti, who designed the display areas in the Musée d'Orsay, and then the space in the Pompidou Centre for the permanent exhibition of modern art. The names of Italian designers appear regularly in the literature from the United States, South America, Britain, Germany, and other European countries. Even though there appears currently to be a lack of investment in museums in Italy, and many travelers' tales of the perilous state of many of the government-funded museums, the brilliance of Italian designers in special exhibitions and fairs, and in other related areas, made a short visit to Italy essential. Those related areas and, at first glance, the relationship may seem very tenuous indeed, became increasingly important sources after Paris. In these related areas, I thought I had found the ultimate in the interactive exhibition, where the displayed object becomes a part of the viewer.

The result of this immersion was the isolation of a few general principles, of a "certain order in the disposition" of exhibitions per se, which can be applied to the exhibition of books and manuscripts. The first, and the most obvious, is the use of a strong focal point to draw the eye to a point in space and the strengthening of focal points by adding frames: either the "n" frame (the arch closed to the sky, or the doorway) or its opposite, the "u" frame (the avenue of clipped trees open to the sky). And as a variation, the interposition of a sighting device similar to the blade of the foresight of a gun—such as the obelisk in the Place de la Concorde—which focuses the eye on the opening of the Arc de Triomphe.

Exhibition designers use either one strong controlling axis which allows no ambiguities—the eye is commanded towards one goal—or a multiplicity of focal points which are revealed as the viewer moves through the exhibition. The most powerful example of the single compelling axis was in the exhibition on Armenian civilization at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. The opening section, rich in rare illuminated manuscripts and books, was in a long room almost the length of a football field but half as wide, with a stud of some eight or nine metres. To break up this vast space in order to display relatively small objects, several large structures, about four meters high and two-thirds of the width of the room, were built containing small niches to hold folio-sized volumes. These niches provided focused viewing for the objects in this large room, plus security and controlled lighting. To create a visual unity in a long room with very low lighting levels, and with what easily could have been visual clutter, the designer drove a narrow avenue, the "u" frame, the full length of the central axis, between the structures, to a brightly lit doorway (the "n" frame), used to frame light at the end of the room. This avenue was created solely for the visual effect; it was very narrow and obstructed so that the viewer could not walk down it, and it was so compelling that the feeling was of a sudden visual swoop down the length of the gloomy room to the
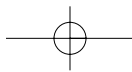
lighted doorway. As a means of articulating visual space and compelling the eye, it was superb. As a means of articulating meaning, even of showing the objects to their best advantage, it was far less successful. And it was not by chance that the structures were painted a dark green, and that the strongly emphasized linearity of the space was softened by curves, by using a rounded structure as the vestibule to the exhibition and curved balustrades at the midpoint. The significance of these features will be discussed later.

Much more common was the use of serial focal points; offering one focal point at the entrance, and then allowing new focal points to emerge as the viewer moved throughout the exhibition. The eye is caught, the head follows, and the feet are led down the visual path.

One of the most successful was in the permanent display of paintings at the Sforza Castle in Milan. The visitor moves through a series of large rooms organized by the standard art history categories of country, century, school, and artist. Most of the paintings are hung on rigid banner-like structures of perforated aluminum or heavily varnished scrim of varying widths suspended between ceiling and floor in irregular patterns. It seems unsophisticated at first glance, and certainly very inexpensive compared with the newly refurbished galleries in Paris and Lyon. As the viewer moves forward in each gallery, a new focal point is revealed, usually on one of the banners but sometimes on a side wall, and emphasis is added by slight or large increases in the intensity of the lighting. As the viewer's feet follow the visual clues and move towards a focal point, other focal points emerge. From time to time, a very obvious focal point was left blank; there was no picture. Viewers, obviously puzzled by this absence, slowed down, looked around, and discovered the painting on the reverse side of the banner, boldly illuminated. The painting at each focal point was, as one soon discovered, one of the choicer items in the collection. The viewers, by following the visual clues with their feet, received a visual reward, that of finding the best paintings in the collection.

The major variation on the vista with its strong focal point is the full or partial blocking of a vista to create suspense or, if the anticipation is strong, to create a visual shock. The paintings hidden on the reverse of the banners at the Sforza Castle created suspense: the imposition of a blank wall totally blocking the view creates a visual shock, and even greater suspense and anticipation. With partial *blocage,* a tantalizing portion of what lies ahead is revealed. Total and partial *blocage* were used with great subtlety in the exhibition galleries of the Institute du Monde Arabe in Paris to create suspense. In addition, "masking" was employed, by hiding from view at a distance in order to heighten anticipation and encourage exploration. Structures that the mind registered as likely to be display cabinets, and seemingly next in the exhibition sequence, were deliberately concealed from direct view by eye-level walls,
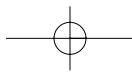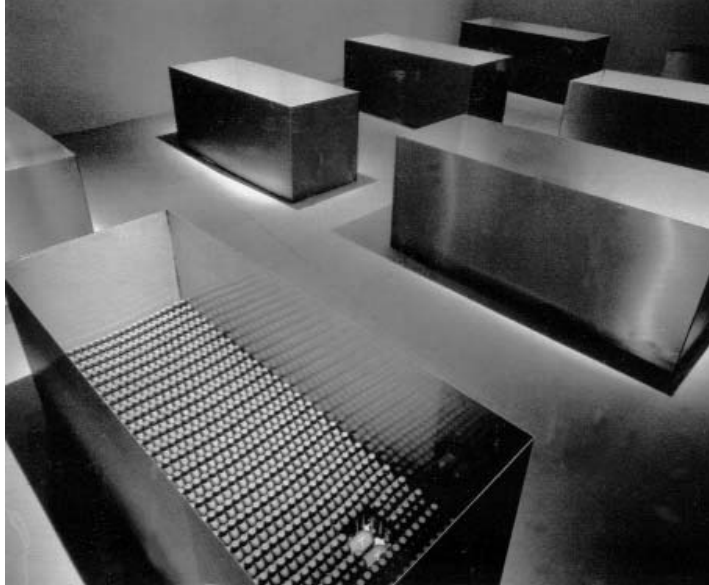
angled slightly to suggest their entrances. In the Gallo-Roman
Museum in Lyon, occasional circular waist-high walls, blank and
unlabeled, from behind which light was emerging, served to excite
the viewer's curiosity. By approaching and then interacting with
these walls, that is by leaning right over them, the viewer was
enabled to look down to see brilliantly lighted Roman mosaic floors
on the level below.

One of the most blatant uses of this device was in the
Armenian exhibition at the Bibliothèque Nationale. Two blank
walls, about five meters wide, each with an open window cut
through it, stood in isolation. Only as the viewers approached,
curiosity whetted, did they become aware of light coming up on the
far side of the sill of the window. It was only by interacting physi-
cally with the construction, that is by leaning right through the
window, that the viewer could see the display case, the reward, set
well below the level of the sill.

The masking technique was used brilliantly in the theme
exhibition of the Florence Biennale at the Leopolda railway station.
One stunning example was the display of the Calvin Klein fashion
clothing pieces; they were concealed in a clutch of large, visually
arresting unlabeled stainless steel vats, each stomach height, into
which one had to lean in order to see the objects which were set well
down at knee height.

The same trick was used in the display stand for Ferre, the
designer of accessories, on the ground floor of the Rinascente
department store in Milan. Two open stands allowed the passer by
to see some of the goods from the aisle, but the third stand was a
hollow tube, lit from the interior and waist high, into which one had
to lean to see the goods on display. But to get to the tube, the shop-
pers had to step up slightly onto the Ferre stand and to invade the
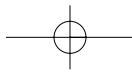
selling space from the aisle of the department store, thus first making a commitment with their feet.

Another technique with a very powerful effect is that of making the viewers turn around, against the forward flow induced by the focal point ahead, and retrace their steps for their reward. The painting on the other side of the banner at the Sforza castle is a mild example. In the Louvre in Paris and the Musée des Beaux Arts in Lyon, as viewers emerge from narrow doorways in massively thick walls they discover major objects in deeply recessed niches, strongly lit, in the walls behind them, to which they have to turn back. A prime example was in the Gallo-Roman Museum in Lyon, which winds down a steep hillside. Each gallery slopes downward, and the impulsion forward under the pull of gravity is accentuated by very strongly lit focal points at the end of each gallery. This strong forward acceleration was deliberately checked by requiring the viewer to turn back into concealed bays to see the choice exhibits. This technique of *renversement,* a turning back, has a powerful psychological effect on the viewer. There is a feeling of choice, of personal control, and of discovery.

What was common to all of these techniques—these tricks of the trade, or art, of the designer—was the principle of seducing the eye and then proffering a visual reward if the viewer succumbed and moved in the direction indicated by the designer. A subtle example is in a boutique in Milan. The very small display window on the pavement featured an exquisitely arranged bowl of flowers, behind which was a photograph of the face of a smiling, beautiful woman. Only if the shopper moved to enter the door of the boutique could he see, behind the bowl of flowers, the even more beautiful unclothed body of the woman.

The designers were cajoling the viewers into interacting with the exhibition space, to move in a certain direction, to bend their backs to lean into containers and over walls, to invade closed spaces, to turn in their tracks, and guaranteeing a reward. Other, more obvious physical interactions with the spaces were the lifting of lids to see light-sensitive objects, the turning of handles or wheels to look at written information on turning drums, the turning of pages of text, the pulling of information sheets from containers, and climbing steps to see objects. The eye, the hands, the back, and the feet all were involved in a physical interaction with the exhibition's space, but not with the objects on display.

This is "light" interactivity, as distinguished from the heavy interactivity that is characteristic of the new science and technology museums. There, the viewers interact physically with the objects on display; they cause pendulums to swing, balls to roll down slopes, wheels to turn, patterns to form on computer screens, chemical reactions to take place, and living organisms to respond to stimuli. Clearly, in an exhibition of works of art or books and manuscripts, the viewer cannot be allowed to interact with the objects themselves
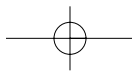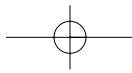
in the same way. This "light" interactivity, a cleverly calculated interaction with the exhibition space, is the solution which modern exhibition designers are developing for exhibitions of books, museum objects, and works of art, and they appear to be learning a great deal from that other related area touched upon earlier—the area where the interactivity is such that the object becomes a part of the viewer.

I am, of course, referring to the design of displays in boutiques and department stores, where the whole purpose of the seduction is consummation, that is the consumption of the object by the viewer. In a retail establishment, the viewer has to be turned into an active participant in the exhibition, first by invading the space and, finally, by acting to purchase.

In Italy, I was spending more and more time in the boutiques exploring the application of the display techniques and principles first discovered in the museums in Paris and Lyon. There were two reasons. First, that of size. Museum spaces in Paris and in the major Italian museums are vast, far beyond the size of any of the spaces available in New Zealand. The Richlieu wing of the Louvre is four city blocks long, and the whole Louvre a full five city blocks. In Paris, I sought out small exhibition spaces such as the Espace Électra, and glanced in passing at boutiques and department stores, where I recognized that the same techniques were being applied in small areas. Second, by the growing realization that the reason the very best Italian exhibition designers were heavily involved in boutique design was because of the considerable design challenges involved. In the city centers of old Italian cities, the shops are housed in buildings dating back several centuries. The external walls, those on the pavements, are all load-bearing walls and, therefore, the openings for shop windows are quite small. The large display windows opening directly onto the pavement that are possible in a steel framed nineteenth century building, where the load is carried internally and not by the external walls, are ruled out. Either the display window on the pavement is small, the width of an archway, or the display window is inside the external wall, and barely visible from the pavement. The shop designer has to seduce the eye, initially using a very limited window space, and then provide powerful incentives to persuade the passersby to use their feet and invade the shop space. Just as in an age of faith, the medieval Christian church was the public art gallery for the masses, so in our consumer culture exhibitions in shops are the true people's exhibitions.

My pilgrimage has provided a set of techniques which I believe will enable me, as an exhibition designer, to seduce the eye and to lead the head and the feet to objects in an exhibition. They have been outlined above as: the use of focal points, either the single controlling visual axis or serial focal points, with the total or partial obstruction of an implied vista to create shock or suspense; the
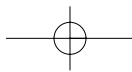
masking of objects, initially to create curiosity and then to involve the viewer in a physical interaction, such as penetrating or bending, to see the concealed object; *renversement,* a turning back against the natural progress of the exhibition; and other techniques which require the viewer to use his or her body to interact physically with the exhibition space; all of which are deployed so as to provide visual rewards for the viewer. However, while such techniques are very useful, they are not sufficient to realize the minds-on book exhibition. Most of the objects in the Turnbull's collections provide little by way of visual rewards. At the Bibliothèque Nationale exhibition, the visual rewards were sumptuous illustrated manuscripts and books; in the Espace Électra, superbly colored illustrations of plants and animals from books and manuscripts; in Florence, elegant Matisse drawings and Michelangelo's illustrated diaries; in Milan's Sforza Palace and elsewhere in the Louvre and the Musée des Beaux Arts, European masterpieces of painting and sculpture. In all of the European institutions, the techniques were being used to enhance the display of items which already had a high visual appeal, and which had a relatively high degree of wonder.

The visual rewards for the viewer in the display of very ordinary nineteenth and twentieth-century books and manuscripts from the Turnbull collections are likely to be few and far between. The use of the standard tricks without adequate rewards will eventually pall, even though in the short term they will provide great fun for the viewer.

In the interactive science and technology museums, the rewards for pressing buttons and pulling levers are normally not aesthetic. They are unlike the visual rewards provided in the art museums and the boutiques. The best exhibits enable the viewer, through interaction, to come to understand principles, whether of mathematics, physics, optics, sound, hydrology, planetary movement, space travel, psychology, chemistry, or biology. The rewards are intellectual, since they are discoveries about relationships in the external world. These are the same objectives of the minds-on exhibition introduced earlier in this paper. For such an exhibition, in order to satisfy the viewer, it will be necessary to create intellectual rewards as the consummation of the seduction of the eye. Such intellectual rewards have been achieved at the Musée d'Orsay and at the exhibition in Florence alluded to earlier in this paper. At the Musée d'Orsay, the philosophy of the curators, abetted by the brilliant design of Gae Aulenti, has created marvelous resonances between works of art and between paintings, sculpture, and the decorative arts. The resonances are so strong that the traditionalists, used to the emphasis in most art museums on isolating the object as a unique work of art to be worshipped, have been very vocal in their protests. The exhibition at the Leopolda in Florence was one of the two major theme exhibitions for the 1996 Florence Biennale. The Biennale theme was *Il tempo e la moda*, loosely translated as time
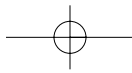
and fashion, but more accurately the times, that is modernity, and fashion. There were twenty-four separate exhibitions in museums in Florence and Prato, and the two major theme exhibitions featured the interplays between modern art and fashion. At the former Leopolda railway station, now little more than a brick shell covered with a corrugated iron roof, Denis Santachiara had designed the installation for the exhibition *New Persona, New Universe*, an exploration of rapid change and the collapsing of boundaries, using fashion, sculpture, sound, film, painting, and conceptual art. He was attempting to show the increasing interactions between ideas, inventions, new discoveries, fashion, and art, and the collapsing of the boundaries between them. It was an exhibition driven by ideas in which the objects were perfectly structured to reveal the ideas.

Santachiara created within the shell of the station building, bigger than a football field, a cocoon of muslin to define the exhibition space. Muslin, insubstantial, temporary, amorphous, lacking rigidity, and moved by every eddy of air, and every passing movement, roofed in the exhibition space and defined passageways and walls within the exhibition. The themes announced by the dominant material of the exhibition were further elaborated at the entrance. Of the four great roman arches of the station entrance, two were used as the outlets for the air conditioning, and the whole area of these two arches was draped in muslin which pulsated in irregular patterns to the air conditioning fans. Half of the front of the building was in constant, pulsating change. One of these themes, the regular pulsation, the distinctive beat of the popular music of modernity, was picked up again and again throughout the exhibition by works using pulsating sound and pulsating light.

The first exhibit was entitled "O," and consisted of a circular wall, painted black on the outside and white on the inside. Around the inside, at eye level, were some sixty round inset spaces, each containing a finger ring provided on request to the artist by a

Figure 2
Denis Santachiara's fabric cocoon for the exhibition *New Persona/New Universe* at the Leopolda station, Florence. Photo Nucci-Sestini, reproduced with the permission of *Abitare.*

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famous ring maker. It was a stunning announcement of a theme picked up by several later exhibits, that of borrowing; the borrowing of art to create fashion, the borrowing of art to create art, and the borrowing of fashion to create fashion. A work of art made up entirely of the works of art of others is pastiche in its purest form.

The second exhibit, this time a square, was a square room almost entirely filled with a square table (note the juxtaposition of circle and square, the basic elements of design). It had a replica of Karl Lagerfeld's working desk, with brushes, pencils, paints, and artists' tools, surrounded by the images that he had drawn on over a lifetime for his work for Chanel and Fendi. From books, magazines, newspapers, and posters, there were images drawn from art, architecture, industrial design, landscape architecture, advertising, and fashion. On the walls were large photographic blow-ups of fashion garments on the models that had made them famous, from Josephine Baker in the 1920s up to the present. Again, there was the theme of indiscriminate borrowing across genres to create the new, one picked up later by other exhibits.

What Santachiara had achieved was a remarkable resonance between the objects in the exhibition, the materials used for the installation, and the structure of the exhibition itself, to provide a powerful persuasion for the viewers to absorb the ideas that underpinned the exhibition. It offered a truly minds-on experience.
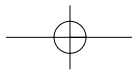
This minds-on experience is characterized by a series of epiphanies induced by the exhibition designer through the resonances built into the exhibition. This differs from the optimal experience characterized by Csikszentmihalyi as "flow"[8] in that the epiphanies sought are sudden, akin to the "ah ha" or "eureka" response. However, it is possible that a viewer, suitably challenged by an exhibition, may enter into the flow experience. In its most developed form, a rhythmical pattern of relationships is constructed so that the viewer, early on in the exhibition experience, is induced to expect to find a pattern, to expect Gombrich's "forward matching."[9] Part of the intellectual enjoyment arises from the challenge of reading this pattern.

This paper has been deliberately structured around the experience of a pilgrimage as a verbal narrative designed to simulate the experience predicated for a minds-on exhibition. At the beginning, there is an announcement of a special experience to come, and hints of structures to be uncovered, in order to heighten expectations and excite the imagination of the reader. Discoveries are announced, with further hints of an underlying pattern into which these and further discoveries will fit. Throughout the narrative, a number of rhythmical elements are introduced, such as linkages backwards (*renversement*) and forwards in the text; regular hints of resonances between museum exhibitions, boutiques, architecture, and gardens; and themes announced only to be delayed to maintain the suspense. At the end, the underlying truth is revealed to the reader (that is, the

8   Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990).
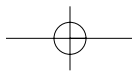9   Gombrich, *The Sense of Order,* 10.
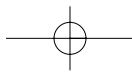
principle of the use of visual rewards to seduce the eye and lead the feet) but, like the best exhibitions, something beyond this expected truth is revealed. In this paper, it is that of the principles of the minds-on exhibition experience.
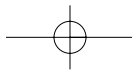
I propose now to return to tie up some of those loose ends which I have been quite deliberately dangling in front of the reader throughout this paper. What was the designer attempting in the Bibliothèque Nationale exhibition of Armenian books and manuscripts? He was using a visual construct which is part of the visual experience of Parisians, something to which they would immediately respond with surprise and then with delight. He simulated, as the controlling axis of the exhibition, the view down through the Tuileries gardens, through the high-clipped avenues of trees open to the sky, towards the lighter space of the Arc de Triomphe, or similar vistas in Paris down avenues of trees to a light-faced building anchoring the vista. The display stands were painted green to make the point obvious, and the curved space at the beginning and the curved balustrade further on were added to suggest the round basins of water surrounding the fountains in the Tuileries.

In Paris, the designer city par excellence, where simply to walk the streets is an education in the principles of design, and where the eye is constantly being trained to respond to focal points, vistas pure, semi-blocked, and fully blocked; to suspense, balance, harmony, and proportion; the response of the Parisians to the visual pun in the Bibliothèque Nationale exhibition is likely to be immediate. However, it has been argued that the techniques and principles used in France and Italy may be substantially European-specific, that people living in an environment of cities with two thousand or more years of classical design built into them are conditioned to respond to certain visual stimuli, and that in a different landscape people might be conditioned differently. It is an argument that must be addressed.

Throughout this paper, the tricks of the good story tellers in all cultures have been deliberately employed. Tricks of partial concealment, of hinting at surprises to come, of using suspense and a little mystery suggest that these tricks are not specifically European, not culture-specific, but universal. They are the same kinds of tricks used by the cunning exhibition designer to motivate viewers to move through space.

I believe that the principles uncovered on my pilgrimage, the equivalent of that "certain order" that Brunelleschi recognized in his studies in Rome, are universal; and as I progressed from Paris, to Lyon, to Turin, to Milan, and to Florence, the influence of Rome became more and more palpable. In the end, it came as no surprise to see, in St. Peter's, the Parthenon, and in the Roman ruins, nearly all of these same principles for articulating space, and leading the eye and the feet through architectural space.

10 "What Is Modern Architecture: An American Perspective" in *Allan Greenberg: Selected Works* (London: Academy Editions, 1995), 11.

I end with a quotation from Alan Greenberg, the leading traditional architect in the United States. "The classical language of architecture (by that he means the tradition inherited from Greece and Rome) is always modern because it is rooted in the physiology and psychology of the individual human being… Classical architecture… is the most comprehensive architectural language that human beings have yet developed."[10] It is this language that the best European exhibition designers are translating into exhibitions, and that we need to learn and understand.