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Effects of Institutional Processes

on Museum Practice

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in Anthropology

by

Elika Pourbohloul

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Effects of Institutional Processes on Museum Practice

by

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Master of Arts in Anthropology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Sondra Hale, Chair

This thesis is an interdisciplinary literature review that illustrates the institutional processes by which museums are structured, using work from diverse disciplines including anthropology, sociology, economics, and art history. I provide a review of museums' funding structures, legitimating mechanisms, and bureaucratic modes of operation as a compliment to standard discourses on identity and representation within foundational anthropological work on museums. In addition, I offer a brief outline on the current state of museums within late capitalism, and explain how institutional and organizational theory is beneficial for understanding and expanding the contemporary discourse on museums. I incorporate academic work on institutions from the interdisciplinary social sciences to comment on how the museum's organizational form works to constrain and define the possible worlds of museum practice.

The thesis of Erika Pourbohloul is approved.

Saloni Mathur

Paul Jeffrey Brantingham

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University of California, Los Angeles

2014

Effects of Institutional Processes on Museum Practice

I. Introduction

Considering the various crises museums are undergoing in their roles as arbiters of culture (Karp et al 2006, O'Doherty 1972) and the historical importance of museums to the field of anthropology, it seems timely to investigate whether or not the available literature on museums can illuminate what some of these concerns may be. It is my contention that important elements—namely, the bureaucratic rise of museums as an organizational form, and the funding structures that support its development—are missing from various assessments and critiques of the museum crisis. These absences are problematic, considering their importance in a neoliberal capitalist world in which the government is taking less and less responsibility for cultural institutions. Contemporary museums are increasingly reliant on corporate sponsorship, earned income, and the patronage of wealthy supporters to ensure their continued survival, which significantly affects significantly their exhibitionary practices. I aim to address why a systematic study of museum administration drawn from diverse bodies of literature in sociology, anthropology, economics, art history, and organizational studies has much to contribute to our understandings of how museums function, the institutional structures by which decisions are made and enacted, and transgressive potential for institutional critique.

Within ethnographic studies of the contemporary museum, is a considerable body of research on the crisis of authority, legitimation, and representation, and the

critical and reflexive turn that this has induced for museum practitioners and the museum world more generally. Among these concerns are, for instance, the grounds upon which museums claim to represent cultures that have been subject to exploitation, dehumanization, and colonialism; how to best represent objects outside of (and sometimes brutally separated from) their native contexts whose meanings may alter in rapid shifts of culture and place; and whether and how audiences can ultimately trust museum narratives as authoritative discourses within the contested space of cultural representation (Lavine and Karp 1991, Preziosi 2012, Crane 2012).

Such focal points make sense in light of the epistemological crises and questions that have informed post-modern discourses within the humanities and social sciences generally. Previously unshakeable categories of classification and narratives established for exotic and “primitive” cultures within the earliest museums of ethnography have been robustly challenged and debated, and the museum world’s reflexive turn has been induced. However, the museum studies literature focuses on these important theoretical concerns at the expense of the operational and financial decisions that structure the possible worlds of exhibitionary practice.

The relative lack of critical attention paid to the administrative practices of museums is evident not just in anthropology and the study of ethnographic museums, but within museum studies generally and its disciplinary foundations grounded in art history. Within art-historical discourse, for example, Victoria Alexander suggests that increased critical attention to the newly-recognized category of American folk art in the 1970’s was because corporate and government agencies were interested in this

category for different and various reasons and supported its growth through funding initiatives for such exhibitions. Meanwhile, art history scholars in typical fashion attended to formalistic concerns, citing only art historical reasons for the emergence of folk-art and highlighting a previous lack of critical attention to this style (Alexander 1996:70). Managing art collections has shifted in accordance with how artists have been able to adjust themselves to broader structural changes and discourses of efficiency and accountability that have come to define many aspects of contemporary life, within and outside of institutions. DiMaggio points out the aversion of pre-modern artists and patrons to discourses of efficiency and market demand, which has shifted towards acceptance of the institutional logic that now defines many museums, the successful procurement of funding, and contemporary arts administration generally (DiMaggio 1986:6).

II. Anthropology and Organizational Culture

The study of organizational life has, until recently, been outside the purview of traditional anthropological research for several reasons. Sociologists, political scientists, and economists have historically taken on the task of studying formal organizations due to anthropology's traditional focus on non-modern, small-scale societies (Hull 2012:12). Thoughtful considerations on the relationship between organizational studies and anthropology by scholars such as Allen Batteau, Susan Wright, and Ronald Cohen have re-engaged the shared theoretical interests of these disciplines. Wright (1994:14) demonstrates how the trajectory of anthropological

research was not easily integrated with the assumptions of organizational theory, the latter espousing a positivist, objectivist, and functionalist research paradigm and a bounded and unproblematically shared definition of culture that anthropology had already reconsidered. There was also anthropology's interest in engaging power and inequality from a bottom-up perspective that could not be easily reconciled with the demand of organizational studies to engage large-scale contexts (Wright 1994:17).

Wright demonstrates that the history of intellectual thought on institutions as a key feature of modern and contemporary life is indebted to sociology and anthropology. Integral to the study of institutions is the analysis and critique of bureaucracy as defined in Max Weber's classic text, Economy and Society.

Bureaucracy, as Weber writes, is a fixture of modern life that is present in the most advanced stages of capitalist development. Bureaucracy is constituted by strict hierarchies of officials and subordinates defined by pre-determined areas of expertise and sets of obligations, carried out in the most impersonal way so as to avoid features such as nepotism and favoritism which otherwise may inhibit an optimally efficient execution of tasks (Weber 1973:4). Weber speaks to the technical advantages of bureaucratic organization, noting that "Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs – these are raised to the optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic administration, and especially in its monocratic form. As compared with all collegiate, honorific, and avocational forms of administration, trained bureaucracy is superior on all these points" (Weber 1973:12).

Work with subfields such as socio-cultural anthropology and archaeology demonstrates the centrality of institutions to human development and civilization, and highlights the development processes to which their existence is owed. Archaeologist Kent Flannery attributes the rise of state-based institutions to fifteen universal key factors, including evolutionary mechanisms, social pathologies such as usurpation into higher-order systems, processes of segregation and centralization, and socio-environmental conditions including warfare, trade, and population growth (Flannery 1972:421). Of prime importance to the contemporary “information age” and the work that museums do in knowledge production is the information-synthesizing aspect of institutions. Flannery highlights this as a key factor in the evolutionary development of institutions, which expand to continually process and produce greater amounts of information than preceding institutions (Flannery 1972:423).

Focusing on social factors of institutional development, socio-cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas posits institutions as a legitimized social grouping, seeking to minimize disorder through the naturalization of social classifications (Douglas 1986:48). Institutions can be seen as “entropy-minimizing devices” whose stabilization of entropy depends on an analogy within the natural or social world so that its mechanism of institutional stabilization is not revealed as arbitrary (Douglas 1986: 49). In this sense, museums can be seen as part of a mimetic process that depends on metaphor for the process of gaining social legitimacy, much like the artwork on display in the museum itself. As Douglas demonstrates, the classifications instilled by institutions have an active role in creating new identities conforming to

those classifications and work to “stabilize the flux of social life and even create, to some extent, the realities to which they apply” (Douglas 1986:100). It is easy to see how current thinking on institutions and legitimacy can be traced to this seminal work on institutions. Institutions, in addition to participating in the process of conferring classifications, act like individuals engaged in a semiotic process in using naturalized classifications to classify themselves accordingly.

The art-historical usage of “institution” as applied in institutional critique, too, shares an anthropological orientation towards an understanding of institutions. Daniel Buren emphasizes, like Mary Douglas, the historically situated, discursive work that the museum-as-institution achieves through the classification and presentation of works of art: “If the (art) work takes shelter in the Museum-refuge, it is because it finds there its comfort and its frame; a frame which one considers as natural, while it is merely historical” (Buren 1983:42). The contemporary art-historical understanding of institutions does necessarily refer to the particularity of any individual institution, persons, or spaces engaged in artistic exchange. Instead, an art institution is a social field—in the most Bourdieusian sense— of participants engaged in the study, assessment, collection, preservation, consumption, and production of a work of art. As Andrea Fraser admits of the self-critical practices of the avant-garde, art can never exist outside of the institution, because it is always already produced within a social field, ready for inscription within the dominant ideology of its time, with the transient possibility of critique being historically circumscribed (Fraser 2005:4). Regarding the critical practices of artist Hans Haacke, Fraser writes, “Beyond the most encompassing

list of substantive spaces, places, people, and things, the ‘institution’ engaged by Haacke can best be defined as the network of social and economic relationships between them... the gallery and museum figure less as objects of critique themselves than as containers in which the largely abstract and invisible forces and relations that traverse particular social spaces can be made visible” (Fraser 2005:4).

Within anthropology, compelling ethnographies on institutions and the bureaucratization of contemporary life by anthropologists such as Akhil Gupta and Matthew Hull have demonstrated the worlds of possible dialogues between local actors and large-scale institutional settings. One of the goals these ethnographies is to reveal at the local level the ways in which bureaucracies contradict straightforward Weberian narratives of rationality, impersonality, and optimal efficiency in conducting business. In Red Tape, Akhil Gupta investigates the failure of the postcolonial state in India to alleviate dire poverty that persists for hundreds of millions of its citizens despite being the fourth largest economy in the world and despite extensive efforts by the state to deliver basic necessities such as clothing, shelter, water, and sanitation (Gupta 2012:3). More crucially, Gupta demonstrates the ways in which the allegedly rational development organizations affiliated with the state produce arbitrariness and “are shot through with contingency and barely controlled chaos” (Gupta 2012:14). Indeed, as Britan & Cohen (1980:24) assert, citizens of developing countries are affected by the character and style of their national bureaucracy as well as the ways in which local agencies interpret the mandates of bureaucratic goals according to their own understandings. In a similar vein, anthropologist Allen Batteau speaks to the stylized

public performances of order, unification, and integration in contemporary bureaucratic organizations, when in actuality differentiation and inclusiveness as an organizational ideal produces fragmentation (Batteau 2000:734).

III. New Institutionalism & Audit Cultures

DiMaggio and Powell (1991) provide a comprehensive survey of varying usages of the term “institution” and the development of the “new institutionalism” across the social sciences, including economics, sociology, anthropology, and political science. Rational choice models of economics and political science argue that individuals make decisions in their own self-interest that tangentially shape institutions, which exist because their benefits outweigh their transaction costs (DiMaggio and Powell 1991: 4). Organizational theory and sociology, on the other hand, emphasize cognitive, symbolic, and cultural explanations for the development of institutions, as well as their self-sustaining and constraining nature in which they shape the nature and scope of available options to individual actors. The new institutionalism sees institutions in their most abstracted form, not necessarily as concrete entities but a diffuse, arbitrary structuring principle, a kind of cultural field that generates legitimacy through apparently rational, rule-based standards of action (DiMaggio and Powell 1991: 13).

Recent work within the study of organizations has become more anthropologically oriented in adopting a processually-oriented, open systems approach in which bureaucracy is treated as one form of organizing human groups among many (Britan & Cohen 1980:13). The neo-institutionalist frame within

organizational studies provides the idea, derived significantly from trends in contemporary social sciences, that symbolic systems, cultural scripts, and mental models have prominent salience in shaping institutional effects, as opposed to the standard emphasis on technical demands and resource dependencies (Powell 2002:976). This assertion of the taken-for-granted nature of meaning-making and the inherently discordant interpretive lenses operating within the same organizational framework speaks to the myriad ways in which anthropology can be of use to organizational studies. Anthropological and sociological work on the evolution of bureaucracy, institutions, and its interactions with complex social forms shows significant promise as a form of critical evaluation of museums, especially considering contemporary concerns with the increasing commercialization of museums in a global age (Mathur 2005).

Marilyn Strathern is optimistic in the anthropological study of “audit culture” in uncovering a key component and structuring principle of contemporary organizational life. As Strathern argues, the linkages between anthropology and discourses of accountability within organizational studies are abundant, including the anthropology of the state, the anthropology of organizations and institutions, globalization, and higher education (Strathern 1999:5). Audit culture is defined as a “taken-for-granted part of neoliberal government and contributing substantially to its ethos... where the state’s overt concern may be less to impose day-to-day direction than to ensure that internal controls, in the form of monitoring techniques, are in place” (Strathern 1999:4). As Strathern argues, accountability and its accompanying “rituals of

verification” have become so entrenched within the fabric of institutional discourse that it has become almost impervious to academic critique considering the apparently neutral, mundane, and bureaucratic regulatory mechanisms encouraging responsibility, transparency, and widening access (Strathern 1999:3).

While there is no detailed study on the linkages between audit culture and museum administration, Cris Shore and Susan Wright’s account of coercive accountability within higher education expresses an important source of many of the pitfalls of the “new managerialism” associated with audit cultures. It is derived from principles of self-management, surveillance, measurement, reliability, and optimal performance, and is supposed to deliver “quality assurance” through the normative regulation of individual and organizational performance, as individuals are treated as work units to be incentivized and measured (Shore and Wright 1999:64). These defining criteria of the new managerialism are instrumental to its pervasive global reach across institutions of diverse forms and as well as its pitfalls. Medical and educational institutions, for instance, that have undergone the new managerialist style of administration have experienced a decline in collective values and lateral solidarities (Shore and Wright 1999:63). Shore and Wright reveal that audit transforms the way environments operate in rendering institutions and people “auditable”, while it also works to the detriment of efficiency in that it “actively encourages the ‘ritualization of performance’ and tokenistic gestures of accountability—such as rigid paper systems and demonstrable audit trails—to the detriment of real effectiveness” (Shore and Wright 1999:81). Such explanations

emphasize, like the new institutionalist model, the inherently inefficient, symbolic, culturally deterministic nature of apparently hyper-rational administrative processes. An emergent audit culture can be applied to the administrative structure of the museum in explaining how the transgressive potential for exhibitionary critique is subsumed—like many other contemporary cultural and intellectual institutions— by the bureaucratization of the museum and its audiences as well as the standardization of its operating procedures that are now taken-for-granted aspects of its function.

IV. Institutional Legitimacy

The question of how museums legitimize certain forms of art and exhibitionary practices is an important one, as it not only determines what is shown (and excluded) within the museum, but also the pre-authorized bodies of work to which audiences and publics will respond. An important archival study on the institutional development of museums is DiMaggio's (1991) analysis of the ways in which the growth of museums as a legitimate organizational form simultaneously engendered critique and reform from its increasingly professionalized workforce (DiMaggio 1991:287). Speaking to the development of museums in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, DiMaggio discusses debate over key aspects of art museums' form and function. The debate over museums' organizational mission focused on whether they should be devoted to collecting, preserving, and exhibiting legitimated works of art that largely reflected the interests of wealthy patrons and elite upper class culture (Alexander 1996:20) or whether museums should instead focus on art education and interpretation (DiMaggio

1991:170). DiMaggio describes important developments that led to emergence of museum education, rooted in an implicit, “taken-for-granted” assumption about the edifying role of museums towards the publics they serve. These factors included the reform movement’s usage of “rational myths” of justice, progress, efficiency, and democracy; the professionalization of museum personnel; the development of art history as a distinct discipline within the university system; and the subsidization of museums under the educational mandates of the Carnegie Corporation (DiMaggio 1991:275).

Of crucial importance to DiMaggio’s argument, both here and in other influential research on new institutionalism (DiMaggio & Powell 1983; Meyer & Rowan 1977), is how organizations such as museums establish legitimacy by incorporating established procedures and maintaining ceremonial conformity with other institutions. The process of gaining legitimacy is distinct from procedures that maximize efficiency, although it ultimately increases the resources and survival capabilities of an organization (Meyer & Rowan 1977:352). A particularly widespread concept in new institutionalism in this regard is isomorphism, which is defined as a constraining process in which organizations frequently resemble one another due to being subject to the same set of environmental conditions (DiMaggio & Powell 1983:147). A key assumption of DiMaggio and Powell’s work is that organizations tend to model themselves after similar organizations that are perceived to be successful, especially where there are ambiguous criteria to assess organizational goals and utility, in order to enhance legitimacy and survival of the organization (DiMaggio & Powell 1983:155).

Organizations (such as museums) that produce ambiguously defined services that are difficult to appraise are particularly dependent on gaining success through isomorphism – in short, copying what other organizations are doing – in order to promote trust and confidence in stakeholders (Meyer & Rowan 1977:354).

This is one of many examples of the assumption that organizational structures are pre-determined because they are the most efficient of all possible ways of structuring museum work, as an economist emphasizing rational-choice theories of human behavior might assume. One of the many benefits of studying institutions from a new institutionalist framework is the critical assumption that there is not necessarily appropriate economic justification for the adoption of certain processes over others (Johnson & Thomas 1998:78). As DiMaggio & Powell illustrate, “The ubiquity of certain kinds of structural arrangements can more likely be credited to the universality of mimetic processes than to any concrete evidence that the adopted models enhance efficiency” (DiMaggio & Powell 1983:152).

V. Museums & Funding

A systematic review of the available literature on funding structures for non-profit museums in the United States reveals that funding bodies affect, to varying degrees, what kinds of exhibitions are shown, depending on the goals of the funders.¹ In addition, the literature demonstrates a complex relationship between funders and differential levels of exhibitionary access. Art museums in the United States originated

¹ In addition to the funding literature I present in this section, this is a process I have observed in depth as a development and research intern at various arts organizations in the Southeast.

as non-profit institutions and do not operate towards the goal of maximizing profit (Heilbrun 2001:200). As Paul DiMaggio suggests, the non-profit form of the museum exists because its exhibiting artists are engaging in behavior that is irrational from a market perspective, and because citizens believed that the goals advanced by museums could not be achieved by the market (DiMaggio 1987: 85). While this seems like a decision in favor of open access and participation, analyzing the history of the museum's formation reveals a desire on the part of wealthy elites to restrict high culture to those most able to afford and appreciate it, distinct from the aims of purely commercial enterprise (Zolberg 1986:187). While sources of earned income, such as admissions fees, gift shops and restaurants, are standard in most major art museums, most are heavily dependent on unearned income to balance their budgets (Heilbrun 2001:210). A 1998 statistics survey of 117 museums conducted by the Association of Art Museum Directors reveals that primary sources of income for museums are the US government, including the NEA, NEH, and Institute for Museum and Library Services, and the State (26.1%); contributed income, including corporate, foundation, and individual contributions (23.5%), endowments (19.5%), and earned income (16.1%) (Heilbrun 2001:211).

The administration of museum funding has become increasingly more complex because of the growth and differentiation of the arts organization's funding environment (DiMaggio 1986:74). The history of museum funding in the United States differs from counterparts in Europe and elsewhere. Unlike many European countries, the United States was quite hostile to the idea of government support for the arts, as a

majority of Americans accepted the philosophy of a laissez-faire economy with minimum governmental intervention (Heilbrun 2001:251). The American tax system also offers incentives for private giving in the arts, compared to comparatively little incentive in Europe (Frey 1980:250). During the peak of individual philanthropy to museums in the 1920's, museums accordingly reflected the interests of wealthy patrons and elite upper class culture (Alexander 1996:20). In the 1960's, Americans became increasingly aware of European dominance in every sector of high culture, and initiatives were taken to introduce, for the first time, a policy of direct, ongoing state and federal support for the arts (Heilbrun 1986:252). The rapid expansion of museums during the post-World War II era brought about increasing institutional complexity and new economies of scale, as the number and kinds of arts organizations and cultural industries grew exponentially during the 1960's and 1970's (DiMaggio 1986:74).

This era also ushered in corporate support of the arts, as well as the creation of the National Endowments for the Arts (NEA) and National Endowment for the Humanities. Jointly, the NEA and NEH have grown increasingly prevalent with other institutional funders as a major source of support for new museum programs and exhibitions, but not maintenance and operations (Alexander 1996:21). Philanthropy and foundation support, such as that from the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Foundation, grew as a major source of funding for American art museums during the 1950's, and state patronage agencies were modeled after them to a significant degree (Meyer 1979:68). Although foundation support has the potential for sponsoring more innovative artistic projects due to less constraints as compared to private patrons,

corporate, or government support, few foundations have explored their potential to support this kind of programming (DiMaggio 1986:80). Another growing source of museum support is the “Friends” circle of many leading art museums, which constitutes small but significant donations from large numbers of people to replace the larger donations of patrons and trustees, with exclusive benefits (Balfe 1993:121). One critique of this system, which especially supports less financially solvent departments within larger institutions, is that it promises exclusive access and privileges to those that can afford to patronize the museum at a higher level, thereby undermining claims to open and democratic participation (Balfe 2001:130).

Funding structures such as “friends” circles and differential levels of access depending on financial support uphold the claim that “access to and understanding of what is socially defined as high culture are doled out in doses sufficient only to create respect for the symbolic goods which dominant status groups control” (Zolberg 1986:185). Within the cultural field of art and its supporting institutional framework, museums ensure their survival through maintaining their legitimacy and reputation by mimicking and building upon what other institutions of similar type and size are doing. These processes of legitimacy are key to museums’ financial solvency and indirectly support varying levels of exclusion among populist and elite audiences.

VI. Current Trends & Future Directions

Literature within the field of museum studies highlights the complex and sometimes conflicting tasks to which museums are assigned. An example is the

frequently observed tension between curatorial and educational departments in the development of museum curatorship as a discipline: "Museum curators were instrumental in institutionalizing a vision of museums that focused on conservation and scholarship, as opposed to such matters as education, public outreach, and exhibitions" (Alexander 1996:41). Museum practitioners and directors such as James Cuno argue that the biggest obstacle facing museums and the quality of their scholarship is a broad educational mandate that extends beyond helping audiences learn about and appreciate the arts. Museums are now required to enable audiences to make informed choices of the challenges of living in an increasingly global society, as defined in the mission statement of the American Association of Museums (Cuno 1997:7). Such mission statements are echoed in the objectives of governmentally-funded arts agencies that provide exhibitionary support. An increasing number of foundations are also interested in goals of access and public outreach (Zolberg 1994:5; Alexander 1996:41), which are often incompatible with the scholarly objectives of curators. However, the goals of a foundation or government agency may not necessarily be compatible with the goals of the diverse funding environment or the commodity culture that now defines the contemporary museum (DiMaggio 1987:87).

Museums have not been immune to the increasing corporatization of nearly every facet of contemporary life, and the global financial crisis has provoked a heightened reliance on earned income and corporate support for many nonprofit cultural sectors. As Saloni Mathur argues, the mid-1990's proved a pivotal time for museums and corporate sponsorship, and entailed a change in the format and content

of exhibitions to “blockbusters” that created a convergence of interests between museums and the for-profit culture industries including Hollywood and high fashion (Mathur 2005:700). While museums may be opening up museums to a broader audience with such exhibitions, there is an increasing amount of audience differentiation with access depending on various levels of financial support and creative control still very much determined by trustees, donors, and other financial elites.

As Mathur admits, museums are increasingly operated by directors such as Thomas Krens of the Guggenheim that are trained in business rather than art history, and are looking to expand the global reach of museums as a corporate “brand” (Mathur 2005:700). As the recent controversy with the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi reveals, the corporatization and globalization of the museum has become enmeshed in the same ethical controversies that plague other major corporations, most notably the exploitation of cheap labor. This highlights the diminishing capability of the corporatized museum to provide a truly critical stance on issues of community development and social concern and the difficulty of maintaining “institutionalized alterity”, as difference and otherness becomes increasingly appropriated by the markets for cultural production (Rectanus 2002:181).

Mark Rectanus suggests that because the museum, as a non-profit institution, relies on sponsorship for its continued survival does not necessarily preclude the possibility of reflection against prevailing hegemonic discourses. Rectanus notes that:

“Although the following studies of contemporary museums point to a convergence of interests among museums, corporations, foundations,

and governments, the reconfiguration of the museum's mission and its curatorial practices also draw our attention to the dissonances and paradoxes within and outside the museum that create spaces outside of institutionally defined boundaries for counter-hegemonic culture" (Rectanus 2002:172).

Rectanus' perspective is echoed in art historical and museological literature that suggests a fictionalized distance between artistic and economic institutions, thereby highlighting the transgressive potential of art.

Such an example is the "New Institutionalism" of curatorial practice, wholly distinct from the new institutionalism of organizational theory and management which occupies my concerns for the bulk of this literature review. The New Institutionalism was a short-lived curatorial response for practicing possibilities of agency and experimentation within the institutional frame. In a re-examination of this practice, Lucie Kolb and Gabriel Fluckiger trace the development and current status of the loosely defined "New Institutionalism". It was developed largely within the hermetic discourses of art history and museology and as a direct result of the aforementioned expectations for museums to foster democratic modes of access and more inclusive forms of participation during the early 1990's— without substantive engagement with the literature on institutions and organizations. The New Institutionalism was imagined as an intervention towards a "process oriented, dialogical, and participatory work that does not result in a final object and is not dependent on traditional white cube exhibition spaces" (Kolb & Fluckiger 2013:13). Its apparent failure as a curatorial project in Europe, according to Kolb and Fluckiger, can be traced to the fact that its critical apparatus was not well tolerated by neoliberalist cultural policies that

undergird state-subsidized museums. Further, the institutions displaying these experimental curatorial projects failed to mobilize the publics necessary to resist and legitimate such programs (Kolb & Fluckiger 2013:14). Kolb and Fluckiger suggest that such interventions at the very least entail a critical rethinking of the institutional organization of the art field and possibilities for action and negotiation with the institution (Kolb & Fluckiger 2013:14).

How, exactly, is a work of art that cannot be separated from the conditions of its production and consumption to accomplish the task of renegotiation or meaningful critique? As Andrea Fraser reminds us, institutional critique reinforces the idea that an institution of critique within the artworld is only possible within the boundaries of the institution, significantly tempering the radical possibilities of an always-institutionalized work of art (Fraser 2005:8). Artists, curators, and critics are not merely observers on the “outside” of hegemonic political systems that they critique; in fact, they actively reap the benefits of an art market that fosters and rewards the entrepreneurial ambitions of neoliberalist enterprise (Fraser 2005:7).

I suggest that rendering the politics of an institution visible by, for instance, staging exhibitions that highlight ties to dubious fiscal sponsors or disparities of access accomplishes very little. In this case, the institution is merely doing what it does best within the confines of its bureaucratic form: ensuring its survival by selecting, legitimating, labeling, excluding from its purview that which is not deemed “legitimate” art, largely based on what its particular field, with its particular structuring logics, has deemed as such— all the while working within the delimiting agency that various

kinds of sponsorship provides. Institutional critique that does not attempt to incorporate institutional theory in claiming transgressive possibilities for political action is largely ineffective because it fails to acknowledge the constructed social field within which curators, artists, and audiences are unaware or reluctant to denote their participation. Our notions of “institution” and its attendant critiques must be expanded, in the anthropological sense of the term, to the social practices which enable certain kinds of authorizing discourses to take place. A means to deliver meaningful, lasting critique of an institution that the institution does not finally canonize and incorporate back into itself is by anthropologically “mining” these legitimizing social forms, which is what I have attempted to do in this literature review.

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