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**A LONG LINE OF PEOPLE** waiting to enter a museum seems to be one highly appreciated measure of success for the institution, as if the time lost in the queue is a currency nourishing the museum, as if entering a museum entails an assumption of disinterest in time. Actually, *disinterest* seems to be a key word when discussing museums, especially the disinterest in risk that is demonstrated time and again as institutions try to transform the instability that characterizes art into a serene experience.

It is possible that by using a business model that equates stability with success, museums evince their desire to increase their chances of being seen as indispensable, not ancillary, to society. Taking on characteristics of successful corporations (focusing on revenue, franchising where that's advantageous, maximizing the value of their investments, locating and then fulfilling demand, marketing themselves aggressively, etc.), they create a kind of mirage, an image of themselves as competing entities like any other. They reproduce and follow a system established for them by society instead of building a sustainable system for a new society. Luckily, however, the status quo loosens its grip sometimes, mostly during economic downturns—suggesting, perhaps, that such unstable periods offer more freedom, more opportunities to experiment with the ephemeral and impermanent. Sometimes during such periods, though, museums dedicate their efforts to reviewing and exhibiting their collections as if such gestures could provide and maintain a sense of stability and refuge, under the aegis of wealth.

Perhaps, too, downturns interfere with the long cultural power trip that for centuries has enabled museums to rationalize the plundering of objects and to feel that they can display ill-gotten treasures with impunity—that, in fact, it is incumbent on them to collect and “protect” these objects. The legitimation of contemporary cultural vandalism (travestied as a multicultural safari) entails the appropriation of objects' (or performances', for that matter) original contexts, in all their specificity, in order to promulgate an image of “universalism.” Along with such accessibility comes danger of transforming the creation of new meanings into nothing more than a reductive and lazy strategy.

I would like a museum in the not-so-new XXI century that abandons the idea of *looking* for the idea of *activation*; one that is not a building or even a fixed space but a series of events and a program; one where the institution gives up authority; one that is dedicated to research into the practical usefulness of art; one where art entails actual social transformation, instead of merely providing highly speculative strategies for bringing about such transformations. One where things are not excised from their contexts—where objects are contextualized instead of historicized. One where things are not exhibited but activated, given use-value instead of representing it. One that is not a structure but a moment; that is not a place to visit but a presence. A museum that is more a part of Internet, open-source, and Wikipedia culture. □