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The Denver Art Museum and the Bilbao Effect

by

Georgia Lucille Lindsay

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

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University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Galen Cranz, Chair
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Abstract

The Denver Art Museum and the Bilbao Effect

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture

University of California, Berkeley

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Museum buildings have clear behavioral functions; they also have symbolic functions, to express the privileged space and valuable objects they contain. Our ideas about what art museums should look like in the United States have changed significantly throughout the past 150 years of the building type's history here. In the 1990s, the number of museums built grew exponentially, and often these buildings are works of art in their own right.

This research looks closely at a recently-completed museum building in Denver, Colorado. Placed in a regional city in the middle of the United States, the Denver Art Museum explicitly wanted to replicate the success of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao with its new wing, making the Denver Art Museum's Hamilton Building the perfect site for an in-depth study of the Bilbao-era paradigm for museums, its connection to urban issues, and what effects the form has on art display. This case study utilizes a multi-method approach, with findings based on interviews with key stakeholders, archival data, and direct observations of the building and the spaces it creates.

From the beginning, the Hamilton Building had functions to fulfill beyond preserving and displaying art: it was to be its own fundraising tool, to represent Denver to the world and the Museum to Denver residents, and to draw cultural tourists in the same way that the Guggenheim museum drew tourists to Bilbao. As such, with a bond approved by the voters, the selection committee hired Daniel Libeskind as the primary architect, based on his personality, political savvy, and exuberant conceptual design.

The resulting building has few vertical walls or horizontal ceilings. It has galleries for the Modern and Contemporary, the African, and the Oceanic art collections, in addition to space for travelling exhibitions, a lecture hall, and a large museum shop. Across the newly-created Martin Plaza, a parking garage is wrapped in retail and residences; the parking garage was required by the city, but the wrapped functions were part of Libeskind's plan for the urban spaces around the new building. In these ways, the Hamilton Building fulfills the explicit requirements of the bond.

The form of the building also fulfills more symbolic functions. Its image is used as one of six in an international marketing campaign to boost tourism to Denver. The grand opening drew crowds for 35 straight hours, and membership and first-time visits both went up during the first year the building was open, and the Hamilton Building is a recognizable icon and a landmark. The building is written about in the local, national, and international press, and while not all comments are positive, it does draw attention to Denver. The irregular spaces for art push curators and exhibition designers to be creative in how art is displayed, even changing art display tactics in the older, square-walled building. Artists generally like creating art specifically for the space, and one of the most successful shows in the building allowed visitors to watch art getting created and installed—an idea that was completely new to the Museum.

In conclusion, a new museum type has emerged, one where the building is as important as the art. This building type serves as a fundraising and advertising tool, not only the museum but also the city.

For Penelope,
who was taking me to art museums before I could walk

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The Hamilton Building (left), as seen from Martin Plaza. The North (older) Building is on the right.

Preface

I came to the idea of wanting to understand new museum buildings as social technology, not just as mere shelter, because of the process around the new wing of the Denver Art Museum. It would later become the Hamilton Building, but in the late 1990s when I was in school in Boulder, it was just called the expansion to the Denver Art Museum. As the bond issue went up for a vote, the idea of building a new wing to the museum was expressed not only in terms of need for more art display space, but also in economic and social terms: the new building would generate revenue through visitation and spending at downtown, and the new building would showcase Denver as the cultural center of the region, possessing the biggest and best museum in eight states. Then, when the initial model for Libeskind's building—called *Nexus* at the time—was unveiled, the claim for the building expanded further to include revitalizing a neighborhood, generating international tourism, and representing Denver to the world. That seemed like a lot for a single building to do, even one that has as recognizable and unique as the Hamilton Building.¹

¹ At the time of his proposal to the DAM, this building would have been Libeskind's first US building; he did not yet have crystalline structures proliferating across the United States.

With this research, I wanted to fully understand the desires of the clients, to understand what the City and the Museum hoped their building would be and do; and then, at the most basic level, I wanted to understand if the building has fulfilled those desires. The selection committee knew what they were getting, more or less, when they hired Daniel Libeskind; are they happy with the effects of that choice? Originally, I wanted to go back and investigate the claims of social effects the building would have, to see if it fulfilled those while still fulfilling its function as an art museum.

In the field, however, the research expanded beyond its initial focus of pure behavioral research: in addition to being a single building with stakeholders enmeshed in local politics, the Hamilton Building is representative of a worldwide trend in museum buildings. As I collected data, I became interested in the institutional realm, as well, and expanded my study to include more levels of analysis than just behavior. Research that had started as a relatively simple post-occupancy evaluation, focused on behavioral functions and explicitly stated goals, quickly expanded into understanding the Hamilton Building as an example of the Bilbao Effect, a new way of understanding what art museum buildings do, and the correlated changes in public perception of art and art museums. There are obviously the economic results, but architecture is more than a purely economic endeavor, and, moreover, other people are already researching the economic side of these new museums. In this research, I was more interested in the building as a social tool, a new kind of institution, and what effect it had on perceptions of Denver and the Museum. However, I did not abandon the initial interest in behaviors, and I still focused on understanding what impact the radical shape of the building had on patrons and on art display. The research presented here assesses the building at multiple levels of analysis, including behavioral, organizational, institutional, societal, and cultural.

Acknowledgements

Even though it feels quite isolating, no dissertation is actually completed alone; such a huge undertaking requires myriad help and support, and I thank the many people who have contributed professionally and personally to making this research possible.

First, thanks go to the advising committee, Dr. Galen Cranz, Dr. Andrew Shanken, and Dr. Richard Walker. As my primary adviser, Dr. Cranz shouldered most of the burden, identifying and encouraging the most interesting ideas, gently discouraging those I should abandon, and responding quickly with revisions. But Dr. Shanken and Dr. Walker both played vital roles in shaping and directing the research, and this would be a poorer work indeed without their guidance. I am also grateful to Anne Spruance and her red pen, who helped make sense of my often incomprehensible prose.

I am also deeply grateful to the many people who helped me gather the data for this study. Patty Williams, Master Teacher and wise woman at the Denver Art Museum, made this research possible, first by agreeing to let me study the Museum, then by providing an initial introduction to many of the staff interviewed, and finally by being interviewed herself, and offering keen insights into art display and architecture. I am deeply grateful to all of my interviewees, who gave their time and perspective freely. Each one offered a unique perspective or a new insight, and I thank all of you. Finally, a few different people helped with gathering archival data; Kevin Williams at BBC, staff members in development and member services at the DAM, and staff at SCFD and CBCA all provided information and reports that helped the research. And Wendel Cox and Bruce Hanson in the Western History/Genealogy Department at the Denver Public Library were patient and helpful with my requests to see anything even vaguely pertaining to the Denver Art Museum. Both of them made it not only easy to retrieve resources but also pleasant to search them out.

Final thanks go to my family: my mother for instilling a love of art and being a constant advocate and cheerleader, my brother for a semester of work-free research, and my husband for his patience, tolerance, and good cheer as I struggled in this research. Thank you.

Chapter 1: A New Museum for Denver

In the 1990s, museums were built at an astonishing rate. In that decade, the number of new museum buildings worldwide grew exponentially, with a 483% growth in capital improvements during the decade (Tilden 2004). The crescendo of this building boom was the Bilbao branch of the Guggenheim Museum. Designed by Frank Gehry and opened in 1997, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao ushered in a new model for museum buildings. Taking a cue from the sculptural model of museums that had begun half a century earlier, these contemporary museum buildings are works of art in their own right, objects that are interesting even without anything in them. The architecture of museums is more flamboyant than in the past, with buildings striving for iconic status, a paradigm proliferating in regional cities throughout the United States.

As journalist Mark West explained, each museum vies to “erect the splashiest most acclaimed signature building” since the last one (2006, 220). In fact, often post-Bilbao museums are substituting a stunning building for a strong collection, and hoping that the building itself becomes a draw for visitors. That is the most common definition of the Bilbao Effect: that the building is as important as the collection (Associated Press 2006). The Hunter Museum in Chattanooga, for example, recently added a wing to accommodate temporary exhibitions, and the Milwaukee Art Museum has become famous for its creative new wing.

These “new museums,” as museum scholar Victoria Newhouse (2006) calls them, have spaces not only for the local permanent collection, but for traveling exhibitions as well, and can receive blockbuster shows to draw crowds. The plan of the galleries tends to be more choice-oriented, and shops and cafes in museums are now the norm. Often, these new museums are funded by a combination of public money and private donations. The private donations come from corporations wanting to be connected to the arts and from wealthy individuals who recognize that public funds do not cover the cost of museum buildings. The public money might be a bond or even a gift by the municipality, which often hopes to see a return on investment in the form of increased tourism dollars. That tactic was wildly successful for Bilbao, where the number of visitors, the length of each stay, and the income generated from tourism all increased dramatically (Plaza 2000; 2006; 2007). It has not been as successful for some American cities, such as Baltimore, which have helped finance new museum buildings only to see the institutions struggle financially (Clarke 2012). Thus, it is important to understand the context and connectedness of the city surrounding these museum buildings.

Since the economic slow-down of the late 2000s, new museum building has slowed, offering the chance to reflect on the changes wrought by a decade of frantic building in an era of international tourism. Scholars have tried to come to terms with the

new museum, some from a social or political standpoint (e.g., Karp et al. 2006), some from an architectural standpoint (e.g., Newhouse 2006), and some from an economic standpoint (e.g., Plaza 2006). Nevertheless, while the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum by Frank Gehry has received scholarly attention, few other recent museum buildings have been thoroughly examined. Instead, the vast majority of published work on new museums have been celebratory picture books like the kind that would grace a coffee table (e.g., Milwaukee Art Museum 2001; Henderson 1998; van Bruggen 1998; Mack 1999). Very little scholarship exists about how the architecture of museum buildings impacts audience perception or experience. In fact, according to a widely respected museum educator, not even museum professionals fully understand the impact that architecture has on visitor experience or art display, a lacuna created by lack of funding for visitor studies (Williams 2011).

Museums are More Than Buildings

The museum building type has undergone a transformation: buildings that fundamentally are meant to shelter art are now required to draw visitors and gain attention for the city within which they reside. Changes in style are bound up in new ideas about program and reflect broader demands from museums about the functions the building must fulfill. Far from being duped by clever architects into buying a building they do not actually want, as American critic and philosopher John Silber claims (2007), museum boards are savvy clients, asking for an object that they think fulfills specific needs of in museums.

With these physical changes to the space of art museums, concomitant changes in art display tactics have emerged. In a building with a sun shade that opens and closes with the weather, it seems fitting that art does more than just sit on white square walls. Or in Denver, where the new museum wing has no vertical structural walls, displaying art has required new strategies and tactics, and possibly changed the public's understanding of what an art museum does.

The museum building has a variety of functions: it relates to other buildings in the city, creates a space for and represents a complex organization, accommodates crowds, affects face-to-face and small group behavior, and shelters objects worth millions of dollars, objects that we showcase as representations of culture at its highest. In this way, it embodies most of the levels of specificity identified by Parsons and Shils (1954) and distilled for use in studying both symbolism and behavior in the built environment by architectural sociologist Galen Cranz (2011). Cranz identifies eight levels² at which analysis can be usefully undertaken to help understand design, five of which are useful here: the cultural level of analysis addresses patterns of values and manifests itself in settlement patterns and urban design; the societal level addresses values and manifests itself on the façade in symbolism, style, and monumentality; the institutional level addresses norms and manifests in building types and program; the complex organizations level addresses norms and manifests itself in the plan and program of the building; the

² The language here is problematic, because *level* implies a component of depth, which is not intended: no level is “shallow.” These could perhaps be called *facets* of analysis, but that loses the nested quality that the theory implies. The various nested facets increase in specificity while focusing on smaller aspects of the built environment, so perhaps *scale* is an appropriate word instead. Throughout, I primarily use the word *level* and occasionally *facet*.

face-to-face group level addresses interpersonal norms and manifests itself in the room. She also identifies the level of technology, which manifests in objects, the level of the organism, which manifests in the body, and the physical environment. While I occasionally touch on these, the first five are far more important for my work.³

The levels of analysis are useful for navigating the many ways in which the built environment acts on people, and the reasons people construct the environment in certain ways; each of these levels informs the others, as well as informing a study of the built environment. For example, even our concepts of where bodies end and what "normal" requirements are for living in space shape and are shaped by culture, and can create disjunctions when interacting with others who unconsciously use space differently (Hall 1966). Thus, observing the face-to-face level leads to insights at the societal level, which in turn explains differences in face-to-face level, with culture as the silent operator (Hall 1959). In my own work, I analyze the architecture of a single case study from multiple levels, understanding how the Museum fits into the city (cultural level), how the buildings operate as symbols and as monuments (societal level), how the buildings fit into the paradigm of the building type of the museum (institutional level), how the building plan both supports and changes the organizational plan of the Museum (complex organization level), and how the buildings change individual and group behavior (face-to-face group level).

The museum as a building type reflects societal values, including issues of class and power and economics, and the separation of beauty from the rest of life. Such values speak to the institution of museums broadly, the economics and ideas that drive what museums are and do. Individual museum buildings express or crystalize those values into specific form. That is, museum buildings take the form they do because of the values of the society, as well as the complex organization that builds them. That form then impacts the behavior of the people in it. It changes who uses the building, can change who visits the building, and how art is hung. This the level which post-occupancy evaluation normally addresses, looking at behaviors in buildings. The way we use buildings, who uses buildings, and the programming of buildings in turn impacts our values and larger societal issues. That is, the behavioral level impacts the values level. There are latent effects of the building—behaviors added together, which we usually are not consciously aware of.

The new wing of the Denver Art Museum (DAM), or the Hamilton Building (Figure 1-1, next page), commissioned in late 1999 and opened in 2006, billed itself as “the first American art museum of the 21st century,” and provides an example of a museum built squarely on the Bilbao model. A public bond financed half the cost of the new wing, a building the DAM claimed was required to attract traveling blockbuster exhibitions and to display the Modern and Contemporary collection held in storage. In the request for proposals, the project included a parking structure and a new museum wing; architect Daniel Libeskind proposed wrapping the parking garage in a residential and retail development and closing off a street to create a plaza outside the new wing.

³ It is easy to get confused by the language; the institutional level of analysis looks at general institutions such as the museum as I’ve addressed it in the literature review, while the complex organizations level of analysis addresses a specific organization, such as the Denver Art Museum.

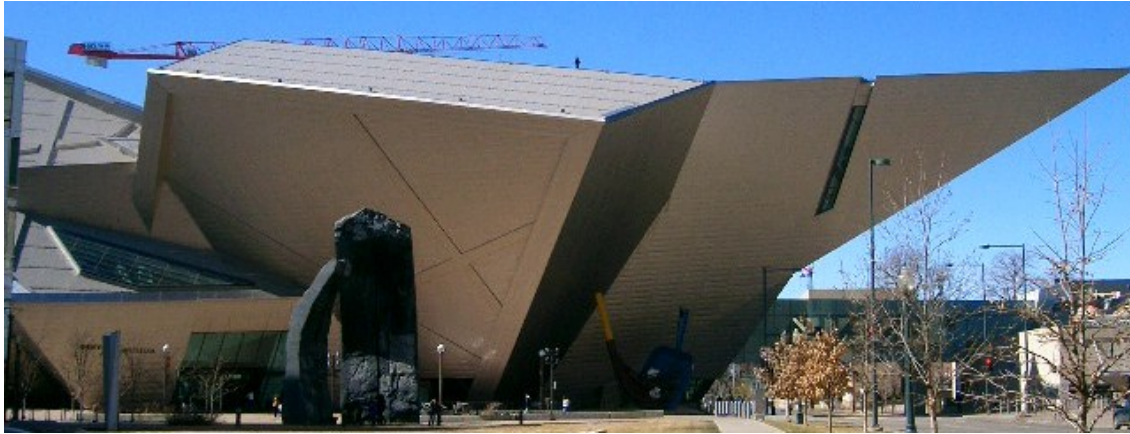


Figure 1-1. The Hamilton Building, as seen from the east. The 190-foot prow on the right extends over 13th Avenue and hovers over the oldest existing Denver Art Museum building, which is now used for a restaurant and event space.

The DAM has always had a feeling of cultural responsibility to the city, the state, and even the region (Harris 1996, 22), and, in general, the Bilbao model of branding necessarily addresses public perception of the museum and the host city's image. The wing opened to fanfare in the international press, a new turn of events for this regional city. In the case of the DAM, this international attention was part of why the public approved some public funding for the building. Although it is not part of the general operating budget of the city, the Museum is financially responsible to the residents of Denver and six to six surrounding counties, who vote on a special sales tax for cultural institutions.

This deep interconnection with Denver and the entire Rocky Mountain region speaks to the public/private partnership that finances so many recent museum buildings. Furthermore, the Hamilton Building was directly inspired by the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, and many of the people interviewed for this research referred to Frank Gehry's building or to the Bilbao Effect when talking about why the Hamilton Building looks the way it does. Before getting to the details of this research, the history of the Denver Art Museum and its buildings is in order.

The Denver Art Museum

What is now called the Denver Art Museum started as the Denver Artists Club in 1893, sponsoring lectures and exhibitions of members' work (Harris 1996, 22). For the first thirty-three years of its life, it did not have a permanent home. In 1923, the Museum was planning for an art museum to be built in Civic Center Park to balance the Carnegie Library (Dickason 1923). That plan never came to fruition, however, because park advocates were worried that such a building would block views of the new City and County building once it was built in 1932.

In 1926, the Denver Art Museum moved into the Chappell House, a donated Victorian residence; in 1931, it gained space in the newly constructed City and County Building (Denver Art Museum 1954), partially because the heirs of one of the painting collections threatened to remove the collection from the DAM unless it was better housed. This is when the DAM became the official art agency of Denver (Harris 1996, 30). The Chappell House has since been razed.

In 1947, the DAM was housed in three separate locations: the Chappell House, the fourth floor of the City and County building, and the Red Rocks Pueblo, a concessions stand at the amphitheater (Bach 1947). Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the DAM lobbied the city for a permanent home, preferably near Civic Center, which was the cultural and municipal center of Denver.

Today, the Denver Art Museum is located in the heart of Denver, near the downtown (Figure 1-2). It lies directly south of Civic Center Park, which was created by clearing land in front of the State Capitol in the 1920s, and just north of the Golden Triangle neighborhood, an area that for a long time was home to parking lots and liquor stores. The DAM worked hard over time to get the space at the southwest corner of Civic Center, across Acoma from the Library (Figure 1-3, next page); the voters turned down multiple bond issues and property owners would not sell. Slowly, the Museum cobbled together the land through gifts and condemnation proceedings (Staff Writer 1948⁴). The Civic Center area is home to four historically significant buildings: the 1894 Capitol, the

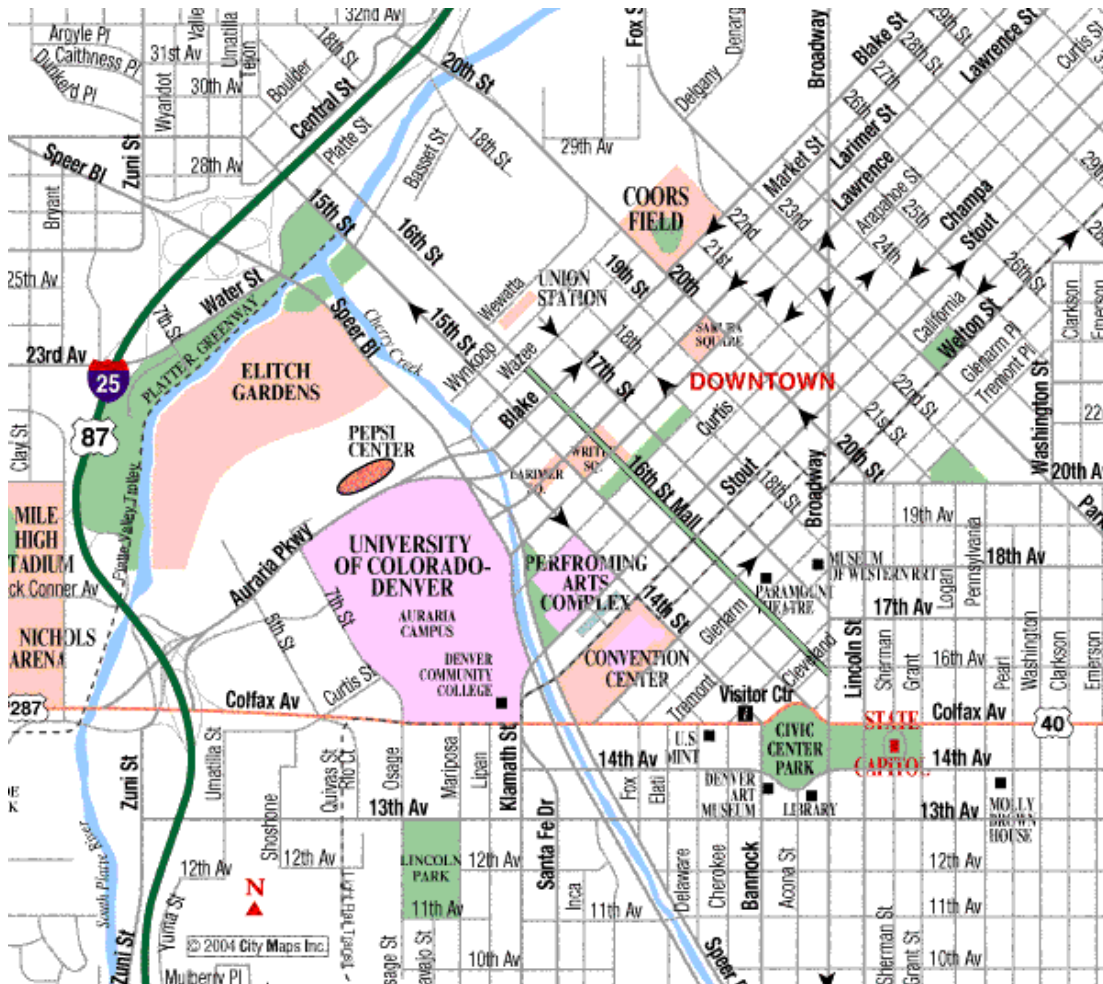


Figure 1-2. Map of central Denver, from www.accessmaps.com.

⁴ Although “anonymous” is a more common term for publications without a credited author, the byline for many *Denver Post* articles is “Staff Writer.” I credit the byline, rather than changing it to anonymous.



Figure 1-3. Ariel view of the Hamilton Building (center left), the North Building (upper left), and the Central Public Library (upper right). The City and County Building is partially visible in the upper left corner. Photograph by John Wark.

1910 Carnegie library (now used for tax archives), the 1932 City and County Building, and the public library designed by locally significant architect Bernham Hoyt (Figures 1-4, 1-5, 1-6, 1-7 next page).

In 1949, the DAM opened the Schleier Gallery, renovated from an electric goods display factory into a modest street-front gallery with large windows, designed by Bernham Hoyt. It was a clean façade with large plate glass windows; some residents disapproved of the Modern styling so close to the classical and historic buildings of Civic Center (Stephenson 1945); at the time, the collections were spread over five locations (Bach 1951). In the early 1950s the South Wing was built next door, to hold the Kress collection, which was required to be in a climate-controlled environment (Denver Art Museum 1954) (Figure 1-8, next page). The South Wing was the first purpose-built building for the Museum (Ditmer 1966), and when it opened, the DAM moved out of the City and County Building. When the Oriental Wing opened in what was formerly a Teamsters Union Hall, it meant that, for the first time, the Denver Art Museum occupied all of the Acoma-Bannock block south of the Civic Center. At the time, the Oriental collection was considered the fifth-finest in the nation (Arneill 1956). In 1961, the museum purchased a small plot of land at 14th and Acoma to be the “front yard” of the museum, completing the Museum’s ownership of the frontage along both 14th Avenue and Acoma Street (Staff Writer 1945).

In 1961, a traveling show of Van Gogh paintings passed Denver by; the DAM took advantage of the disappointment to lobby the city for funds for a new, state-of-the-art building (Harris 1996, 40). In 1966, the City of Denver appropriated \$125,000 to the



Figure 1-4. The State Capitol Building, located northeast of the DAM.



Figure 1-6. The 1910 Carnegie Library, located north across Civic Center Park from the DAM.



Figure 1-5. Denver's City and County Building, located northwest of the DAM.



Figure 1-7. The Denver Public Library, designed by Bernham Hoyt.



Figure 1-8. The South Wing, the Denver Art Museum's oldest existing building, and its first purpose-built building. It is now home to an upscale restaurant, Palettes.

fund for DAM's new building, the first building money the city had ever given to the Museum, and that kick-started the capital campaign (Pearce 1966). In the end, one quarter of the money for the Ponti building came from outside of Denver, and the DAM administration credited the design of the building and its famous architect for attracting that money (Haselbush 1971).

Although James Sudler and Associates was the Art Museum's official architect, the Museum board felt that they needed a famous architect to help raise funds and bring attention to the museum. After I.M. Pei and Le Corbusier both turned down Denver's offer to design the exterior of the new building, Gio Ponti was selected (Ditmer 2000). At the time, Gio Ponti was relatively unknown in the United States; the building for the Denver Art Museum is his only completed building in the country. The DAM selected him because they thought his international reputation would increase exposure for the Museum—increasing donations to the capital campaign, increasing local interest, and drawing visitors.⁵

Perhaps equally important, Ponti was willing to work within the constraints of designing only the exterior of the building. The program for the Ponti Building⁶ was set by Otto Karl Bach, Director from 1944-1974, and he wanted complete control over the interior of the building. For that reason and to save the Museum money, the interior of the building was to be designed by James Sudler and Associates, while the international architect was hired to produce an appealing skin.

Bach wanted all functions together in the same building, and set the maximum space for each gallery at 10,000 square feet; he thought that that was how much the average visitor could cover in forty-five minutes, the limit of their time and attention (Makela 1993, 16). Given those requests and the size of the site and collection, the designers settled on a final structure of two interlocking square towers with two galleries per floor, and curatorial offices and mechanical and elevator shafts in the middle.

Little was written about the project during design and construction (Chandler 1993). In 1967, all but the South Gallery was closed to make way for the Ponti construction, and then the museum was completely closed for over a year to install the galleries (Staff Writer 1970). While the Ponti building was being erected, the construction barriers were decorated by “thirty of Denver's leading artists” (“Museum's Fence Gets Prettied Up” 1968).

The Ponti building is an example of the shift towards sculptural buildings in museum architecture, buildings which were allowed and even required to be distinctive to highlight “the privileged status viewing art was meant to communicate” (Harris 1996, 44). With the opening of the Ponti Building, Denver had the largest museum between Kansas and the West Coast (Staff Writer 1971) and the building became the “dominant icon of the Denver Art Museum” (Sharp 1996, 14). Unfortunately, the building was lambasted by both local and international critics as visually unappealing (Harris 1996, 43).

⁵ The idea that a museum building can do much more than house art is obviously not new to the Bilbao Era. Instead, Bilbao-model museums are the culmination and crystallization of trends existing for decades earlier.

⁶ The building was called the Ponti Building, after the exterior designer, until the newest wing opened in 2006. Then, the name was changed to the North Building to allow for naming rights if a donor were to give a significant enough sum to the Ponti Building's upkeep. I use the two terms interchangeably throughout.



Figure 1-9. The Pontic Building, as seen from the west.



Figure 1-10. The original entrance to the Pontic Building, from inside the lobby. The door opens onto Civic Center Park.

The Pontic Building stands seven stories high on the corner of 14th Avenue Parkway and Bannock Street, on the southwest corner of the Civic Center, and has been compared to a castle, a fortress, and a jail (Figure 1-9). The building is covered in gray glass tiles, specially designed to withstand the extreme temperatures, high winds, and intense sunshine of the Colorado climate. Originally, visitors entered the building through a steel oval that faced Civic Center, and many of the people interviewed for this project said that the entrance was their favorite moment in the building (Figure 1-10). Some of the windows are closed off from the inside to reduce ultra-violet exposure, but those that

are open frame views of the Capitol, Downtown Denver, or the mountains; each window resembles a landscape painting (Figure 1-11).

The first floor has no art galleries and is instead dedicated to associated public functions: the bookshop, a restaurant, locker rooms, and two open spaces that serve as gathering places for large tours, lecture halls, and rentable spaces for events such as weddings and receptions. There is also a large art storage area on the first floor. The rest of the floors are devoted to gallery spaces, for the most part arranged with one or two subject areas per floor. The second floor is where Northwest Coast Native



Figure 1-11. (above) A window in the Western Art Gallery, on the seventh floor. (Below) The view of the mountains visible from the window pictured above.



American Art shares the floor with small displays from the Design collection; the totem poles and canoes from the Northwest Coast collection were installed in the second floor when the building first opened, and it is more complicated to try to move them than to leave them there in spite of changing collections. The seventh floor is also bifurcated, hosting both Western American art and rotating photography displays, as is the sixth floor, which holds more of the design collection, textiles, and European art. The American Indian collection is on the third floor, Pre-Columbian and Spanish Colonial art is on the fourth floor, and Asian art on the fifth.

This arrangement of galleries-by-floor makes it so that visitors can easily pick and choose what types of art they want to see, simply by pushing the elevator button that corresponds to their interest area. It also means that different levels can employ different strategies for art display. The design collection on the European floor, for example, is awash with color and displays objects on a small platform, in chronological order (Figure 1-12, next page). The Asian collection, by contrast, is displayed in wooden cases and is arranged by region (Figure 1-13, next page). The flexibility of the interior was intentional on the part of the designers. Essentially, each floor is structurally a large warehouse, within which the Museum staff constructs temporary dividing walls when they install the gallery, a common arrangement in many museums.

By 1988, the building already needed significant funds for remodeling: the roof leaked, one floor was closed for art storage, the offices were over-crowded, many windows were boarded up (to reduce ultraviolet damage to the art and to neutralize the

gallery spaces, making them blank canvases to hang art in instead of requiring the curators to work around window placement) and the galleries were dark and crowded (Marie Adams Denver Art Museum 2007, sec. 105:40). The board started a capital campaign, garnering \$7 million in pledges from board members, corporations, and foundations, and another \$8 million in city bonds for the renovation (Harris 1996, 52). In the remodel, finished in 1997, the Museum



Figure 1-12. The Design room on the sixth floor of the North Building.

abandoned the old oval portal and opened an entrance on the newly created Acoma Plaza, creating a “new urban center at the southern gateway to Civic Center” (Sharp 1996, 14), to follow the plan created by Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates for a new Cultural Center Complex, a “shared landscape” for the Library, the Art Museum, and the Colorado History Museum (Heilman Brooke 1999). The new orientation towards Acoma Plaza reflected a similar change in orientation when the Michael Graves addition to the library opened in 1995. The 1997 renovations created a concourse connecting the Library and the Museum, a traveling exhibition space, restaurant, and bookstore; they also opened up the fifth floor from storage, re-numbered the floors so that the “mezzanine” became the “second floor,” and moved the curators out of the building (Rosen 1995, 19). Offices for curators and education staff are in a building five blocks away.



Figure 1-13. The Asian Gallery, on the fifth floor of the Ponti Building.

The Hamilton Building

In 1997, the Guggenheim Museum opened the doors of its new branch in Bilbao, Spain. Designed by Frank Gehry, the new museum was clad in titanium, which had been supplied by a Denver-based company. The owner of that “local” business was friends with Lewis Sharp, then director of the Denver Art Museum, and invited Sharp to the opening of the Bilbao museum. The story goes that Sharp went in prepared to dislike such showy architecture, but was so impressed with the form of the building and the excitement it generated for art and for Bilbao, that he vowed to get something equally stunning built for the Denver Art Museum (High-Level DAM administrator (ID60) 2011). And thus, the origin myth claims, the new wing of the DAM was conceived.

In 1999, after an advertising campaign on the part of the DAM, Denver voters approved a public bond for \$62.5 million to finance the new wing of the Denver Art Museum. DAM’s board also contributed capital and fundraising time and, in the end, public and private funds reached \$140 million for the new wing. An architect selection committee was formed, which eventually chose Daniel Libeskind, with his crystalline form and charming presentation style, as the architect. Contractors broke ground in 2001, and the new wing, called the Hamilton Building after the biggest individual donor and chair of the board, opened in 2006. More details on the funding and architect selection processes can be found in Chapter 4.

The Hamilton Building is on the corner of Acoma and 13th Avenue, on the block directly south of the Ponti Building. As part of constructing the new wing, Acoma Street between 12th and 13th Avenues was closed to vehicular traffic, and is now called Martin Plaza (Figure 1-14). While the Museum maintains an entrance in the older building, most



Figure 1-14. Martin Plaza from the south. Left to right is the Hamilton Building, the Michael Graves Library addition in front of a downtown office building, and the Co-Development, with retail on the first floor and condominiums above.

visitors arrive at the Museum through the entrance on the east side of the Hamilton Building. East across the plaza from the Hamilton Building sits a parking garage wrapped in retail and residential units, called the Co-Development. The parking garage was required by the city to accommodate Library and Museum parking needs, and Libeskind and the design committee recommended wrapping it in other functions to enliven the plaza. Other architecturally significant buildings in the area include the Michael Graves library addition, east of the Museum, and the Clyfford Still Museum, just west of the DAM.

The Hamilton Building is four stories high, plus a basement with art storage, preservation facilities and a lecture hall. Immediately inside the entrance, visitors are greeted by staff at an admissions desk, the Museum Shop to the right, and a spiraling stair and atrium to the left (Figures 1-15, 1-16, and 1-17). This is the second—and by all accounts, better—location of the shop, and the design won “best museum shop” award when it opened. Travelling and temporary exhibitions show in the south end (left from the entrance) of the building, which is only two stories tall.

The third and fourth floors show modern and contemporary works from DAM’s permanent collection, and occasionally a smaller temporary exhibit, as well. The second floor, in addition to hosting traveling exhibitions, holds contemporary art in the Western collection and connects to the Ponti building via a bridge over 13th Avenue (Figure 1-18,

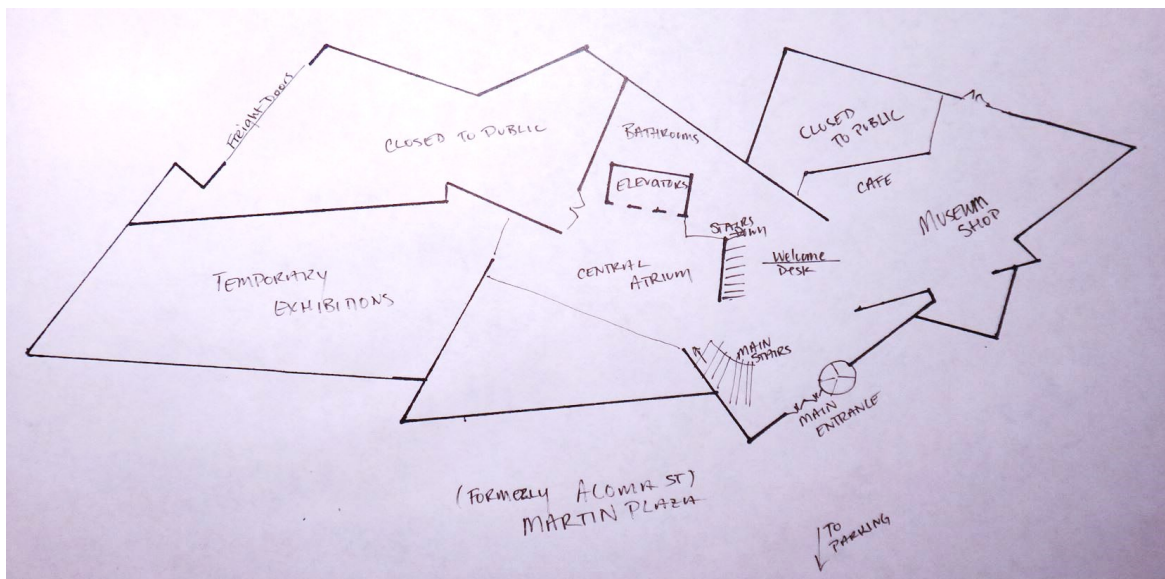
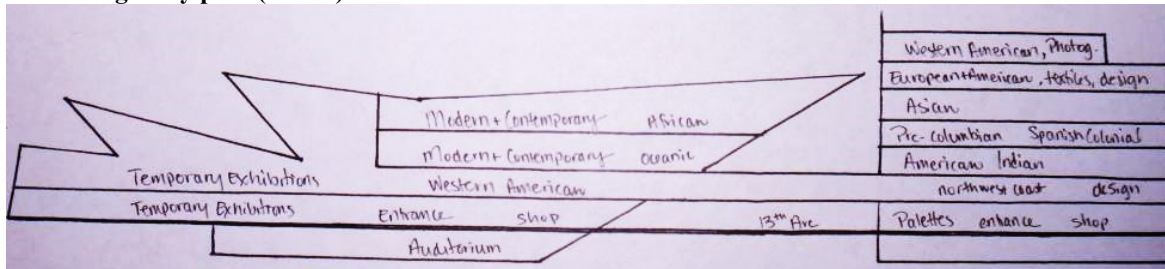


Figure 1-15. Top: Plan for the first floor of the Hamilton Building. It is quite different from a typical floor plan, and to make way finding easier, the Museum offers a section of the museum as their standard gallery plan (Below).



next page). The only vertical structural walls in the Hamilton Building are those that surround the elevator shaft. Otherwise, art is either displayed on or against non-vertical surfaces, or non-structural walls are built to hang the art on, just as is done in the North Building (Figure 1-19, next page).



Figure 1-16. The Museum Shop, from entrance to the Hamilton Building. The front desk is just to the left of the picture, and the atrium is behind the picture taker.

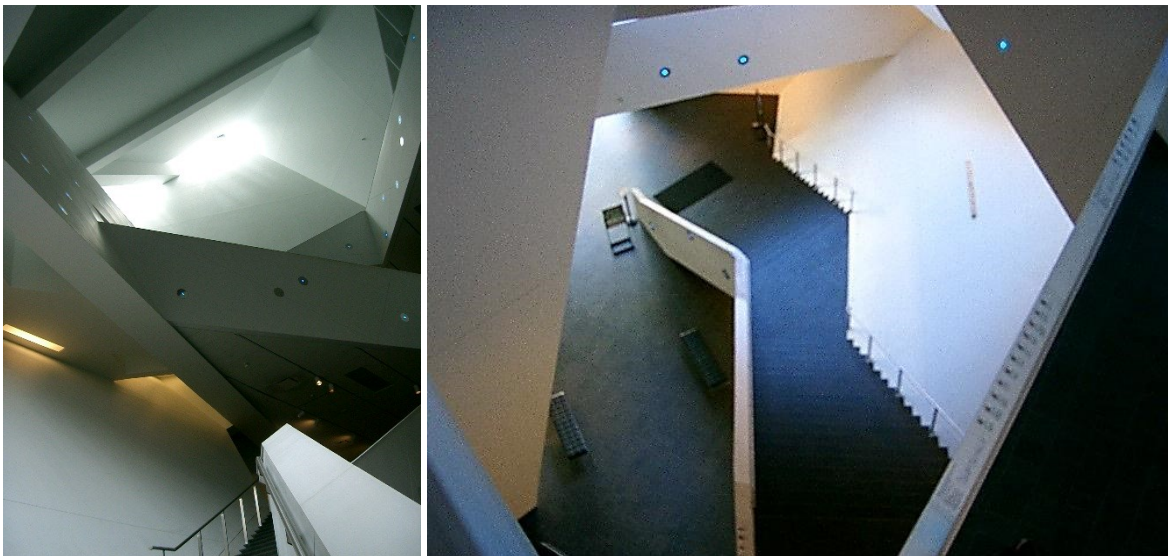


Figure 1-17. The Central Atrium, as seen from the foot of the central stair (left) and from above, looking down (right).

Research Overview

To be able to investigate the local effects of museum architecture, this research uses a case study model. Placed in a regional city in the middle of the United States, the Denver Art Museum explicitly chose the paradigm of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao for its new wing, making the Denver Art Museum's Hamilton Building the perfect site for an in-depth study of the Bilbao-era paradigm for museums, its connection to urban issues, and its effects on art display. In choosing a single building, my goal is to be able

to understand deeply the motivations of the client (i.e., the museum board), the motivations of the city, public response to the building, and how the new building has changed art display strategies. Studying a single building in-depth allows for simultaneous attention to detail and broad scope to uncover any new issues that might emerge. That is, by choosing a single building, I can gather a wide swath of data and see which issues emerge from that data—I can closely attend to issues beyond those of my own choosing—while concurrently addressing the issues in the literature.

Focusing on the Denver Art Museum allows for all the particularities and complexities to be approached. Data was collected in two major ways: archival research and interviews. The archives are local and national papers, as well as clipping files at the Denver Public Library and the few archives at the Denver Art Museum itself. Interviews were conducted with major stakeholders in the museum, including members of staff, volunteers, visiting public, residents of the Co-Development condominiums, architects who worked on the project, local arts advocates and local artists, and officials from appropriate sections of Denver City government. The collected data was analyzed with a mixed approach, using both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The idea of levels of analysis was helpful in sorting out the various scales and foci of the research and analysis.



Figure 1-18. The Bridge connecting the second floor of the Hamilton Building to the Duncan Pavilion and the second floor of the North Building



Figure 1-19. The Western Gallery in the Hamilton Building. Note the non-orthogonal structural walls and the interior vertical walls. The opening in the center of the picture leads to the bridge pictured in 1-22.

After an historical overview, the following chapters move from the broadest level of analysis through increasing specificity to changes in behavior, before moving back up to the level of values and looking at the latent effects.

Chapter 2 presents the history of art museums in the United States, viewing them as an institution, a building type, and a shaper of behaviors. It looks at the museum as a multi-faceted institution, one that works at a variety of scales and levels. The first dedicated museums were not built in the United States until after the Civil War; it was only then that there was an established elite to donate their collections and resources to the organizations they founded. As the twentieth century progressed, museums opened their doors to more types of art, adding modern and contemporary art to the old masters that had graced European museum walls for centuries. Additionally, they opened up to more people and more programming—a democratization of art museums. By the end of the century, museum buildings had become more than containers, but works of art in their own right. Each of these changes in values is reflected in changes in building types, which affects the users, in both obvious and unconscious ways, changing both their behavior and their values. Throughout Chapter 2, I present museum buildings that crystalize the values and stylistic flourishes. That is, I present the history of art museum building types, looking at a variety of levels of analysis in each era or for each model. The categories are fluid and there are precedents for each example; the examples I present help highlight the values and behaviors.

Chapter 3, on urban strategies, examines the more recent values of museums. At the turn of the millennium, museums increasingly became tourist attractions, responsible for drawing visitors to the museum from out of town, out of state, and out of the country. An institution once valued as a keeper of high culture and elite taste to educate and elevate the masses, holding itself apart from the city, is, under this next paradigm, deeply tied to the city and by necessity open to many people. It caters to tourists and popular demands, in addition to the call of high culture. Previous building choices are not abandoned, but these new values are layered on. Buildings are increasingly called upon to represent a city and to draw tourists, because the collections themselves in mid-sized museums in regional or third-tier cities have not.

In Chapter 4, I look at how those larger trends in values at the institutional level help create the new wing of the Denver Art Museum. The appearance of the Hamilton Building is not a random occurrence, but looks like it does because it is a product of a moment in time. The form represents a specific strategy used by Denver and by the Museum to respond to the global trends of privatization discussed in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, we begin to identify, name, and interview the actors who created the changes we see and discuss. The actors in Chapter 3 are more abstract, we are observing trends, while Chapter 4 is the story of the Denver Art Museum's actual choices.

Chapter 5 most closely resembles a post-occupancy evaluation of the building. Here, I consider how the design choices of Chapter 4 are experienced by the users of the building, including staff and visitors. These are the observable behaviors and reactions of people using the building. Chapter 5 answers the question: what does it mean, in a concrete sense, to be in the spaces that were created in response to broader urban strategies?

Chapter 6 circles back to the level of values, this time looking at the latent effects of design and behavior. Post-occupancy evaluations, at their most basic, rely on

observable and reportable information. Comfort studies ask people what their levels of physical comfort are and measure that against recorded temperature information. Building Science studies measure inputs and outputs. Behavioral studies observe where people sit and where people walk, for example. Chapter 6 takes that observable data and extrapolates to latent or emergent values that emerge. These are the effects that users might not fully articulate to themselves.

The limitations of this research are those of any qualitative case study: the results might be peculiar to this case alone. The benefits of studying a single building outweigh these limitations, especially when the findings here are set against available museum theory. The conclusions uncovered at the DAM form a working model with which to study other museum buildings in the United States. This research, then, is an exercise in grounded theory, where I am attempting to form a theory from empirical evidence found in the field (Seaman 2008). That is, I am trying to understand what is happening from the ground up, seeing what patterns emerge. Throughout the study, I have been aware of the existing theories on museums and the Bilbao Effect, and have tailored some of the interview questions to address those theories. This strategy of working simultaneously up from data and down from theory results in theories that do, in fact, reflect available evidence.

Some of the limitations of this research were practical: the Denver Art Museum does not keep a thorough archive that is accessible to the public. In fact, the Museum staff members were simply unable to answer many of the empirically-answerable questions I asked, such as the zip codes of visitors or the number of people who purchased memberships during the building opening who are still members. Also, the Museum denied my request to administer a survey to visitors, either inside or outside the museum. Martin Plaza is a public place, so in theory I could have stood just outside the building and surveyed people entering and leaving, but I wanted to respect the wishes of the organization that was so generous in so many ways, and consequently I did not randomly survey visitors. This reduced the number of members of the public I had access to other than acquaintances.

In spite of these limitations, this research can contribute to the field of the study of Museum Architecture. It offers a new understanding of how this new museum type, the Bilbao-model, works as an institution, and serves as a basis for further research involving more museums across the United States.

Chapter 2: Museums as Containers, Museums as Art

The museum is a complicated institution, evolving from a number of different and conflicting impulses. Museums have propagated elite taste, hoarded treasures, expanded knowledge, and educated the public. The demands on the buildings that house museums are equally complex, with many different user groups to consider, including wealthy donors, scholars, the visiting public, curators, and the works of art themselves. In the early days of museum architecture in the United States, museum buildings resembled palaces or were repurposed homes of the wealthy (which often had been designed to resemble palaces). Hours were limited, effectively restricting who could visit, and museums did little more than preserve and hang art.

In the inter-war period, some art museums adopted International styling and updated their program, the paradigm changed. Now, instead of palatial styling, art was to be shown on white walls within a building with the same styling as a department store or office building. The building retreated to being a container for art, intended to impose as little as possible on the objects within it. In addition, institutions took on educating the public about the art on their walls, especially once Modern Art, an art style many people were unfamiliar with, started arriving from Europe. These two changes seem minor but fundamentally altered the landscape of museum buildings. White walls, the International Style, and a human scale to both the inside and the outside of the building drastically changed how museums looked and how they displayed art. Moreover, inserting education about the art (instead of using the art for education of artists, as had been previously accepted practice) changed programming and patrons. While art museums in the US had been loath to open their doors to all classes and segments, now the museum was not only accepting a wide variety of visitors, it was seeking them out, helping them feel comfortable and teaching them about what they were seeing. Non-display spaces increased, with cafes and stores becoming common.

Many museums continue to be built on the modern container paradigm, but in the middle of the century another type of art museum building joined it on the international stage: the sculptural museum. With these museums, the form changed again, and buildings became more than just a container, they became art in their own right. Buildings like the Centre Pompidou demonstrated that sculptural buildings had the power to draw press and crowds. The Centre Pompidou did not generate tourism on its own, though, in the same way that the later Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao did.

As we will see in Chapter 3, at the turn of the 21st century, the inclusion and wooing of the public that began with the inclusion of commercial spaces in modern containers was taken to its extreme, with iconic buildings that have a myriad of social and economic spaces for the comfort and excitement of potential visitors. Moreover, these

buildings are not simply about the art inside, they are public works projects, designed to be icons of their city and increase tourist traffic to the entire area: they have an economic impact far beyond the museum's own balance sheet.

Most museums, of course, embody more than one of these paradigms, or have been modified over time to accommodate new functions. But the following pages establish a building pattern of buildings changing over time along with ideas about what museums are supposed to do. The ideas imbedded in the Denver Art Museum emerged from earlier museum types. What follows is a brief overview of the evolution of art museum types in the United States, focusing on what we can learn from them as a building type.

Building Types as Social Insight

James Deetz writes that “material culture may be the most objective source of information we have concerning America's past” (1977, 259). Buildings are part of that material culture, and they offer similar insight. As ossified social data, they are a key to both conscious intentions and unconscious habits. Just as differences in the patterns of gravestone carvings indicate local religiosity and wider connections to other countries, differences in buildings can indicate usage and values, because “the places we physically construct are designed to support...culturally defined practices” (Franck and Schneekloth 1994a, 24).

The study of building types is the study of patterns in the built environment, and how those patterns affect and result from human practices. For example, studying farmland divisions shows that land use in the Midwest is shaped by governmental policies, not free-market forces or culturally-defined social practices (Dandekar 1994), and studying housing type reveals how zoning regulations reinforce ideas of family shape, responding to and then reinforcing social norms (Ritzdorf 1994). By going beyond the study of individual farms or individual homes and concentrating on the pattern of farming or the pattern of housing, social insights are possible. For example, Paul Groth (1994) reveals four social classes through a study of hotels as housing. King reminds us that “meanings are not stable”—that the places we construct “have no permanent social meaning beyond the history, society, and culture...in which they exist” (1994, 128). Thus, we have to study the history, society, and culture of the creation of the building to understand the context, and we have to understand the history, society, and culture of the current era to understand what the buildings mean now.

Places, then, are “both the product of human intention and action and the necessary support of human intention and action” (Franck 1994, 346), and the study of buildings types, as collections of objects, makes patterns visible beyond the whims of an individual architect or client, providing insights into institutional and social change. For example, Anthony D. King (1995) traces the development of the bungalow from India before English colonization through Great Britain and across two oceans to the United States and Australia. In exploring the history and development of this one building type, he simultaneously explores issues of class, tourism and second homes, colonization, urbanization and suburbanization, underdevelopment in the third world, and architectural symbolism. Even the term bungalow is slippery, meaning a single-story detached dwelling in some places and meaning a vacation home in others, and King's work reflects

this varied meaning and symbolism through geography, social studies and architectural form.

Nineteenth century cultural institutions and the buildings that house them are a popular subject for building-type studies. For example, scholars have studied asylums (Yanni 2007), Carnegie Libraries (Van Slyck 1989), prisons or penitentiaries (Foucault 1995), North American Victorian hospitals (Adams 2008), 19th century art (Bennett 1995), and what we would now call natural history museums (Yanni 1999). Scholars have also studied furniture (Cranz 2000), housing (Groth 1994; King 1995), parks (Cranz 1982), and settlement patterns (Fogelson 2001; Fogelson 2005). Taken together, these scholars show the ways in which building types can offer social data: buildings are norms, social processes, and values expressed and negotiated in the physical realm. Sometimes, these social data are found only on the plans for buildings, where a ground floor room might be labeled “colored reading room” on an old plan of a library but is now used for the children’s library (as in Van Slyck) or on a note attached to a schematic design declaring the bigger rooms are for inmates of a higher order class (as in Yanni).

Through careful analyses of data ranging from building plans to meeting notes, these scholars have illuminated the role that institutions play in changing building types. Viewing the built environment from multiple perspectives, not just from that of architecture or the institution it houses, offers insights into emerging architectural patterns and how they coincide with larger societal shifts. It is easy to get lost in the particulars of individual buildings, but these scholars demonstrate how those particulars stem from and help shape social values. Institutions are expressions of social values; the public library, for example, does not exist without an idea of a public, of education and self-improvement and paternalism. Buildings bear mute testimony to the values of those institutions. That testimony is then misinterpreted or even challenged, forcing institutional change, which is subsequently reflected in the next generation of buildings.

In each study, scholars address two fundamental questions: what is the intention behind the design, or how did the building type come to look this way; and what is the result of this pattern of building, or how does the building type impact its users? For example, in *The Architecture of Madness*, Yanni explores how understandings of disease altered the design of asylums: the city was viewed as a carrier of disease through bad air and a cause of mental ill-health through over-stimulation and rigid grid structures. Pastoral landscapes and contemplative exercise in them could help cure the insane, it was thought, so asylums were built on vast tracts of carefully landscaped countryside. But use does not always match intentions, which is why contemporary accounts of actual users are important. From them we can learn details such as that the landscaped grounds were often not used as intended, with one reporter observing patients tied together being led on leashes around the gardens, or nurses confiscating even the smallest leaf or pebble acquired on the carefully regulated and fenced-in walks (Yanni 2007). Throughout this study, I similarly focus on patterns of building types, the design intentions that shape them, and the users that complicate those intentions.

What follows is a short overview of three models of the American public art museum as a building type, and the contingencies and clouds of meanings it holds for different groups (Markus 1994). Here, the physical form of the art museum is used as a way to “...uncover social, spatial, and temporal dimensions of the built environment, as well as interactions between these dimensions” (Franck and Schneekloth 1994b, 13). The

models correspond roughly to time periods, but slippage often occurs between the museum types, and many museums incorporate ideas from more than one paradigm.

What can we learn about American culture from the art museum?

Before Public Art Museums

Before there were public museums, there were cabinets of curiosities. These cabinets might be a single room or a wing in a palace, and were rarely built specifically for the cabinet purpose. Here, the prince, nobleman, natural philosopher, or wealthy merchant collected both natural and artistic objects, including specimens of strange creatures, historical portraits, jewels and stones, casts or drawings of architectural features, and other objects that we would now separate into different collections or museums. A diverse and complex collection demonstrated a deep knowledge of how the items fit together, demonstrating power over the material world. Sometimes smaller versions of these would travel with carnivals (for discussions of cabinets of curiosities, see Bennett 1995; Hooper-Greenhill 1992; McClellan 2008; Newhouse 2006; Wolf 2010; Yanni 1999).

A more formal version of these cabinets were princely and noble collections of art and precious objects, which began as collections from antiquity or great masters. These artistic collections were used to display the wealth of the kingdom to visiting aristocracy, or the wealth and discernment of the aristocratic family, and added patina to newly minted nobles. The Louvre is often cited as the first major public museum, and while the *idea* for a public art gallery in a wing of the Louvre existed from the middle of the 1700s, the Louvre did not open its doors to the public until after the French Revolution (McClellan 1999). Opening the Louvre was designed to demonstrate to the newly formed public the benefits of the revolution: that the treasures that had formerly belonged to Louis XVI and the aristocracy now belonged to the people. The message was one of inclusivity and collective ownership, designed to demonstrate both to the French patrons and to the international public what it meant for citizens to own what was formerly the monarch's property. Eventually, it became a repository for the treasures of Napoleonic conquest, an international advertisement for France's military and cultural superiority (Bennett 1995; McClellan 1999). Similarly, the British Museum housed treasures from around the British Empire, although the nature of that museum was less public and more scholarly: some of the first iterations of the British Museum were stuffy, requiring court etiquette, and giving tours only begrudgingly (McClellan 2008; Schubert 2009, 17–19). The British Museum was supposedly organized to promote scholarship, and as such was less focused on art and more focused on collecting specimens—much of the collection was thought of as historical objects, not artistic ones.

William Scott Hendon (1979) classifies these early versions of museums into five types of collections which evolved into what we see in museums today—sacred, wealth hoarding, social prestige, group loyalty, and curiosity/scholarship. One of these, the sacred, magical, or spiritual collection such as was found in reliquaries or shrines has the least power over us today, although some argue that our current relationship to art is that of sacral objects (Duncan and Wallach 2008). Another early form of collection was the wealth hoard bearing witness to economic and military power. These hoards have more bearing on the contents of European art museums such as the Louvre than they do for

American art museums, which had little early aristocratic or imperial plunder to display.⁷ Early collections could also be shows of prestige, as with the *nouveau-riche* in the United States, and manifestations of group loyalty, which demonstrated the collector's membership in a class of people who collected scientific or artistic artifacts. The museum that starts and stays public is an American invention—before that, museums were most often private collections that had been turned public, such as in Basel, Switzerland, where a private family collection was eventually bought by the city in 1662, or royal collections that were taken over and nationalized, such as the Louvre (Burt 1977, 15–25).

Thus, at the time, most museum architecture was that of refurbished and repurposed palaces, with grand entrances, large windows, and decorative drapery. Lighting was much discussed, and plans for skylights to replace windows delayed the opening of the Louvre more than once (McClellan 1999). In the early 1800s, the French theorist Durand published his version of the ideal art museum: from a central rotunda, four halls emerge, one in each direction, and connect to an outer series of galleries in the shape of a square. Four courtyards let light into the long galleries. This paradigm shaped art museum buildings for nearly a century and a half (Searing 1986, 16).

Most of the early collections in the United States were for curiosity and scholarship, not formal art museums. These collections formed the basis for early American museums, some of which were University museums and often closed to the public (such as at Yale in 1832) or were closer to what we would today consider a natural history museum, with a collection of objects which included but were not limited to art—a collection of curiosities and antiques rather than a sacred space devoted to art (Hendon 1979, 22). Without “princely collections” to filter into the public domain, the earliest version of the museum in the United States was created by groups of private citizens forming an association for their own and their members’ edification; the primary purposes of these were educational, and the delight that comes with it (Taylor 1975, 34; Hendon 1979, 22; Wallach 1998; Schubert 2009).

In this context, art was a cultural artifact rather than its own category (Taylor 1975, 36). For example, the Charleston Museum, founded in 1773, the first public museum in the United States, was a natural history museum rather than an art museum, even though it contained some artistic objects. Similarly, Charles Wilson Peale opened his private gallery in Philadelphia to the paying public in 1786, but it was closer to a cabinet than what we would consider an art museum; the remains of the museum were bought by P.T. Barnum when it went bankrupt. The paintings the museum contained were considered historical objects, not art objects (Burt 1977).

These early associations often evolved into Athenaeums, such as the Boston Athenaeum of 1807, where collecting and learning about a variety of things would take place. Sometimes started in libraries or the home of a private individual, the trustees of these athenaeums eventually provided separate buildings, representing a place of universal or well-rounded knowledge. Collections could be thought of as specimens, not

⁷ Unlike the Greek, Roman, or Oriental plunder brought back to England, the Native Americans’ art was not thought of as art until recently, existing initially as “ethnographic artifacts” of what at the time was called primitive cultures—in fact, the Denver Art Museum was one of the first museums to recognize Native American artifacts as art. The professional and amateur archeologists that purchased and unearthed Native American cultural objects kept their collections as scientific evidence (Platt 2011). There were no Elgin Marbles, for example, or gold cups from Egypt in U.S. collections.

as art. They became a version of economic plunder in the United States, where the wealthy would go on the “grand tour” and bring back cultural and artistic souvenirs as a way of demonstrating ownership of the culture (Schubert 2009). Categories were loose, not necessarily formal or historical, and often objects that today we would think of as belonging in different museums—a cast of an architectural feature, a family portrait a few centuries old, a suit of armor, and a stuffed animal—would be in the same room. Many of these early Athenaeums offered art classes and collected items useful for design training. Thus, many of the museums in the US began as academies for art instruction (Spaeth 1969, 2). The encyclopedic museum has some connections with this early museum paradigm, in its collecting and display of a broad type of objects, although often now the display of the objects has shifted to newer paradigms.

From the 1820s through the 1880s, the Boston Athenaeum held annual art exhibitions, provided studio space for selected artists, commissioned new paintings and sculptures, accepted bequests of art, purchased casts and copies of antiques and paintings by European masters, and purchased contemporary art—it was “a patron of the fine arts and an arbiter of taste in the city of Boston” but was primarily a literary society for the merchant elite of the city (Dearinger 2006, 34). Like many early museums, the Athenaeum was “generous” by today’s standards: they showcased local artists, prints and casts purchased abroad, and designs for newly invented machines, a far cry from today’s standard of famous and original only (Taylor 1975; Hendon 1979; Dearinger 2006). However, while the collection was democratic, the patrons were not. According to Hendon, “...private collections were opened to the public but continued to be administered as if they were private, marked by restricted entry, jumbled presentation, and persistent visions of grandeur” (1979, 24).

In 1822, the Boston Athenaeum received a gift from merchant James Perkins—his mansion on Pearl Street. With this new space, the Athenaeum began holding annual art exhibitions, mostly for its own members’ edification and enjoyment. The exhibitions were a financial success, and the proceeds from them were used to buy more art and art books (Dearinger 2006, 41). By the Civil War, the Athenaeum trustees recommended a separate institution dedicated solely to Fine Arts, which culminated in the formation of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, whose first few exhibitions were held in the Athenaeum until the MFA acquired its own building (Dearinger 2006, 57).

Before the Civil War, there was not an industrial bourgeoisie to gift collections to museums—the merchant class had not amassed the fortunes of later generations (Beckert 2001). Elites were not cohesive enough, nor was there a cohesive enough definition of high art, to ensure national galleries or even very powerful art galleries (Burt 1977). Things we now think of as high art, such as Shakespeare, were enjoyed by the masses, and the art in museums was often casts or copies (Levine 1988).

Except for examples like the Boston Athenaeum and the subsequent Museum of Fine Arts, many of the earliest of American museums were often rooms in a house or in a small building, usually in imitation of architectural styles associated with “art” (Saisselin 1983). When the Athenaeums did get their own buildings, they were usually done in a Venetian Gothic style, as opposed to the renaissance or Greco-Roman references of the later museum buildings. The rooms were cluttered and lit by windows, clerestories, and occasionally skylights; since the buildings were for small educational societies, they were not sized for large crowds (Taylor 1975). Unfortunately, there is no good survey of these

early museum and athenaeum buildings such have been done for the Carnegie libraries in the United States, Victorian hospitals in North America, or early natural history museums in Britain (Van Slyck 1989; Yanni 2007; Yanni 1999).

The periods following are not as clearly defined in the literature. Helen Searing presents cycles of museum building booms (1890-1932, after World War II, and 1970s on), and styles ranging from Second Empire through Brutalist and into what she calls "greenhouse" (Searing and Whitney Museum of American Art 1982). Victoria Newhouse, in her survey of exceptional art museums of the western world, identifies seven different paradigms for current museum practices, three of which are relevant to the discussion here (Newhouse 2006). These are the updated cabinet of curiosities, where the art of a single collector is displayed, usually in a private museum; the museum as entertainment, a direct overturning of the sacred space paradigm of the 18th and early 19th centuries, where the path through the galleries is far less set and other, commercial functions such as book shops and cafés invade the museum space; and the museum as environmental art, where the building is its own work of art as part of the urban fabric, and competes with the collections for attention.⁸ Her work focuses on recent museums, although, of course, most of the paradigms are historically derived. Although she describes the forms these museums take, her categories reflect the ideology of the museum more than the form; formally, there is a good deal of overlap between her categories.

In contrast, Neil Harris (1990) divides the relationships of American cities with cultural institutions into four periods: the colonial period, when not much was happening; 1800-1870 or so, when there was quite a bit of class mixing, mass appeal for the arts, and uneven quality of art objects; the 1870s to the Depression, when cultural institutions became increasingly stratified; and the post-World War II era, when culture again became a mass phenomenon, and marketing and nationalization increased. Hendon (1979) sees three periods for museums: before World War I, between the wars, and after World War II. Similarly, Taylor (1975) sees three periods for art museums: the palaces of the Gilded Age, a Modern era beginning after World War II, and a third era in 1975, the spurt of museums that are more welcoming to the public. I largely follow his breakdown of periods, while updating Taylor's last period to take into account the Bilbao era, and responding to the categories that Newhouse called entertainment and environmental art. While there have been celebrations of current museum architecture and critical studies of the museum's role in society, few scholars have pulled the history forward (examples of books celebrating recent museum architecture include Henderson 1998; van Bruggen 1998; Brawne 1998; Sachs and Magnago Lampugnani 1999; Mack 1999; Trulove 2000; Milwaukee Art Museum 2001; Tilden 2004; Barreneche 2005). In the rest of this chapter, I explore the three art public art museum building types in the United States, setting the stage for the Bilbao paradigm explored in Chapter 3.

Palaces for Art

Between the Civil War and the turn of the 20th century, the art museum as a complex organization began to separate from Athenaeums, and "suddenly it was imperative that a proper city should have a proper art museum as a sign of cultural

⁸ Her other three categories—the virtual museum, the monograph museum, and artists' museums—are not architectural categories and thus not relevant to this project.

maturity” (Burt 1977, 173). The buildings were monuments (Pevsner 1976, 136) to the accomplishments of a city or a donor that could afford to build them. Now, art would be set apart from the scientific and historic objects: those items with an aesthetic existence beyond their scientific or historical context moved to the art museum (Taylor 1975). Spaeth (1969) claims that the rise of art museums and the desire to show originals came from the tradition of the Grand Tour, which required young men of means to travel around Europe before settling down, and often they would return with collections of artwork, symbols of their economic and cultural achievements, and class loyalty. After the Civil War ended, the elites of New York and Boston were strong enough and cohesive enough to enshrine a single model of what fine and high art was supposed to be, and had the money to purchase it from Europe (Lee 1983; Wallach 1998; Beckert 2001). These new shrines were important, according to an 1869 speech by William Cullen Bryant, because they would bring national prestige, encourage native arts, be a refuge for private collections, provide education about the arts, and offer uplift to any who entered (Burt 1977, 91).

Originally, this included the plaster casts of architecture and ancient sculpture, as they were seen as nearly as good as the original works of art for demonstrating aesthetic principles. But concurrently with the move towards freestanding buildings and independent institutions, there was a move away from casts to originals, because the wealthy now had the money to buy the latter in Europe. Patina, long prized in British aristocracy for legitimating a family’s place in society, now became accessible to US elites, as well. What Wallach calls the “cult of the original” increased after the Civil war (1998, 50). These newly wealthy industrialists and other capitalists decided that these originals, consumptive conquests of European culture, should be housed in palaces. Not only did it reflect the origins of the objects and lay claim to the cultural heritage of Europe, but it placed these expensive originals in an appropriately sumptuous and elevated location (Wallach 1998).

Claiming a connection to ancient civilizations, many of these palaces were Beaux-Arts in style, designed to be sacred spaces for contemplating art, a space apart (Newhouse 2006; Hendon 1979). Hence, museums of this era were sometimes located in or near parks, which were designed to be a break from the city, where the unrelenting noise, dirt, and work of the city grid retreated (Cranz 1982). This move allowed the museums a physical separation from the city, reflecting the moral separation museum administrators sought thought it was disturbing to park purists (Cranz 1982). Newhouse’s paradigm of sacred space includes fortresses, designed to protect the art inside. Indeed, preservation of the work was deeply important to the founders of the Louvre (upon which these US palaces were modeled); they would not take art that had not been well-preserved, as part of the value of the art was getting to see the technique and brush strokes of the artist (McClellan 1999). Karl Friedrich Schinkel’s Altes Museum in Berlin introduced the grand stair to the museum typology in the 1820s (Searing 1986, 16), creating a series of processional spaces separating his building from its urban context (Bergdoll 1994). Gilded Age museums in the United States used the grand staircase to emphasize the ceremony of going to see art. With busts of artists decorating the outside, central stairs, and high windows and ceilings, the buildings conveyed high social status and the importance of what was housed inside (Figures 2-1 and 2-2, next page; Bennett 1995; Taylor 1975).

The Boston Museum of Fine Arts, founded in 1870, displays many of these classic Gilded Age art museum features. It grew out of the Boston Athenaeum, utilizing its art collections, engravings from Harvard College (since withdrawn), and casts from MIT. It opened in 1876 in a Ruskinian Gothic structure on Copley Square, but the collections and the neighborhood grew so quickly that a new building was soon commissioned (Cavallo 1969; Gilman 1907). Instead of copying the old structure, the trustees toured Europe to study “all the museums in Europe” to arrive at a report on the ideal museum. The new building opened in 1909, containing “sweeping vistas, ceremonial stairways, dramatic domes, and more columns” (Rathbone 1969, 9). This monumental new museum had a segmented plan with each department separate and a clear circuit for the visitor arranged in chronological sequence, a main floor illuminated overhead for exhibitions and lower floor for offices and smaller works, well-lit rooms with finishes in a soft color, and artwork in thick frames to separate one from the other (Warren 1907; Coolidge 1907; Fairbanks 1909). Visitors ascended forty steps to get the main lobby, nine outside and then thirty-one up the grand staircase inside, and the rotunda in the center of the building was equidistant from each different department. With a boiler



Figure 2-1. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, by Richard Morris Hunt in 1902, augmented a smaller building that faced the park. Note the stairs, the columns, and the decorative seals and busts, all signaling a building of importance.



Figure 2-2. The Great Hall of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, by Richard Morris Hunt in 1902.

and powerhouse for light located on the property, it was considered at the time a very modern building, the latest in museum design (Warren 1907, 29).

Another example of the palace paradigm, the Cincinnati Museum of Art, started as a school on its current site in 1866; it does not have the forty stairs that Boston does, but it sits high atop a hill,



Figure 2-3. Cincinnati Art Museum

accessible only by narrow winding roads (Burt 1977, 203). The original stone art school building has been renovated to be part of the galleries, with the addition of later, properly monumental architecture (Figure 2-3). Here, the city matched an original donation from a single individual of \$150,000.

By contrast, New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, founded the same year as the Boston museum, did not grow out of an athenaeum, but is considered the “mother of all New York art museums” (Newhouse 2006, 140). It is sited in Central Park, which represents turn-of-the-century elite ideas about what is good in society (Rosenzweig and Blackmar 1992). Just as the Cincinnati museum had a partnership with its host city, the Met had a partnership with New York City: the city would erect and maintain a building, while the trustees owned the collections and were responsible for programming, including public lectures (Hendon 1979, 25).

The Philadelphia Art Museum, another palace for art, was started as a display space for industrial arts, with many decorative art pieces; it has since grown into a bastion of high art (Burt 1977, 130-139). As with the other museums of this type, it is separated from the city by a “parkway” surrounded by trees, lawns, landscaping, and a fountain (Figure 2-4). Getting to the museum from the city requires an approach, intention, and



Figure 2-4. Philadelphia Art Museum from the side

real effort to make it up the stairs made famous by *Rocky*; runners still use the stairs for a workout (Figure 2-5). The long series of rooms house art ordered according to period and school. In the 1920s, the palatial references to the aristocratic origins of hoards of wealth and treasures extended to include period rooms and historical display, where the works of art could be seen with furnishings from the era from which the art came (Taylor 1975; Hendon 1979).

The most extreme example of this dip into period rooms is the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, housed in a purpose-built Venetian palace on Fenway Court. Opened in 1903, the collection and entire building was designed by Isabella Stewart Gardner, and the building was a venue for concerts, a studio, and a gathering place for thinkers and artists of her time (Hawley 2003). Gardner had traveled around the world with her husband, and once she inherited over a million dollars from her father, she began to collect in earnest. She assisted with the education of Bernard Berenson (eventually a strong advocate of original works of art as opposed to casts) and supported the purchase of original works of art only, in opposition to the predominate ideas of cast collecting in museums. When she died, the house she designed and built remained a museum as it had been when she lived, with quirky period rooms and original works of art from around the globe (Chong 2003).

Simultaneously, other museums became more selective in the art they displayed, and each piece was given more space around it to ensure it would be properly appreciated on its own (Hendon 1979, 22). Either way, the features were designed to communicate permanence, selectivity, sequential narratives, withdrawal from the everyday, and the requirement of proper manners. The shape of the building and the rooms within it were used for gradual instruction, sequential narrative, and crowd control (Bennett 1995; Taylor 1975).



Figure 2-5: Looking toward Philadelphia from the steps of the museum

Modern, “Neutral,” Containers

After World War I, another museum paradigm emerged, one that was more austere and intended to highlight the art more and the building less. These Modernist containers were lower, less monumental, often used an international style, and, as the century wore on, increasingly offered amenities for the general public like cafés and bookshops. That is, commercialization entered the museum building, although it was still usually in a separate space from the art. A prime example of the container paradigm is the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York City, opened in 1939. Taking a cue from department stores, the MOMA building opened directly onto the street, with no stairs and large plate glass windows on the sidewalk; a later addition included a garden hall that resembled a shopping mall or hotel atrium (Figure 2-6; Wolf 2010, 145; Wallach 1998). At this new building, which utilized the Modern architecture previously used only for residences, there was no grand entrance, all floors were equal, there were low ceilings and artificial light throughout, and the square rooms focused on small numbers of works (Taylor 1975, 45–47). The formal presentation of art was focused on education, with a chronological arrangement invented by Alfred Barr, MOMA’s first director, promoting an historical narrative, an arrangement in response to the “secularizing but still deeply religious culture; art negotiating its own relations to life, society, and otherness; market-led privatizing production, fostering radical individuality and gambit-playing” (Schubert 2009, 59; quote in Pollock 2007, 10).

Museum professionals took the aesthetic role of their building very seriously, with the Association of Art Museum Directors asserting that “the role of an art museum as a force for the heightening of visual awareness should make the museum responsive to the environmental and aesthetic quality of its architecture, its landscaping, its interior design, its graphics and its maintenance standards, as well as the installation of its works of art” (1981, 18). The architecture and landscaping of the museum, not just the art inside, had a responsibility to an aesthetic sensibility; that is, the museum building was an important tool in “heightening of visual awareness.” Museums aspiring to this model were often prestige buildings, “a sparkling cultural jewel in the mundane crown of the commercial landscape” (Taylor 1975, 52).

This represents the sacred space concept of Newhouse taken to the



Figure 2-6. The first purpose-designed building for MOMA, by Philip L. Goodwin and Edward Durell Stone in 1939, as it

extreme. MOMA's galleries were didactic and nearly completely artificially lit, giving visitors little context outside the white walls of the galleries (Figure 2-7). This new building type and hanging style trained viewers "to look only at what is inside the frame: everything outside the frame is irrelevant" (Oberhardt 2001, 44). In effect, the museum has taken the paintings and isolated them to see only the painting or the art, and to look outside of this is to muddy the waters. Especially since Duchamp blurred the line between what is art and what is not art, the museum must work even harder to remain a "canonical space," to ensure that the objects within its walls are considered art, and thus sacred (Mack 1999, 17).



Figure 2-7. Gallery space of MOMA today. This picture is from a newer addition, but the paradigm of display is very much still in the tradition established by the original building.

These supposedly neutral galleries worked well for modern art because the art itself is self-contained and self-referential (Newhouse 10). The idea of having a neutral space within which to view art was not new. Painter, sculpture and archaeologist Johann Martin Wagner suggested in 1815 that plain, yellow-gray walls for museum buildings because people go to see a collection and ornament distracts from the objects being displayed (Pevsner 1976, 124). His plan did not prevail among most of the American public art museums, though, and although we now think of the white walled gallery space as neutral—a "testament to the success of MOMA"—at the time it was a significant break from the previous historically-inspired colors, drapery, and details, and was seen as quite radical (Wolf 2010, 205). On the other hand, architect Frank Gehry claims that "there's no such thing as a neutral environment" (quoted in Isenberg and Gehry 2009, 102). While some artists loathed the isolation of the white cube gallery, other artists embraced the blankness of the space, demanding "pure walls that nails can be hammered into, with good toplighting and neutral floors" (artist George Baselitz, quoted in Szeemann 1999, 7). Art and architecture historian Nikolaus Pevsner calls the 20th century museums the "perfect place to show, enjoy and study works of art (1976, 136).

At the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, opened in 1972, Louis I. Kahn created "one of the purest and most perfect statements of architectural modernism," one that seems to be "a nearly perfect environment for viewing and contemplating art" (Dr. Timothy F. Potts, Director, quoted in Tilden 2004, 102). The Kimbell was new, with still-forming collections, when the Kahn building was commissioned; the idea was to be as distraction-free as possible in the contemplation of the art objects (Loud 1999, 14). Unlike Yale University's Art Gallery, where the directors disliked the way the servant spaces were visible, at the Kimbell the formal distinction between servant and served spaces fades and the building is instead about light (Meyers 1976, 3; Bellinelli 1999). Kahn's Kimbell museum revived the old, vaulted space and natural light tradition, but with the modern twist of modularity and open spaces (Searing 1986, 20). Critics love this building for the excellent blending of the old traditions with the "neutral" modern

paradigm: de Wit calls the Kimbell art museum “one of the most beautiful museum spaces designed in the twentieth century” (De Wit 2004, 14), and Magnago Lampugnani calls it the “ideal model of modern museum architecture” (Magnago Lampugnani 1999, 12).

When the Denver Art Museum commissioned its first building, the new gallery ended up being one story, with 150 by 80 feet of floor space unbroken by walls or pillars, which could be split up by plywood panels. More importantly for our discussion, it had an International-style façade, with large show room windows of plate glass allowing passers-by to see into the galleries. One columnist explained in the paper that “just as a department store uses display windows as a part of its selling program, so Bach uses his windows to “merchandise” his exhibits” (Moore 1949). The International style building was not popular with everyone in Denver: one Denver resident wrote in to complain about having a contemporary building on Civic Center plaza, next to the Greek Theater and City Hall with their Greek and Roman references, saying that “alone, contemporary architecture is sad and grievous and unsightly enough. Side by side with the glory that was Greece, it’s untenable” (Stephenson 1945).

While other paradigms for art museums have been introduced (including sculptural, discussed next, and Bilbao, discussed in Chapter 3), the paradigm of the museum building as an empty and “neutral” container to highlight art continues in recent museum buildings. For example, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMoMA) is a modern temple that, once you pass through the atrium that houses the more social functions of the museum (Figure 2-8), has white walls that disappear behind the art and galleries arranged in enfilade. According to Mario Botta, architect of SFMoMA, the “real challenge” in museums “is to discover that perfect balance where the architecture and art enrich one another” (quoted in Tilden 2004, 166).

After World War II, and then especially in response to studies of the limited public most museums were drawing upon, museum practices changed to attract a broader public and offer more amenities to draw this audience, including blockbuster shows and rotating collections (De Wit 2004, 13). In the 1960s, the purpose of museums expanded even further, with



Figure 2-8. SF MoMA atrium (above) and exterior, below



“educational programs, films, libraries, concerts, [and] theatrical performances” directed at both children and adults (Spaeth 1969, 4). Museums, new and old buildings alike, had to find space to house these additional functions, as well as more of everything they had to have before: more storage, more display space, more rooms for coat checks, bigger book stores, and more types of art (Taylor 1975). The art market, a strong economy, tax laws and civic pride all contributed to the proliferation of museum buildings, in addition to the growing public demand and changing taste cultures (Stephens 1986).

In spite of these additional functions, many museums continue to be built on the Modernist paradigm, where galleries are white-walled and neutral, the architecture is clean and often artificially lit, and the works are arranged in a linear fashion. The additional functions were just added into the lobby or other auxiliary spaces.

Buildings as Sculpture

As early as the middle of the 20th century, some museums responded to changes in the social construction of the institution by changing the buildings that housed them. These new museums were art unto themselves, not simply beautiful containers for art, but sculptures in their own right.

The most famous example of a building-as-sculpture museum is the Solomon R. Guggenheim museum by Frank Lloyd Wright. Opened in 1959, this museum represented a radical break with all museums before it, with one curving gallery that spiraled up around a single atrium (Figure 2-10, next page), which many thought was hostile to the program of showing art (Ockman 2004). The large rotunda of the FLW Guggenheim is the dominant image of that building, and it harks back to Durand’s idea of long hallways off a central rotunda, but now the building is all rotunda; and no square of enfilade (Gwathmey 1986, 70; Searing 1986, 21; de Wit 2004, 12–14). Although now any addition or change is fought over and debated among neighbors and architecture critics alike, when the Guggenheim was first erected, it was “decried as an outrageous proposition in New York City” (Wolf 2010; Gwathmey 1986, 72). In contrast to the Kimball or even the MOMA (Newhouse calls the Guggenheim the “antithesis” of MOMA), it is not seen as neutral; the building is the “real attraction” instead of fading into the background and simply serving the artwork it surrounds (Magnago Lampugnani 1999, 11). The building itself is so famous that it spawns small models; there is even a Lego version for sale in the gift shop (Figure 2-11).

Another, more recent, example of a building that is also a sculpture is the Theater Tower addition to the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, by Herzog and de Meuron. This 2005 addition reads as a separate structure from the older part of the museum, designed by Edward Larrabee Barnes in 1971. Clad in crinkled aluminum siding, the cantilevered blocks draw attention to the form (Newhouse, 2006, 301).

Many sculptural buildings were built that were not art museums, but being cultural buildings, they are worth mentioning. For example, Le Corbusier designed an exhibition building for the Centre Le Corbusier, built in 1964-1967, that was a sculpture in its own right. The “umbrella-like steel roof” is separate from the glass and steel building, “with colored enamel façade panels inserted beneath it” (Newhouse 2006, 222). The Sydney Opera house by Jorn Utzon, opened in 1973, was similarly a sculpture in its own right, and drew attention to Sydney and comment in the architectural and popular presses in a way that foreshadowed Bilbao-type buildings.



Figure 2-10. The Solomon R. Guggenheim museum by Frank Lloyd Wright



Figure 2-11. The Lego version of the Solomon R. Guggenheim museum by Frank Lloyd Wright

The Denver Art Museum’s North Building was designed as a “work of art in itself” (Denver Art Museum n.d. probably early 1970s), making it another prime example of the sculptural type of museum building. Opened in 1971, it was designed by a partnership between Italian architect Gio Ponti and Colorado architect James Sudler, who worked closely with then-director Carl Otto Bach to design the inside. The outside is a single ribbon wall composed of 28 different sections, covered in gray glass tile (Figure 2-12). Window slits perforate the ribbon, framing views of the city or the mountains from the inside.

The DAM was very intentional about using this building for promotion when it first opened: the building’s silhouette was used as the Museum’s logo for years, and they even offered a silver pendant inspired by the building for purchase. The museum also intentionally talks about the building as a break from both the modernist and the older, Beaux-Arts traditions of museum buildings. For their 1993 centennial celebration, the DAM mounted an exhibit called *The Art of Architecture*, about the North Building being a work of art. Part of the exhibit was a room explaining different museum styles and their evolution; those styles were Beaux Arts (like the National Gallery in DC), Modernist (like the MOMA), and sculptural, where the DAM placed its own North Building (Chandler 1993).

But the North Building is more than just a sculpture: the designers of this building thought very carefully about visitor experience, and responded to what the director at the time saw as the ideal experience for an average visitor. Director Bach had very specific



Figure 2-12. The North Building of the Denver Art Museum, by Gio Ponti.

ideas about what a building should do for visitors to a museum, and he demanded that no gallery be larger than what he thought a visitor could see before she became fatigued. Thus, the galleries are stacked on top of one another, accessed by an elevator.

The Denver Art Museum's North Building and the New York Guggenheim's building are both examples of sculptural museums that take visitor experience and art display tactics into account in varying degrees. Other architects, including Pei, with his design for the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse and the East Wing of the National Gallery in DC, Barnes, who did the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, and Breuer, with his design of the Whitney, continued this tradition and helped create a new paradigm for art museums as cultural centers responsive to the public, and as sculptural objects in their own right (Bergdoll 2009; Burt 1977, 345).

Many elements of all these typologies are mixed and matched in contemporary museum buildings. Sculptural museum buildings, a variety of commercial amenities, and a choice in routes combined with international economic forces and tourism practices to culminate in a new art museum typology. Named for the museum that popularized the paradigm, this new museum type is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Museum Madness

In the 1990s, museum attendance and art donations increased steadily according to museum scholar Scott J. Tilden (2004), but capital improvements increased at nine to twenty times as fast, and at four times the rate of growth in endowments (7). The turn of the millennium was an “age of museum madness,” in journalist Mark West’s words, where each museum vied to “erect the splashiest most acclaimed signature building” since the last one (2006, 220). One hundred years ago, the wealthy spent their money on creating museum institutions by donating collections and founding the organization; now, the wealth generated by the 1990s and 2000s is spent on museum buildings. These new museums, like the late modern and sculptural paradigms, had much more complex programming than just housing art—the buildings incorporate the “dining, shopping, education, entertainment, and social needs” of their customers (Tilden 2004, 7). These “new museums,” as museum scholars Victoria Newhouse (2006) and Kylie Message (2006a; 2006b) call them, go far beyond just housing art to include “an engaging entry pavilion and more specialized galleries...a top-flight restaurant, and an amply stocked gift shop,” in addition to an education center and an auditorium (Schulze 2001, 23).

Internationally known architects participate in competitions for the commission, often presented to the public as part of the application and publicity process, raising the profile of the project (Rybczynski 2002). Institutions “trade on spectacle, commerce and cultural tourism” in an effort to reach for new audiences (Fyfe 1996, 213). Newhouse and Message both call the products of this paradigm shift New Museums, where the building is an attraction equal to the art and there are spaces for shopping, sitting, eating, are making art part of life again, instead of sacred or didactic (260). Henderson calls the turn of the 21st century a “golden age” for museums—with blockbuster shows and blockbuster buildings that are supposed to innovate and entertain (1998, 11). Because each wave of changes to the museum building type is dubbed “new” at the time of its inception, I call this new museum type the Bilbao museum, following the more common and popular terminology of the Bilbao Effect.

The Bilbao Effect is when “spectacular buildings by celebrity architects are used to revitalize struggling post-industrial cities and put their name on the global tourist map” (Greenberg 2008, 29). It is a combination of emblematic icon and global trademark with a signature architect (Klingmann 2007, 240), and used most often by third-tier cities (those who expect to be regional centers of capital and business, instead of global cities like New York and London) struggling to draw international tourism. Basque Studies scholar Joseba Zulaika (2005) asserts that the Guggenheim’s success at Bilbao was due in large part to the economic devastation in the formerly industrial city. Not only was the rent gap so large that a return on investment happened much more quickly than it would have in a place like Tokyo or Moscow, but the city could provide the spatial clean slate

that made the new museum architecturally striking. He calls the Bilbao Effect the “Krensfication of the museum,” and attributes it to former Guggenheim Museum Director Thomas Krens’ success as a seducer, the exuberance of the 1990s and the desperation of Bilbao to overcome its reputation as a site of terrorism.

Situated in an industrial city with a declining population, a dwindling economic base, and regular violence by separatists, the building, with curvilinear titanium sides and a form that resembles an artichoke, a flower or a fish, along with the art it houses, was to be part of the rejuvenation of Bilbao and part of its transformation into a global tourist site (Brawne 1998, 48; Fraser 2006). The city undertook other projects, as well, including a new airport and investing in a subway system. Juan Ignacio Vidarte, director of the Guggenheim Bilbao, “wanted a building like the Sydney Opera House, which would provide a visual identity and transform the city of Bilbao”—and told Frank Gehry so (Isenberg and Gehry 2009, 136). The Bilbao Museums cost \$166 million to build, and provides \$30 million in annual tax receipts (West 2006). With its international architect and global draw, it enhances the prestige and experience of its client and boosts the economic status of the city it is in (Klingmann 2007).

The Guggenheim at Bilbao was not the first museum to try many of these things, nor the only to combine them. But it did it so spectacularly that it has become synonymous with this phenomenon, (few peer reviewed articles have “Bilbao Effect” in the title, but it is in the title of 12 general articles, and even the title of a play; Betsky 2012; Clarke 2012; Cohn 2012; Cohn 2011; Giovannini 2001; Labasse and Bilbao 2010; Lovatt-Smith 2003; Plaza 2007; Plaza and Clement 2006; Rybczynski 2002; Safdie 2010; Stamp 2011).

The Guggenheim museum had collections it could not display in its New York and Venice locations, and Krens, director of the Guggenheim from 1988-2008, saw international franchises as a way to not only display a larger percentage of the collections, but also as a way to expand the brand of the Museum and bring economies of scale to the world of Fine Arts (Baniotopoulou 2001). He had approached other cities in Europe, Russia, and Japan to host the next franchise of the Guggenheim, but all those attempts had failed (Baniotopoulou 2001; Zulaika 2005). Bilbao, Spain, indicated interest, although it was much too small a city for the Guggenheim to be interested initially. When the city agreed to pay the \$20 million franchise fee the deal between the city and the Museum proceeded (Zulaika 2005). Krens was not the first to think of franchising a museum; Rockefeller tried to “develop a series of MoMA franchises all over Brazil” after WWII (Guilbaut 2005, 136). The Guggenheim Bilbao has proved more successful than those attempts.

Newhouse calls the Bilbao museum “one of the most ambitious attempts to date to associate an art museum with urban renewal” (2006, 246). Located along the water in an old industrial district, this “masterpiece” is its own work of art, “as challenging, distinct, and beautiful as anything an artist might put inside” (Henderson 1998, 32, 35). The building is essentially “*the* founding work of art of the Bilbao Guggenheim” (Zulaika 2003, 126). The Bilbao Guggenheim museum was so successful—earning the city’s investment back within seven years, drawing tourists from across the globe, and making Frank Gehry and Bilbo household words around the world—that museums across the globe have tried to copy it (Plaza 2000; Plaza 2008). The Bilbao represents a “new moment in the evolution of the society of the spectacle and its global architectural

representations” (Ockman 2004, 228). Even buildings that were not consciously thought of as signature projects to draw outside tourists to a cultural facility, such as the Oslo Opera House, were justified afterwards in terms of drawing tourists (Smith and Strand 2011).

The government of Bilbao made a deal with the Guggenheim for a museum and a building calculated to take advantage of the globalizing culture economy (Moxey 2005). The deal arguably succeeded: the museum has been credited with improving the city and stimulating the economy...it “put Bilbao on the map” (Guasch and Zulaika 2005, 17). McNeill (2009) claims this operates in four distinct ways: by generating tourism to the region, by positioning the building in the world of architecture, by increasing the name recognition of the Guggenheim Museum, and copies spring up around the world.

While museums have always been part of an internationalization of culture (Weil 1983, 1995; Message 2006), now even the most traditional institutions are changing the way they present their collections, pushed by the need to appeal to wider circles of visitors. In addition to changing their buildings, many museums in the US and around the world are updating the way they do business, including what they display and how they label their collections, increasing the breadth of artists represented and how curators explain the art (Karp et al. 2006). An American example can be seen in a shiny, slick and picture-laden publication, in which Pitman and Hirzy (2010) lay out the new framework for visitor engagement at the Dallas Museum of Art. Because of extensive visitor research conducted by the museum in partnership with a private firm, the museum has four different categories of visitor that they engage with through various signage and activities. To accompany this new dedication to visitor experience, the museum undertook a revitalized mission and “brand identity” directed at visitors. Now the museum is sometimes open very late, partners with teachers, reaches out to local artists, and offers things to do other than just look at the art. Museums from Denver to Philadelphia to Seattle have offered similar experiences.

Branding the City

One of the hallmarks of museums built in the Bilbao paradigm is a deep connection between the museum and the city, including a financial connection. Public art museums are usually partially funded by the city (in the United States) or by the nation (in Europe), and thus are intricately tied to government finances and geographies. Cities give money for museums and museum buildings to demonstrate collective cultural capital in competition with other cities, vying for regional or global city status (Witcomb 2003; Domosh 1996; King 1991; Brenner and Keil 2006). Cultural institutions are thought to draw educated residents and international tourism (Florida 2005; Dicks 2004). It is part of the creation of a fantasy city, a city to be consumed—to be taken in and checked off a list (Hannigan 1998; Lefebvre 1996). It also can help create a sense ownership of culture and cultural institutions in local residents, and pride in their government (McClellan 1999; Duncan 1995).

The relationship between the city and the museum is a physical one. The museum building is a monument that holds art and is separated from the city, to create an experience of leaving the city behind and entering a whole new realm and mindset (Ameri 1998). However, with the Bilbao Effect, the role that the museum has played in a city has expanded. Even as early as the 1980s, architects discussing museum buildings

talked not only about design, but about each museum’s “urban and civic presence, its cultural role in society, and its symbolic significance” (Stephens 1986, 8). Now, the architecture is supposed to be “as strong as the works of art it contains” (De Wit 2004, 14). This bold architecture is not just for the museum, but also for the city; 100 years ago, museums were separate from the city, but now they are an intimate part of the urban landscape. The demands on the museum have increased to include a need to stimulate economic activity, with “neighboring hotels, businesses, and local governments often encourag[ing] museums to create buildings that appeal to tourists and residents” (Tilden 2004, 8). The Bilbao-model museums are often in the downtown—which has historically served as the commercial, symbolic, and social heart of a city (Beckert 2001; Isenberg 2004; Fogelson 2001).

These museum buildings are conceptualized not just as buildings but also as urban events, claiming the urban fabric as part of their territory. For example, the louvers on the brise-soleil of the recent addition to the Milwaukee Art Museum open for light and temperature control, and they can be opened for big events such as openings of new exhibits; the building and its moving louvres have become emblems of the museum (Schulze 2001, 36). Far from being just a building to house art, the Calatrava addition is an urban landmark and a “symbol of the vitality and the forward-thinking quality of Milwaukee” (Bowman 2001, 9). Similarly, architect Zaha Hadid speaks about the Contemporary Art Center of Cincinnati as a “public living room” (Quoted in Tilden 2004, 34).⁹ The sidewalk supposedly becomes the floor and then curves into the wall, to bring the carpet of the city inside the art museum (Figure 3-1). In selecting Hadid, the Arts Center was within the Bilbao paradigm, seeking “a tourist attraction whose unabashed visibility might radically transform a shabby urban image” (Ockman 2004, 236). A city is represented by its buildings, which both express

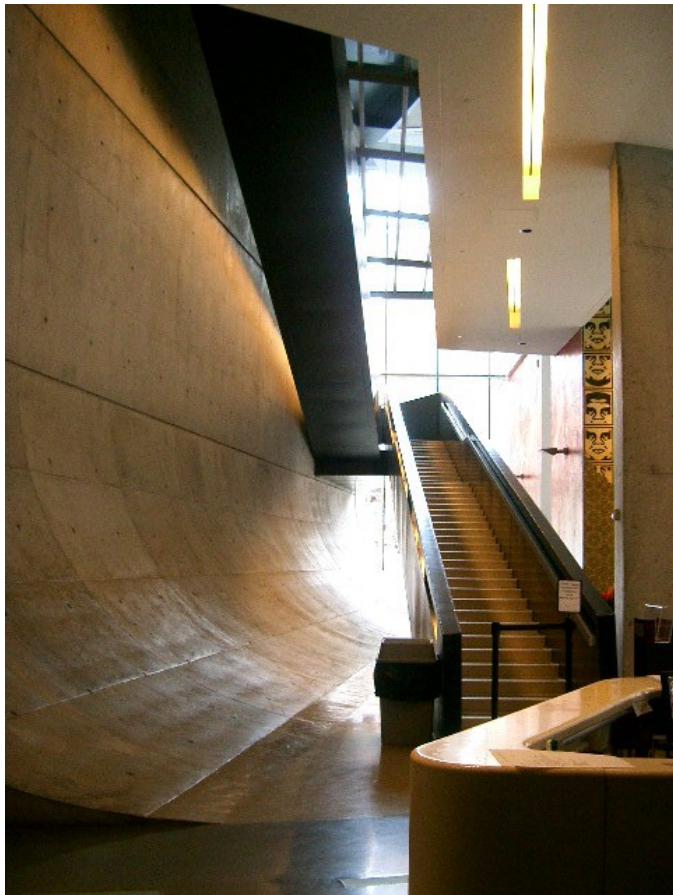


Figure 3-1. The back wall of the Contemporary Art Center in Cincinnati, with the “carpet” where the sidewalk becomes the wall, metaphorically pulling the city sidewalk into the Center and up to the top floors of the building.

⁹ Over a hundred years earlier, libraries were being spoken of as a public living room, and decorated with domestic touches to reinforce the idea (Mohney 1997, 26).

social structure and economic activity (Fainstein 1994), while helping to brand the city.

Place branding goes beyond one isolated marketing campaign to create a comprehensive image in the audience's mind, often perceived by visitors at a sub-conscious level (Anholt 2005; Vitiello and Willcocks 2011). It is a response to the neoliberal condition of nations and states reducing their roles; in an increasingly globalized world, with regions or cities becoming more important than national identity (Clarke and Gaile 1998). Place branding is organized marketing focuses on stimulating demand and it links that demand to supply (Smyth 1994, 14). Boosterism was less organized, with individual entrepreneurs producing an eclectic image, in an erratic and usually regional campaign. Branding, by contrast, is a much more coordinated campaign by a public/private partnership with a consistent image and at a large scale, to use the image of the city for economic growth and specifically for tourism (Greenberg 2008, 36). Architecture is used in branding, with cities using architecture "to elevate their position in the global village" (Klingmann 2007, 2).

Iconic buildings are often, but not necessarily, part of a flagship project—some flagship projects use themed but low-key architecture, and some iconic buildings are not part of a larger flagship project. Flagship projects are defined as urban development around branded sites with architecturally distinctive buildings and cultural facilities, whose purpose is to stimulate further economic and urban development (Hannigan 2003; Smyth 1994). They can be a stimulant to the local economy, but are not always successful at it (Garvin 2002). In fact, Grodach studied three cultural flagship projects and found that they are successful only so far as they connect to existing cultural and economic resources (Grodach 2010). Logan and Molotch distinguished between the use-value that residents get from an emplaced community and the exchange value that can be wrung from places when they are bought and sold (Logan and Molotch 1987); these projects are an attempt to create, from the use-value of a city or area, an exchange value for developers, tax coffers, and business owners.

Culture is a necessary but insufficient condition for economic development; other conditions are a diverse economy, integration of the market, and an increase in the overall productivity of the city (Grodach 2008; Plaza 2008). But cultural consumption should not be ignored: it has real economic implications on a local and global scale (Zukin 1991; Clark 2004). Just copying the iconic building part of the Guggenheim museum is not always successful in other cities: in Bilbao, the museum boosted the economy in the short term, allowing the other changes in the city to take effect (Plaza 2008), and but few other flagships have been rigorously evaluated for economic success (Evans 2005).

Cities, even small or regional ones, are taking on a more entrepreneurial and global role due to economic and global shifts, including a general shift towards privatization as part of the logic of neoliberalism. As national and state governments retreat, regions and cities are becoming "more important decision arenas" (Clarke and Gaile 1998, 3). Public/private partnerships emerged in the 1980s as part of a more entrepreneurial development strategy, with the "public" as the junior partner (Greenberg 2008). Jencks argues that iconic buildings have replaced monuments, because of the size of commissions available and because of marketplace competition (Jencks 2006).¹⁰ In a

¹⁰ The distinction here is fine. Monuments, such as the Arc de Triumph in Paris for example, tend to commemorate an historical moment, person, or event ("monument" 2013). The Iconic buildings, on the other hand, tend towards more abstract symbols of a city or institution, not necessarily commemorating

globalizing world where cities are competing for the attention of global travelers, buildings help brand the city and draw tourists. Iconic buildings require the 21st century's ease of air travel for the global architects to work and media to disperse the images (McNeill 2009). Our current experience of architecture is mediated by the popular and tourism press (Lasansky and McLaren 2004).

The transnational capitalist class plays a large role in how globalizing cities use iconic architecture for urban intervention (Sklair 2005). Corporate funding and culture requires iconic buildings to get attention and draw the necessary capital (Jencks 2006). Certainly at the Guggenheim Bilbao, the iconic building helped increase sponsorship for the museum, and it draws over 800,000 visitors a year, the core of the new tourism economy (Plaza 2000; 2007). But while the Guggenheim brings tourists into the local economy, neither the art nor the building have anything to do with the "cultural locality" within which they are situated, just like much of the international art world (Becker 1999). The Bilbao, and many other "Bilbao effect" buildings, are part of the globalization of architectural form, due to market liberalization, international migration, cultural globalization, and the rise of global architecture journals, offices, and technologies (Guggenheim and Söderström 2010).

The Public Still Pays

In Denver, the privatization began in the 1980s. In the mid-1970s, fifty per cent of the operating budget of the DAM was covered by municipal subsidy; seventy per cent, if servicing the debt for the Ponti Building was removed. As recently as the 1970s, the Museum's Annual Report called the DAM an "agency of Denver," with seventy percent of annual operating costs covered by the City; but no tax money goes for art acquisition or educational programs (Denver Art Museum, undated). In 1981, however, Colorado stopped subsidizing cultural agencies, and the City subsequently reduced funding of the DAM (Harris 1996, 47–48). Now, the DAM is an independent agency with its own not-for-profit status, but there are still vestiges of the old connection. For example, the City owns the land, the Museum owns the buildings, but the City paid for some repair of the Ponti building tiles when they needed it, and throughout the years the voters of Denver have approved bonds for the Museum buildings.

The Directors of some Denver cultural agencies, including the Museum, responded to the dwindling tax support of their institutions with a separate, renewable tax. Since 1989, the Denver Art Museum has been partially supported by funds from the Science and Cultural Facilities tax. The Science and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) distributes money collected through a point-of-sale tax of one-tenth of one per cent in the seven counties in and around Denver, which is divided up between 300 cultural organizations in the Denver Metro area. Five institutions—the Denver Art Museum, the Denver Botanic Gardens, the Denver Center for the Performing Arts, the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, and the Denver Zoological Gardens—are Tier I organizations, meaning that they collectively receive 65.5% of each year's distributions, as written into the statute. SCFD allocations must be used for general operating expenses and not capital campaigns or buildings. From 1989 to 2010, these tax receipts funneled

anything but representing the city or institution visually. Of course there is overlap: the Statue of Liberty is at once an icon for New York harbor and a monument to the friendship between the U.S. and France during the Revolutionary War.

\$100 million to the DAM for general operating expenses, or around a quarter of the general operating budget. One of the results of the SCFD is that all the Tier I institutions have “free days,” where anyone with a Colorado Identification is admitted free of charge (Science and Cultural Facilities District 2009, 3).

The SCFD is a boon to both the institutions that receive money and to the public. According to SCFD staff, the public funding makes it possible for cultural institutions to experiment, while a “sunset” clause keeps them aware of customer and patron wants and needs. The sunset clause states that the tax is not indefinite, that the tax must be re-approved by voters. A SCFD staff member claims that this clause is the only reason that the SCFD tax rates continue to pass, since Coloradans tend not to like increasing taxes indefinitely.¹¹ It is called a “sunset” clause because the sun sets on the taxes unless they are specifically re-approved. It was last approved in 2004 and will go before the voters again in 2016 before the next sunset date of 2018 (“Scientific and Cultural Facilities District” 2013). Many people credit the SCFD sunset clause with the DAM’s concern with appealing to a broad audience: one quarter of their funding is subject to broad voter approval.

People I spoke with in the course of this research were unanimously in favor of the SCFD, pointing out its uniqueness in the United States, citing other cities that have tried and failed to pass something similar. Furthermore, the sunset clause makes the major cultural institutions in Denver beholden to the taxpayers, a potentially much broader audience than they would normally consider. It popularizes cultural institutions that otherwise might retreat into elitism, and DAM staff enumerated programs they feel contribute to the community or that are specifically directed towards broadening the public who attend the museum.

The historic financial connections between Denver and the Museum are still alive in many Denver residents’ minds. Many sources mentioned the deep connections between the City and the Museum, usually in one of two ways. Two-thirds of the twenty-five sources who addressed the City-DAM financial connection talked about the two agencies as deeply interconnected, using a rhetoric of seamlessness. For example, Mike Stretchberry, a long-time volunteer, claimed that the City owns the buildings and pays something to maintain them. One of the architects who worked on the Hamilton Building, Arne Emerson, pointed out that there are no codes that allow cantilevering over property lines and the street and another building, but because the city was so involved, it was possible to erase property lines between the various plots of Museum land and the public streets. And when Director Sharp was congratulating those involved in the Museum, he said, “Everyone involved—from city planners to the public to the Museum’s staff—has been a true partner in the realization of this building. We should all be proud of our accomplishment” (Sharp 2007).

The other third of the comments about the connections between Denver and the DAM talked about the Museum as an amenity of the city, an asset that contributes to the overall experience of Denver. For example, DAM staff member Bridget O’Toole talked about the art being an asset owned by the residents of the city and the region and the Logan Lectures (held at the DAM), an important resource for the city. Many staff said

¹¹ In fact, in 1992, Coloradans passed the Taxpayer Bill of Rights (called TABOR), which forces all tax increases to be approved by voters, rather than the legislature, and sets limits on government spending to the 1992 levels plus inflation unless specifically approved by a majority of voters.

that that public funding leads to a concern for and responsiveness to the larger community: one high-level administrator says that the trustees are “great,” but that most things are begun and ended with public funding, making the DAM as committed to the community as any museum in the country. Not all community members agree, however, with local activist and artist Ashara Edundayo saying that the DAM needs to do more to engage communities of color.

This historical connection between the Museum and the City continued with the Hamilton Building, which was funded with a combination of public and private money. By all accounts, the public money jump-started private giving, while the private money was especially useful for ensuring specific aspects of the project were built, such as the plaza and the wood floor (initially the budget allowed only for concrete). Sharp went to the mayor and asked for money for an expansion so the Museum could attract more and better traveling exhibitions and simultaneously display some of the collections that had previously been in storage. The Nature and Science Museum came to the Mayor requesting a bond issue the same day, so each of them got less money than they wanted. In November 1999, the then-Mayor Webb gave the DAM and the Zoo \$62.5 million each, to put his stamp on Denver. The DAM then started a capital campaign and the trustees said that if the voters approved the Bond issue, they would contribute a \$50M endowment (Chandler 2000).

By November 2011, the DAM had received commitments for more than \$50M for an operations endowment for the new wing, and raised the goal to \$70M (MacMillan 2011). By contrast, the Denver Museum of Nature and Science raised \$14.5 for its new building from the trustees—the most successful fundraising effort in its history and the next-highest amount raised by a major cultural institution in Denver as of 2001 (Aguilar 2002). Chair of the DAM board Fredric C. Hamilton alone gave \$20 million to the operations endowment, which was “the largest one-time donation ever made to a Colorado cultural institution” (MacMillan 2003b). Put another way, the Hamilton Building project received more donation money than any other building in the city’s history, and \$55 million more than any other public cultural building fundraising that year.

Thus, the Hamilton Building could not have been built without both public and private money. The bond helped create a momentum to the project—the Hamilton Building couldn’t have been built without it, in spite of the private donations (Dunn 2006b)—but items like the wood for the floors and the plaza cost extra and were funded separately. An emeritus administrator said that raising money was easy, because the board believed in it and were behind it. He felt that people wanted to be part of a unique brand. A City administrator said that Architecture can have a financial return, but almost more important is the joy that it brings to city residents. She compared signature buildings to the symphony, to parades, to the Occupy movement: there is a cost to these things, but “that is what the city is,” these are what make a city vibrant. The timing of the building project was important, as well, because it is easier to justify a building when the economy is doing well. One Board member said that the DAM could not afford the Hamilton Building today, saying “there is not the money to put into such extravagance now, after the world-wide recession.”

Not the Only Icon

Many sources claim that Denver is an architecturally ambitious city, with one article citing as evidence the North Building, the Jeppesen Terminal at the airport designed by Fentress Bradburn Architects in 1995, and the Central Library designed by Michael Graves in 1997 (Figure 3-2) as evidence (see for example Associated Press 2006). Even after the 1980s oil crash, the city began requiring 1% of construction costs for public buildings to go for art (Nicholson 2006). According to one Science and Cultural Facilities District staff member, Denver and the Front Range are attuned to more than just the function of buildings; people look at aesthetics as well. Peg Long, of the SCFD, said that there is an expectation of pushing the envelope in Denver. A city administrator and an arts advocate both expressed pride in Denver’s optimism, because the city is putting so much money into infrastructure, in spite of the economy. The City Administrator said, “...in the last 20 years, [Denver] has constructed a record number of new, high-profile, buildings and infrastructure, including the Library, the Airport, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Denver Art Museum, Coors Field, The Pepsi Center, completely re-done the freeway through town, and invested in light rail,” a record beyond what she thought similar-sized cities were doing. One volunteer said he loved “the feast of architectural styles our little cow town has—we’re not the center of culture, but we try.”

The perception of Denver as a “little cow town” is notable, given that the City has over 600,000 residents, making it the 26th-largest in the country (Table 3-1, next page). When taking into account the metropolitan area population, Denver moves up to 21st-most populated metro area in the United States, with over 2.5 million people in the statistical area (Table 3-2, next page) (US Census Bureau 2013).



Figure 3-2. The Central Library addition, designed in 1997 by Michael Graves, in the shadow of the Hamilton Building prow.

Some sources claimed that optimism and architectural adventurousness comes from a highly educated population: Denver is in the top ten of the most educated cities in the US, and some sources place it as the second-most educated population, next to either New York or DC (Heathcote 2006; Nicholson 2006; CBS News 2010). Yet, an architect working on the projects says that schools do not emphasize architecture because of the strong outdoor and sports culture; she says people are often intimidated by “high” culture and the institutions that house it. In her opinion, part of the role of the Denver Art Museum in the community is to start a conversation about high culture and architecture. Denver is in transition, from an industrial center to a large regional city with a more complex economy, from a “cow town” to one of leisure and culture (Palmer 2012). Like many regional cities, it is trying to distinguish itself with architecture and infrastructural investments.

	<u>City</u>	<u>2010 Population</u>
1	New York, NY	8,189,997
2	Los Angeles, CA	3,795,781
3	Chicago, IL	2,697,843
4	Houston, TX	2,102,680
5	Philadelphia, PA	1,528,458
6	Phoenix, AZ	1,449,396
7	San Antonio, TX	1,333,969
8	San Diego, CA	1,306,071
9	Dallas, TX	1,200,632
10	San Jose, CA	955,225
11	Jacksonville, FL	823,318
12	Indianapolis, IN	821,745
13	San Francisco, CA	805,607
14	Austin, TX	794,950
15	Columbus, OH	790,456
16	Fort Worth, TX	745,893
17	Charlotte, NC	738,774
18	Detroit, MI	711,744
19	El Paso, TX	651,562
20	Memphis, TN	647,612
21	Baltimore, MD	620,971
22	Boston, MA	620,223
23	Seattle, WA	610,409
24	Washington, DC	604,989
25	Nashville-Davidson, TN	604,824
26	Denver, CO	603,497
27	Louisville/Jefferson County, KY	598,314
28	Milwaukee, WI	595,167
29	Portland, OR	585,416
30	Las Vegas, NV	584,167

**Table 3-1: City ranked by population.
From the US Census Bureau.**

	<u>Metropolitan Area</u>	<u>2010 population</u>
1	New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA	19,567,410
2	Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA	12,828,837
3	Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI	9,461,105
4	Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	6,426,214
5	Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD	5,965,343
6	Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX	5,920,416
7	Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	5,636,232
8	Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, FL	5,564,635
9	Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA	5,286,728
10	Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH	4,552,402
11	San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, CA	4,335,391
12	Detroit-Warren-Dearborn, MI	4,296,250
13	Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA	4,224,851
14	Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ	4,192,887
15	Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA	3,439,809
16	Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI	3,348,859
17	San Diego-Carlsbad, CA	3,095,313
18	St. Louis, MO-IL	2,787,701
19	Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	2,783,243
20	Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD	2,710,489
21	Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO/1	2,543,482
22	Pittsburgh, PA	2,356,285
23	Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA	2,226,009
24	Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia, NC-SC	2,217,012
25	Sacramento--Roseville--Arden-Arcade, CA	2,149,127
26	San Antonio-New Braunfels, TX	2,142,508
27	Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL	2,134,411
28	Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN	2,114,580
29	Cleveland-Elyria, OH	2,077,240
30	Kansas City, MO-KS	2,009,342

**Table 3-2: Metropolitan Areas ranked by population.
From the US Census Bureau.**

Denver's Rent Gap

In spite of those efforts at using architecture to brand and revitalize the city, Denver still has neighborhoods of economic depression and low rents, and the Hamilton Building was intended to help rejuvenate one of those neighborhoods. The Denver Art Museum is located just south of the Civic Center, the seat of city, county, and state government in Denver. The Civic Center area is home to buildings of historic significance and styling, including the 1894 capitol (Figure 3-2), the 1932 City and County building, and a 1910 Carnegie library (now a city building used to hold tax records) (Ditmer 2000a). But city administrators, DAM volunteers, and local advocates all said that the Civic Center is not an appealing and vital site: people do not regularly spend time there unless there is a festival. In the early 1980s, there was an attempt to declare part of the Golden Triangle, the neighborhood south of the Civic Center, slum property for urban renewal purposes, to clear it so private developers could purchase it cheaply for “affordable” housing (Golden Triangle Property Owners 1981). Instead, the area is “heavily impacted by parking lots” (“DenverInfill.com - Civic Center” 2012).

In the early 1990s, the city hired Venturi Scott Brown to create a design for a Civic Center Cultural Complex in the area to have a “positive impact it can have in the future growth of the city of Denver” (Ashton, Hartmann, and Sharp 1993). Their plan, discussed earlier and never fully realized, was to use the Museum, the central Public Library, and the Colorado History Museum to refurbish the Golden Triangle, using plazas, courtyards, and public sculptures (Heilman Brooke 1999, col. 1). Although the Democratic National Convention in 2008 prompted a major clean-up of the park, a DAM volunteer says, “the city would still have to do a lot more work to make the Civic Center a true hub like they seem to want it to be.” Other interviewees agreed with her. The building helps draw more people with money to the Civic Center area.

Interviewees conceptualized the Hamilton Building's role in the physical landscape of the city in three major ways. First, many spoke about it as part of the Cultural Complex or sometimes more broadly as part of the Golden Triangle arts district, commenting on how all three Museum buildings (the Hamilton Building, the Ponti Building, and the Still Museum) work together visually, with colors and textures that complement and match, or pointing out, as one volunteer did, that it is nice to have the library, Colorado History Museum and DAM all “thinking about things together;” that having them all together makes for a good city. Yet two sources pointed to this as a failure, mostly due to the cost of parking. Ekundayo, a local arts advocate said that the Museum is hard to access because of the cost of driving and parking.

Second, the Hamilton Building solved the problem of physical disconnection. For some, the building serves as a connector between two different areas of the city, between Civic Center and the Golden Triangle neighborhood. In fact, Daniel Libeskind originally called this project “Nexus” because he conceptualized it as a place where the city came together (MacMillan 2001b; Libeskind 2000b). An architect working on the project said that the building physically connects the two areas by sloping down to the Golden Triangle, a one- and two-story neighborhood, and rising up and pointing to the downtown at the other end.

Third, the building is supposed to work as an economic stimulant, as a catalyst for transforming the neighborhood, which was mostly parking lots at the time. One urban designer said that its presence increases the value of nearby land; however, an architect

pointed out that the land around it is still empty, and pointed to the abandoned Evans school as an example (Figure 3-3).



Figure 3-3. Evans School, now abandoned, on the block just south of the Hamilton Building.

A Symbol for Denver, a Symbol for the Museum

Many sources indicated that what the client got in addition to a place to house art was a symbol. Two thirds of the sixty comments about the connection between Denver and the Museum from interviews and print media were about the city getting a symbol to help with branding, while the remaining third of the comments talked about the symbolism or branding opportunity for the Denver Art Museum (Table 3-3).

Most of the people who talked about the symbolism of the building at the city level described it as a marketing tool, thinking that the Hamilton Building would bring attention to the city. A high level administrator said that part of the goal of the Hamilton Building was to build such a landmark that people would go to Denver to see it, and Fredrick C. Hamilton, Chairman of the Board, talked about using the building to market the museum and Denver as a tourist destination, in an interview published

<u>Symbolism of building</u>	
For City (total)	41
Cultural cache	13
Increased attention	12
National city	8
Local Pride	8
For Museum (total)	19
Attention or Publicity	8
Symbol for inside	6
Engage community	3
elevating status	2

Table 3-3. How the symbolism of the building was used.

in *House Garden* (Filler 2006). The Hamilton Building was supposed to receive as much world-wide attention “as anything that’s happened in Denver” (Reuteman 2004) when it opened. With the Bilbao in Guggenheim far exceeding estimated visitors when it first opened, expectations were high for this Bilbao-effect building. Especially once Daniel Libeskind was chosen as the architect for the World Trade Center, Denver and the DAM expected a boost in visitations from the additional publicity that would bring (MacMillan 2003c; MacMillan 2003a).¹²

Additionally, many sources talked about the content of that publicity or marketing: the new building would improve Denver’s image by increasing its cultural cachet. For example, DAM staff member Lara Writsel said that the Hamilton Building showed that Denver is becoming a cultural place; a newspaper reported that the civic leaders of Denver launched “an international effort to brand Denver as a cultural Mecca” in conjunction with the Hamilton Building’s opening (Dunn 2006a). Related to improving the image of Denver was elevating its ranking as a city: many saw the Hamilton Building as a way to demonstrate that Denver was a national-caliber city and to reach national and international audiences with its publicity. Eugene Dilbeck, the Executive Director of the Denver Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau, said that the new building could bring urban-oriented tourists to Denver, which “would put Denver in the league of a Chicago or San Francisco” (quoted in Aguilar 2002). One staff member said that Denver is a regional city that wants to be a national city, and that “the Hamilton Building is one more feather in the cap of a national-caliber city;” another said that the Hamilton Building was really a tool for the city boosters to show that Denver is a big city and not a cow town. Six different comments mentioned Denver’s image as a “cow town.”

Either those who call Denver a cow town have not caught up to the national image of Denver as measured by polls or the marketing strategy is working, because Denver ranks well in national polls of architectural accomplishment. The international design firm RMJM Hillier conducted a national survey of perceptions of different cities, including questions about infrastructure and urban design, architecture, arts and culture employment, and other design-focused metrics (RMJM Hillier Communications Department 2008). They found Denver ranked eighth, in the top ten with New York, Boston, Seattle, San Francisco, and Washington, DC (Table 3-4). When the ranking is focused purely on architecture, Denver slips back into a position closer to its rank by size, ranking twentieth, according to a national poll by CNN Headline News and travelandleisure.com (2008) (Table 3-5, next page).

The final category of comments about how the Hamilton Building symbolically served Denver was by instilling a sense of local pride, Emerson, a designer who worked

1	Chicago, IL
2	New York, NY
3	Boston, MA
4	Los Angeles, CA
5	Portland, OR
6	San Francisco, CA
7	Seattle, WA
8	Denver, CO
9	Philadelphia, PA
10	Washington, D.C.
11	Minneapolis, MN
12	Baltimore, MD
13	Phoenix, AZ

Table 3-4: Top Ten Cities for Design (and three "to watch"), according to a national poll conducted by RMJM Hillier.

¹² Interestingly, all the sources that talked about publicity were newspaper sources, except the administrator mentioned here. Interviewees more often spoke about the content of the publicity, increasing Denver’s cultural cache or helping it become a national-caliber city. Citizens think about the role of the building differently from professional writers and critics.

on the building, said that “it changed the way Denver viewed itself.” According to Mayor Hickenlooper, Denver is a rising city; it is not one of the top five US cities, but has “quite a bit of civic pride” (West 2006).

Jayne Buck, the head of Denver’s Marketing Bureau, addressed the Hamilton Building’s role in Denver’s marketing strategy, saying that a building alone does not drive tourism, but that a building can add to branding a city, and the Hamilton building is one of the top ten things they showcase. Furthermore, the building gets press, which is valuable. The Hamilton Building provides a new, state-of-the-art exhibit space, which has a domino effect: it allows Tut, for example, to come through, which draws people.

Building a Strategy

The Bilbao Effect is the subject of many deserved criticisms. Some people cite the risks inherent in working with cutting-edge architecture, such as Crimm *et al.*, who use the Libeskind addition to the Denver Art Museum as an example of risks with new museum projects: six months after opening, “the museum announced staff layoffs, noticeable repairs were being made to a leaking roof, and attendance numbers were not as high as expected due to a severe winter” (Crimm, Morris, and Wharton 2009, 6). The Denver Art Museum was called aggressive, derivative, attention-grabbing, and clichéd (Hawthorne 2005; Filler 2006). Most damningly, it “overwhelms the art” (Kamin 2006). And even Gehry’s building in Bilbao has been critiqued with the label “populist shell,” appealing and accessible (Moxey 2005, 177).

But the Hamilton Building, like other Bilbao model museums, are part of a larger strategy for cities: boards and cities request signature buildings (Magnago Lampugnani 1999). Rosenblatt, vice president and vice director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art for 19 years, quotes Nicholas Pevner as saying that the client, not necessarily the architect, was responsible for the functioning of a building (Rosenblatt 1998, 9). The architect selection committee for the Bilbao Guggenheim wanted a building “greater than the sum of its parts” that people would visit on its own merit, instead of coming just to see the art (Van Bruggen 1998, 28). The art was secondary. At one point in the design process, Gehry was struggling with the atrium and reverted to square boxes as the basis for the design, to make sure the building “yielded” to the art. But Thomas Krens told him that the atrium was his, that Gehry should create art-focused exhibition spaces around it, but that Gehry was the artist on display in the atrium (Van Bruggen 1998, 115). Square white box galleries are not missing from the Museum, just secondary to other spaces. Similarly, Calatrava says that the trustees of the Milwaukee Art Museum wanted to

1	Washington, D.C.
2	Charleston, SC
3	Chicago, IL
4	New York, NY
5	New Orleans, LA
6	Boston, MA
7	Philadelphia, PA
8	Santa Fe, NM
9	San Francisco, CA
10	San Antonio, TX
11	Las Vegas, NV
12	Seattle, WA
13	Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN
14	Nashville, TN
15	Austin, TX
16	Miami, FL
17	San Diego, CA
18	Honolulu, HI
19	Portland, OR
20	Denver, CO
21	Atlanta, GA
22	Los Angeles, CA
23	Dallas/Fort Worth, TX
24	Orlando, FL
25	Phoenix/Scottsdale, AZ

Table 3-5: Best Cities for Architecture in 2008, according to a national poll conducted by travelandleisure.com

“create something exceptional for their community.” He says that the brise-soleil is at once formal, functional, symbolic, and iconic: the board wanted a strong architectural statement, according to David Gordon, director of the Museum (quoted in Tilden 2004, 117).

Denver, like other post-industrial cities, tries to brand itself as an architectural city, because of work like Richard Florida's (2005) proposition that “culture” is an important part of drawing not only tourists but also employees and employers, much as good schools and low taxes did a generation ago. Culture has become another strategy to compete in the global and privatizing world, and newer cities or cities without a strong cultural infrastructure have to use architecture instead of paintings to draw people. The Denver Art Museum, for example, early on decided that it could not compete with museums in the population centers of the Eastern Seaboard, or even Chicago. So the directors (then city employees) pursued Western art and Native American art that they could afford. They have a world-renowned collection of Native American art and artifacts, but the broad public that the museum must attract to bring in memberships and admissions fees does not travel to see those collections. Similarly, the Museum cannot compete with institutions like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, so must use architecture to draw visitors instead of using the collections. Exactly how Denver and the Museum used the Hamilton Building is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Building a “Bilbao” Building

Without the global economic forces and the example of Frank Gehry’s iconic building in Bilbao discussed in Chapter 3, the Denver Art Museum’s new wing would not have looked as it does today. The origin story of the Hamilton Building at the Denver Art Museum begins with skepticism, nevertheless, according to anonymous interviews. Lewis Sharp, Director of the Denver Art Museum, was invited to the opening of the Guggenheim Bilbao Museum. His friend Lanny Martin was CEO of Timet Corporation, the Colorado company that had supplied the Bilbao Museum with its titanium cladding, and he invited Sharp. Sharp, having been at the Metropolitan Museum of Art before becoming Director of the Denver Art Museum, thought that museums buildings should fade into the background, leaving room for the art to be highlighted. He was initially reluctant to accompany Martin to the Bilbao opening, unimpressed with the idea of extravagant architecture to house art. But as they were walking down narrow streets to approach the building site from within the city, Sharp and Martin turned a corner to bring the shimmering new form into view, and Sharp realized the potential for the building to revitalize an industrial city. He turned to Martin and said, “I want one of those for our museum and our city.”

From the beginning of Sharp’s tenure, in 1989, he had been thinking about a new building, but at first the Museum could not afford it. In 1993, in anticipation of the centennial anniversary of the Artist Club’s founding, the DAM gave the Ponti building a face lift, renovating the galleries, uncovering closed windows, and rehangng many of the collections (Chandler 1990). At the same time, the DAM participated in a study of Denver’s urban form around the south side of the Civic Center, now known as Denver’s Cultural Complex (Figure 4-1), carried out by Venturi Scott



Figure 4-1. A sign marking the Cultural Complex near the entrance of the Hamilton Building.

Brown and Associates. The report recommended, among other things, creating a unified design aesthetic for the entire southern side of the Civic Center, expanding the Denver Art Museum to the south of 13th Avenue, and wrapping the parking structure that would be required to accommodate parking (1993a; 1993b).

Once some public funding for a new wing was secured in 1999, a search committee was formed and eventually chose Libeskind as the architect. After they had selected Libeskind, the selection committee interviewed six local firms for the architect of record, looking for the space, the expertise, and the chemistry to collaborate on the project. Local firm Davis Partnership Architects had an open space office (important for the collaborative working style) and were willing and excited to accept the work (Knox and Childs 2006).

What follows is a closer investigation into the drivers of the new building. This is the story of how the Bilbao model becomes a real building in a mid-sized city in the middle of the country. For this research, I interviewed two designers from Davis Partnership and one from Studio Daniel Libeskind, in addition to museum administrators and board members (see the Primary Source List for a complete accounting of those interviewed). Whenever possible, I credit specific people with the information they gave in an interview. Nevertheless, over two-thirds of the participants requested anonymity. In that case, I give the general connection they have to the Denver Art Museum.

Of course, Denver was not the only city, and Sharp not the only museum director, to use a building to draw media attention and tourists. Many of the museums and wings built around the turn of the millennium hired international architects to design sculptural buildings. For example, Allied Works Architecture designed a new Contemporary Art Museum for St. Louis, Missouri, in 2002. The two-story concrete building is “both an exuberant gesture and a metaphor,” going beyond just housing art to “include a philosophical prerogative to engage the community” (Zeiger 2005, 18). (Allied Works Architecture was later hired to design the Clyfford Still Museum that sits next door to the Hamilton Building in Denver). Sharing a sculpture garden with the Contemporary Art Museum is a “restrained and self-enclosed” building by Tadao Ando (who was one of the three finalists for the new DAM wing) to house the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts (Zeiger 2005, 24). Both buildings are part of St. Louis’ attempt to reinvigorate its civic center. In Kansas City, Missouri, another mid-sized mid-western city, Steven Holl Architects designed an expansion to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art that links and reinterprets the meaning of art, landscape and architecture. The five glass buildings proposed in the brief give the museum additional space for temporary exhibitions and educational programming, while contrasting with the older, neo-classical building (Sachs 2005, 200).

A Public Face

In 1999 Sharp asked the Mayor if the city would put forward a bond issue to raise some of the money necessary to expand the Museum in order to display the Modern and Contemporary collection and to provide an up-to-date facility for hosting traveling exhibitions. The unique funding structure of the DAM makes it especially sensitive to public opinion, and the Museum worked hard to engage the public. The new building was going to be the public face of the museum and could represent the SCFD in many peoples’ minds, impacting the renewal vote. According to a local architect working on

the project, the selection committee wanted the Museum to be celebrated by the community, so they actively sought community participation. According to an emeritus administrator, the process engaged the public widely because of the bond funds, which gave the DAM the responsibility to communicate with the public. Libeskind himself advocated for involving the public, equating it to sales: “we live in the marketplace, not only in terms of selling and buying but in the marketplace of ideas. It’s a democratic city, democratic country, and that’s how civic projects get developed... Either you interact and communicate what you’re doing or you’re really cynical and should not be involved in civic art” (quoted in MacMillan 2003c).

After the model was unveiled, public comment was invited—Libeskind’s presentation of the model followed by a panel of “museum, civic, and planning experts answering questions” was broadcast on Channel 8, with a website set up for comments (KDTV Channel 8 2001). More than 400 people attended the preliminary concept forum in July 2000 (Ditmer 2000b).

Some 700 people attended the February Forum on the design—apparently a record for Denver (Chandler 2001). Then, in May 2005, Libeskind gave a lecture which the DAM moved out of its own facilities and into a much larger venue. The DAM estimated some 1,700 people attended, some waiting in line for hours for the free tickets, and some being turned away. One visitor was quoted as saying, “I feel like this is part of history—to have a world-renowned architect here. I think it’s very exciting” (MacMillan 2005; Carman 2005).

As construction on the Hamilton Building started, the model was displayed in the Ponti Building overlooking the construction site, with a notebook for public comment. Some of the comments were negative—“I think this is one of the ugliest designs I have ever seen... I’ll not donate”—some were positive: “Hopefully this will put Denver on the map as an ‘art town.’” Either way, the architects all agreed that it was just good to have public comment (quoted in Booth 2003). In her research on public art in Denver, Joni Palmer (2012) found that public art is public because of the process. The DAM was drawing on public process to help make their building public.

The building is not only a symbol for Denver, it is a symbol for the Denver Art Museum itself. Just as the building increased attention for Denver, sources commented on the use of the symbol to increase publicity for the Museum; one example is the large number of corporate and non-profits that booked events in the building: over forty bookings in the first two months the building was open (Dunn 2006c). The Hamilton Building was supposed to communicate about the Museum to the public: it is a “work of art in itself, and a marker for what is happening inside,” according to an emeritus staff member. He went on, “the Museum organization wants to engage the community, and the building was a tool for that engagement, and a reflection of the innovation occurring inside the walls.” The DAM uses a picture of the Hamilton Building for its Facebook profile, instead of a logo like many other museums (Figure 4-2, next page). Lindsey Housel, in Young Adult Programming, said that the new building gave the Museum a chance to imagine what could go in the space and how the “Museum messages itself.” Finally, staff held hope for the building improving the Museum’s status or reputation; for example, one longtime volunteer explained, if you have a lower-quality collection, you have to have a symbolically big building to make people come and see.

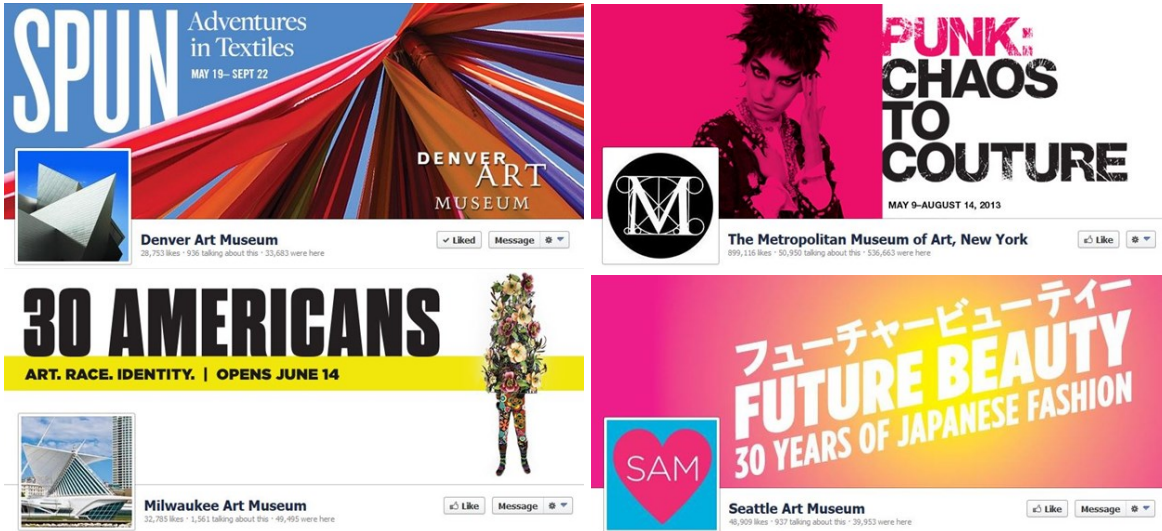


Figure 4-2. A few examples of Facebook page banners for various art museums. Note that those who have older buildings do not bother to use their building as their Facebook icon.

But even before the building was under construction, the DAM had to get voters to approve a public bond, so the Museum was very careful about justifying the building. Interviewees and articles indicated that the new building was justified with two general categories (Table 4-1). One was pragmatic: the Museum needed more space. Of those who talked about the Museum needing space, most sources cited the need for more and better space for traveling exhibitions. As stated earlier, International blockbuster exhibits were passing Denver by because the North Building did not meet national display standards; one Board member cited “the first King Tut exhibition, which did not stop in Colorado.” Without the new building, Sharp later said, the DAM could never have had a relationship with as big an institution as the Louvre (Associated Press 2006), which supplied one of the first shows for the special exhibition space in the Hamilton Building. The second reason the Museum needed more space was for its own art collection: the Modern and Contemporary collection had no permanent home, and less than six per cent of the permanent collection could be on display at any given time (Knox and Childs 2006). Finally, five sources specifically mentioned that the Museum needed more space for visitor amenities such as a bigger coat room, more restrooms, a bigger gift shop, and a restaurant.

Equally important, though, were symbolic reasons: the right new building would bring attention to the Museum and to Denver. Half of those comments mentioning symbolism thought that the building could represent the DAM to the local and international community, as in the case of the Board member who said

<u>Reasons for new building</u>	
Total Pragmatic	12
Traveling exhibitions	9
Permanent collection	6
Amenities	5
Total Symbolic	14
for DAM	7
for Denver	7
reference Bilbao	6
economic	4

Table 4-1: Reasons given for the new building.

that Director Sharp had a broad vision for the role of the Museum in the community and wanted a signature building to focus that vision, or the staff member who said that “people do not always know of the innovations happening on the inside of a museum, so a radical outside can reflect a radical inside.” The other half of the comments indicated that a signature building could represent Denver to the world. A brochure advocating for the ballot initiative said the expansion would “help make Denver a truly Great City” (Great Art for a Great City 1999), and Mayor Wellington Webb said that the HB would do for Denver what the Gehry building did for Bilbao (MacMillan 2003b).

A Shining Star

Once the bond was secured, a selection committee chose the architect, sending out a request for proposal for a \$42 million addition, according to Arne Emerson. The selection committee consisted of the Board of Trustees, City Planner Jennifer Moulton and various members appointed by Mayor Webb. The public committee appointed to help find the architect for the Hamilton Building was charged with finding an international architect who would make a signature building, to attract gifts and collections, not only from Colorado but also from the around the world (Barnes-Gelt 2006). They invited national museum professionals, including scholar Victoria Newhouse, to speak to staff and trustees, and conducted focus groups with staff, trustees and members, which guided the program for the new wing. The selection committee crafted a list of forty architects, then shortlisted it to five who were invited to Denver for interviews (Sharp and Hamilton 2000, 4–8). After the interviews, the Committee selected three architects for the final short list: Arata Isozaki, Daniel Libeskind, and Thom Mayne. The issues for the top three architects to address with the new building were its physical relationship to the Ponti Building and the larger urban context, bringing up questions of architecture and urban design (Chandler 2000).

Once it was down to three finalists, the DAM displayed photographs of buildings by the finalists in the lobby of the North Building, with space for public comment (Ditmer 2000a). Then, Arata Isozaki, Daniel Libeskind, and Thom Mayne presented their concepts to the public at the a meeting at the Museum; even though the facilitator for that presentation called the public “the client,” the public did not actually get a say in who was chosen (Chandler 2000). Of his design, Libeskind said, “it is constructed from walls, which turn into floors, which become roofs. It’s a seamless space of continuity, which really flowers in a kind of tectonic arrangement that offers what I think are really unprecedented spaces” (MacMillan 2001a). Although Daniel Libeskind never referenced the Cultural Complex proposal directly, many of the broad strokes of his urban plan reflected a familiarity with it, according to an architect involved in the project.

Mayne arrived with three different proposals, and brought two assistants to make models while he talked (the invitations to the architects requested they send only two-dimensional representations of their proposals). The board found him abrasive, according to two anonymous board members. At the other end of the spectrum was Isosaki, who the board thought was too serene and reserved. The design he presented was a white box, complete unto itself. Libeskind was unanimously the favorite candidate.

But why was Libeskind selected out of the three finalists? The answers given speak to the political needs of the client, as specific things about the design or concept were only a small percentage of the explanations. Instead, reasons focused on the person that committee members thought they were hiring: he was enthusiastic, diplomatic, and nice (Table 4-2). The comments I categorized as nice included descriptors such as “personable,” “engaging,” and “gracious.” These are the things that sociologist Michele

Persona: 31	Shining Star	10
	Good to work with	8
	Nice	6
	Good architect	6
	enthusiastic	4
	seductive	2
Things said or did: 15	diplomatic	2
	inspired people about or helped sell the building	6
	showed political savvy	4
	spoke flatteringly of Denver	3
Design: 8	was nice	2
	specific things about the concept	5
	visionary	3

Table 4-2. Reasons given for why Libeskind was chosen.

Lamont called “morals” (1992). She found that things like being a team player and easy to get along with were as important to success in the United States as Bourdieu (1984) thought that cultural capital was in France. The category of “shining star” includes comments like he was “magical” or “lyrical” or “unique.” These comments all indicate that Libeskind was something special and stood out from a crowd. The “good to work with” comments were almost certainly post-hoc justifications, but indicated that Libeskind was collaborative and inclusive in his working process, giving credit and asking for input. Only eight comments specifically talked about the design concept he presented to the selection committee. According to a *Denver Post* reporter, the selection committee was tasked with choosing an architect, not a design (Sinisi 2000).

One aspect of Libeskind’s persona was his enthusiasm and willingness to work with others (coded as enthusiastic, good to work with, nice, and diplomatic in Table 4-2). He would say things like, “it’s going to be a terrifically unusual building, I think—a giant titanium-covered sculpture, rolling like a landscape, full of dramatic surprises” (Libeskind 2004, 107). Or he would wax poetic about the Colorado landscape, saying “the shape of the extension of the Denver Art Museum...came to me as I flew over the city and could take in its full symphonic presence from above. I am struck by geology—the shifting of tectonic plates, and the unholy forces they unleash, causing whole mountain ranges to be thrust up from the earth’s crust” (Libeskind 2004, 8). He was careful to give credit to collaborators, such as when he publically praised City Planner Jennifer Moulton as one of the people who made the building possible.

Three different people mentioned the strength of Libeskind’s Jewish Museum Berlin as part of the reason the selection committee chose him as a finalist. That museum opened in 2001, but in 1999 Libeskind’s building opened without exhibitions in it, and hundreds of thousands of people visited the empty building. The building has been called a metaphor, a formal expression of ideas, a “convincing interpretation of the indissoluble interweave of Jewish history with that of the city in general” (Schneider 1999, 19).

Libeskind's building was iconic even before it officially opened, because of the combination of form and meaning, a combination that Libeskind claims is required of any iconic building, which has to "have a meaning, pose questions to the public, and challenge engrained habits" (Libeskind 2011, 31).

Early site plans of the building show a distorted Star of David overlaid on the site (Libeskind 2011). To arrive at the shape, Libeskind connected the address of three pairs of Berliners—Paul Celan and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, E.T.A. Hoffmann and Friedrich von Kliest, and Rahel Levin Varnhagen and Friedrich Schleiermacher—and the lines connecting them made a distorted Jewish star (Libeskind 2004, 92). Libeskind does not believe that form follows function—"on the contrary...form follows an idea" (Libeskind 2011, 20). The idea imbedded in the Jewish Museum is that of the interconnection between Jews and the cultural life of Berlin, at "the crossroads of history..." to "show us that when the Jews were exiled from Berlin, at that moment, Berlin was exiled from its past, its present, and—until this tragic relationship is resolved—its future" (Libeskind 2004, 83).

The form that resulted from those ideas about architecture is one that "insists on its own laws, on an uncompromising uniqueness...in its materials and structural type" (Schneider 1999, 27). The windows are unorthodox, slashing across the outside seemingly randomly, independent of the interior logic of the building (except that there are more of them towards the top floor, where offices are). Instead, the logic of the windows is decided by connecting more addresses across Berlin. Unlike many museums, some of the exhibition spaces are visually charged with angled ceilings and dark corners, and there is no central atrium, but instead "the central dimension of the building is revealed only in time" (Libeskind 2011, 29). That central dimension is the broken void running through the building; only the last void is accessible, all the others lack entrances for anything other than light. James E. Young, a scholar of Jewish memorials, praises Libeskind's Jewish Museum, saying it gives architectural form to the questions raised in the brief—how to represent the lack of Jews in Berlin, what to do about their integration into German culture—rather than solving technical problems of citing and style. He calls it the "spatial enactment of a philosophical problem" (Young 2010, 47).

Libeskind, in creating the Jewish Museum, was responding not only to the idea of Judaism, the Holocaust, and absent Jews in Berlin, but also to deconstructivism, placing his museum firmly in a theoretical architectural tradition (Koenig 2009). Because of the long-standing Jewish diaspora, there has been little particularly "Jewish" architecture for most of history; instead, Jews adopted the architecture of the land they lived in (Rosenfeld 2010). Even after the founding of Israel, however, the a-historicism of Modernist ideas about architecture kept Jewish architects from developing a specifically Jewish style—to be particular would be to be parochial, marginalized out of international architecture (Rosenfeld 2010, 288). It was not until the rise of post-modernism, and the style's sympathy to history and breaking down of universality, that Jewish architects could develop a particular style. Rosenfeld (2010) argues that deconstructivism is a Jewish architecture: Deconstructivism had many Jewish founding members including Peter Eisenman. Those founding members said that the holocaust was a "rupture in the history of Western Civilization that required architects to rethink the fundamental principles of their profession." Eisenman claims that the holocaust inaugurated a post-modern and post-humanist era (Rosenfeld 2010, 290). The rigorously logical and yet

absurd architecture of Eisenman is a sort of holocaust architecture—the logical rigors of modernism allowed the holocaust to happen. So being completely rigorous in architecture results in absurdities like stairs that go nowhere.

For Libeskind, though, buildings go beyond an arrangement of space or a response to history. For him, architecture engages with ideas to create spaces that produce a physical and emotional reaction. Instead of creating space to house programming in the Jewish Museum Berlin, he created “spaces of encounter, memory, and hope” (Libeskind 2011, 15). Buildings fail when they tell “only one story, that of its own making: how it was built, detailed, financed” (Libeskind 2004, 4). He contests the neutrality of modern architecture, calling the New National Gallery by Mies van der Rohe “the most objective building ever built, the glass box to end all glass boxes,” with a “violence in the radical way it strips all but the most essential elements away” (Libeskind 2004, 121). For Libeskind, even the most neutral glass boxes are a choice and therefore a form of expression. He writes that he hopes his buildings produce a physical reaction, that good architecture is “not just about the wow, but also about the experience of dislocation, the shock to the system that comes from seeing something jarringly new or unexpected, so much so that you feel as if you have arrived in another place, between the known and the unknown” (Libeskind 2004, 107-108).

The power of the emotional effect, the unusual form, and the unique moment in history combine in the Jewish Museum Berlin to create an iconic building. According to Charles Jencks, “emotion-laden experience is a necessary aspect of the successful iconic building, and it is one of the reasons why Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum...became one of the foremost icons of the 1990s.” Jencks calls the museum “a vivid metaphor of the unspeakable and unforgettable way the Berlin Jews were systematically catalogued and sent to their death” (Jencks 2005, 55). But the architecture is “surprisingly optimistic,” with contrasts in material, white galleries, light and views from the windows. The spatial metaphors are deepened with “more particular signs of Jewish identity.” In choosing Libeskind as the architect for their own building the DAM clearly stated the desire for an emotional and iconic building. They were also counting on Libeskind’s power to captivate the public. In Berlin, people were drawn to the construction site before the building was even complete (Schneider 1999, 38). What better way to create an event than to hire an architect whose iconic buildings can represent cities, as at the Milwaukee Art Museum, or can be representative of institutions or institutional changes, as at the Getty, where the directors “sought to legitimize this newcomer to the academic world of cultural studies and humanities centers by consolidating its dispersed programs in a setting commensurate with its ambitions” (Newhouse 2006, 208)—a modern temple on a hill outside of Los Angeles by Richard Meier.

In addition to observing the power of the Jewish Museum Berlin and the excitement generated by the Guggenheim Bilbao, the Denver Art Museum’s own architectural history prepared the institution to commission a radical building like the Hamilton Building. Since the DAM had no purpose-built building until it built the South Gallery in 1954 (see Chapter 1), it skipped the palace model of museum building. By the time it commissioned the South Gallery, International style museums were firmly established, and the Gallery’s design resembled a department store much more closely than it did a palace. Even that 1954 gallery, though, was a small addition to the Museum

complex which was mostly housed in re-purposed buildings, having been union halls and car dealerships before.

When the DAM was ready to commission a much larger building—what became known as the North Building—it sought out an internationally known architect, in the hope that a famous name would help with fundraising and advertising. The Ponti building became the icon of the Museum for thirty years, with a weekend-long opening to fanfare, with pendants for sale in the shape of the building, and with stationary printed with the building’s silhouette. The building was compared to a fortress and a jail and condemned at first for being unsightly, but nearly all of my interviewees spoke affectionately of it, forty years after its opening. In spite of the need for an iconic building, however, many of the decisions made were quite practical: the small budget limited the involvement of Gio Ponti to just the exterior of the building, and concerns about the length of time the average visitor had dictated the size of each gallery. Just as in buildings today, a café and bookshop were planned as part of the building, creating spaces of ease amongst the art.

Adding Practicality to a Spectacle

As with the Ponti building, once the internationally-known architect was secured and the Museum was assured of a spectacular building, the architect and client both turned to practical matters. The first incarnation and what Libeskind presented to the selection committee was called *Nexus*. According to early versions of design descriptions, it was going to be the key generator of urban life in Denver, a gateway between downtown and the Civic Center, and an urban art experience. He called it “museum as a destination building” (Libeskind 2000b, 135).

That basic form was approved with the selection of Libeskind as the architect, and the basic scheme remained the same throughout the design process. Nevertheless, many decisions were made during the design process that subtly changed the design. In interviews and articles, nearly half of the comments that referenced why design decisions were made claimed pragmatic reasons (Table 4-3). The entire Co-Development—the parking garage, retail, and Museum Residences—began because of the practical concern for parking: the lot where the Hamilton Building was to be built had been surface parking. To replace that lost parking and to accommodate the increase in visitors the museum expected, the city required a parking garage be erected in the neighboring lot. Albeit primarily practical, that decision had symbolic elements as well: no one wanted a blank parking garage next to the Museum, so the decision was made to wrap it in residential and retail.

<u>Design Decision Justifications</u>	
Total Pragmatic	27
Cost	8
Specific area	19
<u>Areas broken down</u>	
Lot size and placement	5
Parking	4
Windows and Light	2
Ceiling	2
Programming/Adjacency	2
Materials	2
Urban issues	1
Total Symbolic	9
As a gateway	3
add vitality	2
Not a box	2
quality of place	1
2 lines taking a walk	1
Total Aesthetic	6

Table 4-3. Reasons given by interviewees and press for why specific design decisions were taken.

Some of the practical decisions were based on past experience: one local architect working on the project said that the ceiling is the way it is (Figure 4-3) because of an institutional memory: DAM staff had had a bad experience with the North Building's egg crate ceiling (Figure 4-4), so they insisted on a drop ceiling and track lighting. Similarly, the curators balked at the large number of windows in the first design by Libeskind, and so the Hamilton Building is nearly windowless (Kamin 2006). Cost was a practical concern mentioned often: one emeritus DAM administrator says the details would have looked very different if the budget had been larger. For example, the buildings were originally to have been connected only by an underground tunnel, making the Hamilton Building stand alone just as Libeskind's building for the Jewish Museum stands alone but is connected underground to the older building. But the cost of digging underneath 13th Avenue, was too prohibitive, so the North and the Hamilton Buildings were connected with a second-story bridge instead.

For interviewees and columnists, pragmatic issues most deeply affected the details of the design, but were not the only issues. Of the remaining explanations for why the design looks the way it does, many were about what the building represented, rather than what it held or how it held it. The most commonly cited symbolism of the building was that it is a gateway or connector between two neighborhoods, the “monumental Civic



Figure 4-3. The Contemporary and Modern Gallery in the Hamilton Building, where the ceiling meets the walls. The architects offered the museum many different ceiling options that were not standard drop ceiling, but DAM staff insisted on this ceiling.



Figure 4-4. The Asian Gallery in the North Building. DAM staff found the lighting system difficult to rearrange.

Center and the pedestrian-scaled Golden Triangle neighborhood.” While the building literally sits at the transition, the form was enrolled in symbolizing a connection between the two areas: the north end of the building makes a civic gesture (Figure 4-5), but the south end is lower and more scaled for the Golden Triangle (Figure 4-6), and the plaza trees help make that connection visible, according to a designer working on the project.

Finally, aesthetics played a role in design decisions as well. A Board member credits Libeskind with the all-white walls, and with choosing the titanium for the exterior surface, a material Libeskind called “a 21st Century material,” one which he likes because it “has a softness” and glows in the light (quoted in McPhee 2005). Denver is home of the world’s largest supplier of titanium, but it is really expensive. DAM couldn’t afford it, and Lanny Marin, head of Timet, donated what was needed. Libeskind likes the way it holds hand prints, saying “I like to see the tainted surfaces, as they suggest visitors’ engagement with the building” (Libeskind 2004, 129).

The same data yields a different picture when analyzed through the Levels of Analysis filter (Table 4-4). Many of the comments were made about the Urban Form level, such as when a Board member said that closing Acoma St. was not part of the initial competition, but the museum was seen by Libeskind as an urban installation and connection between downtown, the Civic Center, and the Golden Triangle, so he recommended turning the street into a plaza. The Institutional level, addressing symbolism and style, also played a role in decision-making, as when city administrator Ken Brewer pointed out that the process of permitting the new



Figure 4-5. The north end of the Hamilton Building, towering over the 2-story Duncan Pavilion and gesturing towards the Pontifical and downtown.



Figure 4-6. South end of the Hamilton Building. The 3rd and 4th floor on the north end are visible behind.

<u>Level decisions addressed</u>	
Urban Form	10
Institutional	9
Complex Organization	5
Face to Face	2
Technology	8

Table 4-4: The level of analysis indicated in comments about design decisions, from interviews and press.

wing was exceptional because it was a signature building, or when an architect involved in the Co-Development stated that no one wanted a parking garage visible next to a museum building, so they came up with things to wrap it up in. Many decisions were also made about the level of technology, as when an architect involved in the project said that the curators wanted fewer windows because they were worried about UV damage to the collections, an important consideration for a collecting institution. The Complex Organization level was less talked about when making design decisions, although the same architect said that the DAM was constantly thinking about adjacencies within the whole complex. Finally, hardly any of the interviewees or articles mentioned the face-to-face or room level when talking about decisions for the design of the building: for the most part, that was left to curators and exhibition designers, although Libeskind did mention that he was pushing the boundaries “for the sake of visitor experience, that feeling in the stomach that people will have” (MacMillan 2003c). Perhaps Libeskind and the DAM paid more attention to the higher levels of analysis because the room level would potentially be programmed and re-programmed later, and would be the purview of gallery designers.

According to a board member, donors and the board were not part of design decisions; they just helped pay for things that otherwise would not have happened. One DAM staff member said that there was a lot of collaboration with the collections and education department, but according to a board member, there was not a lot of curator input into the design. In spite of lack of input, a high-level administrator claimed it was a transparent design process.

Sculpting a Destination

In spite of the pragmatism, the Hamilton Building had been sold to the public as not just a building but as a symbol and an event. Even the construction process was exceptional, following different rules than most new buildings would. According to sources, nothing about the construction process was typical; everything from permitting to 3-D modeling through construction was innovative or exceptional. According to Ken Brewer, who works in the Development Projects department of the City, the DAM expansion did not follow the typical process for permitting and development because of the close connection between the city and the Museum: the process was exceptional because the Hamilton Building is a signature, public facility. The City essentially said to the Museum, “You design it, we’ll make sure it can get built.”

The structure followed from the form of the building, with engineers getting the 3-D model and working from there. According to Arne Emerson, who worked on the project, all the systems follow the sloped walls, which created problems; for example, how do water and air flow at those angles? The walls are 3-5 feet thick: two feet for structure, 2 feet for ductwork, a foot for plumbing. Mortenson used the architect’s 3-D model to design the steel (which is now standard practice); a designer who worked on the project said they were making up a lot of things about using the computer as they went along. A structure magazine devoted an article to the process:

Once the structural members were designed, these shapes were manually hung onto the 3-D wireframe model, so that the actual member sizes could be coordinated with other disciplines...The wireframe was loaded into Tekla Structures to refine and reshape the model into an exact virtual replica of the

entire structure, including every structural member, plate, bolt and weld. Nearly two months was dedicated to detailing the connections specifically to ensure an accurate advance bill of materials. Scores of connection points had as many as nine members from multiple planes converging to a single point. (“STRUCTUREmag - Denver Art Museum” 2012).

Emerson, an architect working on the project, points out that it would not have been possible to design it without the aid of computers. He said that while form was set mid-way through design/development, trying to figure out how to get the systems in there without destroying those forms took weeks. Buildings with plumb walls do not have to go through what he called “those gymnastics.” The complexity of the building made it complicated to engineer, but museums are never simple because of the variety of users and the need to keep art at specific temperatures and humidity levels. He called the construction industry “antiquated” because it is still thinking about bricks and mortar. Then, as construction started four people dedicated to ensuring the beams were in place would walk through the project each day and laser sight each beam (Kouwe 2003). As the building went up, people commented on the steel form rising out of the ground—one former builder called it “the most complex building project ever undertaken in Denver” (Reuteman 2004). In spite of all these gymnastics, the Hamilton Building was on time and on-budget (Zacks 2006), and it won “a Presidential Award of Excellence in the American Institute of Steel Construction’s 2007 Innovative Design in Engineering and Architecture with Structural Steel (IDEAS2) awards program” (“STRUCTUREmag - Denver Art Museum” 2012).

Even in its construction process, the new wing of the DAM represents, in many people’s minds, a break with traditional architecture. The new wing of the Denver Art Museum was much more than a “box filled with objects.” Libeskind presented an overall plan which included a plaza, a parking garage, and a mixed-use development across the plaza in addition to the museum building itself but, necessitating an understanding not only of the effect the architecture has on art display, but also on the urban fabric. The next chapter examines the effect of the architecture on the building’s users.

Chapter 5: Building and Behavior

The last chapter uncovered how the Hamilton Building came to look the way it does. Once those choices are made and the building is erected, then the art is moved in, staff is moved in, and visitors arrive. The choices made in the design have real impacts for people using the building. The shape of the Hamilton Building has affected how the art is hung, the tours and activities available for visitors, the ability of people to find their way, and even the physical comfort of some visitors. This chapter explores what effects the building has had on behavior. While neither the Museum nor the human subjects protocol allowed me to observe behavior in the DAM formally, many of the people I interviewed had observed behavior and reported it to me. And, of course, I observed patterns as a public visitor and participant observer.

The Hamilton Building changed the spatial sequencing, the experience of the Museum across time, for visitors to the Denver Art Museum. Before, visitors would usually park in the street around the Museum, either in the parking lot just south of the North Building (in the block where the Hamilton Building now stands) or in other on-street parking on Bannock Street, to the west. They would walk to the entrance, which before 1993 faced Civic Center Park and which faced the Public Library on Acoma Plaza after the 1993 renovations. After paying the entrance fee, visitors would then cross a long lobby to get in an elevator, selecting their desired gallery by floor (Figure 5-1). Each

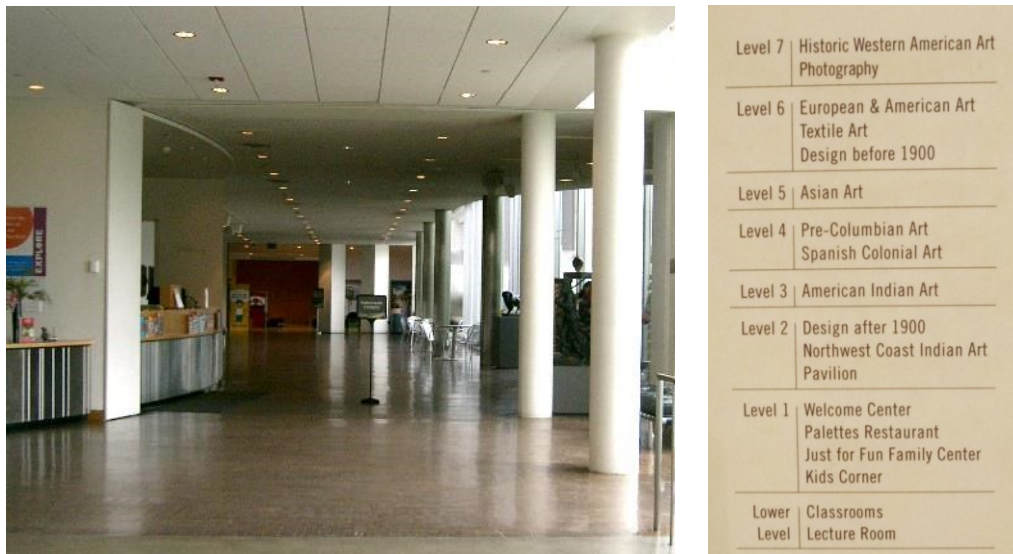


Figure 5-1. (left) the entrance lobby in the North Building. The admissions desk is on the left, the bookshop on the right. The elevators are at the far end. (right) A sign in the elevator indicates what can be seen on each floor.

gallery was arranged differently, and each one was complete in itself. Few people take the stairs. I take them regularly, but have never seen another person in them; they are behind a closed door and are easily overlooked.

Today, most visitors park in the parking garage just to the east of the Hamilton Building, cross Martin Plaza, and enter the museum through the Hamilton Building (Figure 5-2). The shop is immediately visible to the right, and the grand stairs and atrium are visible to the right. Visitors can choose between the elevators or the main stairs, or fire stairs tucked behind the elevators where I have never seen anyone. There is also a staircase between the third and fourth floors in the Modern and Contemporary gallery, so visitors do not have to return to the central atrium to visit both floors of that collection (Figure 5-3). There is art in the atrium, although because it is open to the exterior door, none of the permanent collection lives there. Instead, the Museum commissions pieces for the atrium, which stay only a few months.¹³ The experience moving through the space is one of leaving and returning to the central atrium, putting the Hamilton Building firmly in the tradition of sculptural museum buildings like I. M. Pei's East Wing of the National Gallery (Bergdoll 2009), instead of the enfilades of the Museum of Modern Art.

Wayfinding has been an issue in the Hamilton Building, but a few different staff



Figure 5-2. The entrance to the Hamilton Building. The parking garage is wrapped by the condos on the left of the picture.



Figure 5-3: A guard looks down on the stairs connecting the third and fourth floors inside the Modern and Contemporary Gallery. The central stairs also connect the third and fourth floors.

¹³ A permanent installation paid for by the city-wide requirement of any public buildings devoting 1% of construction cost to art is permanently installed in the atrium as well.

members claim it is getting better with more and improved signage. The Museum map and the signs around the building both show a stylized section instead of the more typical plan: art is organized broadly by floor, rather than by room or wing, as mentioned in Chapter 1 (Figure 5-4). The spaces in the Museum are oddly shaped, which confuses people. One artist observed that the opening was crowded and that “people did not know how to move in the spaces: they are not used to dealing with them on a day-to-day basis.” One staff member, Bridget O’Toole, claimed that the “refreshingly confusing” nature of the Hamilton Building is an asset: she says she finds visitors in the wrong spot, but it means that people discover something they might not have otherwise taken the time to see. The Hamilton Building initially had few places to sit; but places to sit are where people gather, so DAM staff added chairs and furniture. According to a volunteer, the Hamilton atrium is a nice place to sit, because “you can sit and watch without being noticed.”

Security officers say that the Hamilton Building is more energetic, “kinetic,” or “wild,” and that visitors have more energy there than in the Ponti. When asked about their favorite spaces, the security officers explained their choices based on the artwork, not on the shape of the rooms. But many noticed that they were more tired after a day of working in the Hamilton Building, and most chose parts of the North Building as their favorite spaces to work. People specifically commented on the extra energy that people draw from the building, observing that children get excited and even adults seem to have extra exuberance when in the Hamilton Building. Staff find the North Building is more contemplative, more intimate (in spite of being bigger), and more studious. Visitors have a harder time finding their way in the Hamilton Building, than in the North Building. At the same time, Robin Stolp, a volunteer with the DAM’s Access program—designed to meet the needs of visitors with a range disabilities—says that the Hamilton Building’s spaces better accommodate people with mobility issues.

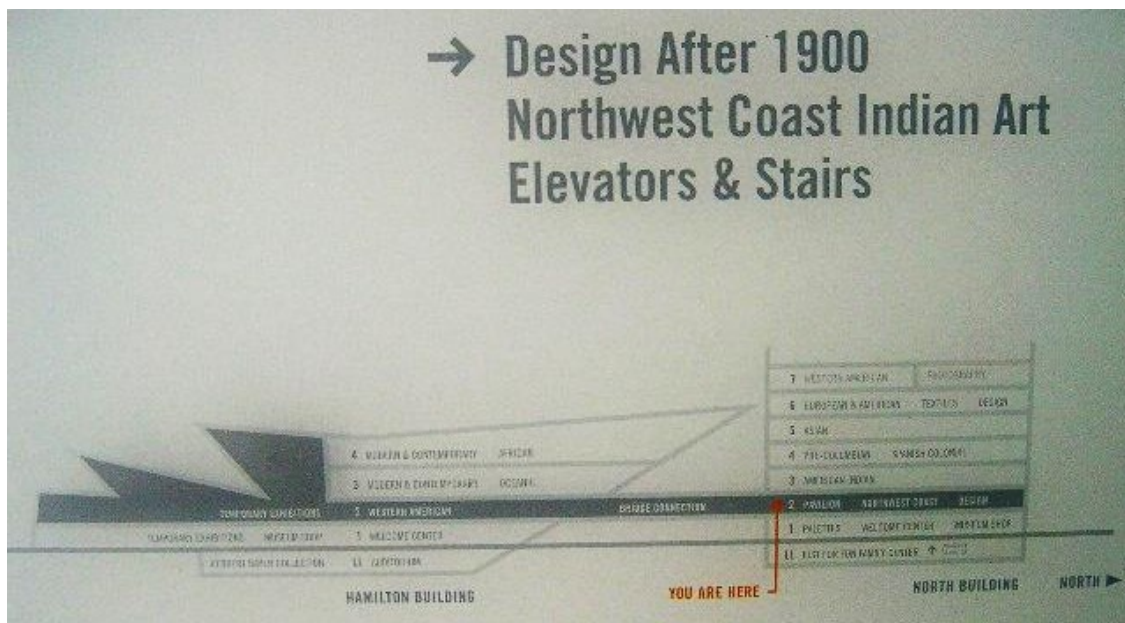


Figure 5-4: Wall guide for wayfinding in the Denver Art Museum. Instead of the normal plan, the galleries are shown in section, by floor.

Another way the building affects the body is that some people experience feelings of vertigo or nausea because of the many different angles in the atrium and on the main stairs. Many people said they had heard of others having that problem (see Goldberger 2006), although none of my interviewees ever complained of this directly. In this way, it resembled an urban legend, in that the protagonist was always one or two people removed from the person to whom I was speaking. Lara Writsel, in Family Programming at the DAM, said she thought people felt ill because of off-gassing in a new building, saying that the complaints had significantly decreased as the building got older. Libeskind justified the vertigo by saying that it was an integral part of the visitor experience:

That feeling in the stomach that people will have, I know it, that kind of dizziness when they confront that lobby. That's part of it. That's what I feel when I go to the Rocky Mountains. That's the same experience, and I wanted that to be part of the beauty of the building (quoted in MacMillan 2003a).

In constructing the Hamilton Building, the Museum extended its programming outside the walls of the building. The project added a \$5 million plaza between the parking garage and the new wing. Libeskind's design extended the Cultural Complex plan, shifting the axis to a north/south orientation down Acoma Street by making a plaza where Acoma street used to end, pledging to "continue the tradition of world class architecture found in the Civic Center," incorporate public art, and preserve axial views down Acoma (Libeskind 2002, 3.37). Sharin and J.Landis Martin donated \$5 million for what came to be named Martin Plaza, which is 75,000 square feet and designed by Libeskind (The Denver Post 2006). The plaza has four public art pieces, which were gifts from trustees. A cow sculpture was given by Leo Hindery, who had commissioned it for his ranch but donated it and \$1 million for its upkeep (Figure 5-5). The Big Sweep by



Figure 5-5: *Scottish Angus Cow and Calf* by Dan Ostermiller. Often there are people sitting on, eating near, or taking pictures of this sculpture.



Figure 5-6: *The Big Sweep* by Claes Oldenburg & Coosje van Bruggen, tucked under the Hamilton Building's sloping walls near the entrance to the Museum (left). The picture is taken from 13th Avenue.

Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen (Figure 5-6) was commissioned by various donors and sited after the building was finished (amnews.com 2005). A former administrator said that the artists were excited to choose sites in relation to the building.

The response to the plaza is mixed. Some comments are positive; a Board member says the plaza has “a lot of vitality,” and a Museum condo resident says that it is the key to the success of the Hamilton building and that it is the most international place in Denver. But for others, it is not an active or welcoming place; two members say that there are a lot of hard surfaces, which make it “less pleasant,” and a different Museum condominium resident says that it is more of a divider than a connector between the Co-Development and the Museum. I personally have never seen the plaza full—the most I have seen at a time was around twenty—but I have heard many languages spoken there. The Museum uses it for programming, such as a sidewalk chalk day, and has hired artists to create an outdoor sculpture and invited the public to participate in its creation (Figures 5-7 and 5-8, next page).

If You Build It...

The Art Museum had high hopes for the number of visitors the new building would draw. One million dollars was budgeted for advertising and marketing, to draw out-of-state visitors to the Museum (Gonzalez 2006). The Museum thought that the new building would draw people like the Guggenheim did in Bilbao, with estimates of

between 800,000 and one million people visiting in the first year (West 2006; MacMillan 2004). The Guggenheim Bilbao had projected 500,000 visitors in the first year, but more than doubled that, garnering more than 600,000 visits in the first six months alone and 1.4 million visitors in the first year (McNeill 2009, 90), which is why Denver revised their projections upwards. Even years after the building opened, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (GMB) continues to attract “an average of 800,000 non-Basque visitors a year (compared to less than 100,000 before GMB opened), possibly a world record for any third- or fourth-tier city” (Plaza 2007). And as we saw in Chapter 4, the Jewish Museum Berlin attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors before it was even opened. Numbers like that set expectations high for an increase in visitors to Denver, expectations which only increased once Libeskind was selected as the architect for the World Trade Center, expanding his fame.

Immediately after the building opened in 2006, it generated interest and revenue: in the first two months it was open, corporations and non-profits had booked over forty private parties using the DAM as a venue. Corporate donors who gave more than \$25,000 to the Museum expansion were offered the Hamilton Building lobby for private functions, continuing the trend towards privatization that was started when the city withdrew funding in the early 1980s. None of



Figure 5-7: Chalk artists and members of the public working on a sidewalk art piece in the shelter of the Hamilton Building on Martin Plaza.



Figure 5-8: (Above) The *Clayground* installation on Martin Plaza, part of the *Marvelous Mud* exhibit (bottom left of picture). (Below) The finished *Clayground*.



the articles in the newspaper noted the neoliberalization of the Museum, or the fact that taxpayers collectively contributed more than \$60,000,000 through the bond issue did earn them the privilege of using the Hamilton Building for private functions.

Thirty-three thousand people toured the building during the 35-hour marathon opening weekend on October 7-8 in 2006 (Dunn 2006c). The Hamilton Building certainly increased the number of memberships purchased; but a DAM staff member emphasizes that renewal of memberships is where the money is, and she did not have the data to estimate if all those memberships were renewed. According to annual report data, admission income was highest in 2008; individual and membership income peaked that year as well (Table 5-1). While income from both admissions and individual giving decreased in 2011, membership income has increased slightly since 2009.

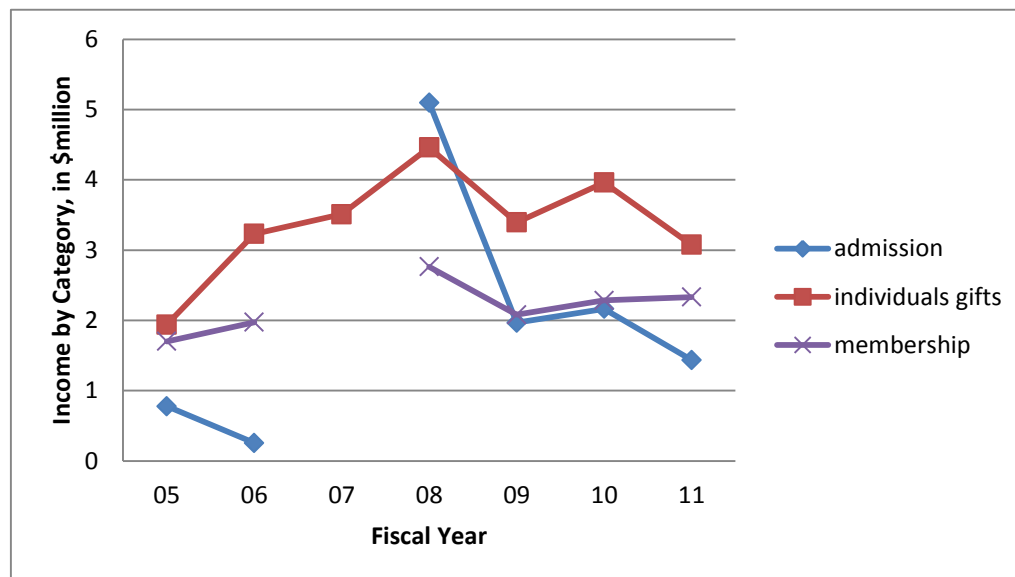


Table 5-1: Annual income from admission, membership, and individuals. Data from DAM annual reports. No annual report was available for the 2007 fiscal year. Blockbuster exhibitions often bring in visitors and members, and King Tut showed at the DAM June 29, 2010 - January 11, 2011.

Timing is an important factor here, since the building went up so soon before the recession hit. With the economic recovery, the numbers are bouncing back from their 2009 low, according to DAM staff. Overall in Denver, total economic activity related to culture went up 19% between 2005 and 2007, from \$1.426 billion to 1.691 billion (Colorado Business Committee for the Arts 2008). The next two years saw a decline almost to 2005 levels, back down to \$1.456 billion (Colorado Business Committee for the Arts 2010). But in the 2011 report, the total economic activity related to culture was back above 2007 levels, at \$1.76 billion (Colorado Business Committee for the Arts 2012). Thus, the number of visitors correlates directly with the state of the economy, and the worldwide recession of 2008 hit the Museum hard.

The DAM posted a \$5.7 million loss in 2006 due to costs associated with the Museum expansion plus declining revenues, largely due to closed galleries and lax programming as the Museum focused on the expansion (Gonzalez 2006). In April 2007, thirty Museum employees accepted buy-outs of their contracts, and seven other positions

were eliminated, saving the Museum \$2.5M (Chandler 2007). But none of the interviewees mentioned this, other than to say that there is often turnover after a new building.

Some volunteers claim that the iconic nature of the building has changed the number of visitors to the Museum and the profile of visitors, bringing in more twenty-somethings than were seen before. Others claim that those changes are due only to the programming, not the building. For the most part, visitors are seen as cultural aficionados, educated women, families, school groups, and now increasing numbers of young adults. However, the ticketing system changed with the new building, and a lot of demographic data about visitors stopped being collected with the new system, making it difficult to compare.

During the first year the Hamilton Building was open, 65% of visitors surveyed said they came to see the new building, and 31% said they “just wanted to see the Museum”—up from 20% who said so during 2000-2006 surveys. Seeing a temporary exhibit dropped significantly (from 31% to 11% of respondents) between the two time periods (BBC Research & Consulting 2008, 2). These numbers indicate that during the first year it was open, the architecture of the building brought a significant number of people in to the Museum. However, that effect faded with time, as is shown when breaking down the responses after the opening into smaller time periods. Of the people surveyed in October 2006, 80% said they were there to see the building; that number dropped to 73% in November 2006 to January 2007, and to 62% in February to June 2007. Although the BBC survey ends there, I speculate that the percentage continued to drop, since most of my interviewees cited “collections or exhibitions” as both “favorite places” and “reasons to go” far more often than just “to see the building.” The number of visitors was lowest in 2006 (Table 5-2); the new building opened in October, and much of the Museum was closed in preparation for the opening. The Museum had its highest attendance in Fiscal Year 2007, the first full year the new wing was open. Attendance

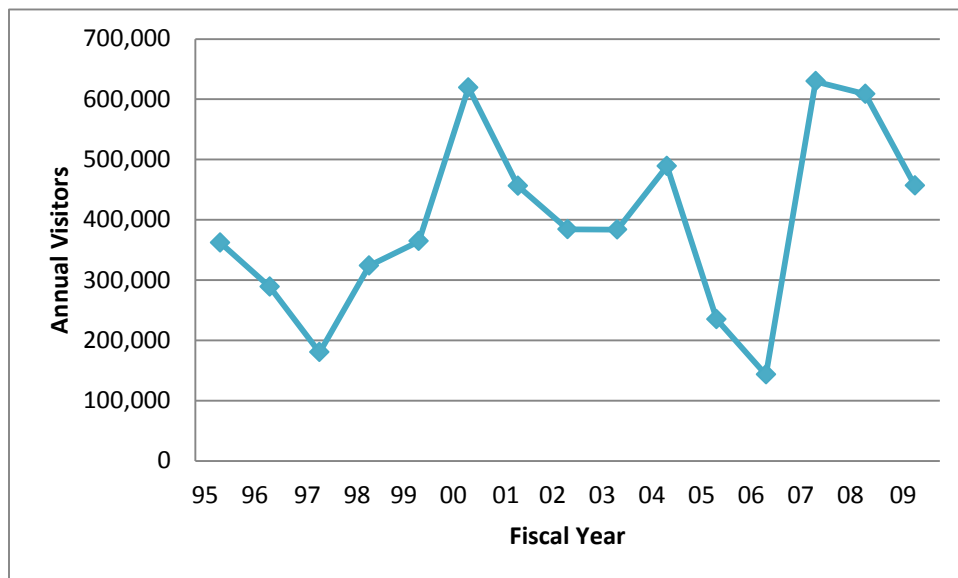


Table 5-2: Number of visitors per fiscal year. From data from the Denver Art Museum. Note the low in 2005-2006, just before the museum opened. The peak in 1999-2000 corresponds to a popular exhibit on

dropped in 2009, but was still higher than most previous years.

After the Hamilton Building opened, the percentage of visitors who had visited prior to survey day within the past year went down; the percentage of those who had not visited for over a year or who had visited never went up (BBC Research & Consulting 2008, 21). This indicates that there was a smaller percentage of “regulars” at the Museum and a larger percentage of people who came only occasionally. Non-member visitors went up (from 73% of visitors to 85% of visitors), after the Hamilton Building opened, as did the percentage of male visitors (BBC Research & Consulting 2008, 23; 40). The data suggests that the opening of the building did bring in visitors who would not otherwise have come.

After the opening of the Hamilton Building, only around 20% of visitors surveyed reported that they visited the Ponti building at all—all but one floor received less than 20% of the visitors, the exception being the Northwest Coast Native American Gallery, which 22% of surveyed visitors reported visiting (BBC Research & Consulting 2008, 4). That gallery is directly across the bridge from the Hamilton Building, indicating that indeed the building shape influenced where people went. Two things help make the Hamilton Building more visited than the North Building. First, environmental design impacts visitations rates: the parking garage exit is thirty yards from the Hamilton Building entrance, but across a major street and two plazas away from the North Building. Second, programming is important: the Hamilton Building hosts the traveling exhibitions, which tend to draw bigger crowds than the permanent collections in the North Building.

Not all the changes in finances or visitors can be attributed to the building or the media response, however, and many different people cautioned against giving the building too much agency. Local arts activist Edundayo said that people go to museums to connect with something inside the building, not for the building itself. The timing of the economic collapse (discussed above) and programming were the two biggest factors mentioned as confounding variables in gauging the effect of the building.

It is hard to distinguish between people liking the art in a space or primarily liking the space. On the one hand, the content of the galleries has more impact on popularity of the spaces than the spaces themselves. For example, volunteer Mike Stretchberry said that the sixth floor is the most popular because of its content—paintings and sculpture are familiar to people. The Native American floors are popular, while the Asian floor is not. This hierarchy of popularity might be exactly reversed in San Francisco, for example, where connections to Asia are stronger both geographically and ancestrally. On the other hand, the Hamilton Building has many more visitors than the Ponti Building. Most visitors visited the third and fourth floors of the Hamilton Building (77 and 74 percent, respectively), with the Oceanic and African art galleries still well above any part of the North Building, with 60% each (BBC Research & Consulting 2008, 4).

To further complicate matters, the building affects the programming, and the Hamilton Building allows Denver to host shows that would have passed it by before. Additionally, some of the regular programming for both adults and children has been affected, with an increased interest in and programming around architecture. For example, the Museum now includes a tour of the architecture in its weekly program of free tours, which did not exist before the new wing opened. People are interested not only in the new wing, but ask questions about the architecture of the older wing as well: the

retired administrator said that the high profile Hamilton Building increased interest in all the architecture. Programming changed for children too, with the “Architects Wanted” summer course developed around the opening of the new wing sold out first of all the other classes that summer. And when groups of school children tour the Museum with their classes, one of the activities they are likely to engage in is writing a poem based on how the atrium space feels to them. Furthermore, much of the programming in the family and children space in the Duncan Pavilion, where the bridge crosses from the Hamilton Building into the North Building, is devoted to architecture. Foam blocks shaped like parts of the Hamilton Building, a table devoted to an architecture-themed puzzle, and a line drawing game (Figure 5-9) are all examples of activities relating to the Hamilton Building theme.



Figure 5-9: “Finish this drawing” game, where the outline of the Hamilton Building is offered and participants are invited to fill it in. The Museum then hangs some of the responses in the window in the Duncan Pavilion, with the Hamilton Building visible in the background.

The “Wow Factor”

The power of architecture as icon is dependent on the “circulation of visual images, combined with an embodied, performed set of tourist practices on the part of architects and their professional critics and journalists” (McNeill 2009, 82). That is, iconic architecture has a strong media presence and draws tourists to consume it visually. According to architectural theorist Charles Jencks (2005), the iconic building “need not be a great work of architecture, but it must be a captivating one. It has to move your

viscera, whether you like it or not, and stay around as a memory image that attracts other thoughts into its orbit” (54).

The media response and the public opinion of the architecture is thus part of the measure of the building’s success. According to a local architect working on the project, there were three categories of responses to the Hamilton Building: one where the building was not even on the radar, a pragmatic conversation asking if the prescriptions of the bond were met, and a love or hate dialogue about the formal qualities of the architecture. She says that Denver is an outdoor sports town, and the Hamilton building did not even register with some people. As part of the bond requirement, the basic functional, pragmatic proscriptions were met: the building provides the square footage and technical requirements specified. As for the love/hate conversation, she says that at least people are talking about architecture; before, in her opinion, most people did not even know what it was. Here, I break down the love-hate category to understand the nuance of public responses.

In all sixty-three interviews conducted with staff, volunteers, visitors, and non-visitors (see appendix A for a complete list), I asked about the Hamilton building generally and its effect on people. Critics and journalists have also broadly addressed the building in writing. In this section, I analyze those comments and criticisms, focusing on when sources were not prompted to address any specific feature. Analysis was conducted in two different ways: through a lens of the theoretical construct of sociological Levels of Analysis (Cranz 2011; see Chapter 1) and through a ground-up method where the data are analyzed according to emergent groups instead of on a pre-determined theory. Both findings are presented here, beginning with the Levels.

Overall, the positive comments greatly outweighed the negative comments, although much of that is due to what interviewees frequently called the “wow factor.” If one takes out comments about the styling of the building, the comments are balanced between positive and negative (see Table 5-3). However, more information can emerge if

<u>Comments by Level of Analysis</u>				
<u>Level of Analysis</u>	<u>Type of Comment</u>			Totals
	<u>Positive</u>	<u>Negative</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	
Urban/Cultural	18	4	3	25
Style/Societal	54	18	16	90
Building Type/Institutional	5	0	7	12
Program/Complex Organization	2	6	3	11
Room/Face-to-face	8	3	0	11
Objects/Technology	3	21	0	24
Organism	0	2	1	3
Totals	90	54	30	
<i>(Totals without Style row)</i>	36	36	14	

Table 5-3: Opinions on the architecture of the Hamilton Building grouped by level the comment is addressing.

we move beyond the “like, dislike, and ignore” categories laid out by the architect. Sociological Levels of Analysis can help uncover a more complex understanding of the media and public response to the form. Broken down into levels, three areas emerge as positively received: the relationship between the building and the city (urban level), the style or values represented by the building (style/societal level), and the small scale of the rooms, which most closely affect face-to-face behavior (room/face-to-face level). Three areas emerge as negatively received: the architectural programming and representation of the Museum itself (program/complex organization level), the effect of the building on a material and technological level like hanging art (objects/technology level) and how the architecture affects the body (organism level).

Style was the most commented-upon aspect of the building; by far the most comments were made about this level. Some of that is probably because of the interview process—I asked specifically about the Museum’s place in the city and about how well it works with the art. Any articles focusing on art display or urban issues were analyzed in those categories. However, not all of this difference can be attributed to my own methods. All newspaper sources were unsolicited opinions. If the article was about DAM in the city, I put those opinions in the ‘urban event’ analysis, but most were more generally about the architecture. This speaks to the Hamilton Building being a success: they wanted a conversation piece to attract attention, and it looks like that is what they got. Negative comments include statements about how the building is derivative, attention-grabbing, and quickly dated, like pop music (Filler 2006), or that “the form is a weird place to start; it is extravagant and wasteful,” from a local arts advocate. However, some people really liked the form of the building, calling it the best space in Denver, challenging in a fun way (Temple 2006), or the most captivating building since Gehry’s Disney concert hall (Lacayo 2006). One person called it “museum as art; the most exciting building in Denver since the Brown Palace hotel” (Goldberger 2006). One DAM member said that the exact style did not matter, that the building did not have to be a Libeskind building, “just something outside the box.”

Besides style, the next two most commented-upon levels of analysis were about the urban context and the technology required for the building. At the urban level, more people had positive comments than negative ones, saying things like it weaves together disparate parts of city space and is a contemporary spin on urban context (Kamin 2006), or that “Libeskind is very good at the spaces in between: the views in the plaza are very good,” according to a designer working on the project. One local architect, George Hoover, said that the new building brings another level of understanding to the space just south of the Civic Center—it challenges it yet is part of it, creating ambiguity. He says, “the city at its best is open,” and thus the Hamilton Building’s challenges to the neighboring architecture helps create openness.

The technical level includes comments on art display, as well as things like the roof leaking or the interventions required to keep people from hitting their heads on the sloping walls (Figure 5-10, next page). An emeritus administrator said that “most of the building’s flaws were technical: it was an innovative building, we had condensation issues, we didn’t know if titanium was the right thing”. Emerson agreed that most of the problems came from the form—it is the first museum where the inside walls match the outside walls, which is a fundamental paradigm shift. A DAM member says, “at this level, the negative outweighs the positive. The bad results are pretty obvious, though:

work on the roof, strips on the floors.” One local professional in arts and culture said that compared to the crystal building in Las Vegas, another art museum designed by Daniel Libeskind, the Hamilton building “looks cheap—the details won’t hold up over time.” Another arts and culture professional contradicted her, saying that the titanium exterior was beautiful; she said it had a “precious” element of holding the handprints of people who touch it.

As an institution or building type the Hamilton Building had no negative comments, and only at this level was the building seen as completely successful. The institutional level addresses the broad types of institutions and general norms in society (Cranz 2011); and only at this level were there more neutral comments than either positive or negative. Most of the neutral comments here were that the Hamilton Building looks like a museum. Museums seem to get a special dispensation to be exceptionally stylized or non-traditional, with comments like the public feedback on the building being “cool but weird” but deemed fine because it is an art museum, not a government building. It seems like “museums do not have to be square,” as a DAM volunteer said, or necessarily look “like copies of Roman temples,” as a Denver resident said. Even though museums have not been built in the neo-classical style for seventy-five years, the “palace for art” model is still strong for many people. One board member said that one advantage of this design



Figure 5-10: Angled wall and the interventions to keep people from hitting their heads on it. Originally, the floor fixture was a temporary wooden block, since replaced by uniform gray platforms throughout the building. In the Western Gallery on the second floor.



as opposed to traditional designs is that visitors do not have to walk as far as in a traditional museum.

The same group of comments about the architecture can also be analyzed more generally than by Levels of Analysis, finding groupings within the comments that emerge from the comments list itself (Table 5-4).¹⁴ Here, we see that negative comments often focus on the form—that it is too flashy, overwhelming to the art, or wastes space (Figure 5-11). Critics called it clichéd (Filler 2006; Ouroussoff 2006), or said it was like a “younger sibling trying to get attention and make itself known,” as one local arts advocate commented. To one resident of the Co-Development, the museum looked “cheap,” and to some, being inside the building was physically uncomfortable (Goldberger 2006).

The most common positive comments responded to the form, but instead of disliking the strong and unusual shapes, people in the positive category thought that it looked “cool” (Figure 5-12), with soaring dynamic shapes (McGuigan 2006) that create an extraordinary spatial experience (Hutchinson 2006). The form also gets attention for the Museum and for the City, according to a DAM member, and a Board member said that the building is “impossible to ignore.” Emerson, who worked on the project, knowing the criticisms of the form, defended it, saying, “Other architects, such as Zaha [Hadid], [Frank] Gehry...have said personally to Libeskind, ‘I love your building.’” Emerson goes on to dismiss the “small-minded people who think the building should be walls and a roof and nothing more.” One cultural professional compared it to a church, adding that “the energy of the walls in the plaza is palpable.”

The energy of the architecture, the media attention, and the economy all affected the behavior of users of the building. The architecture demanded changes in programming and in curatorial choices, and offered new spatial flow for visitors. The media attention

Total Negative Comments	50
Too Focused on Form/Flashy	20
Dislike the Building/other negative	14
Not Functional	9
Public Space lacks vitality	6
Total Positive Comments	107
Looks Cool	38
Symbol or Brand	24
Like the Building/other positive	16
Helps Civic Pride	15
Brings People in	7
Defense of Building to criticisms	7

Table 5-4: Comments summarized by topic.



Figure 5-11: This small space on the second floor of the Hamilton Building is too small to hang art. The Museum usually offers an activity there, but I have never seen anyone in the space. In this picture, there is not even an activity in there; the space stands empty.

¹⁴ The total number does not match in tables 4-10 and 4-11 because some people made comments that bridged levels, such as when a member said that it is “too flashy, with too much wasted space.” Additionally, some comments were neutral, such as “museums do not have to be square” by another member.

and the economy changed the number of visits, the demographics of visitors, and where in the Museum those visitors went, which affected what art those visitors saw. Moreover, the comments on the architecture reveal more than the quality of the architecture or how people use it; they reveal what people value, including possibly latent or emerging patterns of values and behavior. Those unintended consequences for values and behavior are the subject of the next chapter.



Figure 5-12: The prow of Hamilton Building from Acoma Plaza, with *Lao Tzu* by Di Suervo in front of it.

Chapter 6: Unintended Consequences

As we have seen, the need for a new building was justified and the bond was sold to voters at least partially by the need to house art. But the building created to fulfill the functions of representing Denver and the Museum, of fundraising, and of drawing visitors has behavioral repercussions, as we saw in the last chapter. There are also unintended effects on values and norms that emerge. This research has thus far been presented in increasing levels of specificity, moving from higher levels of analysis down through smaller scales. In this chapter, I move back up through the levels to address some of the changes to values and institutions that have come about in tandem with the stylistic and behavioral changes discussed. Having laid out some of the causes and characteristics of the Bilbao model of museums in Chapter 3, having investigated how a fairly large U.S. city utilized the model in building a new wing on a regional museum in Chapter 4, and having discussed some of the results of the choices made in the building affected the building's users in Chapter 5, I now return to a more general level of analysis.

Popularizing an Elite Institution

Among the many things that museums do for the public they purportedly serve is to establish class boundaries and to educate people in an attempt to break down boundaries; like modernity, museums are pulled in opposite directions (Prior 2002). Museums educate about artistic characteristics, but also have the opportunity to teach patrons about proper behavior, about citizenship, and about the evolution of human creativity and the arts (Bennett 1995; Duncan 1995; Yanni 1999).

As containers for fine arts, museums have consistently been associated with elitism, with exclusionary policies and elite patrons (Bourdieu and Darbel 1966; DiMaggio and Useem 1978; Rosenzweig and Blackmar 1992; Zolberg 1994; DiMaggio 1996; Bennett 1995; McClellan 2008; Schubert 2009). Beginning with Bourdieu's study of European arts patronage in the late 1960s, the "public" nature of art museums was increasingly studied. Bourdieu found that in spite of the supposedly public nature of museums in Europe, most visitors were highly educated and usually members of the managerial or other economic elite, or artists themselves (Bourdieu and Darbel 1966). For Bourdieu, a natural-seeming knowledge of the arts is complexly interconnected with political and economic power (Bourdieu 1984). Other scholars have echoed the sentiment that museums preserve a history of class differences (Macdonald and Fyfe 1996; Maleuvre 1999; DiMaggio 2008).

Bourdieu pioneered work on who visits museums in Europe, uncovering that museum-goers are largely upper and upper-middle class, with the mother's level of education the strongest predictor of museum attendance (Bourdieu and Darbel, 1966).

Sociologists in the United States have similarly worked to understand who the “public” is for public art museums. DiMaggio and Useem (1978) found that the museum-going public is largely white, urban, and middle- or upper-class. These studies highlighted the continuing questioning of the role and function of museums, including matters of audience and the need to increase the groups of people served, and the concomitant need for more space, more staff, and expanded programming, in spite of budget shortfalls (Hendon 1979).

In the mid-1990s, scholars initiated what Oberhardt calls New Museology, focused on how the museum—as an institution, a set of practices, and a space where those practices are enacted—helps reinforce existing power structures on an unwitting public (Oberhardt 2001). New Museology scholar Carol Duncan (1995) sees art museums as sites of ritual, a stage where the public comes to enact scripted performances in homage to ideas about citizenship, class, and the ideal citizen. Many scholars focus on the role museums play in establishing national identities in the post-colonial context, including the role that artifact choice and display support the power of colonial powers (Prior 2002; Myers 2001). Museums are one more strategy for maintaining the social order.

Ideas of separation and grandeur shape the physical structures of museums, as well. Grand stairs—or today’s grand ramp—help prepare people for seeing; the work of climbing up the stairs sets apart the art from the rest of life (Newhouse 2006). And grand entrances, lobbies, thresholds, and other signifiers of separation mark the museum as a haven for whoever enters (Lee 1983; Wallach 1998; Ameri 1998). where class or geographic differences no longer structure cultural consumption (Blau 1989). For Tony Bennett (1995), the work of museums is the work of governmental power—getting the lower classes educated in how to be a proper citizens, both in terms of manners and in terms of the content. But Witcomb points out that “museums have also had to respond to forces outside of their control...and have always had to engage in dialogue with their audiences” (2003, 5).

Understanding what is being communicated is not new in architecture. Thirty years ago, Donald Preziosi called for an investigation into intended and received messages in architecture, proposing a semiotics of architectural production (Preziosi 1979). The study of architecture is no longer just about production and reception, but now also includes “reception, representation, use, spectacularization and commodification” (Lasansky 2004, 3). This is not a semiotics study, but it is looking at intention and reception, moving beyond form and into “the cause and effects of a building,” which Donald McNeill claims are “in many ways more interesting than the formal properties of the building itself” (2009, 159). In searching out the causes of the building, it is important to respect the aims and objectives of the project initiators (Smyth 1994).

Visual Studies scholar Suzanne Oberhardt is deeply critical of theorists such as Bennett who see the museum as tools for institutional oppression or social construction of values to benefit the elite, because they do not give enough agency to the general public (2001, 52). Oberhardt points out that although elite dominance is true in some senses, most of the public does not see the museum this way, but rather as a complex institution, one that satisfies our need for the sacred (2001, 3). Furthermore, she points out that most of the minority artists who have criticized museums for their exclusion do not call for their closure, but simply for museums to open their doors wider. Bennett’s study of how

the architecture of museums contributes to their social mission is helpful, but even Bennett has backed away from his earliest work framing museums as governmentality to acknowledge that museums respond to push-back from within and without alike. Furthermore, Judith Blau, studying metropolitan areas, found that the geographical differences in the availability of different types of cultural products—significant at the turn of the 20th century—are no longer as great. She instead sees a “universal culture.”

Today, the relationship between class, visual consumption, and taste is understood to be complex, with multiple taste cultures and methods other than artistic taste for distinguishing and advancing oneself (Gans 1974; Lamont 1992; Halle 1993; Erikson 1996; Peterson and Kern 1996; Oberhardt 2001). Even with this broadening of cultures, taste has long been associated with class and distinctions between old and new money (Veblen 1899; Bourdieu 1984; Fox and Lears 1993; Anheier, Gerhards, and Romo 1995; McCracken 1988). Nevertheless, public art museums are institutions with a responsibility to be open to a broad audience and often have a self-imposed mission to educate that public about art (Blau 1989; Prior 2002; Milligan and Brayfield 2004; Wolf 2010). The very fact that art museums had to have rules on the books for conduct and dress implies that the visiting public was broader than just the “proper” elites, and today museum visitors are broader than just those who can afford original paintings in their own homes (Witcomb 2003). Even some very recent art museum directors have balked at the idea of being an educational institution, and tension between these missions, of promoting elite taste versus creating inclusive education, drives much of the discourse around the role of museums in public life (Zolberg 1994; Karp et al. 2006).

Despite each of these critiques, some scholars and museum professionals continue to defend the institution of the museum as a keeper of culture on behalf of the public and as space for knowledge and ritual. Furthermore, scholars are beginning to study how museum practices in post-colonial contexts often reflect the local customs and relationships to objects, complicating theories of colonial domination; museums are increasingly called upon to respond to diverse communities (Karp, Kreamer, and Lavine 1992). Research is showing that museum audiences are active agents in the construction of meaning (Sandell 2007; Bennett 2005), something often ignored in discussions of national boundaries and representation.

According to Witcomb, critics of museums rarely break out of the binary between glorifying the museum as a bastion of high culture or vilifying it as an emblem of the forces of hegemony and modernity. “Reading” the museum like a text, as post-modern theorists suggest, implies a consistency between the encoding and the decoding of messages, but what the museums “say” is not necessarily what people “hear” (Witcomb 11). Witcomb thus questions Bennett’s assumptions, arguing that international fairs and department stores had an impact on the way 19th century “museums developed and offer another means to question Bennett’s rather totalizing claim that public museums represent the eventual governmentalization of all aspects of culture” (2003, 5). She argues for the importance of moving away from that governmental understanding to engage with other types of contexts, because focusing on governmentality obscures museums’ role in pleasure and economics, as sites of sensate pleasure and sites of consumption (2003, 5-12). Even Bennett himself questions his earlier theory’s claim of museums solely as boundary-makers, as museums open their doors to more people and museums are forced to deal with a variety of publics (Bennett 2006).

This dichotomy between an elite and an educating institution stems partially from museums' funding structures. Many public art museums began as a private collection bequeathed to a city or institution; the American relationship to art is at once gluttonous and virtuous because the wealthy want to own art, but when collectors die, they often give it all away to a museum (Saisselin 1983). Public funding of the arts in the United States has long been controversial, but appears to increase participation in or appreciation of the arts on the part of citizens (Robinson and Filicko 2000; Cornwell 1990)--although regional differences still prevail, responding to political and social differences (Robinson and Filicko 2000). In the United States, museums are particularly responsive to public tastes; of all the arts organizations, museum construction staffing and policies are the most "interwoven in economic, social, and political currents" (Blau 1989, 123). Corporations now fund exhibitions at museums, adding pressure for museum events to be accessible and even popular. These changes in funding affect art museums, because although museums do have strategies to maintain a certain level of autonomy, funder tastes impact exhibitions (Alexander 1996a). This move from individual philanthropists to institutional funders, changes museums and the exhibitions they put on; institutional funding requires that museums become more attuned to audiences, as those institutions fund more popular exhibitions to suit their own goals (Alexander 1996b).

Sometimes the goals of the funders are, at the most basic level, for the company to be associated with the arts, as in the case of corporate funding of arts activities, which can help with public relations and with branding (Sylvestre and Moutinho 2007). Thus, even though the arts have become more available to people through public and corporate funding, they are still seen as a way to "make it" either as a city or as a corporation (Blau 1989). Philanthropy to the arts is a way to increase the cultural capital of the philanthropic organization (Schokley 2002), and the production and consumption of the arts is a significant sector of the U.S. economy (Throsby 1994; Cherbo and Wyszomirski 2000).

Part of the Bilbao effect is breaking down of these previous high/low categories and inviting wider audiences into the museum. The museum is still an institution of high culture, but one that has become more commercialized and popularized (Fyfe 1996). The funding models have changed, requiring museums to justify any public money they get and to seek revenue from memberships, bookshop sales, ticket sales to special events, and rental of the space to balance the budget. The Guggenheim Bilbao managed to capture the popular global imagination and appeal globally and locally, to the high- and low-brow (Ockman 2004, 227). Museums are driven to appeal to wider circles of visitors, with blockbuster exhibitions and iconic buildings, to respond to the withdrawal of public funds and the need to compete with other leisure industries and global tourism (Karp et al. 2006; Wright 1989). As part of this draw to wider audiences and global tourism, museums are inviting their audiences to become partners in the making of meaning, with display tactics based around constructive theories of education, de-centering the object as the primary emphasis in favor of the experience as the draw (Hein 2000; Hooper-Greenhill 2004; Fraser 2006).

The architecture of the Hamilton Building was billed as a fix to social problems. According to Daniel Libeskind, "the new building for the Denver Art Museum will be an icon whose character and form will attract a wide public to the museum complex...The project is not designed as a stand-alone building but as part of a composition of public

spaces, monuments, and gateways in this developing part of the city, contributing to the synergy amongst neighbors large and intimate” (quoted in Tilden 2004, 200). The Hamilton Building and other contemporary museums—such as Zaha Hadid’s Cincinnati Arts Center, Frank Gehry’s Bilbao Guggenheim, and Calatrava’s Milwaukee Art Museum—is an iconic building, an idea closely associated with museums but also used for other cultural buildings such as opera houses and libraries. A volunteer at the new Seattle Library, designed by Rem Koolhaas and opened in 2004, said that part of why Seattle wanted such an iconic building was to help erase the images of the World Trade Organization protests that had dominated the news in 1999. The Oslo Opera House, the Sydney Opera House, and even Garnier’s opera house in Paris are all examples of buildings that are events. These iconic buildings are not only supposed to fulfill behavioral functions like housing people or books, but also to draw attention to the city—to be themselves an urban event.

A Spectacle for Denver

The Hamilton Building was an urban event at an international scale, but it simultaneously acted locally, symbolizing the Denver Art Museum to the citizens of the region, to show on the outside the innovation that was happening on the inside. The interior room shapes and non-vertical walls forced curators and exhibition designers to re-think art display tactics. One critic said that the point of the Hamilton Building is “not to hang artworks so much as to make a spectacle of them” (Carman 2005). The building is an active presence in the hanging of the art—either distracting or enticing, but a presence either way. Some people thought it was the curators’ job to respond to the building; others thought the building should not require such creativity of DAM staff.

How does an art museum best display art? Historically, that question has been answered in different ways—from rich people’s homes to athenaeums, which housed and displayed art for both education and pleasure, and which included objects that we would never consider including in an art museum now. The white cube gallery that we now consider neutral was revolutionary when historical settings were the norm. In the DAM, another revolution is occurring: that a museum building and the art it contains are in conversation: the two interact. The same assumption underlies the Clifford Still museum next door, although the walls there are vertical so the conversation is more subtle.

At the Clifford Still museum, the break with the modern white-cube tradition is in color and material: the walls are textured concrete, gray and mottled, yet square. At the Hamilton Building, the color of modern museums is preserved, but the form has changed. Like the MOMA galleries, the Hamilton Building comes with all-white walls, white metallic donor names, and slate or dark wood floors (Figure 6-1, next page). The art is colorful, but the museum is not. It is the shape of the spaces that break with the white cube tradition, and the shapes that draw the criticism. Critics do not dislike Clifford Still Museum nearly as much as they dislike the Hamilton Building.

The shape of the Hamilton Building made the hanging of art of great concern for many people. One of the main comments people offered informally when they heard the topic of this dissertation was that the Hamilton Building was bad for art display because of the walls. According to Young (2010), the original design of the Jewish Museum had walls that were too steep to hang things on; there, the shape of the building was eventually changed to have more orthogonal walls. At the Hamilton Building, the non-

verticality of the structural walls combines with the “honesty” of the building (discussed in Chapter 4) to make the gallery spaces unconventional and non-orthogonal, making it harder to just hang art on the wall. The hanging process must be carefully considered, to address the exposed hangers and shadows (Figure 6-2).



Figure 6-1: The Modern and Contemporary Gallery in the Hamilton Building. The white walls and the dark wood floors are in the tradition of the neutral container paradigm, but the angle of the walls and ceilings is not.

The varied sources for this dissertation offered a more nuanced view than just a good or bad dichotomy of how the Hamilton Building interacts with the art within it: only a quarter of the comments were directly negative (Table 6-1). Some of those comments were about the building, that it is not good to see art in and that it distracts from the art, which should be the focus of a museum visit. Some critiqued the perceived waste of space caused by the form, or the competition with the art and inflexibility of the forms, and still others say it is hard to enjoy the art in such a space (Ouroussoff 2006). Some of the negative comments, however, were not about the space but about the curators’ inability to hang art well within the space. One artist specifically complained that sometimes the back of the art, including the canvas and hanging hardware showed, which she found distracting. The atrium might be under-utilized



Figure 6-2: The African gallery. The display designers added some vertical walls to hold pieces of art, but the El Anastui piece hanging to the right casts a shadow on the angled wall behind it. The shadow becomes a part of the art display.

for art display because of climate issues, since it is right next to the door (Figure 6-3).

Most of the criticisms focused on the shape of the building (not materials, cost, or appropriateness). Most critics complained it was bombastic or not supportive of art display. Even before the Hamilton Building, though, the DAM worked hard to move beyond white walls in enfilades and bring in programming for children, blockbuster shows, an interesting Asian floor with colors and nooks, and exhibits of things like quilts and typewriters—that is, overall, programming designed to appeal to a broad public or to a

<u>Responses to art display in Hamilton Building</u>		
Total positive		30
	Good place to see art	25
	Building draws contemporary artists	5
Total indicating HB represents changing display paradigms		28
	Building is a new paradigm	7
	*Building changes because of display changes	6
	*Requires creativity from curators: installation matters	5
	*Embrace as example of creativity	6
	*African "cave" as example of creativity	4
Total negative		24
	Not good for art	11
	*Curators do not know how to use it	8
	Takes attention from art	5
Total neutral comments about HB design and art		18
	different spaces: different collections	6
	space affects how people see art	4
	more stuff can be displayed now	3
	new building designed with the user in mind	3
	installed art pieces dictate walls	2

Table 6-1: The Hamilton Building as a tool for art display.
***Starred lines highlight the importance of the installation in art appreciation within the Hamilton Building.**

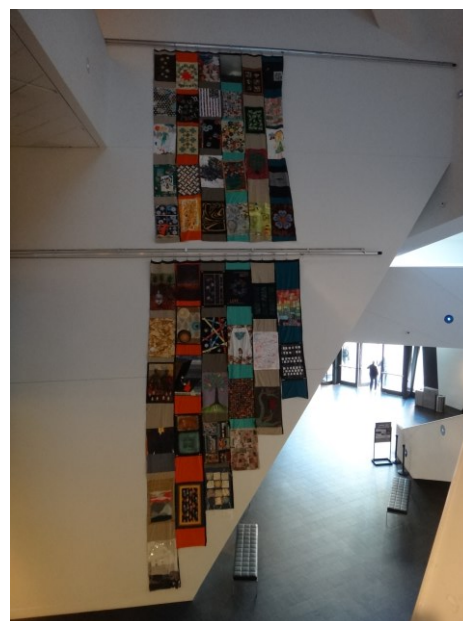


Figure 6-3: (left) The entrance atrium as seen from the elevators. One artist complained about the lack of art installed, although I have seen three different pieces of art in this space. (right) Art installed on the atrium wall.

variety of smaller publics. After the Hamilton Building opened, the hanging of art and the programming extended that creativity, and at its best the building can push exhibition designers to expand their understanding of how to hang art. And when creativity in hanging the art is not called for, extra walls are added and the space fades into a typical square-walled gallery. But the data seems to suggest that the building helps DAM staff think of art as an event, not just objects. The shape of the Hamilton Building does not inhibit normal hanging of art, but it allows for other ways of understanding how to view art, as in the *Embrace!* exhibit. Art has the potential to become an event, not just an object, just as the building is attempting to be an event, not just an object.

In the Hamilton Building, the hanging of art requires and inspires creativity from curators, educators, and exhibition designers. Not always a fan of the Hamilton Building spaces, former curator Diane Vanderlip said that, “there are some really grand boxes around, but this offers a rich alternative to conventional white-cube spaces, and it even surprised me how powerful the volume of space is. If a curator works with the volume of space instead of trying to fight it and turn it into something conventional, then it works incredibly well” (Figure 6-4) (quoted in MacMillan 2006). One of the ways the Museum worked with the space was in the African Exhibit. There, the furniture of display is vastly different from square pedestals. Instead, there is a large piece of furniture in the center of the gallery broken into many small platforms; inspired by the shape of the room,



Figure 6-4: The painting in the center, hung high and at an angle, was cited as an unusual yet successful hanging, possible because of the non-orthogonal walls.

the exhibition designers even included a little cave for children to crawl into (Figure 6-5), an installation one Board member called “brilliant.”

The show *Embrace!*, which opened in 2009 and closed the following year, was often cited as a turning point for art display in the Hamilton Building, where the Museum figured out how to engage the building effectively. For *Embrace!*, Heinrich’s first show as Director, the Museum asked seventeen artists to custom-make pieces that respond to or embrace the Hamilton Building’s architecture. No artists declined. The art was installed while the Museum was open, and spaces were used that had not been intended for display (MacMillan 2009). The idea was to have viewers feel like they were part of the artwork and part of the art process (Paglia 2009). One critic described a particularly successful installation by artist Zhong Biao, a piece he calls a “tour de force”: “Biao has had the walls painted black. To the left is a multi-panel conceptual realist painting that’s extended on one end by video projections and on the other by a mirror that covers an entire adjacent wall. As viewers look in the mirror, they place themselves in the painting’s reflection (Paglia 2009). In this show, the perceived difficulties of the building—the sloping walls and odd corners—were creatively used and turned into assets. One local arts advocate said that *Embrace!* was the best show the DAM had mounted. Instead of fighting the building, it was turned into an event space: the whole show, from installation through the art, was an event beyond just looking at art (Balthrop 2009).

The creativity required for installing art in the Hamilton Building has changed the way some curators think about art in the older building, too; one DAM staff member explained that it is “easier to take risks now.” Just as the white walls of the MOMA were part of a radical shift in art display in the 1930s, the Hamilton building is a part of a new paradigm for art display strategies. In fact, reporters and Patterson Williams, in the Education department, both referenced the artificiality of the white cube paradigm of display and the Hamilton Building in contrast (Lacayo 2006). Libeskind explicitly rejected the idea of a neutral box (Chandler 1993). According to one staff member in Education, “the



Figure 6-5: Children’s cave in the display furniture of the African Gallery. An educator who worked on the installation said they never would have thought of this in a more traditional building.

Hamilton Building asks you to look at things in a new way, just as you should when you are looking at art.” The point of the new paradigm is “not to hang artworks so much as to make a spectacle of them” (Carman 2005). Libeskind indicates that this new paradigm is what he strives for in his museum designs, saying that “great museums of distinctive architecture are an attraction in themselves, but at the same time they provide exciting spaces for the exhibition of art. It’s not just a different form, but a new approach, moving away from static boxes, to meet the new scale and modes of art today” (quoted in Ditmer 2000b). Libeskind says that a way to respect visitors is not treating them as “moving particles in a neutral space” (Libeskind and Museum für Gestaltung Zürich 1997, 82). He said he liked buildings that generate public debate.

The curators were wary of that paradigm shift for the new building and what it would require for display. Emerson said that the curators were polarized, between embracing and loathing the new paradigm. He said, “Shadows occupied conversations—how do you get no shadows on a 30-degree sloping wall?” By contrast, he points out, artists seemed to love the building and enjoy the challenge of creating site-specific art for it. Sculptors especially love the building, and multiple sculptors contacted the DAM, wanting to do a piece to be near the building, according to an emeritus DAM administrator. Artists commissioned to create pieces were inspired by the building: one artist said that having the different types of spaces changed and expanded her piece.

Many people responded positively to this new paradigm; two-thirds of the comments about the Hamilton Building were positive, and some were downright glowing. One critic called it a “fresh, intelligent and stunning” accommodation of art (Heathcote 2006), and many people commented that it was great for specific art, especially contemporary art. A larger percentage of the positive comments came from interviews than from articles about the building; in print, negative comments prevailed. One long-time staff member in the Education department thought that differences in opinion could be explained by how established a person was in the museum world, pointing out that of 200 young interns, only two or three did not like the Hamilton Building, but that the response was more mixed from what she called “established museum people.”¹⁵ Some claim that the unusual space makes people engage more with the art.

In all, nearly a quarter of the comments about art display in the DAM, including positive, negative, and neutral comments, in some way spoke about the importance of installation for viewing art, either regardless of or in response to the building itself. A former administrator drove the point home by saying that the Asian collection is one of the weakest collections—yet, it was his favorite because of the beautiful installation and the amount of education that is offered to, but not forced on, the public. Seven other people mentioned the Asian floor as their favorite in interviews, as well. The same administrator pointed out that art can look good in a variety of spaces, citing the first Clyfford Still exhibition in Denver. The Still collection now has its own building where the paintings hang flat on strictly vertical walls. But at the DAM, a painting was hung in the corner, out away from the wall, which the administrator thought was wonderful. Patty Williams referenced Sandy Skoglund’s piece *The Fox Games*, which used to be in a

¹⁵ At the Denver Art Museum, “interns” are people in a Master’s program spending a semester working at the Museum for course credit. They tend to be in their mid-20s.

square room, but was moved under the stairs in the Hamilton Building's Contemporary gallery—and is far more interesting there. The installation space in the Hamilton Building is “magically different,” she says, and she thinks it makes people stay longer and look more.

Fundamentally, however, the Museum staff does not know how the building affects how people see the art; Williams summed it up: “we do not know the exact response to the architecture, because visitor studies need more money—at any time, all Museum staff who have an interest in installation should have a lucid working everyday sense of visitor response, but currently they do not.”

In addition to the art being treated like an event, the building itself was treated like an event. Many of the complaints about the art display were complaints about the architecture subjugating “necessary functions of any building: as a “spatial container,” a shell or shelter with which various activities may take place—dwelling, working, viewing” (Welchman 2005, 238) to the symbolic functions (Chapter 3). But that is part of what iconic buildings do, they represent a program. An iconic building “works best when it is both obvious and veiled, a compressed striking shape that is similar to something and open to completion in the viewer's mind. It is most potent...when translated into architectural experience that underlines the point of the building, its symbolic program or meaning” (Jencks 2005, 54). In the case of the Hamilton Building, the iconic nature of the building, discussed in Chapter 3, created a space for art events, not just art objects, and helped to broaden the appeal of the art museum.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This research project focuses on the Hamilton Building, using it as an example to understand the iconic museum buildings going up around the country at the turn of the millennium. The Denver Art Museum was directly influenced by the Bilbao Guggenheim, and it has a close relationship to the city of Denver and its taxpayers; its significance is both international and local. The story of the Hamilton Building started with the Denver Art Museum needing more space for art display. From this utilitarian beginning, savvy decision makers identified goals that could be pursued with the building through careful architect and design selection, engagement with the city and the public, and national advertising. The building went beyond just housing art to become a fundraising tool, an advertisement for the museum and the city, and a source of public debate and discussion about the fine arts, including architecture, which was at once a marketing strategy and an exercise in civic engagement.

A combination of social and historical methods helped described how this museum building came to be, what the goals were of those who helped it come into being, and what the results have been of the resulting iconic forms. More than an account of public response to non-orthogonal architecture, this study offers a multi-layered description of a complex set of processes: getting a signature building for a middling collection in the middle of the country, using a building as a technology in service of larger social and economic goals, and the changing art display and museum experience as a result of building form.

Like the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, the Hamilton Building is a tool for heightening visual awareness—but, in the Hamilton Building visitors are made aware of the building not just the art. The wall angles and room shapes constantly remind one of the museum building and the aesthetics of display, and make one aware of the art as objects with physical reality beyond their beauty. Especially with the exhibit *Embrace!*, the Hamilton Building and the DAM removed the clothes of the emperor, showing the magic behind how art comes into being and comes to be in a museum. Art in the Hamilton Building has the potential to be a process, not just a project. The Museum is a building with a physical reality, not just a place for art to float suspended in space.

In some ways, the criticisms of the Hamilton Building being aggressive space-making are correct—but for many visitors that is an asset, and some of the art objects are enlivened by the over-the-top spaces of the Hamilton Building. Post-modernity in literature is marked by a lack of meta-narrative and a fragmenting of perspective, a revealing of mechanisms behind the artifice, and the Hamilton Building feels very post-modern in this sense; we are aware that there is work that happens before the art floats

before us on the wall, we get to see a bit of the process. This knowledge might distract viewers from the art-as-pure-object, but it reinserts some historical understanding of art-as-process; the Louvre was similarly concerned with art-as-process in its early years, when curators there would not accept poorly-preserved art because it was important to see the brush strokes. Furthermore, now we that see art-museum-as-process, the objects themselves are no longer the only precious thing in the museum—the building itself is precious, the whole experience is precious and important. Denverites go to the DAM not just to look at a series of individual objects but to have a museum experience—to take a tour of culture and buy a trinket to take home after having a tea in the gift-shop café. The art still holds a place of privilege, but the reality of the building and its servant functions is laid bare and made visible in the Hamilton Building: corners of empty space, freight elevators open and used as a stage space during the evening event *Untitled*, circulation space with rotating interactive art installations (Figure 7-1).

In prior museum scholarship, the public has been understood through a lens of taste and class, leaving public museums in the US with a tension around who they serve: is it the elites who own the art and donate the money? Is it the middle classes who provide the bulk of the visitors? Is it the lower-middle and lower classes, for whom the museum represents a chance at elevation? The DAM seems to work hard to break down the high/low taste divide, with popular free days, pop art, a popular and critically scoffed-at building, and programming that seeks to engage wide ranges of audiences. This is



Figure 7-1: The second-floor landing of the grand stairs serves as an installation room. The Western Gallery is to the picture taker’s left, the elevators and atrium are to the right. Visitors taking the stairs to the third floor walk through this space before continuing up the stairs around the atrium. The art installed in this room is always either bright or interactive; children tend to enjoy this space.

about programming, and in one sense the Hamilton Building is another branch of that programming. This study looked beyond taste and class to understand what the architecture was designed to do for the complex organization and whether or not it fulfilled those roles for the DAM. The role that taste played in understanding the Hamilton Building is mostly that of architectural taste-makers vs. everyone else. There were a few interviewees who wanted a tamer interior, but those with the most critical comments were largely architects and architectural critics. A way to move beyond taste—professional or popular—as a measure of buildings is to understand how the building works at different levels of analysis.

The Bilbao model of museums is an extreme expression of the sculptural paradigm: visitors have choice in their path through the building, the spaces are incredibly varied, and they inspire artists to create installations and responses to the space. The shop was designed as part of the space from the beginning and is prominently featured for visitors. The new wing does not have some of the other entertainment features, like a restaurant, but that is somewhat fulfilled by the retail shops across the plaza, retail that was planned there from the beginning. The Hamilton Building is part of the city, actively altering the landscape beyond its doors with the plaza, the references to the Golden Triangle neighborhood, retail, residences, and a planned addition. This building has echoes of the sacred space paradigm described by Newhouse, with its cathedral-like atrium that leads the eye up into dazzling natural light and fascinating forms. The “plan” of the museum is a vertical section, with art spaces labeled by floor rather than by room on a floor plan; this is different from most museum guides where the plan is in fact a plan, and was probably taken from the North Building example, where each floor is a different subject or area. The traditional floor plan is less relevant than in earlier museum types.

Building type is one of the tools used throughout this research to frame a discussion of museum buildings and the functions they serve. Victoria Newhouse, especially, presents museum buildings through the lens of typologies, which has helped structure this research by focusing the research only on the Bilbao museum type. But by focusing on iconic buildings and place branding—other tools to understand the work museum buildings perform—this research moves beyond type to address a building as an economic stimulant in a city or region, as looked at in Chapter 3. However, focusing only on economics would miss some interesting changes at the organizational level—such as programming changes in response to the architecture of museums—or at the behavioral level, such as visitors getting lost and discovering galleries they had not meant to see. Each of these foci for research lend an understanding to the many facets of contemporary museum. They also correspond to different levels of analysis, and moving through the levels can help make sense of the work the building does for the art, the people, and the city.

Working at Different Levels

Throughout this research, we have seen the Hamilton Building used as a social tool: the Denver Art Museum used the architect and the unique style of the building as a fundraising tool and as a public face for the Museum, to draw in visitors and to represent the DAM to the public. One architect familiar with the project described the building in the following way:

The building is controversial, but responds strongly to the brief. It is not just one more nice façade, but has a creative impact on art. It is not formulaic or a repetition of what was already there, but an experience of art. Architecture is an ongoing process, not just about the building but about an experience. The DAM had a great client and an enlightened group of builders, and the city understood the project. It is a first in many ways, a 21st century space. It is both sculptural and functional, a work of art, not about confirming views already held. It is about gaps that appear in the homogeneity of the world, with a new kind of museum space and a tectonic sense of structure.

The Hamilton Building, like all twenty-first century museums, is a complex institution, serving public, private, and corporate agendas. Critics who called it bombastic, neighbors who think it stimulates the area, staff who feel it overwhelms the art, and visitors who delight in the way it feels sacred—they are all seeing the building from a different perspective, serving a different purpose. Each one is focused on a different level of analysis, and using that theoretical frame can illuminate the ways in which the building succeeds or fails and illuminate which agendas are successfully enacted through the building.

In a very basic way, the Museum is part of the urban fabric of Denver, and the Hamilton Building takes seriously its role at the urban level, seeking to connect the Civic Center and the Golden Triangle. It makes physical gestures towards downtown, with the prow pointing in that direction, while reducing its height near the residential Golden Triangle. The prow and the bridge are landmarks, increasing the legibility of 13th Avenue for those driving under them. The parking garage attempts to provide a piece of the infrastructure necessary to draw people in from the suburbs and neighboring municipalities, and Martin Plaza attempts to create a node, a meeting place for pedestrians and a ceremonial entrance into the Civic Center from the south. As a landmark, it has largely succeeded; children and adults alike recognize 13th Avenue by the prow.

But the building operates at the urban and cultural level in a more complex way than just as a physical gesture. The city supported the building—financially with the bond issue and in other ways by ensuring the permitting and land purchasing process went smoothly—to rejuvenate a neighborhood (Chapter 1 and 3). The low rents in the Golden Triangle had been a problem for decades, and the City was unable to realize the economic shifts envisioned in the Cultural Complex plan by Venturi and Scott Brown. Brash (2011) argues that the production of space in a neoliberal city is linked to class formation, which is visible in Denver by the types of housing in the Co-Development. The City and the developer were trying to transform the civic center area from a place of homeless people into a place where the upper classes spend time. The retail in the base of the Co-Development is a salad shop, a wine bar, and a coffee shop, luxury consumables catering to museum visitors instead of the homeless who spend time near the library. Change is not possible without “the production of an appropriate space” (Lefebvre 2011, 59). Thus, the neoliberal upper classes are changing the space—producing a visually consumable space representational of global capital—to change the use of that space.

The building has only partially succeeded at this project. On one hand, very little has changed in the property values of the area, aside from the Co-Development. Some of that is due to timing: although Denver's housing market did not crash as badly as it did in places like Las Vegas or Phoenix, it still experienced the slow-down in housing that affected the United States in the wake of the 2008 crash. On the other hand, the condominiums in the Co-Development are some of the most expensive housing in Denver, at \$500 per square foot. That is partially due to the developer being unwilling to sell at a lower cost, and some of the units remain unsold even six years after they were completed. The first apartments to sell were bought by Lanny Martin (the board member who contributed \$5 million for the plaza that bears his name) and Lewis Sharp (Director). Other early buyers were all connected to the art museum in some way.

One of the ways the Museum signaled the change of users for the area south of the Civic Center was through the style of the building, invoking international capital and global marketplaces in its use of an international style. The brick and terra cotta of the Golden Triangle and the neo-classical structures of the Civic Center were completely ignored in favor of a style unique to the twenty-first century and familiar to any global citizen. The symbolism and style of the façade and elevation imply societal values of global capitalism instead of local renewal: the building represents Denver to national and international tourists. But it also represents the Museum to the Metro-Denver area and the Front Range region.

Using a building to represent a place is not new; the Eiffel Tower, the Sydney Opera House, even the Gothic Cathedrals are icons that draw people to visit them. In an age of international media (see Chapters 3 and 6), there is value in generating controversy, of making people talk about your town. What we learn from this building is that we value safe originality. That is, the Hamilton Building stands out from the surrounding buildings, breaks with historical norms for art museums and civic centers, uses a new material for cladding, and defies gravity with its angles and cantilevers. But it is a break that has been vetted, successfully tried in Bilbao, Spain, and copied by cities across the United States. The selection committee had strong evidence in the Jewish Museum and Gehry's Bilbao that this could be a successful strategy.

The new building did help the Museum draw visitors, both because it allowed for traveling shows and because its architecture sparked debate and conversation both locally and nationally. Critics might have panned it, but that did not stop visitors from attending. The societal level of analysis is the level where the building operates most successfully, although not without receiving criticism for thoughtlessly attempting to reproduce the success of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao.

Museum buildings in the Bilbao model are supposed to help draw attention and visitors, broadening the audience both socially and geographically. The Hamilton Building is a recognizable version of this building type, one of the complaints of critics. Even to lay people, though, the Hamilton Building is obviously a museum, and some interviewees who knew nothing about the building said it was probably a museum with contemporary art.¹⁶

The level of program and complex organizations is where the Hamilton Building is most prosaically successful. The building fulfills all the stated programmatic

¹⁶ Through snowball recruitment, I found three people who were unfamiliar with the Hamilton Building.

requirements: it can easily accommodate two different traveling or temporary exhibitions, and I have seen three different temporary exhibitions mounted simultaneously. The Modern and Contemporary collection is on permanent display, and the Museum finally has the auditorium it wanted but could not afford in the Ponti Building in the 1970s. Moreover, the building's shape has spurred programming, from tours and small activities, to specific works of art installed in the odd corners, to entire exhibitions. The main complaint at this analytical level was the art-to-space ratio, with some people feeling like even more art should go into each room. At the organizational scale, the building has challenged curatorial and display paradigms, at the same time that it encourages creative responses to the exhibition space. While some art does not work well in the space, some art, especially custom installation pieces, work especially well, and living artists jump at a chance to make a piece that can respond to the building.

Those changes in curator and artist behavior help create the changes in visiting habits addressed in Chapter 5. The building itself affects behavior, helping people accidentally stumble upon unsought art galleries, helping draw tourists interested in architecture, becoming part of the marketing strategy for the city. As the building becomes another work of art in a museum's collection, the art is simultaneously becoming increasingly event-like, with rotating exhibitions and events to keep people returning; it is the returning members and the repeat visitors that increase revenue for the museum. In this way, even the behavior level of analysis is deeply intertwined with neoliberal agendas and the privatization of formerly public goods.

The museum is a complex institution, and the new wing of the Denver Art Museum is a complex building. Libeskind identified many functions for contemporary museums in his initial application in response to the invitation for proposals:

Libeskind's Museum architecture has a unique signature which inspired anything but indifference, serving rather to propel the discourse on space and form into a new dimension. The role of the Museum in the 21st century is a changed one; new media, technology and communication are integral to creating an exciting new museum identity. Libeskind's architecture is far from the 20th century *box filled with objects*; the architecture becomes part of the museum, transporting, like the exhibits, messages of programmatic and cultural significance. A museum should not only fulfil [sic] the requirements of the Client, but should create a building which becomes a destination in itself (Libeskind 2000a).

While never mentioning the Bilbao museum, he is defining the museum-type now associated with that building.

Criticism based on levels of analysis helps understand the building from a variety of perspectives and can chart accomplishments and failure based on clear, defined, and varied goals, getting out of the murky waters of taste or style. As "function" becomes an increasingly complicated concept, so must the analytical tools we use move across scales. Neoliberalization, discussed in Chapter 3, is one of the driving forces of the spectacularization of buildings and art, discussed in Chapter 6. As museums must rely on not just wealthy patrons but international tourism and in the case of Denver, a renewable tax for arts and culture, they are driven towards popularization. Regardless of what architecture critic Osserhauf said about the derivativeness of the building, most of the

Denverites I talked to liked it—it is a popular building. The democratization of art and art museums, with worldwide branches and blockbuster shows traveling around the globe not just to New York, maybe Chicago, San Francisco or Los Angeles, Tokyo, London, and Paris, but to Denver, Milwaukee, and Phoenix means that more people can see the art, more people are engaged with art. Museums staying open late on Friday nights, serving drinks and hosting music, means for Denver that more young people come to the museum; it is a site for dates for working professionals.

This trend—of neoliberalization leading to popularization—is especially pronounced in Denver because the Museum is publicly funded through the SCFD legislation. the museum is publically funded, it is a public funding stream that must be repeatedly approved by the public. Hence, the Museum cannot simply be a haven for the wealthy; it must appeal to broad audiences.

Final Thoughts

The complex nature of the uses of architecture lends itself to a variety of avenues for further research. This research is a case study of a Bilbao-inspired museum to understand what meaning and effect it has. Next steps would be to add more buildings to the study, to test if my findings here are true. I foresee a study of contemporary, iconic museums in the United States, including the client goals, connection to the municipality, and impact on art display. I would begin by adding in-depth research on the Milwaukee Art Museum addition by Calatrava, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Cleveland by Farshid Moussavi Architecture, the Broad Art Museum in Lansing by Zaha Hadid, and the Akron Art Museum by Coop Himmelb(l)au, all of which are recent buildings in third-tier American cities using internationally famous architects. Are these purely spaces of international capital flow, or are these iconic buildings by international architects also creating local places?

Another interesting and currently under-explored avenue of research is how architecture impacts the display tactics in an art museum, and how both the Bilbao paradigm for buildings and the globalization of art visitations has impacted curators' understanding of appropriate and interesting display tactics. What does it mean that art is an event, and how does the architecture of Bilbao-era museums change our understanding of hanging and viewing art? This is a much more complex subject than I could touch on here, and deserves dedicated study.

The fields of architectural criticism and social and cultural processes in architecture should speak to each other more often and more clearly; I propose investigations into the symbiotic relationship of style, symbolism, behavior, and public engagement in architecture. Denver has been using architecture very consciously to attract national and international attention, by commissioning many high-profile buildings throughout the past decade. How does Denver use architecture to position itself on a national and world stage? How did its efforts in this regard compare with other cities? Would other cities do the same, given the track record of ten years of Bilbao museums?

I personally started out disliking the Hamilton Building: this was meant to be a critique of aggressive form-making. Now I find myself defending it to colleagues who call Libeskind a hack and the building a derivative failure. My defense of the building is not because I agree or disagree with them, or to try to justify my interest. I defend it

because, from what I can tell, the clients—DAM, Denver, Director Sharp, the Board—got the building they asked for from the architect they wanted. Its only failure has been a failure to increase membership renewals noticeably, but it provided international press for the DAM, an arresting building to advertise the city internationally, a public process that made funding the building possible, and a reinvestment by the public into the DAM as a complex organization.

Such a positive response to the Libeskind building came as a surprise: many of the published reviews of the building were negative, and when architects or other architecture students heard that my dissertation was on a Daniel Libeskind building, the project was usually met with skepticism and disdain. Based on these responses, I expected to find an overblown, bombastic building that completely overpowered the art and looked exactly like all Libeskind's other buildings, and which the general public hated because they got vertigo in it. Instead, I found that while the building is obviously by Libeskind, it also responds to the demands of the city and the program, and creates interesting public spaces out of what was once a street. While it overpowers some art, most contemporary art looks fabulous in the building, especially once curators and exhibition designers figured out how to work with the building; moreover, the spaces inspire living artists, including sculptors, dancers, digital artists, and actors, to create site-specific work, involving the local arts community in the museum. And for the most part, the general public likes the museum buildings, and the Hamilton Building is more popular than the older Ponti building. Interviewees repeatedly stated that museum buildings are supposed to be special, unique, and interesting; members of the general public who could not describe the Hamilton Building would identify it as a museum when shown a picture of it, even if they could not identify it as the Denver Art Museum, because it was unique and interesting. And the people who spend the most time in the building, the volunteers, the guards, and the staff, like the building even more than the public. Moreover, the process of choosing the architect and designing the building was a public and publicized process, educating the public about contemporary architecture and what it means for cities. The museum was controversial when it opened, generating worldwide press and local discussions.

Perhaps I am being kind to the Hamilton Building and its designers. The critics say is that they could have accomplished the many design goals without the leaky ceiling and angled walls. But that is the beauty of design: that there are nearly infinite solutions to problems. But some unintended consequences of the Hamilton Building might then not have occurred, such as the *Embrace!* show and the creativity in art hanging, or commissioning living artist to fit in specific corners, or learning display tactics that specifically take into account visible shadows.

Symbolism, so important in the justification of the building and the architect selection, falls away when people talk about the specifics of design decisions. Most of the symbolic statements for why the building looks the way it does, are vague, such as “the quality of a place” beyond the bricks and mortar, or “vitality.” The only concrete symbolism about the design was that it was to be a gateway, bridge, or meeting between downtown and the Golden Triangle, or the Civic Center and the Golden Triangle, all of which were comments made by Daniel Libeskind himself. It is as if the symbolism of the building was taken care of when the committee selected Libeskind—they knew what they were getting, so they just had to bring up the practical in conversations with him. The

architect here played the role of an artist, with the client (the Museum) required to be the expert on use and pragmatics. Symbolism is an important function of the building. The symbolism forced creativity in firmness—required gymnastics to ensure it would stand—and in commodity—unusual shape altering how the basic function of displaying art is carried out. But that delight was a key part of the function.

The old “form follows function” may still be true, but if so, “function” must expand to include the symbolic as it did long ago in the social sciences: the Hamilton Building is a combination of pragmatic and symbolic considerations, both of which were deeply important to the building and why it was built. Further research should clearly define and quantify some of the outcomes of this symbolic function. Unfortunately, many of the mysteries of the creation of the Hamilton Building are still uncovered; many are lost because of closed or non-existent archives. I had to rely on public information and memory, both fickle and shaped by what the participants wanted known. Regardless, to understand design in society our methods must include more than “pure” behaviorism and more than “just” style. Product designers have repeatedly demonstrated that machines’ utility and use are deeply impacted by style, taste, and aesthetics—the effort putting into designing iPhone cases is one example. The Denver Art Museum worked hard to bring international attention to itself and the city that supports it with a crystalline new building clad in titanium that works on many levels of analysis—and perhaps surprising has transformed art into an event to match the building that houses it.

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1. Western History and Genealogy Collection. Annual reports from the Denver Art Museum up to 2000, reports created for Denver and Denver Art Museum, documents and publications by the City of Denver and the Denver Art Museum.
2. Clippings Files. All files and subtopics relating to the Denver Art Museum. Includes newspaper clippings, mailings, gallery booklets, and other small paper items relating to the Denver Art Museum
3. Maps and Atlases Collection.
4. Newspaper Archive. Fully indexed articles of the *Rocky Mountain News* and *The Denver Post* from before the founding of the Denver Art Museum.

Collections at the Denver Art Museum

1. Volunteer Library. Includes training videos for architecture tours and exhibits, and a collection of Hamilton Building Press.
2. Individual Staff Documents.

Collections Found Online

1. www.cbca.org. Past and current reports from the Colorado Business Committee for the Arts.
2. www.denverartmuseum.org. Annual reports for seven of the last 13 years. Information on the building. Archived pages about events and building notes.
3. www.scfd.org. Past and current reports on the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District budget and recipients.
4. www.visitdenver.org. Annual marketing brochures and activities.
5. www.westword.com. Archive of articles written about the Denver Art Museum.

Appendix A: Methods

Museums and visitor response to museums have been studied in a variety of ways, from the theoretical to statistically-based. Qualitative examples include Bennett (1995), who applied Foucault's theories of social control to the design of dozens of museums to arrive at a theory of museums as a communicator of manners and social performances for rising middle classes, and Duncan (1995), who uses the design and art display tactics in seven major art museums to argue that museums are settings for rituals and exercise social control. On the quantitative side, DiMaggio (1996) added a "culture" module to a nationally administered survey from the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center to understand attitudes about culture. Peterson and Kern (1996) analyzed census data. For this case study, I used a multi-method approach, conducting interviews with key stakeholders, collecting archival data, and making my own observations of the building and the spaces it creates. I also spent six months as a weekly intern for the education department of the DAM. For that, I helped with four different evaluation projects, most of which involved getting user feedback on some of their newest programming. I helped design the survey instruments and collected the data to turn over to the museum. In one instance, I also summarized the responses and made a recommendation based on them. While I was not officially collecting data through participant observation—I did not have approval from the Office for the Protection of Human Subjects (OPHS) for such data collection—that internship broadened my understanding of how the museum worked and how staff used the spaces.

This study is based on the assumption that the museum should be understood from a variety of perspectives. The masses have a stake in the museum just as much as museum professionals and the elite; it is just a different stake with different outcomes. From the museum celebrators, I take the assumption that the museum is a valuable institution; it has survived this long and now flourishes in new ways. It holds incredibly valuable objects, preserving them for the future. From the New Museology theorists, I take the idea that power and capital play out in the institution, and that these undercurrents should not be ignored. Art has a rhetorical power beyond just the value of the artwork (Caute 2003). My work stands most closely with Oberhardt's fourth frame, taking into account the popular version of museums while not neglecting the critical and art historical perspectives either. What I am trying to do is go beyond the New Museology critique of the museum to stand at the intersection of the academy, architecture, and the public.

However, although I read texts about the museum and analyze the discourse around it, the museum itself is not a text to be read—it is a building, an institution, and a set of practices.

Understanding the building type helps us to understand the daily world and culture. For example, tracing a single building type through various cultural and economic settings, such as King's (1995) exploration of the Bungalow, offers insights into global culture and consumption. Knowing who funds and designs the building is important, but so is knowing how the user responds to that building: the fact "that a building's forms speak the language of the sponsors in no way diminishes their emotional or artistic impact. It merely explains *whose* language of forms, whose cultural imagery, is used" (Markus 1994, 152). I wanted to know both whose language of forms is used and what the emotional impact is. The idea is to incorporate the general public, including staff and trustees who are invested in the museum but who come from varying personal and academic ideologies, into understanding how the architecture of the building both expresses and influences perceptions of the museum and the art in it.

Van Slyck found that often the intended and received meanings of library architecture did not match, and she and other historians have lamented not being able to speak to users directly when the buildings they study were new (Van Slyck 1995; Adams 2008; Yanni 2007). I have tried to overcome this problem by studying the way a new building is currently used, while simultaneously studying the history of the building's design. The social life of monuments—the road to their creation, the public response, and their possible destruction—are all part of the monument, serving to enhance and keep alive memory (Young 1993). Similarly, buildings can be understood as monuments to a particular organization at a moment in time.

Thus, this research goes beyond a simple cost/benefit analysis where we collect a specified set of performance measures before the project—such as "attendance, operating costs, income sources, energy consumption, security and operation costs per square foot, cost to raise a dollar, visitor satisfaction, return on public relations efforts, net funds raised by type of activity, and unique goals related to the project" (Crimm, Morris, and Wharton 2009, 236)—and then compare those measures to results after the building opens. While certainly the success or the failure of the building is important to the DAM and to this research, *perceived* success or failure is equally important. Crimm lays out measures for success for museum building projects, listing questions to ask such as:

was the project completed on time? Was the project completed within the planned budget? Did the museum meet or exceed fundraising goals? Did the museum meet or exceed attendance goals in the first few weeks? Has the museum attracted new members and new donors? Since opening, has the museum attracted new business to the neighborhood or the community? How well has the museum adjusted to its new success or its disappointing results? Did the project fall short, meet, or exceed program expectations? Did the museum fall short, meet, or exceed attendance goals after twelve to eighteen months? (237-238)

While important, these questions assume that the building project itself is the only independent variable, and could thus be the cause of any changes in attendance and fundraising. In the social sciences, however, causation is often hard to figure out; instead, we often work with perceptions (Sommer Harrits 2011, 155). Because the phenomenon we are working with in the social sciences are ones that many people already have explanations for, we must do what Bourdieu recommends and defamiliarize ourselves with the subject, while simultaneously being able to explain from within the life-world of a person, reasons and causes. That is, we should explain phenomena as

“objective” researchers while simultaneously being sympathetic to non-objective perspectives (Sommer Harrits 2011, 157).

To attempt to uncover both the objective truth and the lived experience of my subjects, I utilized an historical and qualitative inquiry, while analyzing much of the data in a qualitative and a quantitative way. I am using data triangulation (meaning I collect different types of data), and methodological triangulation (meaning I analyze the data in qualitative and quantitative ways) in the way I treat the data (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner 2007, 114). With both interviews and archival data, I use interactive and non-interactive data collection tactics, collecting mostly qualitative data, and using contextual, inferential, and recollective evidences. In essence, I collected “as much evidence as possible concerning a complex social phenomenon ... to provide an account of that phenomenon” (Groat and Wang 2002, 137).

Thus, this research is an interpretive study, seeking facts including perception about what does the building mean to the city and its citizens, and to the press. For example, in the justification section, we cannot know all the reasons the players had for forwarding the building, for voting for the bond, but what is interesting is that the reported reasons are largely symbolic (as in table 4-1).

Interview

Interviews were semi-structured, targeting key stakeholders.¹⁷ Key stakeholders included those professionally associated with the Denver Art Museum, such as DAM staff, board, and architects, as well as those who are interested in the fate of the DAM but who do not work for or with the DAM, such as DAM members and visitors, local arts advocates, neighbors, and residents of the Museum Residences, the condominiums across the plaza from the Hamilton Building. I also interviewed a few people who had no stake in the museum other than through the taxes collected by the Science and Cultural Facilities District, people who do not visit the museum but who live in Denver. (See Table 3-1 for a complete list of categories of interviewees and the number of each, or the Primary Source List for a complete list of all interviews). Many people fit into more than one category—that is, an artist who has work in the museum was a regular visitor long before she was showing art there; similarly, all the local arts advocates are visitors to the museum, and many of them are members. When I interviewed people, I asked how they wanted to be identified, and used what they said to categorize them. When my interviewees had no opinion, I used the way they had been suggested to me by whoever recommended them.

I recruited my subjects in a variety of different ways, with an overall response rate of approximately 85%. First, my contact at the museum sent an email on my

DAM Board members	3
DAM Staff	14
DAM Volunteers	8
Architects for HB or Co-Development	4
Local Artists	3
Arts and Culture Professionals	5
DAM Members	7
Colorado Residents	9
Associated with Museum Residences	7
City or Affiliated Agencies	6
Total	66

Table 3-1: Interviewees by Category

¹⁷ The University of California, Berkeley’s Office for the Protection of Human Subjects (OPHS) approved the protocol for this research, protocol # 2010-10-2338.

behalf to a few staff members of my choosing asking if they would be willing to be interviewed; I then followed up with the OPHS-approved email explaining my project and asking for help. I tried to get a variety of types of staff, with emphasis on those whose job made them most sensitive to the display of art or the public's response to the art. All but one of the staff members I approached agreed to an interview.

Second, and most common, was snowball recruitment. Like Fainstein, I used a "reputational method," asking other informants who would be helpful to the study. She then generalized responses when more than one independent informant said the same thing (Fainstein 1994, 17). At the end of each interview, I would ask, "Is there anyone else you think I should talk to, based on what I have been asking you?" Some people gave no names, some gave as many as five. I followed up with every name given to me with an email explaining the project and asking for participation. Often, these names were for people who played a role at the museum I did not know existed, or offered a perspective that I had not yet figured out how to acquire; for example, one docent recommended that I speak with the volunteer in charge of Access Relations. I had not known that they had a volunteer position solely devoted to making the museum accessible to people with disabilities, but she gave me an important perspective on the building.

Third, I sent an email to friends and acquaintances in the area explaining my project and asking for help. I asked if they were willing to be interviewed or if they could recommend anyone who might be. I also posted on Facebook. From those emails and Facebook posting, I got a few friends, a few friends' co-workers, a few friends' friends, two sets of friends' parents, a friend's great-aunt, and two friends' professional acquaintances. One of my friends posted the email at the city-sponsored senior center where she works, and a few of the seniors involved there were interviewed as well. As with all my interviews, I asked for additional names at the end of the interviews.

Finally, I had one person volunteer for an interview without me asking, after a brief chat; I took the daily architecture tour one day early in my data collection, and the docent commented on my questions, asking if I studied architecture. When I told him what I was studying, he offered to sit down and talk to me about his perspective on the buildings. After our interview, and unsolicited by me, he sent out an email to 15 other volunteers and a board member, recruiting people for me to interview. I followed up his email with the OPHS-approved email I used to introduce my project to all interviewees, and seven people agreed to be interviewed.

Because the interviews were based on their relationship to the museum and I was not trying to get a statistically significant sample, I did not systematically collect demographic information on interviewees beyond their connection to the museum. However, I do know that the youngest interviewee was twenty-two years old and the oldest in her early eighties. Most were white. The income distribution of the interviewees would almost certainly be skewed high, as board members and Museum Residences condominium owners all have higher than average incomes, and those two categories were nearly 10% of the interviews. Of those whose category for this paper was not defined by their job (as a DAM staff member would be), the interviewees' occupations were varied, including a 911 dispatcher, graduate students, a musician, a retired housewife whose husband was in business, a non-profit worker, a professor, a former printer at a newspaper, and policy consultants. Thus, the demographics of my interviewed

sample align more with typical museum-goer demographics than they do with the demographics of the overall population of Denver.

Interviews usually lasted about an hour. The vast majority took place either at the subject's office or at the coffee shop across the plaza from the museum. A few took place at other coffee shops, a few at the subject's home, and a few were phone interviews. I had two requests for an email interview, so I sent those respondents questions and they responded in writing. I audio-recorded all but four of the interviews, with the subject's permission, as well as taking notes during the interview.

The interviews were quasi-structured. I asked everyone to give their opinion on four areas of the museum: the galleries, the non-gallery spaces such as the entrance areas or the bridge connecting the buildings, the exterior of the buildings and plazas, and the connection of the museum to the city. I asked everyone to speak about both the Hamilton and the North Building, and I had questions directed at most levels of analysis. At first, I also asked everyone about who the visitors to the museum are, but after receiving the same list of types of people from all staff and volunteers, I stopped asking that question of those professionally involved with the museum. In addition to the questions everyone answered, I asked each person questions about the architecture of the museum specific to her role. For example, when I was speaking to a curator, I would ask about hanging the art, and how the shape of the building affected display decisions. When I spoke to the Access Liaison volunteer, I asked what adaptations were necessary in any given space, or how people with disabilities experienced the spaces. When I spoke with the docent leading the architecture tours, I asked what sorts of questions he got about the architecture from visitors. Additionally, at the end of each interview, I asked a broad question about what effects the architecture has on people, as a catch-all for any ideas or observations not covered in other questions.

Verbal Survey

In addition to the above in-depth interviews, I conducted short verbal surveys with security officers working for the Denver Art Museum. The officers who responded were recruited during their daily morning meeting. The head of security allowed me to explain my project and ask for recruits during a Thursday morning meeting. He recommended Thursday because it would give me the best cross-section of security officers, with that day staffed mostly by regular, full-time employees with a few part-time or mostly-weekends officers, as well. The officers were allowed to speak with me on their breaks. For the rest of that day, I sat in the security break room with my notebook and my questions.

Six officers chose to respond. The security officers had a variety of tenure at the DAM, some having been there for decades, some having been hired within the year. Some were as young as twenty-two, one was over fifty years old. The questions on this survey centered on behaviors the Security Officers observed in patrons in the different spaces and how the officers felt at the end of the day after working in those rooms.

Archival Documents

The archives of the Denver Art Museum are closed to the public. Through speaking with various staff members, I was able to access visitor counts and aggregate membership data for the past few years—since the Hamilton Building opened—but no

further back. The Volunteer Library, however, proved a valuable resource, with DVDs of docent training workshops and manuals for information to be included in a tour, especially for the Architecture tour. The Volunteer Library also has a notebook of comprehensive press clippings about the Hamilton Building. The Denver Art Museum works with a marketing research firm, BBC Research and Consulting, which conducts visitor surveys for the Museum. I was able to gain access to those reports for the last ten years. Little of that data was directly architecture related, but it did inform my understanding of visitor response to the museum in general.

The bulk of my archival data was found at the Denver Public Library's Western History and Genealogy room. They have an extensive clippings file collection, with almost 30 files directly relating to the Denver Art Museum. Interestingly, this archive is a collection of articles created by Denver librarians: it is a haphazardly curated collection of public writing about the museum. They have indexed and archived every newspaper published in Denver County since the late 1800s. The Denver Public Library is the repository for all the documents associated with the Hamilton Building construction, a government document repository, and houses an extensive Denver map collection dating from before Colorado was officially a state including Sanborn Fire Insurance map books for Denver. Additionally, the Denver Public Library holds Annual Reports from the DAM from the early 1950s through 2001, when the reports began being distributed online. Some of the last 10 years' annual reports are available in archives of the website, although 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2007 are missing. This study includes information collected from all those sources.

In addition to print material, I found some information on websites such as the Economic Activity Study of Metro Denver Culture, found on the Colorado Business Committee for the Arts website (Colorado Business Committee for the Arts 2010), and the website for the members of the Convention and Visitor's Bureau, which uses the Hamilton Building and the Denver Art Museum to promote tourism ("Denver Colorado Tourist & Vacation Information | VISIT DENVER" 2013).

I conducted three interviews not listed above, to follow up on or augment the archival information I discovered: one with a zoning official to inquire about permits and zoning; one with a member of Visit Denver, the tourism board, and one with a member of the Colorado Business Committee for the Arts. I also conducted an interview with someone from the Science and Cultural Facilities District, but as some of those questions strayed into personal opinion, that interview is included in the count above. I include information on these interviews here as opposed to in the interview section because these were factual interviews, with no questions about opinions on the architecture, only questions pertaining to the archival data, and are not regulated by the Office of Protection of Human Subjects.

Analysis

This research started as a behavioral study of what people do in the space, but as I began to collect data, I realized I had to shift to less-quantifiable aspects of the museum, such as its role as an icon, because it was such an important goal of the Museum—with some behavioral and some immeasurable results.

In this study, I tried two different methods of analysis: bottom up and top-down. Bottom up was taking what people said and seeing what patterns emerged. For example,

the idea of the museum as part of city branding emerged because people compare this building with other fancy buildings, not so much with other museums. But bottom-up only research does not explain things in terms we are already familiar with. Top-down is applying a system such as the levels of analysis and engaging explicitly with theoretical constructs and deductive reasoning. It is more difficult and forces things into boxes they might not fit in very well.

Decades of social factors research has indicated that form matters for function: way-finding, acoustics, safety, and defensible space are all examples of behavior that can be supported and enhanced or discouraged or complicated by the shapes of spaces and buildings, and symbolism is a similarly vital function. This is more complicated than simply communication theory of encoding and decoding, it also represents branding, tax dollars, international tourism marketing, complex organizations, and cities.

However, traditional social factors methodologies, as exemplified by William Whyte's technique of applying a behavioral sociological frame to the built environment—cannot help us delve into the complexities of why the world looks the way it does. Behaviorists tend to start from the here and now and move forward with human responses to what is in front of us. This tactic provides valuable information, and I am not saying it is not a worthy pursuit; I wish that more designers paid attention to such research so that it could become part of how the next generation of environments gets designed. But pure behaviorist studies do not offer origin stories; do not help understand how things came to be this way. *The Politics of Park Design* (Cranz 1982) and *The Bungalow* (King 1995) are both examples of social factors research that goes beyond Whyte's behaviorism and tell genealogical stories of the built environment. In this research, I answered both questions: how we got here as well as what "here" means to us now. To do so requires a mixed methodology. By studying both history and behavior, I am de-determining the environment—undoing environmental determinism, instead trying to show the dialectic of behavior/culture and environment/form.

The levels of analysis frame is best for a meta-analysis, to talk about entire studies; it is not as good for fine-grained analysis. When someone says it "looks cheap," it is hard to tell if that is about the style or about the details; when they say it does not hang art well or that space is wasted, is that the symbolism or the style or the program being inappropriate, or even the room's organization or the technologies used. It is hard to know where each critique goes. But, in thinking about what is "functional," it can be very helpful: functional at which level? For example, as we have seen in this building, it functions well at the urban level, functioning effectively as a symbol for Denver, but gets mixed reviews at other levels, such as the technology level where some visitors are distracted by the backs of paintings.

The answer of how successful a building is depends on the question of what were the goals—on what scale or level the analyst is inquiring. The message of Science and Technology Studies—that things and technologies are bound up in the social—has helped frame this study. The Hamilton Building is absolutely a product of social choices, choices about things beyond the technical aspects of keeping art temperature- and humidity-controlled, and more than about style. This research has tried to take on the social complexities of how the building came into existence and what chain of events resulted from those decisions. Buildings fulfill social and technical needs: they are heterogeneous designs. At the Hamilton Building, many critics complained about the way art looked in

the building, or that way-finding was hard. But the design was heterogeneous; it was about symbolism and branding. What some might call architecture for architecture's sake or bombastic form for form's sake was intentionally selected by the selection committee members as a tool for generating specific behaviors: donations and tourism. There was even some talk that the new building could restore the neighborhood, another economic purpose.

The archival record is slim at the DAM, so interviews were an important data collection method. Moreover, two approaches yield complementary data: studying a building while people are still around to offer their perspective gives one a richer picture. Collecting both historical and contemporary data—goals as well as reception and use information—can help us understand the social side of these very public monuments to values. This research collected both historical social data and living social data.

The wealth of data gave me an opportunity to analyze it in many different ways, and the notes went through three or four rounds of coding and categorization. First, the interview and archival notes were divided into rough topical categories. That is, if someone made a comment about seeing the back of artwork, I put that into the “art display” category. These categories were intentionally broad, and arose from the interview or article itself, instead of being imposed by theoretical constructs or some other outside source. Of course, the answers in the interviews were shaped by my questions, and which articles I choose to read were shaped by my research question. Statements that fit into more than one category were placed in both. For example, the comment that a resident heard many languages in Acoma Plaza from international visitors who were curious about the museum, was coded as both “Acoma Plaza” and as “drawing visitors.”

In addition, I tracked each comment about the architecture into a chart of what features were commented on and liked and disliked. For each article I read and every interview I conducted, I categorized any remarks the author or subject made about the architecture (interpreted to include materials, siting, room shape, decorations and color, use of specific spaces and plaza features, among other things) into like/dislike/neutral and charted why. Although this chart did not feature in the findings, it helped inform subsequent layers or rounds of coding.

After the initial, topical, round of rough coding, I undertook a second and more detailed topical coding. Within each rough category, which would sometimes consist of over 10 pages of comments, I further divided the comments into sub-categories. Sometimes these sub-categories were simple “positive/negative/neutral” divisions and sometimes they were topical as well; for example, categories such as “building overpowers” and “curators did not know how to hang a show” emerged from the art display rough category.

The third round of coding was a detailed analysis of content, digging deeper into what the comments said about a given sub-topic. Here, I used the Levels of Analysis frame, discussed earlier, or Cranz' taste categories, or other emergent ordering systems to make sense of the comments. In *A New Way of Thinking About Taste*, Cranz finds that three categories emerge from conversations with her subjects about how they decorate their homes (Cranz 2004). She found that the elderly people she studied—mostly women—decorated their homes using objects of symbolic importance and objects that supported behavior to decorate, combining them according to aesthetic rules. These

categories (Symbolic, Pragmatic, and Aesthetic) helped code some of the interview and newspaper critiques of the building and explanations for why the architect was chosen. Regardless of the theoretical frame applied, the idea at this third level was to create order within each sub-topic, to understand not only the topic but what meaning the sub-topic has for the users of the Hamilton Building.

Finally, some, but not all, of the data went through a fourth, fine-grained, round of analysis. At this level, categories or codes nearly always emerged from the data itself, helping me find meaning and purpose behind some of the comments in the broader categories. For example, if the concern for choosing the architect was pragmatic, which aspect of practicality were they talking about—museum finances, parking, permitting, or any other practical matter.

Although the data I collected are of the type generally thought of as qualitative data, my treatment of them was both qualitative and quantitative. In the findings sections, not only do I describe the general categories and the qualitative aspects, but I offer a quantitative analysis, using theoretical frames. Markus identifies three elements of the building experience: form (or the artistic parts of architecture, what the building looks like), function (how the building is experienced, either through direct experience or through descriptions from people who have experienced it) and space (or adjacency) (1994). Understanding all three together can help architecture be “meaningful in the daily functional world,” by understanding what the “normative cultural architectural ideas are so they may be appropriately addressed” (Robinson 1994, 190).