

From: *Museums for a New Millennium. Concepts Projects Buildings*, curated by V. Magnago Lampugnani, A. Sachs, exhibition catalog (Rivoli-Torino, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, 30 May - 26 August 2001), Prestel, Monaco-Londra-New York 2001, pp. 28-29.

I Just Want More

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Well, it's morning, and once again there's the tough task of waking up. It's always the waking up - in the morning, after a century, in 1984, in 2001, in a billion years. Tomorrow is always some kind of a new millennium. I believe we have known for a long time that the museum, any museum, is in our head, our mind, or somewhere down the alley. Fantasies, fetishes, dreams sustain the idea that it's possible to find some kind of concept that would describe the ideal forms of institutions and spaces for museums at any given time.

At the beginning of the twentieth century one could consider the museum thing fairly new. At the same time, people were trying to get rid of it - you know, the Dada protest type of vision, equating museums with prisons. Today, the general idea would be to go completely electronic, and perhaps have fun with the spaces, turning them into bars and discothèques. At least this fits with an era in which visitors spend more time in upgraded museum cafeterias and shopping malls than in the actual exhibition halls, which serve as a quick segue to a catalog purchase. There is something telling in the way - now, more than ever - a main concern about museums is talking about them, describing them, building them, and wondering what they could be, what and who they serve.

It's obvious that the turn of the dock has no power to change all this, or even to introduce new perspectives. I've always been an advocate of the maniacal aspect of museums - of their ability, for example, to collect, keep, and freeze. After all you can't preserve things for quite as long at home in your own refrigerator, and there you're dealing mostly with your personal idiosyncrasies. In that perspective, museums are collective holdouts for every idiotic fetish and a desperate effort to withhold and study memories. This is good. In this sense, it's just storage, storage and access to it. If it were electronic, it would be science. Keeping the real stuff is being addicted to the fascination of the real-life dimension, keeping up the questionable reality that we do indeed live in a real-life dimension. It's also fun because real-life objects decay, they break, rot, and turn into dust. Other types of safeguard crash and vanish as well. We need this to happen, of course, and there's going to be a lot of it in the coming millennium.

I've always loved the story I quote again and again about the cartographers in *Sylvie and Bruno*, Lewis Carroll's last novel. In an effort to be precise, they enlarged their maps to a scale soon fitting the actual size of the territory. The 1:1 scale map, once unfolded, covered the whole land, annoying the farmers so much that they ended up using the land itself for the map describing that land. Allegorically, that offers plenty to think about when it comes to establishing such things as museums. The best museum has of course always been the street, or even the countryside. Its endless transformation is a combined effect of knowledge, wear, replacement, update, or whatever flavors the juice of the day. Drinking it gives you the full aroma of the inherited cultural load, and a hint of what lies in the future. So yes, the best museum is out there. But then again it's real. The museum we know has nothing to do with reality. It's an exception, it's abstract. This is why we like it. It is a temple, a kind of a box where we store our goodies and spiritually enjoy how they rot.

rot. That's why museums produce some kind of mental mushrooms that leave us intellectually addicted and physically exhausted. No wonder artists turn them into discothèques today: they've been looking like that forever. You have tickets, fliers, even bouncers at the entrance. It's a disco life handled by taxidermists. It's the prop stage for real life. It's B movies for a Z society.

Despite all that, I am a freak. I indulge myself; I spend as much time as I can in those museums. Whether it's MOMA, the National Gallery, or some dumb, corny, crazy museum along a highway, I just do it. So, I'll never criticize large clinical spaces celebrating one big masterpiece painting, or stupid postmodern efforts to fill up spaces with architecture features, or what have you. I just want more.