Muséologies: The Carte Blanche Approach to Collections

Deadline: May 15, 2016

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“The Carte Blanche Approach to Collections: An Event-Driven Strategy”

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Raid the Icebox 1, with Andy Warhol, presented in 1970 at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum in Providence, U.S.A., was an exemplary instance—and a relatively rare one for the period—of an artist being granted complete freedom to interact with a museum’s collection. In the late 1980s, and even more so in the 1990s and after the turn of the millennium, museums would embrace this formula systematically as a way of revitalizing their display practices. Such carte blanche invitations were extended to artists, curators, film-makers, philosophers and specialists from a variety of backgrounds, all of whom brought their own fresh perspectives to museum collections. What were they really about, these invitations that claimed to give artists and other guests from outside the museum’s walls full powers with regard to the works inside? Can projects of this type be distinguished from others, notably commissions, by the greater degree of freedom they apparently offer? Or does the main attraction of this model stem from the fact that it enables museums to “make things happen,” to create events using their holdings? In these carte blanche events, a novel presentation bearing the stamp of a well-known artist or some other figure generates a certain short-term appeal. This strategy, which employs an event paradigm to showcase collections, could indicate a waning of energy on the part of the museum, while assuming that the institution, artist and guest all share a common interest. While museums want to see their collections take on new meaning, artists view them as sites to be explored and approach them as raw material they can use to forge a novel way of thinking or a new work. These new roles, with the artist acting as museologist and the curator as scenographer or archivist, can yield critical, poetic and conceptual results.

This type of practice has become so widespread that certain museums that had instituted innovative carte blanche programs are now abandoning them. It is as if the sheer number of such initiatives had made such events commonplace and reduced their impact. It has become essential, therefore, to question the event imperative that drives such strategies and appears to have taken over collections via the carte blanche. With these considerations in mind, this special edition of Muséologies will try to answer the following questions:

- What factors have led museums to open their holdings to artists, curators, philosophers, film-makers and specialists from a variety of other backgrounds?

- What conditions are conducive to carte blanche invitations? And are the latter actually what they claim to be?
- What impact does the carte blanche have on museum practices and collections?
- Does the increasingly systematized carte blanche still have the potential to yield innovative or even truly original ideas, or has it become just one more formula among others?
- What have been the main types of carte blanche so far? Which projects have had a major impact? What do they have in common? How do they differ?
- What does this strategy have to offer the world of the museum, apart from more visitors and media coverage? And how important are the museum and its collections to the work of the artist museologist, curator or other specialist?

For this special edition, we are looking for contributions that examine the following aspects:

- The development of the carte blanche strategy within the context of the museum and its relevance to institutional, curatorial and artistic
- The role of the event imperative in the development of this museum
- The contributions of artists and other specialists in updating institutional discourse with regard to
- The history of the carte blanche and analysis of some exemplary instances of its
- The different types of cartes blanches, for example, artists' residencies, the design of new collection display parameters, the insertion of one or more artworks in galleries usually devoted to collections, the creation of original works through dialogue with a collection or in relation to a specific piece in
- The dynamic that is instituted once a carte blanche intervention gets underway in a museum
- The new uses of the collection that result from
- The influence or impact of the carte blanche on museum

Deadline for proposals (abstracts): May 15, 2016 Announcement of the final selection: June 15, 2016 Submission of papers for evaluation: December 15, 2016

Publication of the papers selected by the Editorial committee: Fall 2017

Muséologies is a peer-reviewed publication cutting across the arts production and the arts scene, the humanities and the social sciences. Its mandate is to publish and promote interdisciplinary research centered on the contemporary museum's multiple functions.

Submission Details: Please send a 600-word proposal as a double-spaced .doc (Word document) file by email. Include your name, complete contact information, and the university, museum, or organization that you are affiliated with. Please use the following subject heading: "Muséologies Proposal vol. 9 n° 2."

Proposals must be sent before May 15, 2016, to: genevieve.chevalier@uqo.ca

Evaluation: The editor and the editorial committee will analyze your proposal and will inform you of their decision. Articles will be selected based on their contribution to the field of museum and curatorial studies, art history and theory, architecture and urban theory, or arts and cultural education. The clarity of communication, the strength of the research and associated methodologies,

and the relationship to the issue's themes will also be important criteria in the evaluation.

Authors whose proposals are accepted will develop an article (notes and references included) no longer than 7000-word in English or French. Please note that all articles will be peer-reviewed anonymously.

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FRQSC: Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture
INHA: Institut national d'histoire de l'art
SSHRC: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

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