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On the Living Museum; Alexander Dorner and the Israel Museum, Jerusalem

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Contents:

Introduction

Chapter 1: Alexander Dorner

Chapter 2: The Israel Museum Jerusalem

Chapter 3: Willem Sandberg

Chapter 4: The Israel Museum's Collections and Alexander Dorner's Landesmuseum Hanover

Chapter 5: More Than A Museum of Jewish Heritage?

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Appendix A: The Harvard Plan

Figures 1-25

*All photographs by Jacqueline M. Goldstein
Introduction

This thesis will establish the connection between the philosophy of Alexander Dorner, Curator, Museum Director and Educator, and the evolution of The Israel Museum Jerusalem. By establishing a connection between them it becomes possible to address the practice of exhibiting art in an evolutionary fashion, with the essential inclusion of modern and contemporary art that has become standard practice in many museums around the world. Although this has never been acknowledged formally, Alexander Dorner’s ideas and his reconstruction of the Landesmuseum, Hanover during the 1920s and the early 1930s influenced the formation and installation of the collections and exhibitions of the Israel Museum Jerusalem.

Dorner developed his evolutionary exhibition philosophy, which he referred to as “The Living Museum”, later to be published in his book The Way Beyond Art, (1958) during his reconfiguration of the Landesmuseum, when he served as director from 1922 through 1936. Such an institution would link the past and the present by illustrating their relationship to each other, through styles and subject matter, period by period, with the essential inclusion of modern and contemporary art, to explore humanity’s evolutionary process, thus linking science with art. Both this and his recognition of design and architecture as invaluable in this panorama had a tremendous effect on the arts, among other things spurning the creation of The Museum of Modern Art’s Department of Architecture and Design.¹
To examine how Dorner's ideas influenced the artistic direction of the Israel Museum Jerusalem some thirty years later, one must look at who Dorner's associates and colleagues were in Weimar Germany in the 1920s and early 1930s, as well as the artistic director of the Israel Museum in the 1960s, during its genesis. Working with the original artistic director of the Israel Museum Jerusalem, Willem Sandberg, and attempting to work my way back to Alexander Dorner, I have indeed established a probable link: Willem Sandberg, through his friendship and admiration of Laslo Moholy-Nagy, a Hungarian artist and educator, who was a close acquaintance and collaborator with Alexander Dorner. By establishing this link Dorner's impact on museum exhibition can be more fully realized and a thread of a common method in museum practice during this 30 year time span can be analyzed.
Chapter 1: Alexander Dorner

Alexander Dorner’s philosophies on museum exhibition, developed and implemented during his years as a curator and director at the Landesmuseum, Hannover (the state museum of Lower Saxony, Germany) had an effect on the museum world that would spread far beyond Germany. What was significant about his work was that his methods of exhibition, radically different from his predecessors, were accepted and endorsed by a state institution. This was able to provide Dorner with the exposure that would allow his ideas to be transmitted to the Netherlands and the United States for example, and later, to Israel.

Alexander Dorner (1893-1957) was born in Koenigsberg, Germany, which today is actually in Russia. His father, a neo-Kantian theologian was his chief influence throughout his adolescence. Although Kant’s idea of absolutism was the basis for Dorner’s budding philosophy regarding art history, this would later be the ideology that Dorner strove to reverse. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) defined beauty in abstract terms relating the cognitive faculties (imagination and understanding) to the form (shape, delineation or composition other than the matter) of an object. Kant’s belief that beauty is in the form of aesthetic judgment, ideal beauty in particular, can be exemplified by his statement:

“... the excellence of every art at its intensity capable of making all disagreeables evaporate from their being in close relationship with truth and beauty” and “the beautiful affords a universal satisfaction”.

3
Kant further illustrates his thinking by stressing these points in his writing:

“the beautiful is the object of a universal satisfaction
apart from concepts” and “the beautiful is that which pleases
universally without a concept”.6

He viewed humanity’s movements intellectual endeavors as cyclical, the rationality of classical Greco-Roman style in art and philosophy as the pillar everything else measures up against. Philosophers, writers and mathematicians such as Aristotle, Ovid, Virgil, Apulieus and Euclid, are exemplary of this state of heightened consciousness which Kant refers too, humanity at times moving towards this attainment and moving away from it in cycles, a far cry from an ongoing intellectual evolutionary process. In these cycles, the categories of “good” vs. “bad” art revolved around classical antiquities as well.7

Johann Winckelmann (1717-1768) also provided Dorner with an introduction to the worlds of art history and criticism. Both adhere to this absolutism revolving around classicism. According to Kant, all “non-classical styles” were of the “wrong taste”, with man beginning “the wrong way”, achieving “pure” style in ancient Greece and Rome, and going downhill afterwards, in a repetitive cycle, with the renaissance returning to the pure form8. Dorner’s father, a professor, adhered to these philosophies and organized his university and public lectures around them; Dorner attended many of these. It was during one of his father’s lectures to the “Worker’s Cultural Society” in Germany, during the late 1910s, on a “Comparative Analysis of the Platonic and Kantian Pictures of Man” that Dorner became dissatisfied with Kantian ideology. He saw the workers in the audience simply become more perplexed, starting with the title of the lecture itself9. Many did not
know who Plato or Kant were for that matter, let alone their theories on humanity.

Dorner, noticing his father wasting his time as well as the workers', stated, "Knowledge (so much) should not be presented with so little bearing on real life". With this attitude regarding art history and criticism, Dorner began his studies under Adolf Goldschmidt (1863-1944) at the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Germany.

Dorner, during his studies seemed to find inspiration in the writings of Hegel (1770-1831), Herder (1744-1803), and Riegl (1858-1905). In 1893, Riegl published Questions of Style (Stilfragen), the beginning of a series of art historical books which he based on the idea of man's ongoing intellectual evolution. What struck Dorner about Riegl was that he wrote about art history influenced by the idea of physical and intellectual evolution of the earth and man respectively. What separated him from Kant and the well known Swiss art historian Heinrich Wolfflin (1864-1945) was this belief in man's ongoing intellectual evolution.

This was similar to Johann Gottfried Herder's ideology. It was Herder's move away from absolutism towards the recognition of Egyptian art as a predecessor to Greek art, thus an evolutionary philosophy, which attracted Dorner's attention. Hegel's classification of art history into three categories, The Sublime (Ancient Orient), The Beautiful (Ancient Greece) and Romantic (Christian Era) and Riegl's subsequent cataloging of art history as evolutionary, one phase leading into another, paved the way for Dorner's further reclassification. Max Dvorak (1874-1921), whose writings in the style of Riegl interested Dorner as well. Dvorak's inclusion of socio-economic events in his analysis of style provided Dorner with the inspiration of applying this ideology to modern life and modern time. Samuel Caumen sums up Dorner's ideology: "Practical
activity was meaningless unless informed by a philosophy and that knowledge, on the other hand, was aimless unless related to life. Dorner was able to remove himself from Kantian ideology towards an evolutionary philosophy that included science, humanity and its psychological development, instead of exhibiting art simply as it's own entity. He sought "the building of a living, evolutionary philosophy of art". Dorner applied this philosophy to museums and exhibitions in what he called The Living Museum, while working at the Landesmuseum in Hanover from 1919 though 1936.

When Dorner took over the directorship at Hanover in 1922, he had a museum that was crowded with artwork. Dorner reorganized the Hanover Museum on an evolutionary foundation, exhibiting a transformation of one period or style leading or merging into another. He referred to this as a "developmental chain". The actual architecture of the museum was suitable for Dorner as it kept with the traditional neo-classical style with rational, symmetrical lines and columns. Up to that point, museums generally had been housed in such buildings, which served as an integral part of the art history he was trying to relate. In this manner he was able to illustrate previous methods of exhibition in addition to the artworks themselves. His first step as museum director was the improvement and in some cases creation of modern collections, such as Expressionist, Surrealist and Abstract. His object was to create a historical outline through art. Thus he set about reorganizing the museum with consecutive phases of art, each phase or style, in Dorner's ideology seen as socially based, exhibited in an atmosphere directly related to it.

The resulting view to the visitor was each exhibit in its own separate atmosphere (this should not be confused with period rooms, as Michael Levin points
out). Each style or period led to the next, creating in a chronological sense, a unity. To take a walk through his Hanover museum, one would encounter in the medieval rooms, walls and ceilings painted in dark colors, resembling medieval churches and cathedrals, which did not have much lighting on the inside. Moving along to the Renaissance rooms, the walls were painted white and light gray in contrast, a reference to the humanist thinking of the period. The Renaissance was an age that saw a surge in new pursuits in philosophy, mathematics, physics, architecture and anatomy for example, and in Dorner's philosophy, subsequently in art. The light colored rooms also served to illustrate "clearly defined volumes of space, cubes and hemispheres, with structural elements forming the defining frame," the realization of true perspective in draftsmanship, which was achieved during the Renaissance.

Dorner utilizes his idea to look behind the work, period or style, illustrating, through subtle physical elements such as wall color, the social and intellectual zeitgeist of the time the works were created and often the artists' reaction on it. In his Baroque rooms, the paintings hung on walls of red velvet and gold, highlighting the dramatic overtones and the losing of clear definition, the works becoming deeper, thus transforming space and shadow, paralleling what was happening in Baroque depictions of space. Works like Artemesia Gentileschi's Judith and Maidservant (1625), Detroit Institute of the Arts, and Caravaggio's David with the Head of Goliath (1607-1610), Galleria Borghese, Rome, exemplify how many Baroque works seem to appear out of deep shadow along with a heightened sense of drama. The Dutch art of the Baroque period was exhibited amidst cool grays, in keeping with the genre scenes and the "atmospheric treatment of space and light".
In the Rococo galleries, one stepped into a light and airy mixture of pinks, golds and pearly whites, evidence of the changing times, more playful than the serious Baroque. Dorner exhibited different styles within the category of Romantic art, Pre-Raphaelite works separated from Turner, for example.

The atmosphere of the works can be felt subtly, in comparison to the design of Period Rooms, which utilize floor, ceiling and generally the entire area allotted to them to recreate a ‘room’ from the specific period. The floor in every gallery was black linoleum, with the exception of the Rococo galleries, which were a light gray. Working so as not to distract from the different atmospheres, this choice of black and gray linoleum is an interesting break from the more traditional uses of hardwood and marble flooring. The couches and benches likewise, are low and covered with black leather, unobtrusive. Dorner never used replicas of benches or couches from the period, such as The Solomon R. Guggenheim, New York’s recent exhibition “1900: Art at the Crossroads” (May 2000-Sept 2000) which had replicas of couches from the turn of the century France. According to Dorner, his arrangement allowed the works “to speak for themselves.”

Dorner felt that the best way to learn about historic art was to see it against the art of today, and vice versa. Where we are in relation to the past, and how we arrived at the present are what makes exhibiting abstract art, in Dorner’s philosophy, so vital. In the Landesmuseum, Dorner was faced with the task of finding ways to exhibit modern art, a relatively new phenomenon in museums at the time, in keeping with his philosophy. He wanted to illustrate the dramatic change in the art world, with the advent of abstraction, so he created what he called his “Abstract cabinet”, with the help of El Lissitzky (1890-1941), the pioneer Russian Constructivist (figure 1). His choice of collaborating with
El Lissitzky on this project demonstrates at once the influence constructivism had on abstract art, sculpture in particular, and an artist’s utilization of surrounding space in their installation.\textsuperscript{33} They designed a room that would “participate in the activity of the displayed works”\textsuperscript{34} while illustrating the new movement in art, abstraction. This new movement literally permeated from the walls of the “cabinet.” The walls were covered in miles of metal strips arranged from floor to ceiling, painted in three different colors, white, black and gray, the colors arranged in different orders throughout the room. The result was an optical illusion -- the walls changing with the shift of a viewer’s head or eye.\textsuperscript{35} In this manner, Dorner exhibited the changing face of art, with the works of Picasso, Leger, Mondrian, among others. They were exhibited on sliding panels inserted into the walls which, when moved, showed works underneath\textsuperscript{36}. Dorner was able to show the effects of abstract art on life and vice versa, the works illustrating personal freedom of thought, in this ever-changing room. With abstract art came a freedom of expression of the individual, visible as one walks through this room, which changes as the art moves along with them. This was an example of what Samuel Caumen calls Dorner’s “Atmosphere Room Principle”\textsuperscript{37}.

When the National Socialist party came to power in Germany in the 1930s they systematically destroyed its republic and its culture, and any new freedom of expression that differed from their aesthetic ideals. This would include the last gallery Dorner was creating with Moholy-Nagy in the Landesmuseum, in the mid 1930s, the contemporary frame in his evolutionary methodology for exhibiting art.

Laslo Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946), a Hungarian-born artist, best known for his photographic works and his “\textit{Light-Space Modulator}” (1930) which, acting as a slide
projector, showed abstract color compositions with the touch of a button. His main contribution to photography was his development of Photograms, using lighting techniques and light to record light without a camera. When Moholy-Nagy came to Berlin in January of 1920, he was already recognized as an accomplished artist in his native Hungary. In 1920 he met Dorner and began what was to be a lifelong friendship. When Dorner was Director of the Kestner Society (1928-1932) and then later its President (1933) he first began curating exhibitions of Moholy-Nagy’s work, as well as El Lissitzky, Kurt Schwitters (1887-1949), Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) and Walter Gropius (1883-1969) and his Bauhaus school. Moholy-Nagy was a professor at the Bauhaus from 1923-1928, where he developed his Glass Architecture theories, which along with his experiments with photography led him to his “Light-Space Modulator”, which was slated to be an integral part of his collaborative effort with Dorner.

The gallery Dorner and Laslo Moholy-Nagy were collaborating on was called “the Room of our Time”. However, due to the rise of the Nazis, it was never completed. It was to exhibit contemporary art, including the latest developments in film and photography in Germany, such as the synchronization of sound and introduction of color in film. This was a first for the museum world, a triumphant declaration of a new artistic medium. The Room of Our Time included advancements in architecture, and technology, such as Mohly-Nagy’s “Light-Space Modulator”.

During his address at the opening of the Museum of East Frisian Art in Emden in 1934, Dorner stated, “What we need and what modern art history is able to give us – a clear picture of where we came from and whither we are going…” This expressed his philosophy of exhibitions, which generally can be looked at in two parts. First, Dorner’s
*Living Museum* entails a chronological tour through art history, past and present in one museum, each phase or style leading into the next, with education (a study of humanity) through art history paramount. Dorner saw the museum as an educational laboratory for the study of humanity, through their arts. Secondly, he hoped to accomplish this by creating an atmosphere utilizing the building and its grounds for a total viewing experience -- the utilization of the structure to exhibit art.

A predecessor of Dorner, Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781-1841), Neo-classicist German artist and architect, designed a classical rotunda for the Altes Museum, Berlin, from 1823-1830.\(^47\) Schinkel’s motives were different, as he designed with the idea in mind that the visitor’s first thought upon entering the museum be “the sigh of this beautiful and exalted space must create the mood for and make one susceptible to the pleasure and judgment that the building holds in store throughout”.\(^48\) Schinkel’s rotunda exhibited what he called ‘prized monuments of classical sculpture’,\(^49\) placed on high pedestals next to huge columns, with light coming from above, in a rational and linear rotunda.\(^50\) This could very well have directed Dorner towards his atmosphere principle. This definition of ‘prized art’ and focus on social morality has since been seriously challenged with the advent of modern art museums, ethnic museums, as well as Dorner’s Landesmuseum, Hanover. Dorner’s *Living Museum* adapts architecture and various methods of installation, such as the sliding panels in his *Abstract Cabinet*, to each respective period and style that it exhibits, the gallery subtly becoming what it exhibits.

Illustrating and further expounding on his ideas, Dorner’s publication of *The Way Beyond Art* (1958) drew much positive criticism and commentary from the art history field as well as from the scientific,\(^51\) emphasizing the linking of science and the arts.
Dorner relates art and industrial life (sciences) through active participation (on the museum’s part) in contemporary socio-economic issues, as well as the recognition that modern art is a living, breathing part of contemporary society, not an abstract theory, and finally, that modern art is inseparable from the evolution of historical art.\textsuperscript{52}

Walter Gropius, in his speech at the inauguration of the Dorner exhibition in Bennington College, Vermont, 1955, praised Dorner’s farsightedness as a pioneer. Referring to his Dorner’s \textit{Abstract Cabinet}, he cited “this unusual work” to be “of such great significance for the artistic spirit of our time.”\textsuperscript{53} The exhibition was actually an interactive symposium on music and art, with visiting artists, teachers and students participating.\textsuperscript{54} Dorner’s pioneering activity in the exhibition of modern and contemporary art had attracted people worldwide, such as Alfred Barr (1902-1981), the first director of the Museum of Modern Art, Katherine Dreier (1877-1952), founder of the Societe Anonyme, and Philip Johnson, the Museum of Modern Art’s first director of the Architecture Department. Alfred Barr, upon visiting the Landesmuseum, Hanover in 1935, called the \textit{Abstract Cabinet} “the most famous single room of 20th century art in the world”\textsuperscript{55}. Philip Johnson said of Dorner’s proposed \textit{Room of Our Time}, that it carries out the idea of integrating painting and sculpture with photography, film, industrial design and architecture.\textsuperscript{56} In 1932, MOMA established an architectural department and added industrial art in 1933, now known as the Department of Architecture and Design.\textsuperscript{57} MOMA’s \textit{International Exhibition of Modern Architecture} was the first exhibit to display more than just painting and sculpture.\textsuperscript{58}

The full impact of Dorner’s philosophy can be noted as well when looking at his talks and presentations. For instance, he was the key speaker at the 1947 and 1949 annual
conferences at Harvard Graduate School of Education as well as at the National Theatre Conference in 1950, which they titled "The Way Beyond Theatre" after him. In addition, he collaborated on the introduction to MOMA’s publication on the Bauhaus (1938). His book The Way Beyond Art became a standard text for several courses at The Chicago School of Design, and in 1947 and 1948, Harvard architectural students were presented with the task of designing a museum building according to Dorner’s philosophy and the guidelines it set (appendix A).
Chapter 2: The Israel Museum

Almost thirty years after Dorner resigned from his directorship at the Landesmuseum, the Israel Museum Jerusalem opened its doors. Situated on Neveh Sha'anana, the Hill of Tranquility, the museum overlooks the Knesset, the Hebrew University campus, and the monastery of the Cross in addition to several residential neighborhoods of the city. The history of the museum begins with Mordecai Narkiss (1897-1957), the first curator of the Bezalel National Museum in 1925. 61

In 1948 Narkiss saw the necessity of such a museum as a cultural center in the new state of Israel and with this, his idea to create a larger, internationally renowned museum was born. His original plan, aided by the proposals of Leopold Krakauer (1890-1954), a German-born artist and architect living in Israel, was for the new museum to be a construction of glass, steel and concrete on a hill. 62 The idea was for the new museum to exhibit archaeology and antiquities along with the fine arts collection. In addition to this Narkiss proposed plans for education programs and a center for children, which would develop into the Ruth Youth Wing. In the 1950s, Teddy Kollek, former Mayor of Jerusalem, became the activating force, turning these ideas into a reality.

In 1953 Teddy Kollek became director of Prime Minister David Ben Gurion’s office and he immediately continued with the project of the Israel Museum. With the vote of the then mayor of Jerusalem and the Commander-in-chief of the Israeli defense forces, who also happened to be a renowned archaeologist, development began. In May of 1960, Prime Minister Ben Gurion gave a speech in the Knesset about the establishment of the national museum and the need for a cultural institution in the new state of Israel. This was no coincidence, and, as Martin Weyl points out, 63 Ben Gurion’s speech was crucial,
since the museum needed all the support it could get, as it was not high on the priority list of the Knesset.64

The Palestinian and Israeli conflict within the borders of the newly mandated state and their conflicts with the neighboring countries, a major concern of the Knesset and Israelis as well, created a turbulent environment that is still nowhere near peace today.

The Israel Museum Jerusalem was determined to be a separate entity from this.

In 1959 Al Mansfeld and Dora Gad, Israeli architect and interior designer respectively, collaborated on the building of the museum. Their goal was:

“To achieve an individual concept with a new approach towards the design of a contemporary museum which would truly integrate itself into the Jerusalem landscape… to achieve unity in diversity, architectural integrity and harmony with the landscape… and a genuine, though unconventional, monumentality without resorting to formality or pompousness.”65

The result was a terraced complex, nearly 50,000 sq ft, with over 20 buildings made of white Jerusalem stone and glass extending over the hill, and resembling the traditional villages of the area (figures 2 and 3). Mansfeld wrote that the use of a group of buildings is “the true expression of the principle of organic growth, achieved through contemporary architectural and technological means.”66 This accounted for the construction of the museum. As far as the collections it was to house, this is where Willem J. H. B. Sandberg (1897-1984) comes in.
Chapter 3: Sandberg

Willem Sandberg brought to his first curatorial position a broad background consisting of fine and graphic arts and psychology. In Amsterdam, in the 1930s he became a member and the chairman of the Committee for Alternate Exhibitions at the Stedelijk Museum and then was appointed curator in 1937, and eventually became director. Prior to his directorship at the Stedelijk, 1945-1963, Sandberg had traveled to Germany in the late 1920s and briefly visited the Bauhaus where he became acquainted with Walter Gropius and some of the faculty, including Moholy-Nagy. In 1934, Sandberg, after meeting with Moholy-Nagy who had since left Germany, developed an admiration and respect which led to his subsequent organization of an exhibition of Moholy-Nagy's works at the Stedelijk later that year. Following his work with Moholy-Nagy, a contemporary as well as modern artist, Sandberg went on to champion modern and contemporary art at the Stedelijk Museum, curating exhibitions such as a survey of abstract art in the early 1940s.

During his twenty-five year tenure at the Stedelijk, Sandberg developed an international reputation in the museum world for backing and exhibiting modern and contemporary art. In addition to the exhibitions themselves, his graphic arts background led him to create over three hundred exhibition posters and catalogs. He would later design the Israel Museum Jerusalem’s logo as well.

In 1963, while the construction of the Israel Museum was going on, Teddy Kollek acting as chairman of the executive committee of the Israel Museum, sought out
Sandberg, now internationally renowned in the museum world and just retired from the Stedelijk, to take on the leadership. The goal was to make the Israel Museum competitive in an international art arena, to be recognized as more than a symbol for Jewish cultural identity. The Israel Museum needed Sandberg’s direction and connections to achieve this.

As the first artistic director, Sandberg oversaw the different departments of the museum. Beginning during the construction until a few years after the opening, Sandberg worked full-time building up the museum’s small collection acquired from the Bezalel School, as well as laying the foundations for the museum’s future collections and exhibition practices. Sandberg would assist the Israel Museum well into the 1970s making several trips a year to Israel. Having acquired extensive experience in the museum world as well as international prominence, Sandberg had a tremendous impact on the staff (he worked with) at the Israel Museum during its early years: curators, exhibition designers and museum professionals in general.

Initially the most pressing issue for Sandberg was to enlarge the size and scope of the museum’s collection. He said, “we’d like to have about 70 or 80 first-class contemporary works in the permanent collection by the time we open”. His reputation in the art world was paramount in obtaining various loan exhibitions as well as many important gifts for the museum, such as donations of works from prominent artists such as Chagall, Alberto Giacometti, Henry Moore, Louise Nevelson and Picasso. The extent of Sandberg’s work shaping and building the Israel Museum and its collection can be seen from his appointment as Honorary Fellow of the Museum in 1975.

Under Sandberg’s artistic direction the Israel Museum developed into an institution bearing striking similarities to Dorner's Living Museum. Dorner’s close
relationship and collaboration with Moholy-Nagy and Moholy-Nagy's subsequent acquaintance and collaboration with Sandberg provided a channel through which Dorner's ideas were transmitted to the development of the Israel Museum. This can be illustrated through a comparative analysis of the collections and exhibition practices of the Israel Museum with Dorner's Landesmuseum.
Chapter 4: The Israel Museum Jerusalem’s Collection and Dorner’s
Landesmuseum, Hannover

When the Israel Museum opened on May 11, 1965, its five elements were united: *The Bezalel National Art Museum, The Samuel Bronfman Biblical and archaeological Museum, The Shrine of the Book, The Billy Rose Sculpture Garden and The Ruth Youth Wing*. The critical response from the public was overwhelmingly positive. Looking at the guide map available to the visitor upon entering the museum, one can see the wide terrain covered by the museum’s collection, pre-historic to contemporary, similar to Dorner’s *Living Museum*.

Walking through the galleries one moves through prehistory to Canaanite, Israelite, Second Temple (referring to the second temple of the Jews, destroyed in 72 AD), Roman and Byzantine periods, with pieces ranging from the “Jericho Skull” c. (6000 BC, Neolithic period, Jericho), the “Victory Stele of Seti I” (Egypt, 1318-1304 BC) and from the Ramesside period, a statue of Rameses III (Egypt, 1196-1166 BC). In addition to Egypt, the Neighboring Cultures gallery houses art from Persia, Anatolia and Greece. Medieval, Romanesque and Gothic periods are touched upon as well, however briefly.

In the 15th-19th century art galleries, one can see Mannerist, Early and High Renaissance, Northern Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo, Neoclassical and Romantic art. Notable examples are paintings by Jacob Gerritz and Albert Cuyp, Dutch painters, drawings by Rembrandt and paintings by Fragonard. Here the Israel museum deviates
from Dorner’s philosophy. Although it exhibits works spanning these periods, they are placed together in a few galleries, albeit chronologically. The difference lies in not devoting entirely separate rooms for the differing styles as well as differing atmospheric principles. With the exception of modern and contemporary art, the significance of what is being displayed completely overrides how it is being displayed, as they are exhibited among generic wall hues and benches, the natural lighting coming from the windows above assisted by track lighting (figures 4 and 5A). Nineteenth century Romantic works are exhibited mixed together, in contrast to Dorner’s sub-categorizing them by region, country and style.

Given the Israel Museum’s collection, an alternate installation could have been arranging Romantic works in this fashion: England, Germany and France, etc. The emphasis is on the chronology, the changes in periods and styles left to speak for themselves, to convey the psychological and intellectual evolution. The inclusion of the Art of Africa and Oceana, Pre-Columbian Art and Asian Art galleries on the first floor agrees with Dorner’s idea to exhibit humanity as a whole, intellectual evolution through art. The Israel Museum devotes several galleries to them, not simply singling out western evolution.

Following this mélange are Impressionist and Postimpressionist galleries, and two floors devoted to 20th century art. They include works by Georges Braque, Alexander Calder, Marc Chagall, James Ensor, Fernand Leger, Paul Signac and Edourd Vuillard to name a few. The works here are exhibited in a much brighter setting, created by white walls and more windows (figure 5). There is still track lighting but it is rendered almost superfluous due to the combination of the white walls and more windows in the galleries.
The contemporary art wing is comprised of two levels next to the two levels of 20th
century art (figure 6). As Dorner's Room of Our Time was to exhibit the contemporary
art scene in Germany, The Israel Museum, a national museum, devotes a section to
contemporary Israeli artists. With regards to Dorner's Room of our Time, there is also the
essential inclusion of a gallery devoted to design and architecture. These rooms also
have the white walls and bright lighting of the modern art galleries as a backdrop.80

Dorner's atmospheric principle of including building and grounds into the
exhibition, evidenced by his Abstract Cabinet, an installation unto itself, is clearly
demonstrated by The Shrine of the Book, The Billy Rose Sculpture Garden and the main
buildings as well, all illustrative of the environment in which the museum is situated, that
of Israel, its caves, hills, villages, ecology and history. The orientation and reception
building that the visitor first enters when visiting the museum is in keeping with the
architectural style of all the buildings in the complex, with the exception of the Shrine of
the Book and the Billy Rose Sculpture Garden (figures 7 and 8). The Shrine of the Book
follows the reception building immediately on the right hand side. Walking toward it the
visitor sees a stream coming from a small waterfall recessed in the stepped stone terrace,
which serves two functions: it is aesthetically pleasing as well as demonstrative of the
drainage systems of the area.

Using the environment as an integral part of the exhibition is an idea that Dorner
expressed in his reconfiguration of the Landesmuseum. The Israel museum is a national
museum, that depicts its geographical area, which is very different from its counterparts
in the western world. The Israel Museum's complex was designed so that its buildings
and landscape would closely resemble the traditional villages of the surrounding area.
Jerusalem stone used for the buildings, local vegetation and free-standing stone walls (resembling archaeological digs) in the sculpture garden exemplify the Israel Museum’s use of its physical elements in their exhibition. There were no large art museums in the young country at that point, no neo-classical history in museology to express, so the museum expressed the architectural history of the area. The Shrine of the Book is a prime example of the Israel Museum’s physical elements being an installation unto themselves, as its structure literally illustrates the area in which the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, the caves as well as the jars.

The Shrine of the Book, designed in 1965 by Frederick Kiesler and Armand Bartos, American architects, houses letters and fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls, one of the most important archeological finds of the century. The Shrine of the Book, is a living example of the scrolls due to its shape and structure (figures 9 and 10). Its white domed roof was modeled after the lids of the jars in which the scrolls were found, in the Qumran caves in the Judean Desert, and the entrance is recessed as dark and tunnel-like, giving the effect of actually walking into a cave (figures 11 and 12). Curator Ziva Strenhell writes, “The architects would have to find a way of articulating the religious and national values of Judaism in a way consonant with universal issues of light and darkness, and good and evil, the main themes of the scrolls. As it turned out, they were to find the key in the actual setting of the discovery, in the physical realities of the desert, the rocks, the caves and the endless light of the sun.” The theme of good versus evil was achieved by building a black basalt wall to correspond with the large, white domed structure (figures 13 and 14).
After exiting the structure, the visitor is presented with several choices: to backtrack towards the building for temporary exhibits, the *Ruth Youth Wing* on the immediate left, the *Neighboring Cultures* wing, which is the start of the Bezalel Art collection, housed in separate buildings all attached underground, and the *Billy Rose Sculpture Garden* further up on the right (figure 15).

Opened with the museum in 1965, the *Ruth Youth Wing* demonstrates the ideology of art as education, as it is a learning art center. It is geared toward children, however it has many programs for adults as well. It has guided tours for groups of young visitors as well as activities with in the museum for youths, such as hands-on art workshops and study groups. For adults there are lectures, art and film clubs and a training program for teachers, in cooperation with the Department of Education at the Hebrew University. Right from its beginning, education through art was one of the underlying principles in the philosophy of the Israel Museum. Dorner’s *Living Museum* held that the museum was to be a laboratory for the study of humanity’s history through its art. Educational programs played an integral part of Dorner’s museum experience, the key to fully exploring art – what kinds of art exist out there, who created the works, how were they created and why.

The *Samuel Bronfman Biblical and Archaeological* collection, the works comprising the Neighboring Cultures galleries and the earlier portion of the art collection contains major finds of local archaeology discovered since 1948, as well as a large collection of artwork from neighboring cultures. Within this collection are the skeletal remains of a man with Neanderthal features from caves from the Galilee and Carmel, tools from the Chalcolithic period (4000-3150 BC) in the form of clay, bone, stone and
metal, art work and artifacts from the early Canaanite period, Egyptian, Persian, Roman and Byzantine periods as well, such as steles, relief work, statuettes, tools and pottery. Research and further study are promoted in these collections as the museum fosters archaeological, historical and biblical research and exploration simply due to the topography surrounding the museum (figures 16 and 17). The Israel Museum makes full use of its grounds and landscape in this manner for a total viewing experience similar to Dorner’s Abstract Cabinet. Jerusalem’s surrounding landscape is clearly visible as the complex is situated on a hill. As Jerusalem is one of the oldest cities on earth, it plays an integral role in the viewing experience of biblical and archaeological collections in its midst. In this manner, the Israel Museum’s grounds become part of the exhibition, as the walls and floors did in Dorner’s Abstract Cabinet.

Designed in 1964 by Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988), American-Japanese artist and architect, the Billy Rose Sculpture Garden, is an outdoor walk through their modern sculpture collection. The sculpture garden stretches over five acres of rocky Jerusalem landscape (figures 18 and 19). It consists of a series of semi-circular graveled terraces enclosed by stone retaining walls and agricultural heaps of boulders similar to the terraces in the surrounding hills of Jerusalem. The surface of the garden is covered with a layer of small stones resembling the Zen gardens in Japanese monasteries. As one studies the ecology of the garden, the vegetation of the surrounding environment of Jerusalem is thriving – olive and fig trees and rosemary bushes. It is in this garden overlooking the Judean landscape, that over fifty major sculptures are exhibited outdoors in a permanent collection. Works by Picasso, Henry Moore and Rodin next to Magdalena Abakanowicz’s “Negev” present an eclectic and comprehensive view of
western modern and contemporary sculpture (figures 20 and 21). As the garden is outdoors, it enables the installation of large-scale works by artists such as Henry Moore, Richard Serra and James Turrell. The sculptures here seem to commune with their surrounding nature, as they are outdoor installations in the midst of the Jerusalem hills, the integrating factor being the artist’s chosen medium, as in “Negev” which is made of quarried stone of the area. The works dotting the wide-open expanse extending over the hill continue with the philosophy of integrating the physical elements into the installation. A collection spanning from humanity’s beginnings to contemporary times and environments its works are exhibited in ways to become installations unto themselves. These components were the essential embodiments of what Dorner had in mind when designing a Living Museum, which can be seen in the Israel Museum as well.
Chapter 5: More than a Museum of Jewish Heritage?

The Israel Museum’s original founders feared the limitation of being labeled a museum of Jewish heritage. Its goal was to become an international museum, which is expressly why Sandberg was hired.

At first glance, the Israel Museum Jerusalem can be viewed as a *Living Museum* for the Jewish people and Israel itself, differentiating it from Dorner’s evolutionary ideology, which did not focus on one ethnology, but humanity as a whole. The argument for the museum as being dedicated solely to exhibiting Jewish heritage would state that Israel Museum’s exhibition is geared toward presenting its genesis, present and future, utilizing the structures, grounds and works to do so, by highlighting the categories of *Canaanite, Israelite* and *second temple*, the miniscule representation of *Medieval, Romanesque* and *Gothic* art and the presence of an Israeli art wing.

Tracing the history of the Jewish people through its artwork, one starts from its prehistoric beginnings through, as stated earlier, the Canaanite to Israelite periods, works dating from the time of Kings David and Solomon and the first temple to the expulsion by the Babylonians, followed by the return of the Jews to the land of Israel and the building of the second temple. Following this period was the Roman occupation and the subsequent almost 2,000 years of the Diaspora, referring to the dispersion state of the Jewish nation, after Roman siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the second temple. By looking at the guide map one can say that the Israel Museum tells the tale of the Jewish people through artwork, the artwork excavated and found in local environment as
well as throughout the world, during the time of the Diaspora. The Israel Museum exhibits artwork as well as archaeological artifacts found in the area in chronological sequence in the fashion of an archaeological dig, exhibiting layer by layer, the history of the area and its people, in a systematic, scientific approach. This was also one of Domer’s points, the joining of sciences and the arts instead of segregating them as had been customary previously.

One can also view the limited scope of the Medieval, Romanesque and Gothic collections as intentional, to coincide with the exhibition of Jewish Heritage. The exhibition of Byzantine art is illustrative of the ruling power and people inhabiting the land until around the middle of the seventh century, when Islam surfaces in the land of Israel and dominates until the 20th century. There was no major influence felt of Medieval, Romanesque or Gothic art in Israel, as evidenced by the lack of cathedrals (the art of these periods centered around Christianity), due to the Islamic governance and majority in the area. For the Jews exiled in the countries where these styles flourished in the cathedrals and churches of their day, the Jew, with a few exceptions, was not a defining member in society, merely an outsider.

For the Jewish people the 15th century was a time of change. It was at this time that Joseph Caro, Jewish philosopher and theologian, born in Toledo, Spain, in 1488 wrote the third codification of the Talmud, called the \textit{Shulchan-Arouch}, translated literally as \textit{Prepared Table}. This was a text relating the Oral Law (Talmud), passed down from generation to generation which hadn’t been worked on since the time of the Roman occupation. It had a major impact on Jewish daily life, as it provided answers to
questions raised regarding prayers, ceremonies and daily rituals, the changing times and
demands of the day.

One may argue that the Israel Museum reflects this turn of events, by continuing
with the exhibition in a chronological fashion, with 15th century art. The Israel Museum
has Jewish Ethnography galleries, designed in the same manner as the 15th-19th century
galleries. On display is Jewish artist Eliezer Sussman’s *Horb Synagogue* of 1735, from
Germany whose original hand painted interior has been transplanted intact to The Israel
Museum. Also shown are clothing and textiles from Spain, France, Morocco, Yemen,
Turkey, Uzbekistan, Iran, Germany and Russia for example, allowing one to grasp the
richness of the surrounding cultures and stylistic influences that these countries exerted
on the Jewish people in their midst (*figures 22 and 23*).

This influence of other cultures on the Jews can be examined through the fine art
that is traditionally associated with periods and styles in history. For instance, the ornate
and beautiful painting decorating the walls of the afore mentioned *Horb Synagogue* can
be compared to a Fragonard painting in the 15th-19th century fine art galleries
respectively. In this example, one can note the style of the times, the playful, highly
decorated art of the Rococo, and be witness to the evolutionary process felt by the Jews
in the Diaspora, who, when forced into exile after the Second Temple, were subordinate
to the ruling classes of the societies they lived in, who dictated the culture and rule of the
times. However, as these galleries are not in close proximity to each other, this argument
cannot be sustained. They are separated by temporary exhibition space, Pre-Columbian
Art galleries, Art of Africa and Oceana galleries, Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art
as well as period rooms of the 16th and 17th century (*figures 24 and 25*).
The Israel Museum exhibits the Israel of today with the exhibition of contemporary Israeli Art. These galleries are located in immediate proximity to the two floors of 20th century art. However, when the museum opened in 1965, it opened without a separate exhibition space for Israeli art. Martin Weyl, who was the director of the museum from 1980-1997 stated that the goal was to be established internationally first. It was not until over a decade later that the sites for modern and contemporary Israeli artists, the Ayala Zacks-Abramov Pavilion and the Merzbacher Galleries, were established and integrated into the Israel Museum complex.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

My research began when I noticed the striking similarities between Dorner’s philosophy and The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Dorner’s *Living Museum*, being a systematic tour through humanity’s psychological and intellectual evolution, via its art, runs along the same lines as many standard introductory art history survey courses in colleges and universities worldwide. Dorner strives to ‘cover all the bases’ towards his goal of exhibiting this artistic evolution, illustrating the point that one style or period is connected in some developmental way with its predecessor and its successor in this continual evolutionary path, encompassing prehistoric to contemporary art. For Dorner, the exploration of evolution was his path. This investigation has such a wide panoramic view that it becomes impossible to delve into each period or style in depth. The *Living Museum* is able to provide the essence and atmosphere of the styles and periods through the art as well as the physical setting, giving the viewer a way to look beyond the surface of the works towards their respective socio-economic environment.

The Israel Museum is in fact a museum that exhibits art from around the world, from the beginnings of man to contemporary art. Its Subject is humanity, not just specifically relating to the Jewish people. It does this in much of the same way as Dorner’s Landesmuseum, giving an overview of the different styles and periods with all that it had at its disposal. Given that there was no acquisition budget, it was not able to provide much in the way of depth, but nevertheless was able to provide the overview that it set out to exhibit. The fact that this was the original intent of the founders of the museum was precisely why Sandberg was brought over to be the original artistic director of the museum, argues against the museum being specifically oriented as well. Through
further research into the history of the Israel Museum, analyzing who and why the original artistic director was chosen, I have uncovered a link between the museum and Dorner's ideology, as evidenced through the connection between Sandberg, Moholy-Nagy and Dorner.

As this link provided a connection between the two seemingly unrelated parties, it served as evidence for the basis for the Israel Museum's design, and also illustrates the scope of Dorner's ideology and its effect on the museum world. This unacknowledged link to Dorner's ideas is an indication of his importance in the study of fine art exhibition in the museum world. In conclusion, it can be said that Dorner's ideology of the *Living Museum* was transmitted to Sandberg through his friendship and collaboration with Moholy-Nagy. Moholy-Nagy and Sandberg's subsequent friendship and collaboration contributed as well and then in turn influenced the design of the Israel Museum, its collections, methods of exhibition and structure. Thus these two seemingly unrelated elements were linked and illustrated the effect of Dorner's ideology on this museum's exhibition practices.


Caumen, p. 15.


Caumen, p.16


Caumen, p. 23.

Caumen, p. 17.

Caumen, p. 17.

Goldschmidt, like Dorner, had been well versed in the theories of Kant as well as the writings of Jakob Burckhardt. In an extremely simplified overview, one can say that Burckhardt had a similar philosophy to Kant. He was not in agreement with Herder and Hegel’s ideas of coherence in (art) history, let alone man’s ongoing process of intellectual evolution, later to be the corner stone that Dorner builds upon. Burckhardt rather adheres to Kant’s logic of the continuing circle with classicism at its apex.

For further reading see Riegl, Alois. *Late Roman Industrial Art (Die Spatromische Kunstindustrie) 1901, The Duch Group Portrait (Das Hollandische Gruppenporträ) 1902, and The Origin of Baroque Art in Rome (Die Entstehung der Barockkunst in Rom) 1908.*

Heinrich Wolfflin, a contemporary of Goldschmidt, was Burckhardt’s student and successor at Basel University. In his writings on art history, when describing art, he applies terms to this Kantian foundation such as (from) “unrest to stability”, “multiplicity to unity” and “unconscious whirling to conscious aiming”. Wolfflin in his writings found that past and future art had to follow this cycle (Greco-Roman at apex, preceded and followed by “wrong art”, to the Renaissance, etc.), all the while disregarding distinctions between historical styles and the growth of one style into another, labeling art history, for the sake of analysis, “the cycle of the two opposites”. Wolfflin and his school called this “the scientific law” of art history. Goldschmidt lectured to his students, Dorner included, against this absolutism of which he was certain was not the solution, but what was his theory instead? Goldschmidt apparently left the subject open for debate, which was where Dorner stepped in, but was clearly against the finality of Kant and Wolfflin.

For further reading see *Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität (Letters for the Advancement of Humanity, 1793-1797).*


Riegl begins art history with the prehistoric depictions of nature and finishes with Impressionism and depictions of space. Ibid, p. 26.

See Dvorak, Max. *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte* (1924).

Caumen, p. 29.

Caumen, p. 7.

Caumen, p. 30.

For further reading see Dorner. Alexander. *The Way Beyond Art*. New York: New York University Press, 1958. It was during this time that Dorner developed a life-long friendship with Walter Gropius and became acquainted with his Bauhaus school and many artists such as Kurt Schwitters, El Lissitzky and Laslo Moholy-Nagy.

Caumen, p. 46.

Ibid,p.54.


Exemplary are the anatomical drawing of Leonardo DaVinci, which through the study of anatomy enabled him to achieve the realistic rendering of human skeletal structure and muscle tone in his artwork.

Caumen, p. 88.
29 Cauman, p. 89.
31 Ibid, p. 91.
33 Exact origins of abstract art are up for debate, constructivism being one of the many influences, as well as Fauvism, Dada and Surrealism, German Expressionism, etc. It is difficult to classify or generalize much about abstract art as a whole, except to really focus on it as a reactionary movement, further experimenting with expression of the individual.
34 Cauman, p. 103.
36 Ibid, p. 104.
39 Hight, Eleanor M. *Picturing Modernism: Moholy-Nagy and photography in Weimar Germany*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, c. 1955. (p. 93). Moholy-Nagy championed photographic studies in the United States with his technique of Photograms, which he would later use in his curriculum at the Institute of Chicago; that of Photograms as the first step before learning to use a camera. In his Bauhaus book, *The New Vision* (English translation of *Von Material zu Architektur*), he addressed the need for photography to be part of art studies programs, his book eventually used as standard text in many art schools (p.4).
41 Cauman, p.33-34. Walter Gropius’s Bauhaus School was the joining of the Weimar Academy of Art and The Institute of Arts and Crafts (Germany). The Kestner Society is an art organization in Hannover that was and still is widely known for its support of modern and contemporary art.
45 MOMAs’ Philip Johnson would later transmit these ideas into The Museum of Modern Arts’ establishment of an architectural department in 1932, with the addition of Industrial art in 1933, now known as the Department of Architecture and Design.
46 Ibid, p. 111. *The Museum of East Frisian Art opened to exhibit, from antiquities to contemporary, the art of that region in Germany.
47 For further reading see: Schinkel. *Sammlung Architektonischer Entwurfe*.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 See Cauman, p. 166, for commentary from Herrick and Ames.
52 The museum’s active participation in socio-economic issues is accomplished by its exhibition of artwork dealing with the issues in question and having corresponding lectures and other educational programs on related subjects as well.
54 Cauman, Classes at the college were cancelled for three days during this symposium, allowing for students and teachers to be part of the interactive audience, with the visiting artists and alumni as well. See the Bennington College Alumnae Quaterly in 1955 for a synopsis of the symposium.

Ibid, p. 44.

Ibid, p. 44.

Ibid, p. 45. In 1935, MOMA created a Film Library, later a film-theatre auditorium and in 1940, a Department of Photography.

Cauman, p. 167.


The Knesset is the Israeli Parliament. As Israel was established in 1948, there was still much to do in the way of education, health care systems, civil planning and engineering, etc.

There was an open international competition held for the design of the museum, on which Mansfeld and Gad collaborated and won.


Quibus de Causius Praemium Erasmianum Adjudicteur Viro Clarissimo Willem Sandberg Praemium Decemitir. Praemiuim Erasmianum, 1975. (p. 12-25). Sandberg studied at the Netherlands Academy of Fine Arts (1919-1920), later traveled to Austria and Germany to study psychology and then returned to the Netherlands to work in graphic design. When presented with the Erasmus Prize in 1975, Sandberg was noted for his integration of fine and applied arts, film and music, as well as contemporary art into the Stedelijk Museum.


Moholy-Nagy was at that time working in the Netherlands as a graphic artist for a company called International Textiles in addition to working as an exhibition designer for The Dutch Rayon Industry. He designed an exhibition of their works for Utrecht’s commercial fair in 1934, as well as for the World’s fair in Brussels.

Exemplified by his exhibition “Exposition internationale d’art expérimentale”, held at the Stedelijk Museum, November 3-38, 1949. This was the first CoBrA-Exhibition held in Amsterdam, which met with many adverse reactions form the public. The CoBrA movement was founded in 1948 and lasted for three years, disbanding in 1951. CoBrA stands for the three cities in which the member artists lived and worked: Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam. For further reading see Stokvis, Willemijn. COBRA: an international movement in art after the second world war. New York: Rizzoli, 1988.


Pietersen, Ad and Pieter Brattinga, p. 99-101


Grace Glueck. New York Times, Nov. 24, 1964. The limited amount of work they had at that point was from the Bezalel Art Museum.

Le Musee d’Israel, entretien de W. Sandberg avec M.G. de la Coste-Messeliere, L’Oeul, no. 124, April 1965.

Pietersen, Ad and Pieter Brattinga, p. 101


The installation of works from the Romantic period in 19th century art in the permanent collection have not been subcategorized as of yet.

With respect to contemporary artists who need elements for their installations that require more than the standard white wall background..


Ibid.


Ibid.


When I met with the chief curator, Yigal Zalmona, and asked him about the brief display of these periods he replied that it was not in fact intentional on the part of the museum, simply that the Israel Museum, having no acquisition funds at its inception, was not given much in the way of Medieval, Romanesque and Gothic art, comprising its permanent collection of what was from the Bezalel and gifts donated to the museum.

For further reading see Gerber, Jane S. The Jews of Spain; A History of the Sephardic Experience. New York, The Free Press/Macmillan Inc., 1992. One of the exceptions was Moses Maimonides, an internationally renown doctor, philosopher and biblical and talmudic scholar in the 12th century, whose encyclopedic writings of Jewish Law, such as his Moreh Nebukhim or The Guide for the Perplexed, which was a major influence not only on Jewish philosophers and theologians, but on Christians and Moslems as well. See Maimonides, Moses. The Guide for the Perplexed. For an English translation of the original Arabic text, see Maimonides, Moses. The Guide for the Perplexed (translated by M. Friedlander, Ph. D) New York: Dover Publications, 1904.


Referring to syllabuses and courses such as Art History 100, in the United States, private schools New York University and Stanford University for example, state schools like The State University of New York, Binghamton and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Le Sorbonne and Oxford University abroad as well, of the study of art history in many schools that aren't specifically oriented towards one ethnicity. This style in survey art history courses has however been challenged today.

This introduction, similar to the survey classes, provides exactly that, an introduction. It is then after the survey classes, that students can choose to continue on with studies and learn about specific styles and their periods in classes designed specifically around them, such as a course on Baroque art, or Egyptology courses. These classes can be still further subdivided, relating to a certain artist, school or period/style within another, and so on.

When I corresponded with the original architect, Al Mansfeld, through the generous and invaluable help of his son Yoel Mansfeld and spoke with Yigal Zalmona, neither attributed any ideas to Dorner, in fact Al Mansfeld had never heard of him.
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Sandberg


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El Lissitzky


Other


Appendix A

Harvard Graduate School of Design

Problem II: A LIVING MUSEUM

Issued: 11/14/47
Due: 12/17/47
Jury: 12/18/47

L. C. Currie
J. C. Harkness
C. Nagel

The city of Cambridge plans A Living Museum—a problem posed by Alexander
Dorner, Brown University, November 14, 1947.

I. Why a LIVING MUSEUM?

Present art museums are mostly considered or nicknamed mausoleums. They do not seem alive, because they act as shrines of eternal values. The heaven of the traditional art museum consists of arrays of galleries and period rooms. Here we face the works of art of all times and regions. They are presented to us in detached imperturbability as holy relics containing the miraculous vision of the Divine Beauty.

Consciously or unconsciously modern man resists such a philosophy. The galaxy of models of timeless truth and beauty presses on him like a tombstone. We know from our scientific education that life, including man’s mental activities, cannot be squeezed into any static pattern of truth or beauty. Life is “alive” only because it is constantly changing its very essence, and that change has an inner coherence, because the mutual penetration of all living forces results in their mutual transformation. The result we call evolutionary growth.

We live our daily lives according to this philosophy. All modern activities, including modern architecture, “live” because all their ideas and means change by improved experience. The mental faculties of the architect “grow” by transforming obsolete faculties into new ones. Only traditional humanities are still trying to stick to the belief in an Adam in us. They try to tell us that we shall never be able to change the ideas or faculties of the divine soul that was blown into that Adam. It is on account of this obsolete philosophy that the traditional art museum reveals to us in galleries and period rooms symbols of the eternal, always equally valuable, spirit of a timeless (Adamic) man. Man has the idea of beauty and he has the divine faculty to create it. That makes the art museum dead.

How can it be made living? Only by introducing what careful observation has been showing for a long time: that the so-called “works of art,” too, speak to us the language of growth. Mental growth creates the amazing “inventiveness,” the ever new visions of reality, that we falsely call the (aimless) variety of styles. The endless variety in man’s visual production is created by the ceaseless and omnipresent need and urge to grow. Inside that urge pulses the creativeness of life, which changes man’s mental tools, the very identity of his mind and of the reality which this mind sees. The past lives in us as an irresistible urge to go on growing. There is a unity between past and future; but it is an entirely dynamic unity of self-transformation. The traditional museum is dead because it is still trying to unite past and present in a static way, by erecting never-changing ideals of beauty or never-changing aesthetic faculties and imposing its products upon life as timeless models. Our new Museum could be “living” if it succeeded in creating this new dynamic unity.
Appendix A

d growth that turns the past into a driving force toward a better working future.

The following is a description of the needs of such a "working" Museum. We assume that the director is free to plan according to professional experience and that his hands are not tied with the obligation to display bequests of random collections of "beautiful" works of art.

I. The Practical Needs of a LIVING Museum

The Museum should be able to cope with a peak-attendance of 1000 people at openings of exhibitions. (Important particularly for the size of the reception hall and tea-room.)

1. MAIN FLOOR (The whole Museum, except for some items mentioned below, should be on the ground floor.)

a.

i. Entrance to corridor leading to offices, studios, shops, and store-rooms

j. Entrance to staircase to basement and possible later second floor

k. Ample benches along the walls

2. The Permanence of a LIVING Museum

The Museum should be able to cope with a peak-attendance of 1000 people at openings of exhibitions. (Important particularly for the size of the reception hall and tea-room.)

1. Outside the Reception Hall

a. Revolving glass door

b. Electric eye checking the attendance

c. Swinging glass door opening into the reception hall

2. Reception Hall

a. Hat check

b. Reception desk, extended into counter for the sale of guides, publications, and reproductions

c. Directly accessible: separate wash-rooms for men and women

d. Entrance and exit doors of permanent exhibition lying close together

e. Entrance door to area of changing exhibitions of contemporary content

f. Entrance door to area of changing exhibitions of historical content

g. Entrance to lecture hall

h. Entrance to tea-room

3. The Permanent Exhibition

is the genealogical tree of our present visual language. Its trunk and ramifications convey to the visitor the evolution of man's reality and thereby the driving forces of our present. It illustrates the evolutionary growth of our cultural forces focused on the growth of man's visual language.

Since it has to simplify and also to freeze what is actually a totally moving and very complicated process of interpenetrating transformations, it will first consist only of a trunk, i.e. of a succession of ten rooms. Ample room should be left for a later addition of branches to that trunk.

Every one of these rooms represents the peculiar world of the relative phase of growth. Every one is completely different in shape, light, and treatment of its boundaries. (The "normal" four walls appear almost nowhere.) Therefore they should have no "architecture," that is, they should have no fixed walls. They should allow for skylight and artificial light from ceiling and all sides. They should further allow for transparencies representing architecture, gardening, and planning, which can be turned on and off; for loudspeakers and earphones (to hear the poetry and music of the period).

Every room contains also the original "works of art" set into their relative milieu of reality.

None of these "rooms" should have a direct connection with our present
Appendix A

reality (through windows or doors). Only the rooms of our latest movements, where the evolutionary flow falls into our present, should have windows. Every room has a small anteroom with a text explaining the experiences that led to the particular picture of the world represented in the following room. The average area allotted to the rooms would be approximately 30' x 30'; the area for the room of our present should be larger (ca. 50' x 50'). The anterooms could have skylight for biological relief of the visitor.

We like to emphasize again that this Permanent Exhibition has no static permanence whatsoever. It should remain entirely flexible (a) for external extension toward the future and for additional branches; (b) for the improvement of the representation of the past by increase in knowledge, understanding, and technical means of conveying both.

The permanent display has two exits, one into the Reception Hall and one into the Area of Modern Exhibitions, which is separated from the Area of Historical Exhibitions.

4. Changing Exhibitions

The permanent display emphasized the temporal development—that is, so to speak, the vertical line—of man's artistic growth. The changing displays emphasize the horizontal line of that growth by spreading out into detailed representation of specific historical periods or specific fields of past and present activities.

a. The Area for Changing Exhibitions of Contemporary Movement and Problems

should have direct contact with the outside world through glass walls or large windows and skylight. This contact should also be visible from the outside by day and when opened at night. There should also be artificial light from the ceiling and all sides. The construction should again give full freedom to the internal arrangement of the exhibitions and allow for heavy material to rest on the floor and to be suspended from the ceiling (since the walls, the traditional carrier of heavy objects, have disappeared). The "architectural" character is given by the changing exhibition itself. The size of this exhibition area is about 120' x 120'.

b. The Area for Changing Historical Exhibitions

should be separated from both the Modern Room of the Permanent Display and the adjacent area for Modern Changing Exhibitions. This area (120' x 120')—again allowing for a maximum of inner flexibility and the same facilities for placing and suspending heavy material—should have no optical contact with our present outside world. It should rely entirely on occasional skylight, but mostly on artificial lighting.

5. The Lecture Hall

should have 500 fixed seats and space for 100 emergency seats. It should have a desk on a platform that runs the full width of the hall. Behind the desk should be a screen that provides for three slide projections to be shown side by side or for moving pictures. On the opposite (rear) wall should be a separated room or balcony containing the projectors. The seats are to be arranged in amphitheatrical order.
Appendix A

The Tearoom
should have a small pantry with running cold and hot water. It should hold about 250 people.

Offices, Studios, Shops
The director's room should also allow for space for the meetings of the Museum's staff and guards, i.e. for 15–20 persons.

Ante- and reception room for director's secretary
Seven offices for rest of staff and secretaries

Adjacent and accessible through the same corridor:
The studios of restorer and photographer and the shops of two carpenters, two painters, one electrician, and one plumber. The noisy shops should be separated from studios and offices. The best way to do this might be by placing the storeroom between shops and studios. All offices, studios and shops should be on the same floor as the permanent and changing exhibitions.

Storerooms
The storage area should be 120' x 30'. It should be divided into an area for permanent exhibition material and an area for the material of changing exhibitions. Storerooms as well as shops should be accessible through overhead doors to unloading trucks.

12 studios for classes of about 20 with facilities for painting, sculpturing, etc.

The heating plant
The air-conditioning system for the use of permanent and changing dis-

C. Second Floor
The possibility of a second floor above the offices, studios, shops, and storerooms should be foreseen for permanent study collections that might accumulate through gifts and bequests.

These rooms should have skylight and artificial light.
Lissitzky, El. Design for the Abstract Cabinet, Hanover, 1927

Figure 1
Figure 2

Figure 3
natural light
the Modern and
temporary Galleries

Figure 4

natural light source
(walls) in
Galleries

Figure 5A
Modern Art gallery (one of)

Figure 5

Contemporary Art gallery (one of)

Figure 6
Reception building
Israel Museum

Figure 7

View of the buildings from above

Figure 8
Interior of the Shrine of the Book

Figure 9

Interior of the Shrine of the Book

Figure 10
Dome-like roof of the Shrine of the Book

Figure 11

Entrance to the Shrine of the Book

Figure 12
White roof and black basalt wall of the Shrine of the Book

Figure 13

Interior of the Shrine of the Book

Figure 14
Visitor's Guide Map, Israel Museum

Figure 15
View of Jerusalem from the sculpture garden

Figure 16

View of Jerusalem from the sculpture garden

Figure 17
The sculpture garden

Figure 18

The Israel Museum

Figure 19
View of the buildings from the sculpture garden

Figure 20

"Negev" in the sculpture garden

Figure 21
Judaica Gallery

Figure 22

Roof of the Thora Synagogue

Figure 23
Period Room
Israel Museum

Figure 24

View of the buildings from the sculpture garden

Figure 25