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It is important to analyze the similarities and differences between two varying types of institutions for several reasons: in order to understand how each type of cultural institution is defined; to understand how each may defy its typical definition; and what elements are popular or beneficial in these cultural institutions.

In comparing the Brooklyn Museum and the Brooklyn Historical Society, the geographic region of focus is the same: the borough of Brooklyn, NY; yet both differ exponentially in other factors. The Brooklyn Museum is too large for an entire viewing in 45 minutes, so this study will be limited to the Arts of Africa long-term installation and the Black List Project exhibition. The Brooklyn Historical Society is significantly smaller, and could be perused in 45 minutes. For both institutions a stopwatch was not used; rather an approximate timing was taken from a mobile phone. The trips to both took place on a Sunday afternoon, which may have added to the lack of attendance: Saturday seems to be an “outing day” and Sunday is more of a “home day”, where most shops and institutions close early. While there may typically be more people arriving on a Saturday to both institutions, the type of visitor would probably change during the week at both to accommodate the possible educational school field trips that would be conducted at the Brooklyn Museum or Brooklyn Historical Society.

At the Brooklyn Museum the main type of visitor was of the well-dressed, middle class persuasion. There was a good mix of couples in their twenties-thirties, and families with children 10 and under. There were not many teenagers, which may change during the week sure to the school field trips taken to the museum. The museum did not seem overly crowded, but there was a steady flow of visitors.

These visitors mostly spent a few minutes at a piece, and then move on. The length of the time spent perusing an item usually increased with the visitor’s age. There are many moving image displays throughout the two exhibitions in the museum. In the Arts and Africa exhibit, there are two small sized television displays with edited footage of various African tribal rituals that are described with written display placards. One of the televisions has a two-seater wooden bench in front of it for visitors to sit and watch, while the other does not.

In the Black List Project exhibit, there are two larger television displays with excerpts from “The Black List: Volume One”, an HBO documentary made as part of the Black List Project. The televisions play the same excerpts, but are not played in sync. Visitors can sit to view the excerpts in three plastic chairs per television. Most of the visitors preferred to stand and watch for a few minutes, and then move on to another item. As an interactive part of the exhibit, there are two Macbook Pro laptop computers located in a back corner of the exhibition room where visitors can record and edit their own youtube video dealing with the issue of the impact of race on their life and accomplishments. The equipment is minimal, with the camera and microphone installed on the laptop, and a small optional light. The instructions are written in a large font and are simple and clear.

The layout of the Brooklyn Museum begins with a very large and imposing room as the entrance; the rooms decrease in size as you enter their various exhibitions. There is no cell phone or camera policy stated using signs, but there is a warning that some exhibits might be considered too adult in content for certain age-ranges of children. One of the first rooms is the museum store, which is easily accessible as a visitor enters and exits. The museum café is located right in the middle of the Africa and Arts exhibition, which is very jarring and distracting. There is also a staff break room in the main exhibition room (where the Black List Project is located), whose door is constantly opening and closing to reveal loud and rowdy workers every few minutes. As this main room is also very large and open, with extremely high ceilings, the sound bounces and reverberates, making the museum much more boisterous than would be expected. The audio from the two non-synced television displays plays discordantly, adding to the noise.

No visitors used any audio devices as accompanying tours or guides, and the five guards that moved in between exhibits also constantly moved in between the staff break room doors. There was no interaction between the guards and the guests. For student visitors, the cost of entrance was a \$4.00 donation and large bags had to be searched and checked.

While the Brooklyn Museum was too large to view completely in the time allotted, the Brooklyn Historical Society was the opposite. The main point of interest was not what it had, but what it lacked. There was no security, no guards, no audio tours, no cell-phone or camera policies, and no visitors. To be fair, there were two middle class looking couples, one in their twenties to thirties and one middle aged; both seemed to pop in, look around, and then leave quickly. As opposed to a \$4.00 donation, the historical society charged a mandatory \$4.00 admission fee.

The historical society is laid out on 3 floors plus a lower level in a late 19th century Queen Anne style landmark building. The two staff members (the only ones in the entire building) recommended taking the elevator up to the 3rd floor, and then working down via stairs or elevator. The 3rd floor is an oral history exhibit of Portraits of Brooklyn's Vietnam Veterans. The exhibition was curated in an interactive format. The visitor stands on a platform with a drawing of two shoes to indicate where to place their feet, and the audio begins playing through an overhead speaker that is engaged by the weight of the listener on the drawn shoes. The visitor is standing in front of a portrait of the person or persons who are speaking, and there is also a glass exhibition case of various photos, metals, letters, and other artifacts from this individual's Vietnam experience. There are also two interactive stations with a lovely mahogany wood finish and accompanying chairs. Each has its own headphones and computer screen with two simple buttons for control of the device (a mouse that moves the cursor and a selector button). Here a visitor can read transcripts of the oral history, or they can listen to each oral history again, and look at digital photographs of the various artifacts in the cases.

On the second floor of the Brooklyn Historical Society, there is the Reading Room (which is closed on Sundays) and a small room for the Vietnam Photo Exhibit. This was a small room with a limited number of photographs. There was a computer and keyboard with a place to enter your contact information and to contribute your own Vietnam experience to the exhibition. Such experiences would be uploaded but the instructions were not clear about where to view the story once the upload had occurred. The first floor of the historical society contained the small entry foyer in the front half of the house, and a small exhibit in the back half of the house. These did not contain any moving image displays.

The lower level of the historical society held the Counter/Culture exhibit, recording the disappearing local stores of Brooklyn. This mostly contained photographs, but there was one small television display in the back of the exhibit that showed 4 different interviews with owners of various Brooklyn shops. The production quality of the oral histories was low—the camera was shaky, there was a lot of ambient noise that made it difficult to hear, and the aspect ratio of the image was off, causing the image to look slightly flattened and out of proportion. There was no seating available for viewing this display.

Comparing the visits to a museum in Brooklyn and a historical society in Brooklyn, similarities can be found in what goals each institution is trying to accomplish: to create locally relevant exhibitions,

to educate through these exhibitions, and to entertain through these exhibitions. The Brooklyn Museum seeks to achieve these ends through creating exhibitions that focus more than merely on Brooklyn history, but by choosing topics that are more loosely relevant to Brooklyn and therefore can interest and attract more diverse visitors. The Brooklyn Historical Society's strict regionalism limits it in the numbers of visitors it receives for its exhibitions. To be fair, the reading room is its primary focus and may in fact be why the institution receives most of its visitors. Each of these institution's charter seem to cross over into the other's; the Brooklyn Museum has a library for academic study, and the Brooklyn Historical Society has four levels of temporary and permanent exhibitions. Yet they both also adhere mostly to the goals typical of their type of institution: the Brooklyn Museum is mainly about educating a vast audience through exhibitions, and the Brooklyn Historical Society is mainly about educating scholars and the academic world about the history of Brooklyn.