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New Museum and Library of Congress National Audiovisual Conservation Center

The two cultural heritage institutions I visited were the New Museum and the Library of Congress' National Audiovisual Conservation Center (NAVCC). The New Museum is located in Manhattan, and offers access to exhibits six days a week (the museum is closed on Mondays). The NAVCC is located in Culpeper, VA. The NAVCC is closed to the public, except for three nights a week when free screenings are held in their cinema.

I visited the New Museum on a Tuesday at noon and stayed for approximately two hours. The exhibitions on display were Nari Ward: *We the People*, Jeffrey Gibson: *The Anthropophagic Effect*, Mariana Castillo Deball: *Finding Oneself Outside*, Adelita Husni-Bey: *Chiron*, and *The Art Happens Here: Net Art's Archival Poetics*. The museum has six floors, each of which is relatively small compared to most museums. I began on the top floor, and worked my way down. The gallery spaces seemed to grow in descending order. As I began on the sixth floor, attendance was slim. I encountered two quiet couples, and two solo visitors. When I got to the third floor – approximately forty-five minutes later – the attendance seemed to pick up, with more couples and solo visitors in view. I also encountered two women with three children. The exhibits did not seem to entertain the children, who ran around and were quite noisy. I encountered the group again on the first floor, where a security guard asked the women to keep the children from running.

Each floor had at least one guard, with the larger floors having two. Two of the guards seemed to have knowledge of the work, as I observed them discussing the pieces with solo visitors. A video projection of a short film ran on loop off in a small hallway behind the elevator. There were three chairs casually set up in front of the projection. I sat and watched the entirety of the film, during which no other visitors stopped to watch. The New Museum was notable for the seemingly constant motion of its visitors. The large art pieces allowed visitors to view them by walking around them, rather than stopping in front of a piece to observe it. The labels accompanying each art piece were rather small, often disappearing into the white walls. I found that if one wanted to learn about a piece, they would have to search for the labels, which few did. These labels sometimes featured a number that was associated with a clip on the museum's audio tour. Through my entire visit I encountered only a single couple taking advantage of this tour option.

The exhibit Adelita Husni-Bey: Chiron was the only installation to feature solely video art. Some of the pieces had audio playing on speakers aloud, while others had two pairs of headphones for viewers to wear. This space is somewhat hidden, as its entrance is in a hallway that looks to be a fire exit. I encountered approximately ten visitors in this exhibit; though only one actually sat down to watch the films.

Unlike the New Museum, the NAVCC is only accessible to the public on limited occasions. I attended a public screening of the film *Shakespeare in Love*, on a Thursday evening at 7:00 P.M. With approximately two hundred seats, there were only forty or so attendees at the screening. The room was uniformly attended by older white men and women. A sole young couple sat in front of my group, but exited the screening midway through the film. As the NAVCC is a multi-million dollar establishment, I was surprised

to learn that the masking system in the cinema had long since broken down. In discussing the situation with the projectionist, I was disappointed to learn that there were no immediate plans to repair the system. Thus, the 35mm projection did not have crisp borders, leaving an unpleasant blurriness on the borders of the image.

Due to the fact that the NAVCC is a part of the Library of Congress, the building features heightened security measures. All attendees of their screenings are subjected to an airport-style security checkpoint, complete with metal detector and conveyer-belt. Should anyone exit the building at any time, they would be forced to reenter through the security checkpoint. Unlike the New Museum, visitors of the NAVCC were asked not to use their mobile phones during the screening. Thankfully, all obeyed this request. I had not previously seen the film, and while the anticipation of seeing the brilliant Judi Dench in the role that finally won her an Oscar was high, I found myself disappointed. I found it perhaps too joyous and carefree, and ultimately rather obnoxious.