The Boston Globe

Most, Doug. "Behind the Kennedy Institute Experience with Edwin Schlossberg." *The Boston Globe*, March 26, 2015. http://www.bostonglobe.com/magazine/2015/03/26/behind-kennedy-institute-experience-with-edwin-schlossberg/Wl4KQP3wufol0IZOLBJlFI/story.html

Behind the Kennedy Institute experience with Edwin Schlossberg

The story of the software, the programs, the tablets, and Ted Kennedy's vision for his institute.

By Doug Most MARCH 26, 2015

Ahead of the opening of the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate on Tuesday, the Globe Magazine is exploring the history of the project and Kennedy's vision for it.

The building honors Edward M. Kennedy, but the fingerprints all over what the visitor experience will be belong to Edwin Schlossberg, the husband of Kennedy's niece, Caroline Kennedy. The founder of ESI Design in New York, Schlossberg created the software that users will play with to experience

being a senator, the exhibitions they will interact with as they walk the spacious hallway, and the programs that will fill the time of their visit.

In a wide-ranging conversation with the *Globe,* Schlossberg talked about his contributions, Kennedy's vision for it, and what visitors should expect to see.

STEPHEN WILKES

Edwin Schlossberg.

Can you explain the idea behind the software that people will use at the institute?

In the conversations I had with Senator Kennedy a long time ago, in 2004, the thing that was so interesting to him about the Senate is that it was a deliberative body, 100 people representing all these people around the United States coming to a consensus about things that were really important. He loved the Senate. He loved being in it. He loved getting bills passed; he loved the process of it. When I said, "What should we do?" he said, "This is a place where the visitors make the experience true. They are being given an opportunity to become the vehicles of discovery to how the Senate works. To be senators in training for a time." We wanted everyone to become a senator, to become the process. It's constituent-based. The idea is you have to become the Senate, through your actions and your behaviors with other people, passing the bills.

How will it work exactly?

The experience is divided into two parts. First is Senate immersion. One hundred people, each a senator, they go through and arrive in the morning. Before they arrive, they find out what date it will be they are discussing in the past. It could be September 25, 1952. Each of the days you arrive, it's a different date, different set of issues. In two and a half hours, you hear what the bills are, you experience going to caucus, to the cloakroom, and negotiating with the people in your party and other parties in order to figure out whether to pass or defeat the bill, depending on what side you're on. You learn what the press said, what people in your state said. Then you vote on the bills, and then you see what happened on that date. All the scripting is done by high school groups around New England. We created a development kit. Schools can sign up to do it and do the research, finding the newspaper articles, the speeches, and assemble it for the institute. Twenty-five have already done it. We hope thousands around the United States will do it.

Most political libraries are focused more on the individual. This one seems more devoted to education than the man.

Senator Kennedy was more interested in the Senate than making a memorial to only his accomplishments. There is still an exact replica of his office. But the environment where this game is played is an exact replica of the Senate.

But there is more than the replicas, right?

The second part of the exhibit is a gallery experience. Everyone gets a tablet, and they can move along and get more information, like how a bill becomes a law. We've seen all the studies about poor civic engagement and how little people actually know about their local politicians.

Did that play a role in any of this process?

We wanted it to be a very accessible experience for people who didn't have time to spend two hours. We didn't just want them watching a film, so they are engaging in the process. The whole idea is to make it a completely immersive experience. You became responsible for the Senate; there's no one to blame but yourself for what happened that day in the Senate. The heart of it is learning.

What do you think will surprise people as they come through the institute?

The idea that it's civics, engagement theater. It's more about what contemporary life is about. It's not a memorial to a single person. It's designed to explain the inner workings of one of the bodies at the heart of democracy. It's not a lecture or a book or a movie. It's a simulated model. We think this can become a more widespread template for ways to learn and to learn in a way that is productive for you.

Speaking of productive, what would Senator Kennedy have thought about today's nonproductive political climate?

I hesitate to speak for him, but when he passed away, people thought he was responsible for the spirit of the Senate. Everybody is more empowered with access and ideas, and that has changed the way people think. And how money has changed things. But the idea and aspiration of what the Senate is about is a critical piece of the groundwork of the country. Part of the aspiration of this institute is to provide four, five, six simulations a day. Tens of thousands of people will go through this, and maybe that will make a difference.

Was it important for it to be located on Columbia Point, next to the JFK Library?

It evolved. The leadership at UMass was so spectacularly inviting to get that to happen. Teddy was really excited about having it at the University of Massachusetts. And it would be next to the Kennedy Library; that was attractive, too.

The design of the building is almost stark; it's very simple and clean.

Rafael [the architect, Rafael Vinoly] did a model for Senator Kennedy. It really works beautifully. It's elegant and inviting. It's hard if you see it and there are only 10 people in it. But when you see it filled with kids and school groups, it really works beautifully as a streetscape. The noise is very cool.

What about the noise?

The happiness of going through a marketplace. The individuals going through this odyssey of doing things. The space activates beautifully with lots of people in it. And when people walk into the Senate chamber, you can just hear the deep breaths. The authority of the space is sacred; it really grabs people.

Whose idea was the replicated chamber?

Teddy wanted that. He felt it was important, to make it have the gravitas of what we wanted to do.

It sounds like you've already had real people come through to test the space out.

We've been having lots of play-tests of kids coming through it. All of a sudden, these kids are like, there is a centeredness in their voice, talking about a bill. In one of the simulations, about segregation and allowing slaves to be sold on the streets of Washington, D.C., to see a group of black and white and Asian and Hispanic kids talking about the subject, with their state names on them, and to see them arguing over slavery and to see a kid use a dignified deep voice is really, really cool. The excitement with younger children, all of a sudden they take on the role of an older person, and it's important to them.

This interview has been edited and condensed.

DID YOU KNOW?

1819 — Year the original 48 US Senate desks were built

101 — Number of replica cherry wood desks (right) built for the Edward M. Kennedy Institute by Doug Dimes of Northwood, New Hampshire

1932 — Year of a certificate in Kennedy's replica Senate office from Herbert Hoover to Rose Kennedy commemorating Ted Kennedy's birth

$79 million — Cost of the institute

CHERYL SENTER

$38 million — Amount paid by taxpayers

$12-$14 — The range of admission fees for Massachusetts residents; free for children and active US armed forces members

68,000 — Square footage of the institute

135,000 — Square footage of the neighboring JFK Library

10 — Grade of the students in Malden High School teacher Greg Hurley's history class who were among the most active testers of the software at the institute before its opening

750 — Number of Android-based tablets the institute has for visitors to debate the issue of the day and ultimately to vote as if they were US senators

NEW YORK POST

"Art springs from scenic drive," *NewYorkPost.com,* January 9, 2012.
http://www.nypost.com/p/pagesix/art_springs_from_scenic_drive_ydE3zjAkLkQn4pRS8YsugJ#ixzz1j4oPuDF0

Art springs from scenic drive

Last Updated: 3:47 AM, January 9, 2012

Posted: 2:42 AM, January 9, 2012

Edwin Schlossberg's new series of paintings, "Beneath Suddenly," was inspired by a nighttime drive on Martha's Vineyard. "I was driving on the highway, and I saw this sign I thought was so beautiful," the artist said at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts in SoHo on Saturday night. Schlossberg recounted how he then tracked down 3M's Scotchlite material — a thin surface that includes "thousands of tiny glass beads" to make road signs visible at night — to use in his paintings. The works also incorporate dust of lapis lazuli, ruby and silver. The opening drew guests including Schlossberg's wife, **Caroline Kennedy**, **Jean Kennedy Smith** and her son **William**, **Philip** and **Lisa Maria Falcone**, **David** and **Lauren Bush Lauren**, **Alexandra Styron**, Vogue's **Tonne Goodman** and her sister, "The World of Gloria Vanderbilt" author **Wendy Goodman** and artist **James Rosenquist**. Painter **John Alexander** then hosted a private dinner for 50 at his nearby loft and studio, seating guests at one long table in white.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
WSJ.com

Heyman, Marshall. “NY Culture: Artist Reflects on Work.” *WSJ.com*, January 7, 2012.
http://online.wsj.com/article/art+on+work

NY CULTURE
JANUARY 7, 2012

Artist Reflects on Work

Edwin Schlossberg and Caroline Kennedy

On Saturday at the Ronald Feldman Gallery in Soho, Edwin Schlossberg, the founder and principal designer of ESI Design and the husband of Caroline Kennedy, will open his latest art show, titled "Beneath Suddenly." Mr. Schlossberg, who has been represented by the Feldman Gallery since 1978, said in an interview that "this is about the best show I've done."

The 21 pieces, which are made with a reflective material called Scotchlite used for highway signs, are about "the things you can't see or that I think you can't see. They're about physical areas, the idea of mass energy, the perception, for instance, that happens when liquids change to solids," Mr. Schlossberg said.

He added that in the 3-foot by 4-foot works, he tried to evoke the idea of looking at the sky and feeling the ground beneath your feet or of the transition from a liquid to gas and then back.

In between working on projects like designing a virtual National Mall to experience the Washington, D.C., site on smartphones or expanding the Ellis Island Museum, Mr. Schlossberg said he paints in his studios on 19th Street most mornings and in Martha's Vineyard on vacation and during the summer. "I've been working on this set of pieces for 2½ years," he said.

Still, openings make him anxious. He recalled meeting Magritte decades ago at an exhibit of the Belgian surrealist's work. "He felt incredibly poor and very worried, because, he said, everything he ever thought was on the walls. He felt like he didn't have anything else in him," Mr. Schlossberg said. "You've been working really hard to do all these things and the joy of being an artist is the flow you feel in the midst of making it. I love that moment more than anything."

'Consciousness Enables Longing'

— Marshall Heyman

The New York Times

Dowd, Maureen. “Silence is Golden.” *The New York Times,* December 6, 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/07/opinion/dowd-silence-is-golden.html?_r=1&ref=maureendowd

Silence Is Golden

By MAUREEN DOWD

December 6, 2011

Hello chatter, my old friend.

The sounds of silence are a dim recollection now, like mystery, privacy and paying attention to one thing — or one person — at a time.

As far back as half-a-century ago, the Swiss philosopher Max Picard warned: “Nothing has changed the nature of man so much as the loss of silence,” once as natural as the sky and air.

As fiendish little gadgets conspire to track our movements and record our activities wherever we go, producing a barrage of pictures of everything we’re doing and saying, our lives will unroll as one long instant replay.

There will be fewer and fewer of what Virginia Woolf called “moments of being,” intense sensations that stand apart from the “cotton wool of daily life.”

“In the future, not getting any imagery or story line or content is going to be the equivalent of silence because people are so filled up now with streaming video,” said Ed Schlossberg, the artist, author and designer who runs ESI Design. “Paying attention to anything will be the missing commodity in future life. You think you’ll miss nothing, but you’ll probably miss everything.”

Schlossberg said that, for a long time, art provided the boundary for silence, “but now art, in some cases, is so distracting and intense and faceted, it’s hard to step into a moment. Especially when you’re always carrying a microcamera and a screen all the time, both recording and playing back constantly rather than allowing moments of composition and stillness when your brain can go into a reverie.”

In an inspiring throwback, art once more offers a chance to step into a mute and vivid moment of being in “The Artist,” the new silent movie that hit the Cannes Film Festival like a thunderclap.

First, an American writer and director, Woody Allen, created a gorgeous homage to vintage Paris in “Midnight in Paris.” Now, a French writer and director, Michel Hazanavicius, has created a gorgeous homage to vintage Hollywood.

Not being a silent movie buff, I was trepidatious about “The Artist.” And a 23-year-old at the Motion Picture Association of America screening here puzzled over why it needed to be silent. But I loved the clever evocation of a primal fear featured in the many iterations of “A Star Is Born,” as well as “Singin’ in the Rain,” “Sunset Boulevard,” “Invasion of the Body Snatchers,” and “All About Eve”: Will you get to the top, only to be devoured by the hot new thing?

“More and more people have that fear because of the financial crisis and how fast the world is changing,” Hazanavicius told me. “You’re at the top one day and very quickly you can fall. In the generation of my parents and grandparents, people worked in the same factory all their lives. Now people work there two months and they put it in China. Now you’re born into one world and you die in a very different world.”

It turns out that all the skeptics were wrong, and it was clever to do a silent movie in 2011, as an antidote to our modern plague of pointless chatter. It’s a weird paradox that the essential feature of technology is talkativeness, but usually without the sound of human voices attached.

In the case of “The Artist,” silence is not only golden, it’s a reminder of how much you can articulate without words. If you take away the language, green screens and 3-D glasses, the feelings — pride, vanity, envy, fear, love — can be more primary and fascinating.

Hollywood rarely makes great movies anymore. They make comics, phrases (“Friends With Benefits,” “He’s Just Not That Into You”) or holidays (“New Year’s Eve,” “Valentine’s Day”) and attach scripts that are often dreadful.

Hazanavicius has made a witty, moving and joyous romance about a dashing silent movie star, George Valentin — akin to John Gilbert and Douglas Fairbanks — who can’t accept talkies and a jazz-baby starlet who rises as he falls, and loves him as he crashes and literally burns.

The theme of silence is used ingeniously throughout, in Valentin’s relationship with his loyal Jack Russell terrier, in his “Citizen Kane” silent breakfast table tableau with his farbissina wife, and in the climactic Fred-and-Ginger tap dance that substitutes, as it did for Fred and Ginger, for a sex scene.

A moment where the starlet, Peppy Miller, luminously played by Bérénice Bejo, the real-life partner of Hazanavicius and the mother of his two children, sneaks into Valentin’s dressing room and role plays with his jacket is more romantic than anything Hollywood dreams up.

Hazanavicius recalled that at a French screening of the movie, a group of teenagers approached him. “They thanked me for letting them hear the silence,” he said. “It was touching to discover that these young people, always with their iPods, could like real silence.

“I compare it to the zero in mathematics. People think it’s nothing, but actually it’s not. It can be very powerful.”

“Technology used to tell old stories: Pepsi Family Center set up to interact.” *Wavy.com,* November 15, 2010. http://www.wavy.com/dpp/news/north_carolina/technology-used-to-tell-old-stories

Pepsi Family Center, North Carolina

Technology used to tell old stories

Pepsi Family Center set up to interact

NEW BERN, N.C. (AP) - Edwin Schlossberg, the founder and principal designer of the design firm that helped dream up the exhibit designs for the new N.C. History Center, said that 10 years ago, it was a stretch to take an interactive and technology-centered approach to aspects of the design.

Schlossberg of ESI Design helped create the design of the Pepsi Family Center and the Regional History Museum, as well as the History Navigator tours that have visitors using smart phones to learn about Tryon Palace Historic Sites & Gardens as they move around the site.

He is married to Caroline Kennedy, the daughter of President John F. Kennedy and president of the Kennedy Library Foundation.

"We wanted to make the people who visit here, a part of the storyline," Schlossberg said as he spoke to more than 100 people gathered in the center's Cullman Performance Hall who wanted to learn about the vision behind the exhibits.

Schlossberg said the children and family-centered Pepsi Family Center is set up so visitors interact with each other as they go through a series of high-tech experiences that show them what it was like to live in the 19th century. They complete group activities simulating what it was like to sail a ship, for example, or to make turpentine for a naval store.

They first enter a time machine experience that he said is meant to change the mood for children who might have just come from the "intensity of the bus."

"The history over the last several generations is, you want to have a monologue with the history of a place," Schlossberg said. "It was sort of you and the stuff. Young people don't expect that. They expect to talk with other people about what they're getting."

Schlossberg also said the Regional History Museum is meant to give visitors a context in which to understand the palace, while the mobile History Navigator Tours allow visitors to get questions answered as they move around using a website accessed through their smart phones.

The mobile media presentation offers different perspectives of history such as from town leaders, women or children.

"You carry a narrative with you, and if you have questions, you can look at them and find out from the narrative with you, so you become as important as the story you're learning about," he said. "This was a very out there idea 10 years ago," he added.

Kay Williams, palace director, said the palace staff decided they wanted to take an interactive approach to the exhibits after surveying students and visitors. They asked the visitors to rank their preferences of what they wanted from the palace.

"All the votes went to more interactive activities," Williams said. "It became very clear that visitors were seeking social experiences."

She said that the traditional tour can be limiting for younger visitors, since they have to be quiet, and can't touch things, and the center offers visitors a wider range of experiences. The interactive, technology-focused design also responds to a view that history is no longer important.

"You have to use the tools of the present and of the future, I think, to (respond) to that," she said.

New Bern resident Jack Baft said he thinks the interactive and technology aspects of the design are exciting.

"We're finally going to use technology for something worthwhile, other than just entertainment," he said.

Zhang, Nancy. “Butterflies in the Dream Cube.” *ShanghaiDaily.com,* April 21, 2010, http://www.shanghaidaily.com/sp/article/2010/201004/20100421/article_434758.htm.

Butterflies in the Dream Cube

By Nancy Zhang | 2010-4-21 |

Lighting effect of Shanghai Corporate Pavilion

More in photo gallery

THE Shanghai Corporate Pavilion, known as the Dream Cube, features high levels of interactivity and spectacular, shimmering, pulsating lighting effects inside and out. With an open mesh structure that makes the whole building transparent, it is envisioned by designers as an organism. Lighting brings the internal organs and functions to life. Interactivity symbolizes the spirit of cooperation in the Shanghai business community.

Its two internationally famous designers are Edwin Schlossberg, founder of ESI Design, known for creating interactive public spaces worldwide; and Robert Dickson, a celebrated lighting designer in the entertainment industry. His projects include US President Barack Obama's Inaugural Ball and the 1997 Hong Kong handover ceremony.

Q: Pavilion innovations?

Schlossberg: Modern life is characterized by interactivity in the widespread use of computers and the Internet - this is what we wanted to encapsulate in the Dream Cube.

Visitors are not just presented with a story, they're invited to participate in the story. It's a metaphor for how we all collaborate to create the future.

Before the pavilion was built, we invited ordinary people to take pictures around the city and post them online. We used the photos in the pavilion and visitors will recognize their own pictures as they enter. Also, there are fields of fiber glass rods that respond to visitors' touch by changing colors. There is a 360-degree performance theater where sensors detect clapping or raised hands to change animations inside and outside the pavilion.

Q: Light and interactivity?

Dickson: Designing lighting for an interactive experience is very different than for a passive performance. I didn't want visitors to be conscious of lighting or technology; we want them to feel comfortable so the design is subtle. It's difficult to impress Shanghainese because there's so much lighting here already so the Dream Cube is surprisingly calm.

Every night there's an eight-minute light show after the pavilion closes. Lights not used during the day will be on show, and it will be exciting and emotional.

Q: Comparisons?

Schlossberg: It's certainly different, it's a leap forward in immersion experiences.

Dickson: Interactive use of light is a new step and a challenge. Our creativity and inspiration are kept alive by challenges. I have designed lighting for many one-off events, but in this interactive experience every visit will be like another event.

Q: Chinese elements?

Schlossberg: This is my first visit to China but I read some Chinese literature at university, and the butterfly dream story from (the Taoist text) Zhuangzi has been an inspiration for the Dream Cube.

Zhuang Zhou dreamed he was a butterfly, but on awakening wondered if it was really the butterfly dreaming of him. Today we are switching back and forth between nature and technology, it's an unresolved issue. The solutions keep changing and we have to change with the solutions - the butterfly dream became a metaphor for this ambiguity used throughout the pavilion.

Q: "Green" features?

Dickson: All pavilions are sharply restricted in electricity use depending on size - ours is 700 kilowatt hours per day. Meeting these restrictions was our toughest challenge because we also wanted to do many special, innovative things. We used a lot of technology to achieve effects we wanted while meeting the criteria so visitors will not have a reduced experience.

Schlossberg: Innovative green technologies are displayed. They are not common yet, but demonstrate that though Shanghai businesses lead the way, they have not forgotten environmental responsibilities. Green features are also interactive to emphasize that to create change for a greener future, we all have to act.

The New York Times

Makinen, Julie. “National Pavilions With a Global Touch.” *The New York Times online edition,* September 12, 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/09/business/global/09expo.html?_r=2&pagewanted=1

September 12, 2010

National Pavilions With a Global Touch

By JULIE MAKINEN

SHANGHAI — Ever since the Shanghai Expo opened last spring, the U.S. pavilion has taken a drubbing in the American media. It has been called “a national humiliation” and “an epic failure of planning.” Many critics have assailed its architecture as boring, while others have complained that it fails to do enough to showcase American science and technology.

“The U.S. Pavilion offers no vision of the future,” complained Bob Jacobson on the Web site The Huffington Post. “Like so many of the busted malls at home that it so closely resembles, the U.S. Pavilion is fragmentary and momentary, not the beacon of hope the Expo hosts expected or that the American people deserve.”

Even the U.S. secretary of state, Hillary Rodham Clinton — who spearheaded a last-minute campaign to raise about $60 million from corporate sponsors because no government financing was allowed — seemed more relieved than impressed when she toured the pavilion in May. “It’s fine,” she said.

But look beyond the U.S. pavilion, and there is plenty of American creativity, innovation and technical prowess in evidence at the Expo. Some of the most iconic, popular and impressive attractions at this modern world’s fair were conceived, designed, built and installed by U.S. companies, even if their names are not on the buildings.

Take Miguelín, a blinking, breathing, gesturing animatronic baby that is 6.5 meters, or 21 feet, high and has been wowing and perplexing visitors at the Spanish pavilion. It was built by Amalgamated Dynamics, a Southern California costume and special effects company known for its work on films like “Alien vs. Predator,” “Starship Troopers” and “Spider-Man.”

Or consider Saudi Arabia’s flying-saucer-shaped pavilion — one of the most popular, with waiting times reaching six hours or more. Visitors have been impressed with its immersive film experience, which takes the audience on a tour of the Middle Eastern country. But to create that experience, the pavilion team called on Sky-Skan, a company with headquarters in New Hampshire and offices in Europe and Australia that is known for its work with planetariums.

Sky-Skan used 25 projectors and its proprietary DigitalSky software to make one of the largest seamless video images in the world — 1,600 square meters, or 17,000 square feet. By comparison, an Imax movie screen is about 354 square meters.

BRC Imagination Arts, based in Burbank, California, played a lead role in the U.S. pavilion. But it also created and produced the Information and Communication Pavilion, sponsored by China Mobile and China Telecom. As part of that, BRC designed and built a unique handheld touch-screen device that each guest — 1,900 an hour — can use while touring the pavilion.

In some areas of the exhibition, visitors can personalize their experiences by making selections using the touch screen. And as people see things that interest them, they can swipe the device over various “targets” to collect information. The multilingual, rapid-recharging device can take pictures, and when a guest returns it at the exit, everything collected and recorded is downloaded and transformed into a personal Web page. Each day, about 24,000 new Web pages are created.

“This is a next-generation item for our industry,” said Bob Rogers, the founder of BRC. “We have been looking for ways to greet you before you come in and stay in contact long after you’ve left. This has really caught the attention of theme parks and museums, because it’s a huge leap forward.”

Not far from the Information and Communication Pavilion stands the Shanghai Corporate Pavilion, known as the Dream Cube. Its principal designer was also an American, Edwin Schlossberg, whose New York firm, ESI Design, has worked on projects as varied as the Ellis Island Immigration Museum in New York Harbor, the Playa Vista community in Southern California and the giant Reuters sign in Times Square, New York.

The Dream Cube's lighting design was created by Full Flood, a Los Angeles company, and its day and nighttime presentations are by Don Mischer Productions, known for its work on Super Bowl halftime shows, Olympic Games opening ceremonies and President Barack Obama's inauguration ceremony.

The central narrative of the Dream Cube — which was financed by more than 30 state-owned companies in Shanghai — derives from a story by Zhuangzi, a Chinese philosopher in the fourth century B.C. In the text, Zhuangzi dreamed that he was a butterfly flitting around but he suddenly woke up and no longer knew whether he was Zhuangzi who had dreamed he was a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming he was Zhuangzi. "This is the transformation of things," the philosopher wrote.

Visitors to the pavilion, which focuses on Shanghai's past, present and futureand invites public input on possible solutions to the city's challenges , might assume that the Zhuangzi inspiration had come from the Chinese members of the Dream Cube's creative team. It actually originated with Mr. Schlossberg, who recalled it from his "great books" curriculum as a student at Columbia University in New York.

"I remembered Zhuangzi from my college philosophy class. It related to this idea that there are many points of view to solving a problem," he said. "The butterfly also played into this idea of transformation, and the struggle of modern life."

Mr. Rogers, of BRC, noted that companies had long sponsored some of the most innovative pavilions at world's fairs. As far back as the 1930s, Henry Ford used one to propose large-scale soybean farming in the United States, and General Motors introduced a concept for a coast-to-coast U.S. highway system.

And the "globalization" of world's fair pavilions is hardly new — Mr. Rogers's company, for example, worked on the Canadian Pacific Pavilion at the 1986 Expo in Vancouver, British Columbia, and the Basque National Pavilion at the 1992 Expo in Seville, Spain.

But with the Shanghai Expo, the phenomenon of pavilions as globalized products seems to have reached new heights.

Mina Chow, a professor at the University of Southern California School of Architecture who is filming a documentary on the Shanghai Expo architecture called "Face of a Nation," said expos these days were less about showcasing exclusive products made in particular countries and more about prestige. "To create the most memorable image or pavilion experience — if that means going to Canada for Imax, California for animatronics and film production — then so be it," Ms. Chow said. "The prestige of the party becomes paramount, and often, unsurprisingly, to the neglect of the country's values and culture."

Alec Gillis, co-founder and co-owner of Amalgamated Dynamics, said that working for Spain on the mammoth Miguelín — which cost about $2 million and took about nine months — was a good creative and business opportunity, regardless of which country's pavilion it was in.

"I've always wanted to do a giant baby," Mr. Gillis said. "There's something to juxtaposing the cuteness of a baby and the imposing scale of a monument."

The idea for Miguelín came from the Spanish filmmaker Isabel Coixet, and Mr. Gillis was a bit apprehensive about how the public would receive the huge tot. "We didn't want it to be creepy," he said. But "when I saw Chinese people come around the corner, it was just looks of awe, big smiles."

"I think Isabel was correct in her analysis of the psychology of the Chinese and how they would respond," he said.

Mr. Gillis, who has seen computer-generated graphics substitute for some of the work his company used to do on movies, said the Expo was a great chance "to remind people in this virtual age that there's a value in real, tangible things." Already, his company has received inquiries from Chinese companies about building more babies. He is ready to go if the orders firm up.

"The gestation period would drop," Mr. Gillis said. "We have the molds. We can crank them out now."

Oleniacz, Laura. “N.C. History Center uses high-tech interactivity to tell old stories.” *ENCToday.com*, October 22, 2010. http://www.enctoday.com/news/history-91647-nbsj-design-center.html.

N.C. History Center uses high-tech interactivity to tell old stories

October 22, 2010 8:24 PM
Laura Oleniacz
Sun Journal Staff

Edwin Schlossberg, designer of the new technology-driven exhibits in the North Carolina History Center, talks Friday about how the center was planned.

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He is married to Caroline Kennedy, the president of the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation, and also an attorney, an editor and a member of the well-known Kennedy family, according to jfklibrary.org.

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They first enter a time machine experience that he said is meant to change the mood for children who might have just come from the “intensity of the bus.”

“The history over the last several generations is, you want to have a monologue with the history of a place,” Schlossberg said. “It was sort of you and the stuff. Young people don’t expect that. They expect to talk with other people about what they’re getting.”

Schlossberg also said the Regional History Museum is meant to give visitors a context in which to understand the palace, while the mobile History Navigator Tours allow visitors to get questions answered as they move around using a website accessed through their smart phones.

The mobile media presentation offers different perspectives of history such as from town leaders, women or children.

“You carry a narrative with you, and if you have questions, you can look at them and find out from the narrative with you, so you become as important as the story you’re learning about,” he said. “This was a very out there idea 10 years ago,” he added.

Kay Williams, palace director, said the palace staff decided they wanted to take an interactive approach to the exhibits after surveying students and visitors. They asked the visitors to rank their preferences of what they wanted from the palace.

“All the votes went to more interactive activities,” Williams said. “It became very clear that visitors were seeking social experiences.”

She said that the traditional tour can be limiting for younger visitors, since they have to be quiet, and can’t touch things, and the center offers visitors a wider range of experiences. The interactive, technology-focused design also responds to a view that history is no longer important.

“You have to use the tools of the present and of the future, I think, to (respond) to that,” she said.

New Bern resident Jack Baft said he thinks the interactive and technology aspects of the design are exciting.

“We’re finally going to use technology for something worthwhile, other than just entertainment,” he said.

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At Tryon Palace, history gets a facelift

By Martha Quillin
martha.quillin@newsobserver.com
Posted: Sunday, Oct. 17, 2010

NEW BERN Too many tourists who shuffled through Tryon Palace since it opened in 1959 saw the reconstructed colonial governor's mansion as a once-in-a-lifetime trip.

They could have gone back. They just figured that, having seen the English silver, heard the trill of a costumed fifer and smelled a simmering dish made from an 18th century recipe, they didn't need to.

With the opening next weekend of the historic site's new $60 million, 60,000-square-foot N.C. History Center adjacent to the palace, visitors will be able to use current technology to craft a different experience of early American life each time they come.

They can play different roles in raucous interactive games, and choose whom they want to narrate their tour of the grounds from eight characters on a handheld computer. They can watch puppet shows and musical performances. They can have their pictures made and added to the electronic Tryon Palace Family Album.

Finally, history can stop repeating itself.

"The first thing people say when they walk into the new building is, 'Cool!' " said Greg Smith, who runs Mitchell Hardware in downtown New Bern, a couple of blocks away. "It's vibrant. It's current."

It also has the potential to turn a roadside stop for travelers on their way to the beach into a must-see tourist destination that forecasters say will generate nearly $18 million in tourism spending for Eastern North Carolina each year. Economic studies on the project suggest it will more than double attendance at the palace, to about 200,000 people each year, and will add a night to the average hotel stay in the area.

The N.C. History Center has been a long time coming. The state bought the old Barbour Boat Works property next to the palace in 1997 with plans for a simple welcome center. It was to replace the converted gas station the palace has used for decades to sell tickets and to hand out maps for the house and grounds and neighboring historic homes.

Edwin Schlossberg, who designed his first interactive project in the 1970s for the Brooklyn Children's Museum, helped guide Kay Williams, the palace director for 27 years, and public and private supporters to a more modern museum concept where visitors manipulate objects and figure things out for themselves. In that model, Schlossberg said, "the process of discovery is as important as the objects to be seen."

"Q&A: The Exhibition Designer." *Nature* 459, 329 (21 May 2009): 329.

Q&A: The exhibition designer

A pioneer of interactive museum installations, **Edwin Schlossberg** lets young visitors experience science first hand, from launching a space shuttle to seeing the world through an animal's eyes. As his neuroscience-inspired paintings are shown this month in New York City, he explains how he applies cognitive science to harness children's curiosity.

How do you engage children with science?
If you put a bucket of water in front of a child — 2 years old, 5 years old, even 8 years old — they will play with it forever. They learn a lot because they can craft a range of experiences as they integrate their sensory and physical worlds. I try to design like that. Most science museums try to train future scientists or to say "Isn't science cool?" To me, neither of those attitudes is appropriate. I like to make experiences that allow you to see something differently, in a way that encourages you to have a conversation with other people in the room. It's more about provoking questions than giving answers.

S. WILKES

What challenges do science museums face?
Today's parents are afraid of their kids growing smarter than them. When the theme park Sesame Place opened in Dallas, Texas, in the early 1980s, a survey found that the vast majority of parents would not come because they were worried their children would ask questions they couldn't answer. They were afraid of their kids' curiosity. We decided to print tens of thousands of comic books that answered all the questions kids might ask. And we got an audience.

How do you draw on cognitive science?
I want to make exhibits that engage all the senses, so I look to people who have the best understanding of neurophysiology and learning. When I designed for the Brooklyn Children's Museum in New York, I talked with child psychologist Jean Piaget. Then I read sociologist Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, which argues that we often behave like actors, taking on roles that influence how we respond to our surroundings and each other. I've consulted educational computer scientist Seymour Papert and artificial-intelligence pioneer Marvin Minsky at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Most of these scientists think that learning by doing is better than just looking or hearing.

How does the public see neuroscience?
Amazing discoveries are happening in labs all over the world, but they are not visible to the public. I'm not aware of any current major exhibit on neuroscience in the United States or abroad. For the US pavilion at the 2005 World's Fair in Japan, I proposed an exhibit with my company ESI Design on how people are imaging neurons. We thought it would be important, beautiful and interesting. But President George W. Bush didn't like it.

You designed a museum for NASA at the Stennis Space Center in Mississippi?
Yes, it's right next to the highway — the first science museum in the country that is also a rest stop. It is now scheduled to open next year because the site was completely destroyed by Hurricane Katrina and construction was delayed. It's a space museum, but the main focus will be on meteorology. You'll walk into a big spherical theatre, put on 3D glasses and feel like you're at the centre of a hurricane. Then the sides of the theatre will roll up to reveal labs where you can explore the tools that allow us to make the weather visible. You'll be able to turn on sensors to monitor the wind speed and water temperature at buoys in the Gulf of Mexico, and compare that with what you see outside the building.

What other exhibits are you working on?
Did you ever see a Tamagotchi, the digital toy that would 'die' if you didn't pay attention to it? I found that idea creepy but brilliant. For the exhibit at the Children's Museum of Los Angeles in California [which was due to open next year, but the funding for which is now uncertain], we tried to make it feel as if it was an ecosystem the children had to take care of with their own hands. They walk into this fantastical place with a giant tree and animals called Dogbear and Puppycub that seem to be sleeping. If the kids start to blow air and shine lights, the creatures wake up and they can pet and feed them.

Is there anything you've always wanted to build?
An oversize scale model of the human body as a giant pinball game. It would be the size of an American-football field. A hundred people playing together would make all the systems work so the body wakes up. It might help us to think of ourselves not just as individuals, but as a gigantic community of cells.

You're also a painter. How does your art relate to the brain?
My new set of paintings shows what I imagine your neuron patterning would be if you were thinking of a phrase — such as "You being focused", "You considering stillness", "You absolutely certain". It thrills me that scientists are able to see neurons. My art is what we might see if we could witness the process of thinking itself. ■

Interview by **Jascha Hoffman**, a writer based in New York.
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Edwin Schlossberg: At the Moment
Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York City
Until 30 May 2009.

Sheets, Hilarie M. "Edwin Schlossberg."
ARTNews 108, no. 7 (Summer 2009): 124-26.

reviews: new york

Edwin Schlossberg

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

Edwin Schlossberg's inventive exhibition, "At the Moment," literally shone light on states of mind—among them, self-possession, focus, attachment, and certainty. He beamed a photographer's lamp at 22 paintings on aluminum panels, each 3 by 4 feet (all 2008). They blend evocative phrases like "You Being Alone" with abstract markings. Illuminating, exposing, and interrogating, the harsh lights trained the viewer's eye on these reflective surfaces until a thought-provoking interplay of word and image emerged.

The titles matched the stenciled words on the paintings, each starting with the word "you," such as *You Holding Onto Time*. But the words on the paintings are scattered over the surfaces and can be read in varying configurations, continually—and poetically—shifting meaning, as in "Time Holding Onto You." Accompanying these words are streams of parallel lines, painted freehand in clusters of white, silver, and black that intersect at various angles, suggesting different narrative lines and converging paths.

The relationship between text and imagery was more direct in other works. In *You Realized*, the words are paired with a loose web of wavy, silver lines evoking neurons. In *You Being Focused*, short white lines and red dots are aligned in three neat horizontal rows that could be read as text or a musical score.

One of the most successful was *You Considering Stillness*, which looks like a cellular matrix or a pattern of footprints in the snow. It glowed under the radiance of the lamp and offered a physical equivalent to the ephemeral state of "stillness." In this show, Schlossberg, who is also the founder of ESI Design, a company that creates interactive exhibitions, gave viewers an acute experience of self-awareness, both mental and corporal.

—Hilarie M. Sheets

Edwin Schlossberg, *You Considering Stillness*, 2008, acrylic on aluminum, 36" x 48". Ronald Feldman Fine Arts.

Donik, Verna. "The key of exhibit is: 'experience'." *The Associated Press*, January 11, 2005.

The key word of exhibit is: 'experience'

By VERENA DOBNIK
Associated Press Writer
427 words
11 January 2005
14:14
Associated Press Newswires
English

NEW YORK (AP) - Ed **Schlossberg** is a very private man creating very public work.

The designer of an Internet system that links Americans to their Ellis Island roots and a ground zero chapel exhibit on the terrorist attack would prefer that his work stand on its own -- minus the, "Pssst, he's Caroline Kennedy's husband" added on, often in "iffy" tabloid gossip.

The truth is, she's often by his side, quietly bolstering his work -- with the famed name tagging along like an uninvited guest.

This week, **Schlossberg**'s new one-man art show opened at a Soho gallery: poetry he wrote and etched into 36 polished panels that reflect the face of each visitor who stops to read them.

His aim, he said in a telephone interview, is to draw people into "an experience."

"There's no reason to make something unless it moves someone's nervous system," said **Schlossberg**, who holds a Ph.D in science and literature. "I made the poems into visual objects so they're accessible, so you can see yourself in the words. It's what you do when you're reading: You confront the issues, you have a dialogue with yourself."

He's been etching the words into the reflecting aluminum with a steel stylus for about a year, letter by letter -- from a notebook he carries around to scribble thoughts as they come to him.

With a staff of 50, his ESI "experiential" design firm is both high-tech and high-spirited, working from a Manhattan office where some corners resemble a child's playroom, strewn with whimsical, multicolored objects, graphics and hand-drawn sketches amid the latest computer screens.

Schlossberg heads an ongoing interactive project for Ellis Island's American Family Immigration History Center, where a database of information, visuals and sounds bring alive more than 17 million immigrants processed on the island from 1892 to 1924. To help more Americans trace their roots, he's now expanding the system so descendants of people who came through other ports and at other times will also be able to tap their family stories.

The ground zero interactive exhibit at St. Paul's Chapel -- still up, with changing images -- pulls visitors into a sanctuary where rescue workers ate, slept and prayed after Sept. 11, 2001, while mourners left objects of remembrance.

The current art show at the Ronald Feldman gallery in Soho runs through Feb. 5.

Art in America
no. 6 (June/July 2005): 186

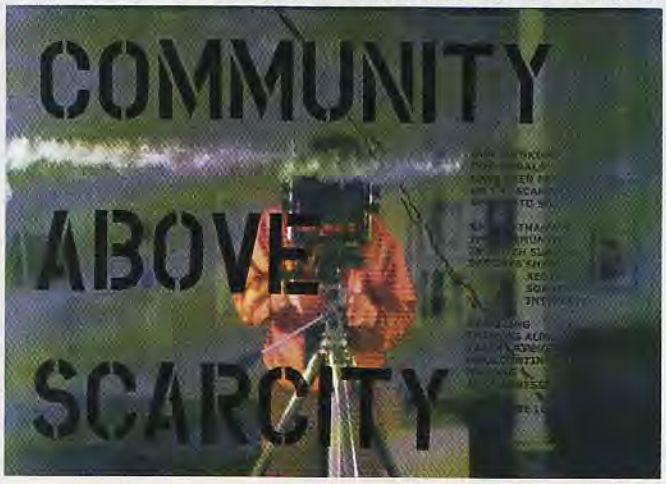
Edwin Schlossberg at Ronald Feldman

Artist, designer and poet Edwin Schlossberg's conceptual "drawings" are actually highly polished, midsize aluminum panels (3 feet in their largest dimension) applied in various ways with words and phrases. In "Reflecting on Culture," his recent exhibition of these pieces at Feldman, the viewer was included among their reflections, a factor intimately related to the content of the work. The visual aspects of the installation were impressive: a single line of 50 evenly spaced panels filled the gallery at eye level, while the texts, printed in caps of various sizes and fonts broken up into lines of simple phrases and longer observations, had the salutary effect of visual clarity, which seems to be Schlossberg's major concern. The simple but powerful presentation strengthened the artist's message that culture is "to be shared, rooted in continuity, focused on generations, transferred along the memory of sudden losses" (*Culture To Be Shared*, 2004).

In places, the texts are aphoristic, with a taut, abstract style—particularly in the large, stenciled title phrases, which can resemble slogans ("community above scarcity," for example). The viewer is invited to consider a visual shorthand that pares language down to essential statements; these coalesce around generalizations that are hard to test as right or wrong ("unconscious attention unravels culture"). In some places, the language tends to undermine itself in self-referentiality, but elsewhere it spells out meaningful consequences: "Culture is the resting place of emotional understanding, yet always changing, defending it and our presence in threats to continuity, watching for fanning fires that break the respect for understanding" (*Culture Breaks*, 2004).

Schlossberg is clearly interested in the relationship between art and language in his insistence on the visuality of the object mediating the meaning of the words. In this, his work may be linked to that of other text-based artists such as Lawrence Weiner. Schlossberg is writing a kind of concrete poetry, whose forms are emphasized by repetition of representative phrases and also by their physical presentation. The reflective aluminum panels, encompassing the world of the spectator, reiterate his belief that culture needs to be humanized in order to become fully effective. —*Jonathan Goodman*

Edwin Schlossberg: ***Community Above Scarcity***, 2004, etched poly-polished aluminum, vinyl lettering, acrylic paint, 24 by 36 inches; at Ronald Feldman.



art on paper
7, no. 5 (March 2003): 68

Edwin Schlossberg.
Ronald Feldman Fine Arts.

One can read Edwin Schlossberg's *Deep See Poems* as referring to the punning title of one of his artist's books; or one can "see" them as a kind of visionary graffiti, well-crafted rather than casually scrawled. They're writing in which words become abstract images, sometimes festively colored, sometimes fragmented into isolated letters. Like Icarian meteors, sentences often blur into gestural streaks. Indeed, there's a kind of distraught didacticism

Edwin Schlossberg, *Self is Another*, ink and graphite on vellum (48-1/2 x 39-1/4 x 5-1/4 in.), 2002. Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York.

about Schlossberg's texts, as though he is pleading with us to take his thoughts seriously rather than simply enjoy their aesthetic display. He invites us to reflect even as he distracts us with the quirky style of his reflections. Ideas proliferate, but the sensuous interplay of the words, which are of different sizes, colors, and shapes, provides a sensory experience that precedes any concern with meaning.

The paper gets more integral to the poem as Schlossberg's work develops. In the poems from the 1970s, the text appears on unobtrusive plain paper; in the new ones, it appears on and under doubled sheets of luminescent vellum. The membranous surface of each sheet seems to exist independently of whatever is inscribed on it. It subsumes the life of the mind the words represent into its own inner life. In *Underwritten* (2002), the words almost disappear into it. The labile space between the doubled papers becomes what Freud called a repression barrier. The text underneath is readable up close, the text on top is blurred. The unconscious is unexpectedly clearer than the conscious. Words become what Freud called mnemonic traces, the vellum writing pad making them even more enigmatic. Thus the new works are more about the evocative power of paper than about the conceptual power of words. Schlossberg writes the early poems with feeling. In the new ones, the real feeling is in the semi-transparent paper; veiling the words, it shapes their appearance, adding its strange beauty to their meaning. Schlossberg is a mystic, eager to find "the history of the world in one word," as a 1977 work states, the way William Blake found it in a grain of sand. In the new works, history and language seem forgotten in mystifying vellum.

—Donald Kuspit

May 2, 2001
PULLING THEM IN

PULLING THEM IN; Now Showing: Something Dazzling

By PETER HALL

Correction Appended

TAKE a deep breath,'' says the disembodied voice of Tom Hanks as the planetarium audience gapes at the projected stars overhead. ''No, I'm serious,'' Mr. Hanks continues. ''Really, everybody, do it. Every atom of oxygen you just inhaled was made deep inside a star.''

There, in the opening show at the American Museum of Natural History's Rose Center for Earth and Space, is the essence of the new age of edutainment: the dazzling star show, the Hollywood star narration and the personalized, motivational delivery of scientific information.

There are 9,000 museums in the United States, according to the American Association of Museums in Washington, and thousands more learning centers, visitor centers and corporate displays. Where once their exhibitions were static, comprising artifacts in glass cases and wall-mounted captions, today they are increasingly cinematic and interactive ''experiences.''

The edutainment boom has, in turn, given rise to a new generation of exhibition designers, the tech-smart, theatrically minded visionaries and pragmatists who specialize in bringing objects, ideas and even corporate philosophies to life.

Their éminence grise is Ralph Appelbaum, whose New York company, Ralph Appelbaum Associates, helped create exhibitions for the $210 million Rose Center but who is perhaps best known for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. Mr. Appelbaum argues that demand for experiential exhibitions is an inevitable outcome of a theme-park-and-movie culture, in which children are more likely to know the names of the characters in ''The Lion King'' than the names of the American presidents. ''Families have found that their leisure activities are on the thin side when they are rooted in the fictive,'' Mr. Appelbaum said. ''Museums have been constantly exploring techniques to make more robust and better attracters of people's time.''

Hence the opening planetarium show at the Rose Center. Like the opening scenes of a movie, the first few minutes inside a museum play a crucial part in the attraction process. ''It's where you leave the outside world behind,'' said Robin Silvestri of the multimedia firm Batwin & Robin Productions in New York, which worked on the Rose Center Show as well as the orientation theater of the new National Museum of Australia in Canberra. ''It gives the viewer a chance to sit and adjust to what's around them and introduces the basic themes.''

The Australian museum, a $95 million complex that opened in March, orients its visitors in the Circa, a theater designed by the Manhattan-based firm DMCD. Inside the darkened 40-seat theater, the arriving audience watches a film titled "Land" delivered on four thin "plasma" screens that crawl on hydraulic lifts across a large rear-projected backdrop, depicting Australia's distinctive landscape and the human impact on the environment. At the end of the brief show, the entire theater rotates 90 degrees to face a new presentation on the theme of nation, while a fresh batch of visitors watches the "Land" performance.

The revolving theater, while appearing to be a gimmick, actually solves the problem of circulation, one of the foremost concerns of the exhibition designer: how to keep people moving without losing their attention. (The National Museum of Australia is anticipating a million visitors its first year, twice the population of Canberra.)

The museum's director, Dawn Casey, admits that finding the balance between dazzling multimedia experiences and traditional museum exhibitions was a challenge. "The national museum in Wellington, New Zealand, faced a lot of criticism when it opened a few years ago for being too much of a theme park," Ms. Casey said. "I think we have the balance of scholarship and entertainment, of contemplation and involvement, just right."

AROUND 120,000 artifacts are displayed in the museum, including bark paintings, convict clothing, cricket memorabilia and the carcass of the last Tasmanian tiger, which died in the 1930's. "That special quality of the real object is still a vital part of this museum," Ms. Casey said.

Until relatively recently, the very definition of a museum was a repository of treasures and artifacts, its roots lying in the private collections of the Mesopotamians and Medicis before coming to light in the great democratic European museums of the 18th century. The discipline of exhibition design, however, has a shorter and humbler history, emerging from world's fairs and trade shows, where its function was to sell national and corporate ideals, unassisted by the presence of a precious artifact.

An early influence was James Gardner, who as a British Army officer devised radar-confounding inventions during World War II before turning to the creation of exhibitions. His first major show, "Britain Can Make It," at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1946, was created to raise the spirits of a war-damaged nation, and his best-known design, in 1966, was the Evoluon Technological Museum, an interactive science center financed by the Dutch electronics company Philips. Gardner's American counterparts were Charles and Ray Eames, who created a series of exhibitions commissioned by I.B.M. in the 1960's and the multiscreen slide presentation for the 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow, which showed Russians a cross section of the lives of ordinary American people. It provided an appropriate backdrop for Richard Nixon to challenge Nikita Khrushchev in the famous "kitchen" debates.

The didactic undertone of some of these postwar exhibits seems heavy-handed by today's multicultural standards. In contrast, at the National Museum of Australia, everything -- from the multinarrative exhibitions to the building, which was designed by the Australian architects Ashton Ragatt McDougall to resemble a jigsaw puzzle -- intends to convey that there are several, sometimes conflicting stories of the country's history, according to Ms. Casey, who is an Aborigine.

Edwin Schlossberg, who has been designing exhibitions since 1970, notes that his clients today come to a project with a better understanding of their audience, and the sense that they cannot afford to presume a single visitor's perspective. "There used to be a depiction of the museumgoer as someone who already knew the context and was looking for more content," Mr. Schlossberg said. "Now everyone's quite aware that the context is not apparent for most people and you have to develop both. It's a huge leap."

Mr. Schlossberg's recent projects include the American Family Immigration History Center at Ellis Island and the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington, where the design attempts to accommodate Roman Catholics as well as the merely curious. Visitors to the John Paul center are encouraged to design a stained-glass window out of available motifs on a digital kiosk, practice bell-ringing and create a giant collaborative collage by floating designs onto a video wall. Visitors can record their testimonials and creations by swiping a card through a scanner and review them later at interactive stations in the cafe. The idea draws on Mr. Schlossberg's firm's previous experiences in creating interactive environments, notably the Sony Wonder Technology Lab, a four-story interactive museum in the Sony Building on Madison Avenue, which opened in 1993.

The arrival of commercially trained designers into the museum world has not been without conflict. The designers' estimation of audience attention spans can differ radically from those of museum curators, who typically spend years studying the minutiae of their chosen subject and are unwilling to see their essays reduced to 50-word captions. "There are curators who want to get their thesis on the walls, and you have to strip that out," said W. Scott Guerin, a partner at DMCD. "That's a painful process."

Other designers take a more collaborative view. "That thesis paper is what's important," said Robert Checchi, an exhibition designer formerly at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum who is now based in Santa Monica, Calif., where one of his clients is the J. Paul Getty Museum. "We're out to educate, not to entertain. Curators should work well with designers -- it's a chance to be heard. They're ecstatic about getting their ideas out in the world. Designers who see their job as entertainment are losing sight of their goals."

Mr. Guerin maintains that entertainment and information do not make a dichotomy. "You can have fun while you're learning," he said, adding that DMCD takes a heterogeneous approach to exhibition design, in contrast to, say, the "highly architectural" process of Ralph Appelbaum Associates. Indeed, Mr. Appelbaum's interpretive exhibitions at the Rose Center and the Corning Museum of Glass in Corning, N.Y., are relatively stately compared with some DMCD projects, which include rides more commonly associated with theme parks.

In DMCD's drawings for the new $85 million Kalamazoo Air Zoo, an aviation museum in Michigan to be completed in 2003, there is a "solo coaster" for visitors to fly around the collection of warplanes, and a simulated World War II bombing run over Germany, where they have a 50 percent chance of being "shot down." At the base of the Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, DMCD created a 100,000-square-foot science center where visitors learn about oil drilling (Petronas's business) through dioramas, games and a simulated helicopter ride to a replica oil rig.

Projects like the Petronas exhibition, serving the gods of corporate promotion and education, represent an increasing trend in exhibition design that seems to blur once clearly defined lines. But Mr. Appelbaum, whose company recently completed a temporary exhibition of television history for the Brazilian media group Globo in São Paulo, argues that corporations can still be altruistic in these projects and create social spaces rooted in learning. The Globo exhibition, for instance, tackles the philosophical chestnut "Does culture make television or television make culture?"

Corporate-financed shows, after all, are keeping designers in business. Mr. Schlossberg, for his part, is single-minded about the need for his clients to put educational agendas first. "My role is to make the customers smarter, not to sell them products," he said. "I say that if your goal is to sell them products you should hire an ad agency."

Photos: IN CONTEXT -- The Pope John Paul II Cultural Center is meant for the devout as well as for the curious.; CORPORATE -- Ralph Appelbaum, whose firm designed a Brazilian exhibition on TV history, right, says corporations can promote themselves and still educate the public. Below, a 200-inch telescope mirror, the ceterpiece of the Corning Museum of Glass. (Graziella Pazzanese/Esto); (Peter Mauss/Esto)

April 27, 2001
PUBLIC LIVES

PUBLIC LIVES; Ellis Island, and Other Backward Glances

By ROBIN FINN

THE brainy type but emphatically not the confessional type, Edwin A. Schlossberg is seated near a drawing table in his loftlike office at 641 Avenue of the Americas, trying and failing to extrapolate a logical progression from his rather charmed -- he'd probably opt for a favorite word and call it cool -- life's journey, which now includes the design of the interactive database on Ellis Island that links Americans to 22 million ancestors.

Why did he end up designing museum exhibits? "I don't know." Did he have any ambivalence about marrying into the Kennedy clan? "Nope." Does he consider himself a lucky man? "Yep." Is his work -- and maybe his life -- all about making improbable connections? "Exactly." Bingo! Call him a Renaissance man, like some relatives do, and he doesn't flinch, though he confesses he doesn't play an instrument. "But I can play the stereo really fantastically," brags Mr. Schlossberg, a fan of jazz and Dylan, and designer of a Chicago Symphony Orchestra initiative, Echo, to broaden its audience.

"It all makes sense when you look at it backwards," Mr. Schlossberg says of his lifeline, and darned if, decades ago, he didn't design a series of layered poems inside plexiglass precisely that way -- the words don't coalesce into a comprehensible whole until you back away. There's one hanging in the hall; it overlooks the gargantuan "pinball man" that, like Frankenstein's monster, can be summoned to motion (the catch is, it requires 125 people for activation).

"That concept's still for sale," notes Mr. Schlossberg. There are, he admits, 15 or 20 projects that Edwin A. Schlossberg Inc. has had to back-burner for lack of discerning patrons. Same goes for the movie script, based on Virginia Woolf's "Waves," wasting away in his desk. "I love the idea of reweaving the threads to make something that was unconnectable connectable," he says of the mandate that's moved him ever since he wrote his (published, of course) dissertation as a conversation between Albert Einstein and Samuel Beckett.

Robust and sunburned at 55, with a neatly clipped head of prematurely gray hair, he wins (apologies to Arnold Schwarzenegger) the award as resident intellectual of the Kennedy in-laws -- when's the last time the action hero quoted John Donne, Wallace Stevens and Gertrude Stein in the space of two hours? Or had a retrospective of conceptual artwork (creations Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg blithely refers to as "stuff") mounted at the National Arts Club. Or, spurred by an ancient Chinese word-poetry exercise, assembled 52 canvases and wrote down everything he knows (Mr. Schlossberg did it in 1996).

AS for his wife's take on his art, Mr. Schlossberg cites Mr. Stevens, the renowned Hartford poet/insurance man: "Wallace Stevens was always talking about how you're never your profession at home. It's good not to be taken seriously; that level of irreverence is refreshing," he says. "It's probably that sense of humor and irreverence that keeps me wanting to make things. As if you could get it right; that would be the funniest thing ever."

He discloses that staring, laughing and, last but not least, thinking, count as pivotal compositional moments in his workday: "Thinking up the methodology of a new project is a hoot," says the designer, whose two latest projects -- the Ellis Island database and the interactive displays at the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington, D.C. -- qualify as major hoots. Next on his agenda: a Louisville arboretum, a North Carolina historic site, signs for the Reuters building.

He waited until the Ellis Island project was operational to indulge himself and research his four grandparents, who all left Russia due to religious persecution and disliked discussing the past: "It's like seeing someone you love and haven't seen in a long time," he says. "It's a rush, like finding evidence of your extended self."

He insists his Jewish-ness (he's "happy and proud" of his heritage, though isn't a regular at services like his father, a well-off Upper West Side textiles designer, was) is immaterial to his work on the Catholic museum. His three children are being raised Catholic; 8-year-old Jack's First Holy Communion is imminent. He is, he says, surrounded by "Catholicism with a big C and a little c."

A disciple and employee of the free-thinker Buckminster Fuller, a running mate (and we're not talking politics) of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns on the downtown art frontier in the late '60s ("I've always loved to be with people whose presence and mind is really unfamiliar and interesting, and they are about as interesting and unfamiliar as you can get"), Mr. Schlossberg left Columbia University professionally clueless, with a pair of doctorates (science and literature), in 1971. But he was hardly idle: "Being bored is irresponsible."

He wrote seven books on computer games after a chance encounter with his aunt's futuristic Hewlett-Packard pocket calculator in 1974, and founded his self-named corporation in 1977 after a project-by-happenstance at the Brooklyn Children's Museum prompted a demand for his design skills. He became Mr. Caroline Kennedy -- at least in tabloid parlance -- when he married the former president's only daughter in 1986, but wasn't thrown by the hoopla: "It's amazing we met each other, but life is what it is, and it was clear very early on that it would be a different set of issues than in other circumstances. But we still have plenty of time to be who we are; it's worth preserving that."

Photo: EDWIN A. SCHLOSSBERG (Chester Higgins Jr./The New York Times)

March 15, 2001

Edwin Schlossberg Inc. Plugs In the Vatican

By FRED BERNSTEIN

EDWIN A. SCHLOSSBERG heads a design firm that specializes in interactive museum exhibitions. He is also an artist who inscribes poetic musings on metal, glass and paper. Last week, at the opening of a retrospective of 84 of his works at the National Arts Club, some of Mr. Schlossberg's employees were surprised to find themselves surrounded by the private thoughts of their otherwise reticent boss.

"It's the stuff he can't express at the office," Mr. Schlossberg's wife, Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg, explained, "because there he works as part of a team."

And yet the work Mr. Schlossberg does at the office has never been more personal. His addition to Ellis Island, where all four of his Russian-born grandparents landed a century ago, is about to make the island's Immigration Museum a place where visitors can not only learn about their family histories but also round them out. This project, which will have its debut April 17, should raise Mr. Schlossberg's profile in New York, where he has often been known more for his marriage than for his work. (He is also designing electronic displays for the new Reuters headquarters to open in Times Square this fall.)

"Until now, visiting Ellis Island was a very melancholy experience," Mr. Schlossberg said in his office last week, "because you couldn't find evidence of your family."

The contribution of Mr. Schlossberg's firm, a database of ships' manifests from 1892 to 1924, will allow visitors not just to find that evidence, but to augment it by recording oral histories and scanning photos and documents into the museum's electronic scrapbook.

Mr. Schlossberg, 55, said he plans to take his three children to Ellis Island this spring. For another part of their heritage, the children may have to accompany him to Washington, where the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center, a $65 million museum designed by Leo A. Daly Architects on the grounds of Catholic University, is set to open next week. For it, Mr. Schlossberg has designed interactive displays that offer visitors repeated opportunities not just to learn about Catholicism, but to explain -- in words, music and pictures -- what the religion means to them.

What is surprising isn't that the church turned to a designer who grew up in a "moderately observant" Jewish home to tell its story. After all, he said, "my wife is a Catholic, and for her and her family it's been a great source of strength." What is surprising is the use of interactive exhibits, in which much of the content is created by the visitors themselves, to explain what is perhaps the most hierarchical of religions.

"What we did is really similar in function to a cathedral," Mr. Schlossberg said, "where the stories were told in the windows and the carvings. Only there, the ideas were fixed. We've made a kind of collaborative cathedral."

The approach weds Mr. Schlossberg's longstanding interest in technology (his 11 books include a best-seller on calculator games) with his ambition to broaden audiences for museums. Ralph Appelbaum, the exhibition designer behind the Rose Center for Earth and Space, calls Mr. Schlossberg's work "a critical part of what new museums are looking for, which is as broad a range of entry points into their narratives as possible." Mr. Schlossberg's approach has the support of Cardinal Adam J. Maida of Detroit, who conceived the project, and of Pope John Paul II, to whom Mr. Schlossberg showed the designs during a Vatican visit last year.

When Mr. Schlossberg was hired in 1996, the plan was to honor Pope John Paul II. The model, Mr. Schlossberg said, was the presidential library. (Mr. Schlossberg designed some of the exhibits at the Kennedy Library in Boston.) At Cardinal Maida's request, Mr. Schlossberg's company, Edwin Schlossberg Inc., which is based in the Flatiron district, hired a polling company to ask 1,000 Catholics in New York and Washington what they most wanted the museum to include. "The life of John Paul II came in sixth or seventh," Mr. Schlossberg said. "What was clear was that people wanted to learn about Catholic beliefs."

At the museum, which Mr. Schlossberg and his staff refer to as JP2, visitors can choose a topic from a list that includes "community" and "imagination"; the swiping of electronic cards tells the ubiquitous computers which theme to highlight.

Mr. Schlossberg and his colleagues wrestled with ways to talk about dark chapters in church history. In the end, they decided to list all the popes, but generally describe the accomplishments of "only the good ones," Mr. Schlossberg said. (The Holocaust is mentioned in a discussion of Pius XII.)

One of his first insights into display design came at the Vatican Pavilion at the 1964-65 New York World's Fair. Mr. Schlossberg, who grew up on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, went there to see the Michelangelo Pietà from the Vatican Museum, on loan to the fair. He remembers not only the sculpture, but the moving sidewalk that whisked visitors by it. "Given the size of the crowds," he said, "there was nothing else they could do."

The sheer number and diversity of museumgoers today require a more interactive approach, Mr. Schlossberg believes. "We are constructing opportunities not just to learn about a particular subject, but also about other people and their way of seeing that subject," he said.

The museum also includes an exhibition of Vatican art and a room devoted to objects, including skis belonging to John Paul II. The interactive displays "aren't meant to replace object-oriented museums," Mr. Schlossberg said, "but to expand the range of things museums can do."

Ten days before its official opening, workers at the museum were still solving minor technical problems. The sights and sounds of dozens of interactive displays were appealing, but also a bit overwhelming. "Come play; we need people to ring the bells," announced a recorded voice at an attraction that lets six visitors play church bells in sequence. Computer terminals where visitors are to

create electronic collages announced, ''The word for the day is 'faith.' ''

The reliance on computers may create capacity problems. One sure-to-be-popular area, where visitors will be able to design stained-glass windows for display on large overhead screens, has only four stations, hardly enough for the 1,500 visitors expected at the center each day.

Is Mr. Schlossberg trying to make Catholicism user-friendly? ''Catholicism is user-friendly,'' he said. ''Don't confuse the delivery system of Catholicism,'' he added, ''which may be hierarchical, with the experience, which is something much more personal and more profound.''

Photos: PLEASE TOUCH -- Edwin Schlossberg, above, with his poems on foil (top left) and silk-screen artwork (far right). His firm designed interactive displays (left, top right and right) for the new Pope John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington. (Portrait, Philip Greenberg for The New York Times; installation photographs, Pope John Paul II Cultural Center)

NEW YORK

The Family Man

You know Ed Schlossberg as a guy who married into the most famous family in America. But his new project -- helping ordinary Americans trace their family histories through Ellis Island -- may finally give us all insight into the man who lives with Caroline Kennedy.

By **Jeffrey Hogrefe**

When Edwin Schlossberg and Caroline Kennedy were married in 1986, the Hyannis Port celebration was compared to a royal wedding, complete with entertainment after dinner. Carly Simon sang a few songs; then George Plimpton narrated a fireworks display which was his gift to the couple. Not surprisingly, the media was obsessed with the groom: Who was this man marrying America's First Daughter? But Schlossberg resolutely remained a mystery, refusing to grant interviews. And though he was described as a specialist in interactive media, no one actually understood his chosen profession. So when a burst of fireworks fizzled into a fog bank, Plimpton couldn't resist. "These fireworks," he quipped, "represent what Ed Schlossberg does."

Fifteen years later, Schlossberg is sitting in the conference room of his interactive-media firm in an old cast-iron building in the Flatiron district. At 55, he's grayer, but he's still a strapping six foot two, a good-looking man with a calm, assured, slightly sardonic detachment.

"My kids tell me it is so annoying that all the other kids' fathers are investment bankers," he says, referring to Rose, Tatiana, and Jack Schlossberg, uptown kids with a downtown dad who dresses in black jeans and black sweaters and does something with computers. "Not that anyone knows what an investment banker does."

If Schlossberg is sensitive about the public perception of his work life, he does not let on, perhaps because he has become accustomed to a great deal of unwanted attention. He's "fiercely protective of Caroline," according to one observer, and never takes his children to public events, to shield them from the photographers who hounded his wife in her youth. I'd been informed that he would not want to talk about his family. But families, it turns out, are what his biggest project to date is about.

Last week, the nature of Schlossberg's work became much clearer, even to Plimpton, who still thinks what he does is "very cerebral, complicated, and conceptual." Five years in the making, the American Family Immigration History Center on Ellis Island is an Edwin Schlossberg Incorporated-designed interactive-media display consisting of 41 computer stations and a Website. Linked to an extensive database of more than 17 million people who passed through the island from 1892 to 1924, the Website will allow anyone who suspects he was descended from an Ellis Island immigrant -- approximately 40 percent of all Americans -- to find out for sure. None of the data would be available were it not for the Mormon volunteers who, motivated by their religion's interest in genealogy, laboriously transcribed the ship's handwritten manifests from microfilm.

"I never set out to be a designer," Schlossberg explains. "What I was doing

was thinking. Suddenly people began to pay for my thoughts."

Although to most people he's still the mysterious husband of Caroline Kennedy, Schlossberg has designed innovative media installations for many leading institutions, including Sony Wonder in the Sony building on Madison Avenue; the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan; and the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington, D.C., which opened in March. "Because of its potential audience," notes Ralph Appelbaum, a museum designer with offices in SoHo and London who is often a competitor of Schlossberg's, "the Ellis Island project is going to raise his visibility."

Growing up in the years immediately after World War II on the Upper West Side, Schlossberg was surrounded by a large extended family of Russian Jews. All four of his great-grandparents were Ellis Island immigrants who were born within 50 miles of one another in the vicinity of Poltava, Russia, a fact that had to sustain young Ed's curiosity.

"When I would ask my grandparents about Russia, they didn't want to talk," Schlossberg says. "One of the things about immigration under duress is that no one wants to tell you about it."

Schlossberg's private office looks out across Sixth Avenue to the stolid cast-iron buildings that his grandparents probably went to when the structures were gleaming new department stores, at the turn of the century. For a person who has assiduously avoided all contact with the media, he seems remarkably at ease talking about his life. His grandfather built a small real-estate empire, then lost it all in the Depression. His father, Alfred Schlossberg, was a well-to-do textile designer and manufacturer.

One of those Upper West Side boys who spent all their free time going between painting lessons, classes in science at the Museum of Natural History, and Hebrew school, Schlossberg attended P.S. 166 and the Birch Wathen School. In 1967, he received a B.A. from Columbia College; four years later, a Ph.D. in science and literature from Columbia University. His thesis was an imaginary conversation between Albert Einstein and Samuel Beckett -- hardly a step to an assured academic job. Instead, he was, as he puts it, "invited into the process" of making art in New York.

Befriended by John Cage, who taught music composition at Columbia in those days, Schlossberg rode the subway downtown and rented an apartment on 13th Street. He spent time with artists Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, who were then living in the same loft building near Peck Slip. Rauschenberg and Johns were combining language and art and science in their early artwork in a way that appealed to Schlossberg. And he began to create what was known as "concrete poetry." In his case, the compositions consisted of fragments of letters on Plexiglas panels that could be manipulated to reveal phrases. Influenced by Asian art, he also stenciled finely wrought poetry onto rice-paper scrolls connected by bamboo rods.

At the same time as he was pursuing a career as an artist, Schlossberg went to work for R. Buckminster Fuller, the visionary who invented the geodesic dome and the Dymaxion car, which looks like a spaceship on wheels, and who inspired the *Whole Earth Catalog*.

"I learned a lot from Bucky," Schlossberg says. "Both negative and positive. He was fantastic at writing menus. But he wasn't interested in cooking dinner."

"I just thought he has had this life of ideas: fantastic, amazing, poetic, beautiful ideas. Then he moves on," Schlossberg says. "It is often harder to slog through it and make sure the thing gets done."

While at Columbia, Schlossberg had published a magazine called *Good News* that contained only inspirational essays written by Fuller and others. The magazine led to other design jobs. "I never set out to be a designer," Schlossberg explains, "Like Bucky, what I really was doing was thinking. Suddenly people began to pay me for my thoughts."

A chance introduction to the director of the Brooklyn Children's Museum at a White House conference on children and youth led him in 1971 to a staff position at the museum. Just as Schlossberg had sought out Johns and Rauschenberg when he wanted to learn how to make art, he went to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to talk to Marvin Minsky and Seymour Papert, groundbreaking human-behavioralists who pioneered artificial intelligence, when he wanted to learn how to create an interactive experience for children. The success of the Children's Museum led Schlossberg to the Massachusetts Association for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to design an interactive display for a visitors' center outside Farmingdale, Massachusetts.

With his career gaining momentum, Schlossberg used money he had made writing books on computer games to finance a design company. "My father worried that I would starve pursuing the poet's life," Schlossberg recalls. In 1977, ESI started with a staff of 2; today it employs 50.

A snowstorm threatens to dump two feet of snow on New York City on the day of the opening of Schlossberg's retrospective at the National Arts Club. But by six in the evening, the threat has diminished. It's the first time works from his 30-year career have been brought together in one place. Schlossberg stands near the entrance to the gallery, looking every inch the Artist in a tailored black leather jacket that recalls Vienna in the thirties.

"It's nice seeing this early work again," says Caroline, who has arrived late dressed in a black pantsuit, pointing to a Plexiglas art piece created in the late seventies. She has moved away from Schlossberg and is surrounded by a few friends. For someone allergic to talking to the press, Caroline assumes her role as wife of a media-worthy personality with a sporting detachment. But Andrew Cuomo, who is married to Caroline's cousin Kerry Kennedy Cuomo, quickly steps in to ask where the children are.

"You have to show them the Tiffany-glass ceiling in the other room," Cuomo advises. She says she'll bring them into the gallery when it is quieter.

"Ed is a unique creative genius," says Larry Bellante, project director of the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, which developed and funded the history center. "He is a bit of an artist and a bit of a philosopher. He is able to describe and work with people, stimulating them into being as creative as possible and also forcing them to follow along with what his ultimate vision for the project is. He says, 'This is what I want it to be,' and his staff steps in and makes it possible. I've never known anyone better at this, and I've worked with a lot of designers."

The Ellis Island project is not only his most visible project but also his most personal. He grows visibly

excited as he describes how he felt when he located on the center's database the ship's manifest for Abraham Hirsch, a grandfather who arrived in New York Harbor in 1903. "It was an awesome experience to see that name pop up on the screen," he says. "My whole life began on Ellis Island.

"I knew that we didn't want to turn the center into a roller-coaster ride," Schlossberg goes on, recalling how it felt to walk through the Immigration Museum. "When you are there, the feeling is reverential, knowing the struggles that these people went through. The challenge for us was to create something that didn't detract from that quality.

"We call it a celebration of the American family," Schlossberg says about the Ellis Island center. "The idea was that this would be a place for Americans from all places. We created a whole set of different experiences for people to re-up their citizenship and explore the ethnic diversity that they were part of.

"Like an official family-reunion place," Schlossberg says, voicing his ambition for the project. "We hope that once it is under way, people will want to come out to the island with their families and make a day of it. I'd like to call up my cousins and sister and go out there with them and put together our family tree."

If his extended family hasn't made the trip yet, the Schlossbergs -- Ed, Caroline, and their kids -- have; they took a tour of Ellis Island when Ed first signed on to the project. I suggest that maybe the history center will finally show his kids -- and everyone else, for that matter -- what he does for a living, but he shrugs.

"There's a lot in our culture no one thinks anyone actually invented," Ed says of his children's understanding of technology. "They look at a computer screen and do not understand someone actually spent a great deal of time trying to organize all of the information that they are viewing."

Schwendner, Martha. "Edwin Schlossberg, Figure: Ground." *Time Out New York*, June 8-15, 2000, 66.

Edwin Schlossberg, "Figure: Ground"

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, through Jun 24 (see Soho).

Edwin Schlossberg is a prolific writer and artist who's shown in New York since 1978. He's authored or coauthored a large number of texts on a wide range of subjects, including *The Pocket Calculator Game Book, The 1977/78 CB Guide,* an essay in *New Perspectives on Our Lives with Companion Animals* and the article "Insights and Illusions of Philosophy by Jean Piaget." Schlossberg is something of a polymath: He's also an architectural designer whose firm completed the common areas of Sony Plaza in New York. And he's Caroline Kennedy's husband.

How all of this relates to art is another story. From the looks of the work now at Ronald Feldman, it appears that Schlossberg might be better off sticking to one of his other lines of business. He presents two groups of work: a series of poems stenciled onto paper by pencil and then embellished with ink, and a series of brass stencils fabricated from computer scans of those poems. The poems themselves are vague and a bit facile, leaning toward New Age musing rather than philosophical inquiry. *Seem Wake Up Shade,* for instance, reads, "Being without unconscious (conscience) becomes our destruction wake up seem shade mind your heart." Another piece, *Sadness Happiness,* is equally touchy-feely: "Sadness isolated cacophony always never balance symphony connected happiness."

Extended reading assignments are generally not welcomed by art viewers, who expect something more immediate than a curl-up-and-read-a-book experience (and there are 42 pieces in this show to ponder). But text-based art can conquer the reluctance to stand and "read" an exhibition, as artist-wordsmiths like Jenny Holzer have proved. It's just that Schlossberg's combination of text and visuals doesn't really work: He doesn't gain much by turning his poems into visual art—except that he escapes the criticism (or lack of notice) they might receive in the literary world.—*Martha Schwendener*

Edwin Schlossberg, "Figure: Ground," installation view, 2000.

June 2, 2000

ART GUIDE

Here is a selective listing by critics of The New York Times of new or noteworthy art, design and photography exhibitions at New York museums and art galleries this weekend. Addresses, unless otherwise noted, are in Manhattan. Most galleries are closed on Sundays and Mondays, but hours vary and should be checked by telephone. Gallery admission is free.

* denotes a highly recommended show.

Museums

* "ART AND ORACLE: SPIRIT VOICES OF AFRICA," Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Avenue at 82nd Street, (212) 535-7710 (through July 30). This is the first big international loan exhibition of African art to appear at the Met outside the Michael C. Rockefeller wing, and it is gorgeous. The subject is divination, the practice of channeling superhuman knowledge to predict the future, diagnose illness and promote social harmony. Nearly every object here has a role in that process or reflects its effects, from a "power figure" that looks as explosive as a stick of dynamite to a Yoruba divination tray believed to be the oldest African wood sculpture in the West to the portrait of a king who was warned by diviners to beware of water and had himself depicted as half-fish. (He ended up in exile far across the Atlantic in Martinique.) Hours: Sundays and Tuesdays through Thursdays, 9:30 a.m. to 5:15 p.m.; Fridays and Saturdays until 8:45 p.m. Admission: $10; $5, students and the elderly (Holland Cotter).

* WILLIAM MERRITT CHASE, "Modern American Landscapes, 1886-1890," Brooklyn Museum of Art, 200 Eastern Parkway, at Prospect Park, (718) 638-5000 (through Aug. 13). Chase (1849-1916) had a long, distinguished run as a painter, teacher and art politician. But this show zeroes in on the five-year period when, in a transitional phase between the brown, murky tones of his Munich training and his arrival at a lighter style based on French Impressionism, he painted genteel views of park landscapes in Brooklyn and Manhattan. Aside from their engaging scenic content, the 35 oils and pastels in the show are important because they are the first paintings in which an Impressionist style was used to depict American subjects. Recent examinations corrected some errors about their locales. And new scholarly speculations on Chase's motives for painting them suggest that he wanted them to serve as examples of "civilized urban landscapes" that accorded with the European avant-garde model of modern life. Hours: Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. (to 11 p.m. on the first Saturday of each month). Admission: $4; $2, students and the elderly (Grace Glueck).

* "MAKING CHOICES, 1920-1960," Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, (212) 708-9480 (through Sept. 26). The main event at the Modern these days is the museum itself. This has been the case since last fall, when the project "MOMA 2000" began the first of what will be three successive

top-to-bottom reinstallations of the permanent collection galleries. The affair has been billed as a test drive toward the future, a chance for an institution to rethink the modern art tradition it helped to invent and to consider its own identity in what is often called a postmodern world. This second installment, which looks denser, weirder, messier and more truly modern (or maybe postmodern) than the first, is a big leap in the right direction. Hours: Thursdays through Tuesdays, 10:30 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.; Fridays, to 8:15 p.m. Admission: $10; $6.50, students and the elderly (Cotter).

* ''MASTERPIECES OF JAPANESE ART FROM THE MARY GRIGGS BURKE COLLECTION,'' Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Avenue at 82nd Street, (212) 535-7710 (through June 25). The good news is this ravishing exhibition of Japanese art, ranging from Neolithic pottery to knee-weakening Edo-period screens with a breadth and depth rarely seen in New York. Even better news is that a large part of the collection from which these 200 works are drawn is a promised gift to the Met, placing it suddenly among the top five museums for Japanese art in the United States. The show includes Buddhist sculptures and mandalas, monochrome ink paintings and calligraphy, hand scrolls and hanging scrolls as well as occasional but outstanding examples of ceramics and lacquerware. A specific Japanese sensibility, alternately refined and earthy, discreet and rambunctious, spiritual and cosmopolitan, and always astoundingly attuned to materials, is revealed here. Hours and admission: See above (Roberta Smith).

* ''MICHELANGELO TO PICASSO: MASTER DRAWINGS FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE ALBERTINA, VIENNA,'' Frick Collection, 1 East 70th Street, (212) 288-0700 (through June 18). The Albertina, which has one of the world's greatest collections of works on paper, houses 65,000 drawings and watercolors and nearly a million prints, from Gothic to contemporary. The small sampling of 45 drawings and watercolors here runs from Michelangelo to Jackson Pollock and includes many works that have never before left Austria. Standouts include Leonardo's ''Half-Length of an Apostle''; four drawings by Durer, including his ''Head of an Old Man'' (1521); Michelangelo's anatomical study ''Seated Male Nude With Two Arms''; and Raphael's ''Madonna and Child.'' There are works by Rubens, Rembrandt, Poussin, Claude Lorrain, van Gogh, Picasso, Klimt, Schiele, Chagall and lesser-knowns. It is not often that one gets to see this range of masters packed into one small show, a fine teaser for the full Albertina experience. Hours: Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sundays, 1 to 6 p.m. Admission: $7; $5, students and the elderly (Glueck).

* ''MAXFIELD PARRISH, 1870-1966,'' Brooklyn Museum of Art, 200 Eastern Parkway, at Prospect Park, (718) 638-5000 (through Aug. 6). A romantic fabulist who painted in a tight, finicky mode that left out no detail, Parrish (1870-1966) was a highly accomplished illustrator who could be considered the father of Norman Rockwell. As a more aspiring painter, he also pursued a never-never world of chaste but titillating young women and knightly men in pastoral landscapes that melded medieval towers with New England forests, Western gorges and the deep blue skies of fairy kingdoms. This show of more than 140 paintings, drawings, prints, illustrations and ephemera ranges from such well-known Parrish chestnuts as ''Daybreak'' (1922), depicting a young woman's ecstatic awakening to an erotically symbolic Dawn, to his coy, cartoonish ''Old King Cole'' mural of 1894. Aside from its campy entertainment value, there is enough here -- particularly his graphic art and some fine landscapes -- to sustain the revival of interest in his work that began with the Pop Art era. Hours and admission: See above (Glueck).

* "THE PRINZHORN COLLECTION: TRACES UPON THE WUNDERBLOCK," Drawing Center, 35 Wooster Street, SoHo, (212) 219-2166 (through June 10). The legendary Prinzhorn Collection, amassed just before and after World War I in Heidelberg, Germany, is one of the originating points of the study and appreciation of art by the insane. The collection's first New York appearance is a mine of exciting new information: 200 drawings and handmade books that often stun the eye and always touch the heart, by mostly unfamiliar artists. Its suggestion that the art of the insane is not pure, timeless and autonomous but part of a larger continuum of art and visual culture may be the exhibition's most valuable lesson. Hours: Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Free (Smith).

"1900: ART AT THE CROSSROADS," Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Avenue at 88th Street, (212) 423-3500 (through Sept. 10). A wacky exercise in historical simulation, the excuse being a new century. It is hard to remember the last time so many bad pictures were in one place at one time, unless you consider eBay a place. There is also a good deal of excellent art mixed in among the dogs, and sometimes what is best is not what you would expect, which is partly the show's point. We're meant to look anew at a moment 100 years ago when it was not yet clear who would be the pioneers in the 20th century and who would be forgotten. The show provides just enough compensatory rewards for its schlock quotient. The weak-hearted and modern-day culture Pharisees may never get past the shock of confronting so much of the art that the abstractionists were rebelling against in a museum created as a shrine to 20th-century abstraction. Hours: Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Fridays ad Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Admission: $12; $7, students and the elderly (Michael Kimmelman).

"TREASURES FROM THE ROYAL TOMBS OF UR," Morgan Library, 29 East 36th Street, (212) 685-0610 (through Sept. 10).The Sumerians flourished in third-millennium Mesopotamia, creating one of the earliest civilizations as they devised such essentials as writing, numbers, the wheel and irrigation methods. This sumptuous exhibition attests to their visual achievement with gold, silver and carved calcite vessels; weapons, tools and cylinder seals; and ingenious jewelry made of lapis lazuli, carnelian and gold. On view as well are several of art history's most familiar, if least exhibited, masterpieces. All belong to the University of Pennsylvania and are part of one of archaeology's greatest discoveries: the intact, lavishly equipped royal tombs excavated at Ur in the 1920's by C. Leonard Woolley. Hours: Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Fridays, 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Saturdays, 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sundays, noon to 6 p.m. Admission: $8; $6, students and the elderly (Smith).

Galleries: Uptown

JOHN BOWMAN, Winston Wachter Mayer, 39 East 78th Street, (212) 327-2526 (through June 30). Since the 1980's, Mr. Bowman has been using traditional painting styles to allegorize postmodernist historical and philosophical conundrums. More interesting conceptually than formally, his new paintings include mysterious images of Renaissance-style theater prosceniums teeming with Ensoresque faces, masks and gargoyles. In one we look out from the stage over a serene, autumnal forest. Maybe the empty stage signifies the end of master narratives (Ken Johnson).

VIK MUNIZ, " 'Photographs' and Personal Articles," Ubu Gallery, 16 East 78th Street, (212) 794-4444 (through June 10). In a series of handmade "snapshots" and ingeniously concocted newspaper

clippings, Mr. Muniz continues his special brand of trompe l'oeil, full of surreal wit, tell-tale signs of deception and insights into how the mind and eye construct and refute visual illusion (Smith).

FRANCIS PICABIA, "Late Works," Michael Werner, 4 East 77th Street, (212) 988-1623 (through June 8). From Cubism and Dada to postmodernism, there is hardly a 20th-century art movement that this maverick French modernist has not contributed to or presaged. This show confirms his prescience and his stylistic profligacy, but it also reveals the high levels of painterly experimentation, curiosity and passion basic to his perpetual motion (Smith).

VITTORIO SELLA, "Mountaineer and Photographer, 1879-1909," New York School of Interior Design, 161 East 69th Street, (212) 472-1500 (through June 10). Some of the world's most spectacular peaks sat for portraits by Sella (1859-1943), including the Matterhorn in Switzerland, Kangchengjunga in Nepal and K2 in the Himalayas. This intrepid Italian climber is thought by many to have been the greatest mountaineering photographer of all time. And his spectacular views of soaring summits, sprawling glaciers, breathtaking crevasses, awesome ice falls and the people who braved them tend to bear out that opinion. There have been mountaineering photographs before and since his time, but few with the freshness and compositional clarity of these (Glueck).

JAMES SHEEHAN, Joseph Rickards, 1045 Madison Avenue, near 79th Street, (212) 924-0858 (through June 16). Scale is of the essence in Mr. Sheehan's painting. He makes robustly painterly pictures of crowds, swimmers or cruise ship scenes on panels smaller than two and a half inches square. A thumbnail-size piece of reflective paper bears an almost microscopic image of the artist's high school swim team. The imagery is not very exciting, but the combination of tiny scale and richly worked paint makes for attractively idiosyncratic objects (Johnson).

LORRAINE SHEMESH, Allan Stone, 113 East 90th Street, (212) 987-4997 (through June 9). Swimming verges on religious experience in Ms. Shemesh's frothy but overly illustrative paintings. Immersed in luminous, painterly flux, male and female swimmers grasping one another's feet make a living yin-yang symbol; seen from below, a woman sitting in a pink inflated doughnut seems to float heavenward (Johnson).

Galleries: 57th Street

ALEXANDER ARCHIPENKO, "Terra Cotta Sculptures," Zabriskie Gallery, 41 East 57th Street, (212) 752-1223 (through June 10). These suave, mostly small terra cotta figures were made by Archipenko (1887-1964), an innovator in early 20th-century sculpture, in the 1930's. They deal with the female form, from solid, sensuous torso to near-abstraction in which open spaces play a role. One of their distinctive features is elegant surface finish, highly polished with the addition of colored elements and inlays to the basic structure. He is at his best in several beautifully modeled torsos of idealized figures that reach for the spiritual essence of form (Glueck).

HANS HOFMANN, "The Summer Studio," Ameringer/Howard Fine Art, 41 East 57th Street, (212) 935-1110 (through June 9). Cape Cod was the summer life and subject of Hofmann (1880-1966), who observed it for more than 30 years from his Provincetown studio. In oil, watercolor or pen and ink, he depicted it in many modes, from abstraction to outright realism. The works here vary from mere

sketches to large finished paintings but collectively they have the exuberance of Hofmann's engagement with a very lively scene. Hofmann used many of the sketches as tryouts for larger painting ideas but they hold their own (Glueck).

JOHN TORREANO, Littlejohn, 41 East 57th Street, (212) 980-2323 (through June 10). A gimmick like adding fake gemstones to paintings and sculptures should quickly wear thin, but Mr. Torreano has been doing it for almost 30 years and his new works look as fresh and vivid as ever. This show presents mostly smooth, round-ended, thematically decorated columns attached to the wall. ''Dalmation'' is white and studded with near-black gems; ''Pistachio'' has gold-leafed wooden balls imbedded in its ice-cream green surface (Johnson).

Galleries: SoHo

EDWIN SCHLOSSBERG, ''Figure: Ground,'' Ronald Feldman, 31 Mercer Street, (212) 226-3232 (through June 24). Mr. Schlossberg shows a series of text works: rectangular brass sheets with cut-out Jasper Johns-style letters spelling out portentous phrases like ''being conscious becomes our destruction'' or ''awake through every wave.'' The brass sheets were also used to stencil black-and-white paper versions activated by graphic and gestural additions (Johnson).

DANIEL SPOERRI: ''LE CABINET ANATOMIQUE,'' Emily Harvey, 537 Broadway, at Spring Street, (212) 925-7651 (through June 10). One of the French Nouveaux Realistes along with Yves Klein, Arman, Jean Tinguely and others, Mr. Spoerri was known in the early 60's for turning chance arrangements of objects on tables into wall-hung sculptures. Here he presents small, framed assemblages, in each of which exotic and banal objects like shells, masks, tools, dolls, jewelry or bones are attached to old anatomical diagrams, producing a familiarly Surrealistic poetry (Johnson).

JEFFREY STURGES, Spencer Brownstone, 39 Wooster Street, (212) 334-3455 (through June 30). Photography of corporate, industrial or otherwise anonymous functional architecture is a common genre now, but Mr. Sturges gives it a compelling beauty in large, richly colored prints. Pictures of a brick wall sandwiched between deep blue sky and intensely green grass or of a well-lighted and clean pedestrian tunnel in Zurich are compositionally perfect and dreamily vivid (Johnson).

ROBERT ZANDVLIET, Peter Blum, 99 Wooster Street, (212) 343-0441 (through June 10). For his first New York solo show, this young Dutch painter presents a group of large black-and-white, Abstract Expressionist-style monotypes. They are less interesting, however, than five egg tempera-on-canvas paintings also on view. The latter, layered compositions of wide, crisscrossing brush strokes, call to mind Franz Kline, Gerhard Richter and David Reed but have their own attractively muted color and buttery sensuousness (Johnson).

Galleries: Chelsea

OLADELE BAMGBOYE, Thomas Erben Gallery, 516 West 20th Street, (212) 645-8701 (through June 10). The first New York solo for this British artist includes a new, multipart interactive digital piece, which is an update on ethnology and its obsession with authenticity, and a cyberspace take on the question of the original in art. The show's main visual interest, though, comes from large-print 1980's photographs in which the artist's nude figure seems to be half-submerged in backgrounds of patterned

fabric or wallpaper. The pictures look computer-assisted but were produced from studio setups (Cotter).

ROBERT BREER, AC Project Room, 453 West 17th Street, (212) 645-4970 (through June 24). An original members of the 1960's group E.A.T. (Experiments in Art and Technology), Mr. Breer here presents vintage examples of one of his signature concepts: motorized Minimalist sculptures that move slowly and comically about as though they had lives of their own. A white Styrofoam square creeps purposefully across the floor; a rumpled silver blanket breathes; seven toylike black domes dragging eccentric linear trailers produce a constantly metamorphosing three-dimensional ''Floor Drawing'' (Johnson).

HOVEY BROCK, Jeffrey Coploff, 526 West 26th Street, (212) 741-1149 (through June 17) Mr. Brock makes large, loopy watercolors of captivating subtlety. Using a wide brush and diluted paint on off-white panels or paper, he traces circulating, linear arabesques over and over, creating shimmering entanglements that seem to hover in space like knots of cosmic or submolecular energy (Johnson).

E. V. DAY, ''Transformer,'' Henry Urbach, 526 West 26th Street, (212) 627-0974 (through June 10). Ms. Day takes the idea of exploding female stereotypes a little too literally: she creates installations in which glamorous evening gowns are shown in the process of being blown to bits. A close-fitting silver-sequined dress, evoking the one Marilyn Monroe wore to sing ''Happy Birthday'' to President Kennedy, gets the treatment here. Like a lot of political art today, the effect is suave, entertaining and subject to several interpretations, all of them more or less one-liners (Smith).

WALTON FORD, Paul Kasmin, 293 10th Avenue, at 27th Street, (212) 563-4474 (through June 30). An impressive, life-size watercolor of a rampaging Indian elephant dominates this exhibition. The galloping, sexually aroused pachyderm is rendered in faux-antique style on 22 separately framed pages assembled into one looming 12-by-18-foot rectangle. Curiously, the elephant has attracted dozens of birds -- owls, starlings, goldfinches, vultures, larks; they are meant to symbolize Western efforts to colonize India (Johnson).

PAUL GEORGES, ''The Big Idea,'' Center for Figurative Painting, 115 West 30th Street, (212) 868-3452 (through June 30). Although he has stayed with traditional subject matter -- self-portraits, nudes, landscapes, flowers and mythological scenes -- Mr. Georges brings a modernist outlook to it. This miniretrospective of nearly 20 paintings in diverse styles reveals how he has brightened and lightened his palette over the years, tempering his affection for the old masters with the hereandnow. An example is an inviting self-portrait of 1989-90 whose welcoming informality is conveyed in a dazzlement of light and color. He is also a master at flower painting; his colorful blooms, in gardens or in vases, have a lusty freshness few contemporary painters can match (Glueck).

ELLIOT GREEN, Postmasters, 459 West 19th Street, (212) 727-3323 (through June 24). Mr. Green's paintings look like Saturday morning cartoons filtered through a child's feverish delirium. Rubbery arms and legs, bizarrely swollen fingers, big scary shoes and sad, misshapen faces are packed into fragmented, emotionally-charged scenarios. Yet even as they tap into elemental desires and anxieties, they remain works of great formal elegance, with carefully penciled, serpentine lines, richly muted color and tightly interlocking, de Kooningesque compositions (Johnson).

CHARLES MCGILL, ''Club Negro,'' Barbara Ann Levy, 453 West 17th Street, (212) 645-7810 (through June 17). Mr. McGill, an African-American artist who plays golf, has come up with a funny line of satiric mock-commodities for black golfers under the fictive label ''Club Negro.'' A faux-commercial display promotes new, Africanized golf balls like the ''New Spook'' (''If you can't beat them, scare them,'' reads the ad copy on the shelf) or the ''Malcom X,'' which is ''guaranteed to improve your game by any means necessary'' (Johnson).

LUCA PIGNATELLI, Generous Miracles, 529 West 20th Street, (212) 352-2858 (through June 15). Big, brooding and theatrical, the paintings by this Italian artist could be overbearing and portentous, but they are not. Rather, ghostly pictures of a World War II bomber flying over a mountain lake or a massive, charging locomotive or snowy forests -- all realized in dark stains on distressed, stitched-together tarps -- are ruggedly physical and mysteriously romantic (Johnson).

ROBERT STACKHOUSE, Urban Architecture, 210 11th Avenue, near 24th Street, (212) 924-1688 (through June 10). Mr. Stackhouse was one of a number of ambitious sculptors who in the 1970's turned from Minimalism to a more psychologically evocative, architectonic installation work. This disappointing exhibition, his first in New York in almost five years, presents illustrative painted images like a spiraling snake or a boatlike structure extended into Abstract Expressionistic space and a collection of big rocks organized on the floor into a shape like a ship's hull (Johnson).

''TOPOLOGIES,'' White Box, 525 West 26th Street, (212) 714-2347 (through June 17). Inaugurating this gallery's expansive new basement site, ''Topologies'' brings together six conceptualist approaches to architectural basics: a wall incision by William Anastasi; poetic text on a column by Lawrence Weiner; archetypal building blocks by Barry Le Va; a partial reconstruction of a Peruvian ruin by Osvaldo Romberg; a sound piece by Shelley Hirsch to animate the entry ramp; and a video projection by Maria Marshall to dissolve a wall (Johnson).

JASON YOUNG, Cristinerose, 529 West 20th Street, (212) 206-0297 (through June 17). Working more like a sculptor than a painter, Mr. Young pours, paints, layers, sands and otherwise tools synthetic resin on medium-size panels, producing sleek, biomorphically patterned abstractions. At once repellantly plastic and seductively tactile, they exude -- and perhaps critique -- the vacant allure of industrialized decoration (Johnson).

Other Galleries

''CLOCKWORK 2000,'' P.S 1 National and International Studio Program 1999-2000, Clocktower Gallery,108 Leonard Street, between Broadway and Lafayette Streets, Lower Manhattan, (718) 784-2084 (through June 17). A genial showcase of the 18 artists from 14 countries who have worked on the Lower Manhattan premises over the last year as part of P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center's studio programs. Self-invented systems, hybrid media (often discreetly computer-assisted), unshowy formal polish and a preference for understated ideas with resonant implications are threads that run through a show whose transnational mix confirms yet again that New York is an important cultural node on a global circulatory system (Cotter).

''KEITH HARING: THE SVA YEARS (1978-1980),'' School of Visual Arts, 209 East 23rd Street, (212)

592-2010 (through June 17). This exhibition documents Haring's studies at S.V.A. and might interest his fans. Haring was evidently an exceptionally intelligent and energetic student, alive to all kinds of possibilities, from Abstract Expressionistic painting to text-based Conceptualism to video performance. Naturally it is his knack for comic graphic invention that shines, especially in a delightful series of 77 small pencil drawings made in one day called ''Manhattan Penis Drawings for Ken Hicks'' (Johnson).

Last Chance

''ART IN THE AGE OF QUEEN VICTORIA: TREASURES FROM THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS PERMANENT COLLECTION,'' National Academy of Design Museum, Fifth Avenue at 89th Street, (212) 369-4880 (through Sunday). The Royal Academy, founded in 1768 and still going strong, was a driving force in British art in the 19th century. The 76 paintings and sculptures here, spanning Victoria's reign, include biblical and mythological scenes, genre subjects with morality themes, swashbuckling costume portraits, idealized nudes, exotic tales, behind-the-battle glimpses, landscapes and seascapes. Among the more appealing and amusing works is Richard Redgrave's ''Outcast'' (1851), in which an outraged father dismisses his fallen daughter and her illegitimate baby. ''Treasures'' like these make this wonderfully fustian display worth visiting. Hours: Today, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; tomorrow and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. Admission: $5 (Glueck).

''BIENNIAL 2000,'' Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Avenue at 75th Street, (212) 570-3676 (through Sunday). A show without a theme: no strong point of view, not much sex, no dead pigs or rotting eggs, or mannequins with a penis for a nose. Sounds boring, no? This committee-organized Biennial goes out of its way to be ecumenical, independent, geographically diverse, representative of all media including the Internet and different from what the New York power brokers would do. All this may be admirable. It is also truer than previous biennials to what goes on across the country; truer to the character of the American scene, where artists come from other countries; more respectful of different generations and multiple strategies. And flat. Notwithstanding Hans Haacke's forgettable noisemaker, it is the most uncontroversial Whitney Biennial in years, which is not good. Hours: Today through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.. Admission: $12.50; $10.50, students and the elderly (Kimmelman).

RENE DANIELS, Metro Pictures, 519 West 24th Street, Chelsea, (212) 206-7100 (through tomorrow). Conceptual painting is in. Artists like Martin Kippenberger, Elizabeth Peyton and Luc Tuymans are fashionable and suddenly this neglected Dutch painter, whose career was stopped by illness in 1987, looks like a prophet. The pictures of trees, swans and the receding inside of a gallery, sometimes abstracted into the shape of a bow tie, wring symbolist poetry from ordinary stuff effortlessly (Kimmelman).

AGNES MARTIN, PaceWildenstein, 32 East 57th Street, (212) 421-3292 (through tomorrow). It is possible to experience in Ms. Martin's new paintings -- all five-foot squares bearing pale, watery stripes separated by penciled lines -- as shimmering, transcendental luminosity. The dingy, washed-out blues, oranges or yellows and the nondescript surfaces may also cause a feeling of sensory deprivation. How one responds may depend as much on faith as on taste (Johnson)

''WOMEN OF WARHOL: MARILYN, LIZ AND JACKIE,'' C&M Arts, 45 East 78th Street, (212) 861-0020 (through tomorrow). A ghostly evanescent power permeates this show, the result of Warhol's

tissue-thin pictorial magic, his canny eye for the iconic potential of everyday images -- whether from movie magazines, publicity stills or newspapers -- and his correct assumption that the weight of history could anchor his seemingly ephemeral art (Smith).

Photos: David Godbold's ''Indian Giver,'' part of ''Clockwork 2000'' in Lower Manhattan, turns a 16th-century engraving into a satirical comic strip. (Aaron Lee Fineman for The New York Times); Ignacio Zuloaga's ''Portrait of a Dwarf,'' at the Guggenheim. (Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum)

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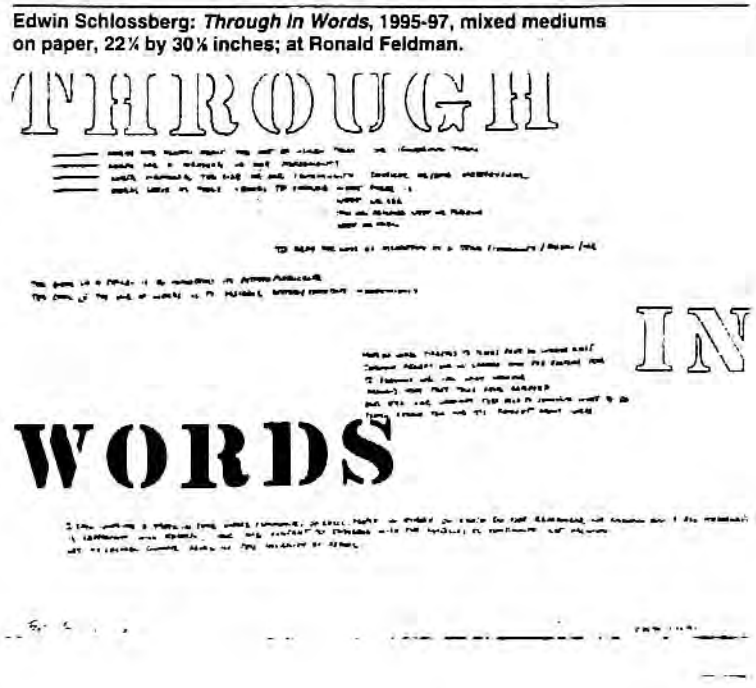
no. 11 (November 1997: 131

Edwin Schlossberg at Ronald Feldman



Edwin Schlossberg: *Through In Words*, 1995-97, mixed mediums on paper, 22¼ by 30¼ inches; at Ronald Feldman.

The 45 drawings Edwin Schlossberg exhibited make up a series of philosophical observations, written in discrete blocks of text. The group, titled "Knowing Not Known," furthers his 15-year practice of embellishing his own texts. Schlossberg, who holds a Ph.D., is the author of several books on philosophy and computers; he is also a successful designer (his company did the public areas of Sony Plaza in New York).

The current series was inspired by the Yongle Dadian, an early-15th-century Chinese compendium of historical, literary, philosophical and scientific knowledge. In these mixed-medium text-drawings on 22¼-by-30⅛-inch sheets of Arches paper, the words are judiciously chosen and placed. They are lettered in freehand, block-capital style, in isolation or arranged in long horizontal lines, in blocks, in vertical columns of one word each and in numerous other configurations. In addition, almost every work is drawn upon with colored ink, usually minimally decorated with abstract patterns of squiggles, diagonals and shading. Occasionally a phrase is printed larger than the rest. The texts are written casually; although they are mostly legible, the style is not precious.

Work such as this, which relies so heavily on text, often degenerates into a reading exercise for the viewer, and unless the artist also happens to be a good writer, which is rare, boredom quickly ensues. Schlossberg's texts seem to be the result of deeply held thoughts and beliefs. On close reading, one finds a certain airiness that prevents one from pinning them down into neatly parsed sentences: "A FUTURE SO AMAZING NO ONE COULD REFUSE/A WISH OF MINE SO CONTINUOUS AND ASSAULTED." Occasional uncertainty as to the reading of a particular word—is it "assaulted" or "assimilated"?—makes one aware of the eye's fallibility in receiving and translating meaning from the written sign.

Idea and *Through In Words* use letters in a simple serif font reminiscent of the stenciled typeface in Jasper Johns's paintings. A literary impetus in the work of both artists allows the words a power equal to the visual aspect. In *Idea*, two columns of text are divided by a tenuous, wavering, vertical line. The left-hand column, given the underlined heading "INVENTORY," is a list of defining facts about the world. The right-hand side is filled with Schlossberg's usual philosophical observations: "EVERYTHING TELLS SO MUCH BUT WHO IS LISTENING/AND WITH WHAT EARS/BRAIN/EXPERIENCE." A single diagonal line in the lower left corner of the sheet and a large shading pattern near the top left finish out this piece.

Listening mentions such writers and other creative thinkers as Maugham, Conrad, Joyce, Pound, Williams, Einstein, Stein, Niels Bohr, Orville Wright. *Lenses Patterns* includes a quote from the poet Wallace Stevens: "WHEN WAS IT YOU FIRST HEARD OF THE TRUTH, THE THE." In *Stillness*, Schlossberg replies to Stevens: "I MUST ADD ONE TO WALLACE STEVENS/THE THE THE." In Schlossberg's embellished writings, the writing, which is in the realm of philosophy, not poetry, far outstrips the visuals.

—*Vincent Katz*

He sees in broken English

EYE ON ART

JERRY TALLMER

IN THE beginning was the word. But words are deceptive things.

If you walk this way and that, for instance, past the three parallel Plexiglas sheets of one of the seven large "Tidal Gestures" in the back room of the Ronald Feldman gallery, the fractured words and letters in black type on the Plexiglas will form different combinations and permutations until you might finally make out something rather like: "We return / from angle / to center / substance / changes."

The front room has 26 sheets of Plexiglas, one for each letter of the alphabet, suspended from contraptions that look like the coat racks that guys push through traffic in the Garment District. Each sheet displays a number of words starting with the given letter ("Absolute, Advance, After, Again, Air, All, Art, As, At") and a poem: "Looking through words / places form / fall slowly together / like evening / arriving shadowing / claims of the present . . ."

The artist calls these "Word: Nerves." He is also the man who wrote the poems. At the moment this tall, good-looking artist/poet was fiddling with the little lights behind the "U" screen and the "Y." Those oversized coatrack things had been specially constructed for this exhibit, he said.

What was he planning to do with them after the show?

"Make me an offer," said Edwin Schlossberg.

His interest in words, and in art, and in words-as-art, goes back a long way. Born here in 1945, son of Mae and textile manufacturer Alfred Schlossberg, he'd started writing poems at 15. "Then I saw a lot of Oriental scrolls, and it seemed to me the visual part of reading was mostly being ignored."

At 19, while majoring at Columbia University in English, American Lit, and physics, he did his "first small layered poems." In 1968 he put out a mixed-media book of "Words Words Words Words Words Words," Universal Limited Art Editions, preface by Robert Rauschenberg. It was shown at the Jewish Museum.

His Ph.D thesis was on "Einstein and Beckett," itself published as a book in 1973. "When you're learning about somebody," Schlossberg says, "you have a conversation with them, and at that time I was learning about physics."

What did Samuel Beckett teach you about physics?

"A lot." Serious smile. "Science is always about setting domains. Beckett was brilliant at describing domains that were not normal."

In "Philosopher's Game," a book written with John Brockman in 1977, he went on to imagine conversations between such as Woody Allen and Erasmus.

The starting point for "Word: Nerve," those alphabetized Plexiglas panels, he said, had been the 20-volume Oxford English Dictionary.

"If you read the Oxford English Dictionary all the way through, which I did — "

All the way through?

"Yeah."

How long did it take?

"Four months. If you read the OED all the way through, you find an amazing pattern of words with multiple meanings, the ones that take up eight or nine pages each. Other words only have three lines — not much activity around *them*, right?

"I started thinking about that. And how all the multiple meanings come through expression and inflection. Well, you can isolate this out, so the poetry comes through — as it always does — in the reader's mind."

And the writer's mind, yes?

"Oh yeah," said Edwin Schlossberg, poet. "Someone's gotta start. 'Tidal Gestures' a whole different thing," he said. "It seemed interesting to try for the same idea through multiple visual levels. The title has to do with layers and waves, and talking about something very big and very slight at the same time. When you look at the poems, they move sort of like waves and water."

In the other room, the "Word: Nerve" room, the last panel is "Z." On which panel the poem starts: "Who, looking deeply, becomes the eyes I behold . . . " Two of the eyes that Edwin Schlossberg frequently beholds are those of his wife, Caroline Kennedy. They met when she worked in a museum. He designs installations for museums too, particularly children's museums. "There are things I do with lots of people, and things I do by myself," said Ed Schlossberg.

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, 31 Mercer St., (212) 226-3232, to June 9.

New York Post: Michael Schw

WORDS WORD WORDS: *Artist Edwin Schlossberg's work "Tidal Gestures" portrays words themselves as art.*

The New York Times
December 11, 1987

Edwin Schlossberg

Ronald Feldman Gallery
31 Mercer Street
Through Dec. 24

Edwin Schlossberg is a poet whose words, in the past, have tended to drip one by one onto the page, and from there to be transferred to a wide variety of supports. Sometimes those supports were hung flat on the wall. Sometimes they were peculiar to himself, like the T-shirts of a year or two ago that changed color according to the emotional state of the people who were wearing them.

This time round, and in response to a Far Eastern journey, the poems — some of them now noticeably longer and more regular in form — come on screens, on hanging scrolls and on canvases drawn taut and backed with bamboo. Collaged with scraps of paper imported from Japan for the purpose, they look very well. On the screens, the artist's calligraphy might not be rated high by Japanese masters of that discipline, but at least it is clear, there and elsewhere, Mr. Schlossberg had a wonderful time.

John Russell

The New York Times

May 24, 1985

Deep See Poems by Edwin Schlossberg (Ronald Feldman Gallery, 31 Mercer Street): As the title of the show will indicate, Edwin Schlossberg is a poet — someone who uses words in a distinctively ordered way — who is not content with the traditional stillness and passivity of the printed word. His poems are about seeing, about knowledge and about our ways of ordering and categorizing our perceptions. Some of them are abstract, in that they are made up of lists and hierarchies and alternative extremes. But the abstraction does not exclude wit, and one of the most strict and severe of his poems has for its first and last lines the one word "soup."

If these poems are at home in an art gallery, it is because they are made in such a way that they gleam, glow, shine and look back at us. Color plays a part in this, and so does freehand drawing. In fact, the poems have a second life, one that would be agreeable to look at even if we didn't know the language in which they are written. Some of them do, as a matter of fact, incorporate runic signs of an indecipherable kind. (Through June 15.)

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John Russell

arts
(February 1979)

EDWIN SCHLOSSBERG

"Visual Presence" is a series of cryptograms examining the paradoxical nature of perception. Fragmented letters, layered letters, aluminum embossed letters, black letters on white, white letters on black, letters typed on folded papers, pieces of letters on layers of clear plexiglass: Schlossberg's intention is to make thoughts seen, forming, disintegrating, surfacing on matte and reflective surfaces, deeply effected by light and by the motions which lead through chaos toward order and vice versa. Schlossberg's background is in science and literature, as well as in environmental design and education. In these works he acknowledges his affinities with Johns and Rauschenberg, and there is also an obvious connection with visual symbolist poets from Mallarmé to Wallace Stevens. Whether it is a *Poem for Jasper, Here What is Seen is Thought, In the Shadow* or *Looking Through*, Schlossberg's visual writings of *WORDSWORDSWORDS* are silent and obsessive reminders of the conceptual underpinnings of linguistic vision. (Ronald Feldman, *November 18-December 30*)

Barbara Cavalieri

Art in America
(March/April 1979)

Edwin Schlossberg at Feldman

While lacking the large scale of a retrospective, Edwin Schlossberg's recent exhibition of poems provides a glimpse of the range of his achievements over the past 14 years, including a complete display of the poems from *wordswordswords* (a book published by Universal Limited Art Editions in 1968) and a selection of individual poems on vinyl, plexiglass, aluminum and copper. The three most recent works, which are the most complex and imposing in the show, consist of lettrasign letters applied to sheets of transparent vinyl. These sheets are suspended one behind the other on wood frameworks projecting from the wall in a way that calls to mind both Oriental scroll painting and newspaper racks in libraries. Parts of each letter have been placed on each transparent plane, so that the words cohere and can be read only when the viewer faces the poems straight on. When viewed from oblique angles the alignment of letter parts changes, and the words fragment into abstract patterns of suspended shapes (in one case so complex as to be reminiscent of Analytic Cubism). Verbal art is transformed into visual art as the spectator's point of view changes, and the transitory quality of insights as they occur in the mind is given an objectified visual and temporal form.

Many of the words and lines, such as "Nothing can be made in pieces" and "As words become," not only are poetically expressive but also refer to Schlossberg's process of making the poems and the viewer's process of reading them. The words encourage acts of synthesis by their meaning as well as by their visual structure; yet paradoxically the syntax is often nonlinear and discontinuous in ways that refer back to the physical fragmentation of the words and make the works seem more dream-like than systematized.

The smaller, framed works on aluminum and copper also enlist the medium as an aspect of content; they contain puns that refer both to psychological self-reflection and to a reflective surface in which the viewer literally sees himself. In these poems the words and letters are dispersed throughout the rectilinear fields—sometimes pulled apart, sometimes overlapping—in patterns that afford the viewer a multiplicity of ways to combine and recombine them.

Color never dominates and only rarely plays a major role in Schlossberg's works. However, in some of the aluminum and plexiglass poems red, yellow, or blue lines and drips meander around and through the black and white letters, adding an explicitly automatist quality to the spontaneous effect of the word formations.

Schlossberg has, since early works of the '60s, grown palpably more skillful at coordinating the visual and poetic devices which make up his work, turning with increasing success to the third dimension to expand verbal meanings. —*John Baker*