*Thoughts on Otto, Deger and Marcus*

Hi George. Sorry that this took a while. I lost track of your e-mail reply. In any case, somewhat peripatetic in focus, but perhaps some ideas will emerge as I identified things in the draft. Enjoyed reading it, BTW, would be good if there were some videos or images of the two exhibitions. I could not find anything online.

In any case, here are some ideas below….connected to overarching themes. I added some reference documents that could supplement (let me know if you are not on Academia and I can forward the pdfs). Long, but a good opportunity to think through some related issues as well.

**1. Cultural Shorthand**
For me, one of the most curious parallels between ethnographic work and museum displays is the necessity of applying some sort of "cultural shorthand" to the cultural forms, moments, happenings, dialogues, experiences that must be translated to a public—the ethnographic readership or the museum public. That whole project—which was the extensive subject of the *Writing Culture* efforts over the years—has been only marginally identified (in a reflexive and critical sense) in some cultural display industries. As I relate below with a Disney Imagineering workshop (which explicitly hired two anthropologists to create "cultural" worlds), the luxury of the anthropologist who is able to so critically and reflexively address the cultural shorthand processes of their work is not available to some in the worlds of cultural displays. In some cases, this is due to budgetary or timeline requirements. In other cases, while this sounds elitist, it could be a lack of exposure to critical theories that deal with the explicit intersections of culture and its representation.

So, on first glance—not specific to this work but to the intersections of anthropology and museums in general—I am suspicious that the ways that the two parties approach issues of cultural shorthand will not always intersect. As an example, I sometimes find that the charrette method that is popular in design does not address the divide (Lyotard's *Différend*?) between the parties involved. As I will suggest later, the power dynamics alone inherent in the cultural translation processes—moving from ethnographic field experience to a display or design approach in a museum or exposition—necessitate some degree of suspicion that the process taken by the parties is an achievement of a fairly democratic dialogue. I fear, to some degree, that the luster or fetish of the material display inherent in a museum, theme park, or expo space somehow brings us back two or three steps in terms of our cultural critiques. Of course, many museums and their staff are highly aware of *Writing Culture*-style critiques and many even apply such paradigms to their approaches to culture shorthand. I know you didn't enjoy the space, but the Museum of Jurassic Technology is one of the great examples of a space that is hyper-conscious and reflexive, at a meta level, of the very processes that gave rise to its own material and cultural constructions. I guess I should save this focus for the "Collaboration" comment below.

I suggest more about this in the Design Contexts section below, but I think it would be important to address in this work how the design decisions of any exhibition—paralleling the narrative choices in ethnography—reflect a necessary closing down of the cultural world and a distillation of it into its key essences. I have written extensively about the challenge of creating a cultural display, especially as it involves a shorthand process. I have sometimes referred to this as "culture sampling," drawing on the modes of representation connected to remixing in technological forms of art.
https://www.academia.edu/2249945/Culture_Sampling

Ethnographers and museum practitioners are remix artists in the sense that they choose only a few bits and pieces of the world to re-present to an audience—however vast and different its audience members might be. The "culture samples" that are chosen are deemed—in a pedagogical and didactic move, I would say—to be not only appropriate in a representational sense (though we need avoid any notions of 1-to-1 representation of the signifier and the signified!) of the cultural moments at hand, but they are considered to be the representations or essences that are the most important in conveying to the public the matters at hand (Geertz' cockfight comes to mind). As I read the following passage in the draft, "As Weibel and Latour (2007:94) write: 'A museum exhibition is deeply unrealistic: it is a highly artificial assemblage of objects, installations, people and arguments, which could not reasonably be gathered anywhere else. In an exhibition the usual constraints of time, space, and realism are suspended.'"….I was reminded of how focused, directed, and specific cultural displays in museum have to be. Perhaps we could call such work "metonymic representations" as they are distilling (in V. Turner's sense of multi-referentiality) complexity into key symbolic, rhetorical, political, and performative forms that are intended to have a notable effect on the audience. As I will suggest later, I think that one of the most interesting opportunities for a museum—in today's day and age—is an ability to use cultural shorthand and techniques of connecting with patrons in emotional, political, and other senses in ways that are conceptual, postmodern, unexpected, and, even—in terms of dark theming—unsettling.

Of course, in any such consideration being made to fashion a cultural display, the context at hand is of utmost significance. The outcry related to recent examples of cultural appropriation in the world of fashion and music, for example, seems much loader given the commercialist context of the representation. This is why theme parks take the brunt of the cultural appropriation critiques, as opposed to museums. Increasingly, museums are, of course, becoming more like theme parks in their approaches, which often appear to be commercial in nature in terms of connecting with a public or audience. Certain museums may have a specific agenda—or agendas—that define a public mission, a focus on a key cause (like environmentalism), or a specific audience or population to be targeted.

## 2. Design Contexts
I mentioned earlier a concern with the presence of design—in the museum context of cultural display—given that there is a predisposition to not be immediately critical of material culture for its obvious power of presence—its form, matter, ability to interact with us, etc. Also, as suggested earlier, any ability to connect ethnographic and design worlds together may necessitate more in-depth conversations among the participants. I am sure that you are all engaged in such dialogue and feedback about the work. More and more, in working with a recent European group of cultural scholars, I find that I fall back on some sort of ethnographic experiential everyday sense in terms of looking at key cultural issues. I have noted this disciplinary divide more in recent years than in the past, but it's a reminder of how we do often speak different languages—in this case cultural ones—in terms of moving down the path of deciding on a museum exhibition and its specific directions.

In my recent time studying both world exposition spaces and museums, I find that the design contexts that I find most interesting are those that: 1. Promote non-realist representational practices, 2. Engage in some sort of practice of admixture or remaking (reminiscent of the discussion of the first exhibition as

a "juxtaposing [of] different cultural worlds"), 3. Provide for audience feedback (see the Museum 2.0 stuff later), 4. Unsettle the guest, perhaps through techniques of the uncanny, dark theming, existential or nihilistic tendencies. (see Chart 1.1, https://www.academia.edu/30777263/Introduction_The_Meanings_of_Themed_and_Immersive_Spaces)

Of course, there is a myriad of ways in which to represent a cultural moment in a museum space. Some process chart or mood board (as I will mention the in Workshop experience below) often defines the initial stages of the space. This tendency reminds of the headnotes or broad-based macro-level organization of ethnographic fieldwork. Begin with the main ideas, then experience and account nuance. Just as bias and cultural presuppositions impact the "objectivity" of a fieldworker's effort to experience and describe/analyze a cultural setting, the museum creator's task is made very difficult given the variables of: 1. Media competition (the museum folks I have worked with at the annual IAAPA theme park conventions have told me that the competition with theme park, video and virtual experiences, and other forms have led to complete interventions in their own museum practices), 2. Presuppositions based on culture (museums often have to create dialogue with the outside world in terms of a given issue; an example is the ideological Americans at War at the Smithsonian years ago; it clearly was trying to come to terms with the 911 attacks in some ideological jingoistic and pro-military senses), 3. Agendas (practical matters like budget, political dispositions, charges or foundational goals of the museum and associated organizations).

As I think about the confluence of museum design and anthropology, my own cultural, political, and representational sensibilities led me to the recent examples of the world exposition. While the form has declined in a "high culture" sense, it has evolved into a form that I find to be exemplary in terms of a possible window into approaches to cultural display that are pedagogical, participatory, political, and existential. The work I conducted in observations at World Expo Milan in 2015 reminded me of some of the recent movements in the anthropology of the Anthropocene that, as tired and overdone as they are getting, do point out some possible ways of looking at the world (especially now given the cosmology of Trump and the rise of fascism across the world….a topic for later times!). Here are the contexts of culture and display that I found to be the most enlightening and unsettling:

I detail these world expo contexts in a piece here: https://www.academia.edu/28469058/Dark_Theming_Reconsidered

The reference points are the Swiss, Brazil, and Pavilion Zero pavilions from the Milan Expo. Such spaces tended to:
- Offer culture as a <u>problem</u> to be solved; not a repository of ideals, foundations, and proud moments, but a struggle with current political, ecological, technological, and even spiritual realities
- Promote design forms that stressed not literal, representational contexts but abstract and postmondern ones. Something as simple as a forest (Austria pavilion) is not presented as a series of trees, but as trees with accompanying political texts that, almost as intrusions, challenge the materiality of the trees that are intended to act as foundational symbols for the exhibit.
- Address dialogue and convergence: many of the pavilions invited technological means of connecting with guests, even extending the dialogue well beyond the people leave the expo spaces. Convergence, from H. Jenkins work (or even Grant McCracken's "culturematic"), suggests

that those who interact with the media have the ability to change or alter it in some way. Sometimes the same is called "spreadable media" for its connection with transmedia.
- Suggest transmedia, or means of extending the storytelling beyond the space itself and into new media forms (a virtual experience, a comic book, a text, film, etc.)
- Focus on darkness: with many of the trends noted in pop culture (such as the trend of the anti-hero), the pavilions tended to offer a more unsettling rather than entertaining experience. See, https://www.academia.edu/18359552/Controversial_Topics_Pushing_the_Limits_in_Themed_and_Immersive_Spaces_Masterclass_   Perhaps also worth noting some mediation of the decline of entertainment within popular public space, including museums? (See, https://www.academia.edu/29602684/Should_Architecture_Be_Entertaining)
- Meditate on reflexivity: Pavilions like those of Brazil offered guests haptic and experiential approaches that required a participatory approach with other guests in the space, thus suggesting an emphasis on a future-looking environmental cosmology of cooperation.

Here are a few of those spaces to help visualize:
Switzerland
https://youtu.be/8F_mX3jYyRw

Pavilion Zero
https://youtu.be/s6HrnnpbN9Q

Brazil
https://youtu.be/Jyc3hFF0BGQ

We should consider visiting and profiling as many of these spaces in our work as possible as they really do show us the possibility of approaching design in less traditional senses. We cannot forget that the initial design decision—think the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford with its typological approach to culture, still one of my favorite museums, BTW—made in the establishment of the space really does impact everything that happens to come in that space. Obvious, of course, but reminds also of the general determinations made by the ethnographer in terms of theory, method, approach (imagine if Rappaport had approached his work in Pigs for the Ancestors using a non-ecological focus!) and how these impact the course of cultural representation to come. In the current exhibition described, though I haven't seen it, using Death as a primary theme, for example, presents a challenge as it is a topic that carries very heavy emotional and existential weight. Certain museums that really do wish to address ecological issues, as another example, have the initial challenge of the dealing with that emotional topic in such a way that is effective given the values that visitors bring with them prior to even experiencing the museum. Incidentally, I am currently completing a short chapter on the topic of how popular spaces use design and narrative to detail disturbing political and ecological messages to customers (a sort of "consumer public sphere"). To go back to the exhibition, I would be curious to see how the narrative and design decisions take into account the loaded nature of a topic like death.

## 3. Collaboration
One of the most pressing issues that I can identify in terms of connections of contemporary ethnography and the design approaches of museums is certainly that of collaboration. The experience of the passive, disconnected viewer of art and material culture in a museum—much like that of the omnipotent fieldworker in anthropology—has certainly passed to a great degree. Contemporary museums have the

real potential to develop forms of collaboration, dialogue, and exchange—I was happy to read of "intercultural" efforts in one of the designer's notes; while the term has become a buzzword in some corporate training circles, it suggests an interesting revision of some of the old and tired notions of pluralism and sober multiculturalism—and I believe that in the sort of world that we exist in today (see the Anthropocene section later), some of the great values of a culturally focused museum are opportunities to create dialogue among cultures and people from distinct and contrasting backgrounds, as well as with nature and other species (Philippe Descola's work, for example). Along these lines, I was pleased to read of "This can be part of the intent of the ethnographers/curators to address an issue of concern in contemporary society, where the exhibition can become a means to create discussion and awareness." I think the identification here is the sense that ethnography (sociology as well, such as Michael Buroway's work) may have a public and interventionist role in engaging others to action. Likewise, the curator has the potential to stir consideration and awareness by the public. I think any work in this realm needs to identify the long-lasting impacts of the public's participation. As I said with the example of the charette, in some cases, public hearings or matters of a supposed community nature (at least in the United States) often use the voice of the public as a sort of window dressing for process: we heard from the public, so that part is done (the same can be said of aspects of college and university governance!) Meaningful involvement of the public would be realized only through the same careful thought that is paralleled in *Writing Culture*-styled reflexive and critical considerations; thus museum practitioners would be involved in envisioning the forms, contexts, modes, and intended outcomes of any form of dialogue that may be created through the exhibition forms and processes.

From the article, I was curious to read: "This section also offers various means of audience interaction, discussion and feedback, that curators at the museum have used to further their knowledge of how people relate to their dead, knowledge that still awaits to be included in the exhibition." It just occurred to me that having some sort of annotation in an exhibition in which the curators expressed their intentions would be an interesting opportunity for a more dialogic exhibit. Of course, too much reflexivity in anthropology—thinking of Dumont's *Headman and I* text here—can have the opposite effect of drawing too much attention to itself. Critiques of the work of Ai Weiwei, for example, sometimes state that Weiwei's overly reflexive and self-constructed approach to his art may detract from some of the true political causes he is forwarding. That being said, some level of reflexivity and awareness of the representational implications of one's cultural exhibits is a necessity. Another interesting side of potential collaboration is the Museum 2.0 efforts in which guests and patrons of museums have the ability to express more of their voices in the work being presented.
In my own work in themed spaces, I have made some efforts—largely unsuccessful—to bridge the divide between academic critics of these spaces and their designers. I currently collaborate with an architect on some of these projects and once did work with a sound designer on similar efforts. Because so many in the museum world have an academic connection, home institution, or academic background, the necessity of such dialogue may be less. As I describe in the Workshop below, it is a challenge to create dialogue between communities that, ironically enough, share the same object of work/study. Connecting this to the collaborations between ethnographers and museum professionals, any similar divides—perhaps those that exist with notions of theory-practice differences—could be addressed. The focus on "double agency" in the piece is interesting, and it reminds of the need to clearly define the actors, contexts, audiences involved in any and all such projects and collaborations.

**4. The Future**

I was most intrigued with the writing that focused on the idea that "design is characterized by an orientation toward the future." I believe that design can have such a focus, but I tend to think more of design as a sort of mixed temporal project (Heidegger's fusion of temporalities comes to mind, as does the German show *Dark*, and Andrei Tarkovsky's approach to time in most of his films). I would suggest that museums and heritage (see the Heritage section later) engage in complex temporal projects of a sort that considers the future, but also puts into context the past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in many German museums and memorials that I have studied) and places the guest's significance for being at the exhibit (in the present) into question or concern. I cover a few of these context in a piece on immersion of the future:

https://www.academia.edu/30777103/Theming_and_Immersion_in_the_Space_of_the_Future

I would also suggest that a future-orientation is connected to the residues of the Anthropocene (no pun intended) in terms of taking some of the valuable aspects of this overdone critique into some meaningful realms of consideration—notably, a call to action in the didactic-pedagogical project that has been, and will remain, the unique call of the museum as a cultural form.

**5. Immersion**

In reading the comments, I was struck with the fact that "we managed to move many members of the public to reflect on their own experiences through contrast and identification with the scenes we constructed." It clearly sounded like a goal of the exhibits was to create a space that can be said to have immersive potentials. There is a vast literature on the idea of immersion, but we may reflect on the significance of concept—as it connects ethnographic and museum practice—in terms of the value of the ethnographer experiencing the spaces being studied in significant and meaningful senses, and then passing that along (though in much ethnography, the textual modes chosen do not really transport the reader to those spaces experienced), while in museum spaces, some attempt is to use various essences to create evocative spaces that will have some desired effect—from emotional movement in the guest to learning something new. As many know, "immersion" has become a bit of a buzzword and sometimes spaces that make claim to be immersive ones really do not offer the visitor much—psychologically or existentially—such that the person involved isn't really moved by the experience. I am reminded of "Happy Place" in Las Vegas and other places in which the individual moves from one space to the next—each designed as an ideal backdrop for Facebook or Instagram posts. While the space appears to be immersive on the surface, due to the lack of story, narrative, and deep engagement of the individual, the effects are disappointing. New theme park venues, like Star Wars Galaxy Edge, are moving towards a deeper level of immersion in which guests spend extended time in themed venues, even taking on characters, and spending larger time periods (24 hours or more) while in character. Thinking about the more pressing issues of the world—which may need mobilization of guests beyond their mere consumer or being entertained status—will require different sensibilities about immersion.

I wanted to mention a space that I recently experienced that holds some true potential in terms of creating immersive spaces that are more than entertainment venues. It is a chain known as the VOID (https://www.thevoid.com/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAr8bwBRD4ARIsAHa4YyKi3GEo85cfKSBlIQRo7V88jqUZvYnTG-Z-gMeshR40VVmRwsc5YsYaAkN9EALw_wcB) and the technology of the spaces involves wearing a VR headset and walking through a 3-dimensional space. You can actually feel certain surfaces in the space, which though are dummy props are projected upon with the 3-dimensional VR technology. It's quite innovative, though the space I experienced was focused on science fiction. Theoretically, you could use

such technology to create new museum displays—of cultural events, specific atmospheres from around the world, etc.—such that the guest be better able to grasp (emotionally, sensorially, even existentially) the goals and intended outcomes of the designers. As some of the commentary notes at the end of the piece suggested, "atmosphere" and "presence" can be a vital aspect of contemporary museum work; that being said, one has to think quite carefully about intent, context, outcomes, and perhaps be open to more active engagement of the guest within the cultural and spatial tableaus. Unfortunately, some of the uses of immersion that we note—including certain VR uses in museums in which a space, for example, is re-created for the guest—do not pick up on the potentially radical potentials of new media and technology.

The discussion of the tangibility of an exhibition in the writing—"an exhibition can be seen as a design intervention, the scaffolding of an issue to make it more sensory, tangible, present and discussable"—by the way, was a fascinating focus. It would be interesting to chart out—visually—what sorts of elements materially, technologically, sensorially, provide for such ability for the work to act as an intervention. This sort of use of immersion interests me the most. The exhibition could, as I understand the idea here, act as a sort of "punctum" in Barthes' sense that draws our attention—our emotional investment—such that we are willing to engage the work during the exhibition and after in further instances and after images or reflections of the work, such as through social media and related forms.

This piece may connect to this section's ideas:
https://www.academia.edu/30777296/Questioning_Immersion_in_Contemporary_Themed_and_Immersive_Spaces

**6. "re"**
In other work, I have suggested the value of the prefix "re" in terms of its dual potential to act conservatively and to move forward more radically. Some time back, I completed a guest professorship at JGU in Mainz and I taught a course on "Cultures of Remaking" (some of the examples and references in these papers below):

https://www.academia.edu/4062209/A_Case_for_Remakes_the_State_of_Re_

https://www.academia.edu/4182920/Remaking_as_Potential_A_Summary_of_Issues
(see Potentials, beginning on page 9)

As I suggest in this work, the ability for a remake or remix to refer to both something before, and to portend something to come, suggests an important ground on which ethnographic and museum work may coexist. The mixing of cultural worlds and experiences in *Christmas Birrimbirr* reminded me of how such reworking and remixing may have an unsettling potential. I believe that more deliberate attention to a remixing agenda in museum contexts—as I suggest in Heritage below—may produce more meaningful opportunities for museums (and world expos) to activate an interventionist agenda in our cultural worlds.

**7. Discomfort and Guest's Role**
I have already mentioned the value of discomfort as it may be achieved in spatial realms. There is, of course, a tradition of unsettling the reader in ethnographic and journalistic worlds. Museums, more than theme parks and lifestyle popular spaces, have also tended to offer unsettling experiences to patrons. As

a general tendency, I believe that approaching cultural display through something other than pure entertainment is of great value. Given the practical constraints of any space—even keeping the doors open!—it is often hard to imagine cultural displays that do not have some appeal to patrons who do not seek out museum spaces for purely educational or didactic reasons.

One example of a spatial approach to discomfort that I mentioned in the architecture and entertainment piece (https://www.academia.edu/29602684/Should_Architecture_Be_Entertaining) is that of the architectural team connected with "Reversible Destiny." In short, imagine create a kitchen space within a home in which basic appliances are not conveniently placed within reach of the user, or in which electrical outlets are out of reach (necessitating stretching to reach them), or in which level floors are eschewed for uneven ones that require challenge in terms of their navigation. Many would find these approaches to be maddening, but I believe that they present the possibility to move our experiences with popular spaces (museums, theme parks, even lifestyle stores) from spaces meet our needs to ones that need to have their needs met by us. Especially in a world that is defined, more and more, by less passive forms of media and entertainment, we might begin to think of ways to shift our expectations of what the patron's role in the space is. Museums could thus begin to place emphasis on the guest—this depends on what the exhibit is, what the contexts are, etc.—to interact with that space in some non-traditional ways. As we looked at in Collaboration, the Museum 2.0 movement suggests that the guest may offer their own interpretation of a space such that they have a role in that space as it is transformed over time. Augmented reality apps, though dangerous in their potential candor, allow for real-time citations to be added as "overlays" of a given space, thus creating a living, real-time hypertext of a space.

I think that with any museum exhibit, it would be a worthwhile conversation to have in terms of defining what possible roles the guest has in the exhibit. Challenging that same guest—to make a notable change in their lives or to see things through new perspectives—is a notable goal of many museums today. Liebeskind's Garden of Exile at the Jewish Museum Berlin is a great example of a design approach that is focused on discomfort but that is not heavy handed in terms of its approaches. Just Google "Garden of Exile" if unfamiliar with the design of the space. Given what I read in the article (the commentary at the end), it sounded as if the focus on death—an uncomfortable topic for many—was an effectives means through which to create binding between the exhibits and the visitors. I was curious as to what narrative commentary was present in the exhibits.

## 8. Heritage

A few years back, I advised a dissertation student from Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. The student created a very innovative project that merged traditional spatial design (Chinese gardens) and traditional Chinese folklore with more VR and technologically based theme park rides and film projection. In our conversations, I was very much taken with his work—it had emerged during a conference in Singapore at which we both presented. During one of the Q&A sessions, a truly arrogant attendee attacked his work for lacking "seriousness," due to "it's appeal to popular culture." It was at that moment when I began to think more carefully about the implications of cultural heritage, which, to some degree, has a footing in most cultural and natural history museums around the world. At this time, we might note two movements of heritage: 1. of heritage as a potent political force—a weaponizing of culture in a political sense—in which the preservation of presumed (sometimes monolithic, commonly unproblematized) pasts are for the sole purpose of political affirmations of the present. 2. of heritage as

a coming to terms with an uncertain future. The contradictory connection of these two uses of heritage is particularly instructive as we think about the politics of representation within museums.

The above incident, BTW, is described in a recent publication (p. 3):

https://www.academia.edu/36187408/Heritage_as_Remaking_Locating_Heritage_in_the_Contemporary_World

The work I completed at the conference and the eventual paper focused on the idea of reframing heritage in five metaphorical senses: tree to that of a rhizome; the battery to that of the Rube Goldberg machine; monument to souvenir; lecture to the dialogue; and library to open source. You can read of these considerations in the piece, but the point I wanted to make in terms of this museum project is the value of identifying the various design (or ethnographic) metaphors or approaches that are considered appropriate for the representation of cultural forms and then ruminating on replacing those approaches with ones that may be more germane to both the contemporary situation of the museum in the world around it and to the specific goals of the curator (and ethnographer).

**9. Workshop**
As connected to some of these considerations, I wanted to close with a short reflection on a workshop in which I was a participant some time back. With a second anthropologist (a traditionalist from UCLA), I was hired by Walt Disney Imagineering to assist in leading a two-day workshop in "worldbuilding." The venue was what you might expect from Disney—a rented mansion in the hills of LA with a seemingly limitless budget. We were tasked, as anthropologists, in providing feedback so that the Disney VPs (from marketing, rides, Pixar animation, ABC comedy) could have four platforms on which to build future properties. The worlds were, from the beginning, envisioned as an ice world, little people world, outer space world, and a western world. Some of the lower-level staff created mood boards (with various predictable images) that were, perhaps unknowingly, simplifications of the desired spaces from the beginning. [The circumstance reminds me of another example when I interviewed a German architecture in reference to a new Iceland themeland he created for a German theme park. My question: how did you do the research for the tableaus, buildings, and forms of Icelandic cultural design? His answer: I went to Google and typed "Iceland" and the images that were found became my source material!] I heard that what was created eventually became some of the backstory for the Frozen properties of Disney. At first, I approached the task quite seriously and illustrated how a cultural anthropologist would begin a world-building process with a complex understanding of each and every element of the natural, cultural, economic and other sides of a world. As you might guess, this complexity was not in the mix in terms of the workshop. It began to have the feel of "let's just get to the good stuff," "give me the Cliff Notes" version of things. The cultural shorthands, to go back to my initial points, were shockingly and surprisingly lacking in density, nuance, and I would even say, imagination. What they wanted out of us—the anthropologist experts—was some sense of authoritative "you're on the right track," which, thinking back to the moments of being in somewhat awe in the presence of these folks, I think we gave them that. We were the authorities who could confirm that their processes were legitimate. The brutality honesty of their "cultural" processes—and that of the German architect envisioning Iceland for his popular representations—are reminders of where much of our work is perhaps headed. Am I incorrect or cynical?

LukasS On OttoDengerMarcusVer2

Of course, I am bound for life with an NDA preventing my detailing of any of this in publication, but it makes for great reflection on the reality of how "culture" is often environed, created, and expressed by a major player like Disney. Ultimately, I think this reflection reminds us of what is at stake in terms of cultural representation—both from the world of anthropology and that of the cultural museum. We exist in a world in which our desires to be introspective, reflexive, critical in our practices to culture and its reenvisioning as text or museal display are met with the opposite—oversimplifications and desires to "cut to the chase" of culture and its representation. If that is the world in which we exist, what, possibly, do we do next in terms of our cultural projects?

Scott