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Making Human Rosetta Stories: Museums and Foreign Language Learning

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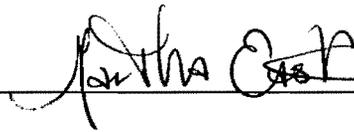
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**MAKING HUMAN ROSETTA STONES:
MUSEUMS AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING**

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Overseen and approved by Martha Easton, Ph.D.



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Abstract

Museums and foreign language education have much in common. Both are concerned with broadening the cultural outlook of individuals, both are particularly relevant in the lives of today's students, and both face challenging shortages of funding and other resources. This paper describes the points of intersection between the work that museums do and the study of foreign languages in primary through post-secondary education. After examining a number of existing partnerships between museums and language classes, the author argues that a potential area of specialization for museums has emerged in the field of foreign language learning: the teaching of culture. The ensuing analysis of how museums might contribute to this aspect of foreign language education centers on evolving approaches to teaching culture in both museums and schools. Current constructivist theories of cultural identity form the basis of the paper's final sections, in which recommendations for museums interested in this kind of partnership are presented and a potential plan for a northern New Jersey museum is outlined. The paper concludes by restating the case for museums and schools to work together to better serve foreign language learners.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
A Note About Terminology.....	4
Chapter 1: Why Foreign Language Learning?	5
Chapter 2: Why Museums?	11
Chapter 3: Existing Programs.....	17
Chapter 4: The Case for Culture.....	21
Chapter 5: Approaches to Teaching Culture (FL Context)	26
Chapter 6: Approaches to Teaching Culture (Museum Context).....	33
Chapter 7: Recommendations for Culturally-Focused FL Study in Museums	37
Chapter 8: Program Proposal for the Newark Museum	43
Conclusion	51
Works Cited.....	52
Appendix A: Lesson Plan for Newark Museum Mandarin Chinese Program	64
Appendix B: Student Worksheet for Newark Museum Mandarin Chinese Program	68
Appendix C: Images of American Homes for Newark Museum Mandarin Chinese Program	70

Introduction

One hundred years after its founding in 1906, the American Association of Museums joined with the United States Congress to celebrate its centennial, declaring 2006 “The Year of the Museum” (“Museums 2006”). In special resolutions passed by both federal chambers and by a number of state and local governments, museums were recognized for their contributions to the American public as “community landmarks” that “foster exploration, study, observation, critical thinking, contemplation, and dialogue” (S. Res. 437). The year-long event included the production of museum-themed books and television specials, the participation of over 300 museums and cultural institutions across the country, and the world’s largest gathering of museum professionals at AAM’s 100th Annual Meeting, held in Boston in April 2006 (“Year of the Museum”).

Only five months earlier, and a mere four hundred miles south on Interstate 95, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages had brought to a close the first “Year of Languages” at its Annual Convention in Baltimore. Like AAM, ACTFL had secured widespread governmental support for a year-long celebration of its primary organizational concern – the teaching and learning of foreign languages in the United States (Abbott and Brown). In collaboration with schools, communities, and businesses, ACTFL spent 2005 advancing three goals: *celebrating* foreign languages and cultures, *educating* the public about the academic benefits of studying a foreign language, and *communicating* to legislators and private citizens the importance of language education in today’s global society (“What is the Year of Languages?”). Also like AAM, ACTFL had organized conferences, publications, and a national campaign to further its cause.

The temporal proximity of The Year of the Museum and the Year of Languages is significant in a number of ways. In the most obvious sense, it reflects the growing trend of special interest organizations pushing for year-long public engagement with selected social or political causes – the years 2005 and 2006 were also recognized, respectively, as the World Year of Physics and the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (“World Year of Physics”; *IYDD*). The educational nature of both foreign language study and museums, and the fact that they were nationally celebrated just one year apart, speaks to the importance of education as “our generation’s ‘moonshot,’” the issue that will define the future course of the United States into the twenty-first century (Duncan). Wording from the Congressional proclamations issued for each event demonstrates their shared educational focus: just as foreign language study contributes to “increased cognitive skills, better academic performance, and a greater understanding of others,” museums “enhance the public’s ability to engage as citizens, through developing a deeper sense of identity and a broader judgment about the world” (H. Res. 122; S. Res. 437). At the same time, the fact that AAM and ACTFL sought formal recognition of their organizational efforts suggests that both foreign language education and museums were simultaneously facing real or perceived challenges, prompting the need for increased support and awareness.

When considered in the context of back-to-back “Year of” celebrations, the above-mentioned similarities between ACTFL’s and AAM’s organizational concerns paint a picture of two causes that could stand to benefit from one another. Foreign language education and museums have related goals, they face similar fiscal and logistical challenges, and they are both still evolving in response to the needs of modern American society. In this paper, I will examine these points of connection between museums and foreign language education in order to propose mutually beneficial ways for them to partner with one another.

To begin, I will review the reasons why museums, historic sites, and zoos should be interested in working with foreign language classes and how such work can suit their widely divergent, but often educationally-focused, institutional missions. I will then turn my attention to students and teachers of foreign languages and the reasons why museums are uniquely suited to their learning needs. This discussion will focus on two crucial aspects of foreign language learning – language use and cultural competency. After briefly outlining the ways museums are currently, and could conceivably, enhance the language use aspect of foreign language learning, I will focus on cultural competency as the most fruitful area for future collaboration. In the ensuing analysis I will review the importance of culture to foreign language study and the various approaches to teaching culture that foreign language educators have used. Finally, I will outline general suggestions for how museums can go about teaching cultural competency to students of foreign languages, and I will develop a specific proposal for an urban museum in northern New Jersey.

A Note About Terminology

In any study of how languages are taught and used, it is of course necessary to acknowledge the importance of word meanings and nuances. Unfortunately, the words used to describe the activity of language learning frequently vary depending on who is doing the learning, where the learning is taking place, and what previous language experience the learner possesses. The idea of learning a *foreign language* is familiar to many in the American education field, though some may object to the nationalistic overtones of the phrase. An alternative – *second language learning* – was coined by writers in the field of applied linguistics to generally refer to what happens when a speaker with an established ability in one language learns a subsequent language (“Second Language Acquisition”). However, a distinction has developed between the two terms; *foreign language learning* is now considered to be the acquisition of a tongue other than the locally dominant language of social and economic activity, while *second language learning* is the process of acquiring the local language, generally after moving to a new country or region (Johnson and Johnson). Other options, such as *world languages* and *modern languages*, have entered the lexicon in recent decades and are more or less interchangeable with *foreign languages*. However, the most common usage among professional organizations dedicated to language instruction in American schools remains *foreign language learning*. As this paper is primarily concerned native English speakers studying languages other than English within a structured school curriculum, I will adopt the terminology used by educators at an organizational level. The term *foreign language* is thus used throughout this paper, though with the caveat that no cultural or linguistic chauvinism is intended.

Chapter 1: Why Foreign Language Learning?

For museums, the first question that presents itself when contemplating ways to facilitate foreign language learning is: Why? What impetus might a museum have for using its limited resources to help language learners? To begin answering this question, it may be enlightening to look at the advantages of learning a foreign language in the first place. According to the Center for Applied Linguistics, students who study a second language in school:

- Demonstrate superior problem solving skills,
- Score higher on standardized tests,
- Earn better grades,
- Are less likely to drop out of school, and
- Have better career opportunities than students who do not study a second language.

On a national scale, training proficient second language speakers results in a citizenry better outfitted to compete in the field of global commerce, maintain homeland security, and meet the social needs of our diverse (and rapidly diversifying) American society (Met, “Improving” 214-215).

In a complementary way, American museums are increasingly viewing themselves as social service institutions that can contribute to the intellectual, economic, and cultural lives of the public that they serve. In remarks at a conference sponsored by the American Association of Museums, for instance, speakers from a variety of museums and cultural institutions described their commitment to “uniting museums and other cultural institutions with the economic and social viability of a city” through such activities as providing skills workshops for homeless youth, organizing science enrichment training for teenage girls, and creating a heritage tourism program for an economically depressed region (*Museums in the Social and Economic Life* 8, 19-

22). Such an emphasis on community action and social relevance makes museums already poised to take up the issue of foreign language learning. As with their current education-related activities, museums can view foreign language education as one more strategy for producing skilled, thoughtful citizens who can build safe and economically viable communities.

Just as museums have spent recent years identifying and addressing community needs, many of them are demonstrating a growing concern for what their community members are actually saying. In describing the long and cyclical history of American museums' relationship with their publics, art historian Andrew McClellan notes that the 1980s ushered in a new age of accountability for museums (182). No longer assured of funding from wealthy private benefactors, museums now face growing pressure from private and public funders to identify *who* visits them, *why* they come there, and *what* services museums can offer those people. As a result, the field of audience research has expanded tremendously in recent years, and museums are putting more effort into understanding the stated needs and interests of the public.

Foreign language education advocates have made similar recent efforts to understand public sentiment and expectations for foreign language learning. An ACTFL-sponsored Roper poll conducted in 2004 found that 45% of respondents felt public school foreign language instruction was inadequate, and 50% believed foreign language instruction was underfunded (Heining-Boynton 8). A set of studies by the Frameworks Institutes in the same year concluded that the American public views international education (including foreign language learning) "as a means of updating our curricula, respecting other peoples and cultures, and preparing our country to be a cooperative partner with other world nations" (Met, "Realizing" 57). As members of the American public, the participants in these two surveys merit inclusion in the broad category of American museum constituents; therefore, their ideas about the importance of

foreign language education and its current failings are well worth the attention of museums. Responding to these stated public needs in the area of foreign language learning would be one more way for museums to show their commitment to public engagement.

An issue that perhaps resonates more strongly with museums than that of social service is the idea of museums as sites of heritage and cultural understanding. As Michael A. Mares eloquently states, museums “are the precious record of the past that is preserved to serve the needs of future generations. They are the golden thread of our heritage that links yesterday to tomorrow. They are the way we learn about the world. Without them, our cultural awareness, our scientific understanding, and our very sense of self become increasingly impoverished” (95). Compare with that the sentiments of foreign language advocates in the United States, who maintain, “It is through the knowledge of languages and cultures that we best begin to know and comprehend the scope and significance of human experience in history, from ancient times to modern; it is through the knowledge of languages and cultures that we best learn to [...] achieve our full potential as citizens of the world” (Gaston 1). In this shared outlook on the importance of culture and cultural understanding, museums can find another reason for supporting the work of foreign language classes.

Another reason for museums to reach out to foreign language educators, and one that is of central importance for this paper, is the longstanding commitment of museums to supplementing and enhancing classroom learning. From the start, museums in the United States have been imbued with an educational purpose; as early as 1875, The Metropolitan Museum of Art celebrated the fact that teachers and their students frequently came to the Museum to supplement their curriculum, studying illustrations relevant to the subjects of their classroom learning (Johnston 65-66). A few years later, the Newark Museum’s progressive founder John

Cotton Dana reiterated the responsibility museums have toward schools, saying, “As soon as [a museum] begins to teach it will of necessity begin to form an alliance with present teaching agencies, the public schools, the colleges and universities and the art institutes of all kinds” (24). For the remainder of the twentieth century, and on into the twenty-first, museums have maintained this dedication to serving schools and other institutions of formal education, creating what AAM has declared “the most longstanding and successful example of the interest and ability of museums to join forces with other institutions in working toward common goals” (*Museums for a New Century* 66).

Clearly, it is thoroughly in keeping with past practices and current goals for museums to continue looking for ways to work with teachers and students. And, perhaps unsurprisingly, one subject area that is of increasing importance to today’s teachers and students is foreign language learning. According to a survey funded by the U.S. Department of Education, 8.9 million students in the U.S. were enrolled in foreign language courses in 2007-2008, an increase of more than 3% from just three years earlier (ACTFL 1). While school districts and states have traditionally introduced foreign language requirements in 9th grade, more and more schools are expanding them to include lower grades; foreign language education is spreading to middle and elementary school levels, and enrollment in elective and advanced placement foreign language classes is also rising (*Standards* 21). Foreign language enrollments at colleges and universities have demonstrated similar growth, increasing by 13% between 2002 and 2007 (Modern Language Association). Museums that have dedicated themselves to collaborating with formal learning institutions would be remiss if they ignored an issue of such growing relevance for the students and teachers they serve.

Before closing our discussion of the benefits museums might draw from foreign language education initiatives, it is worth examining what might be the most basic advantage of this kind of project. In a fundamental way, working with foreign language classes can help many museums fulfill their institutional missions. Table 1 below shows a sampling of museums and other cultural institutions, some of which currently advertise programs directed at foreign language learners, and some of which do not; current foreign language offerings at the institutions listed in the table will be examined in further detail below. Accompanying excerpts from each institution’s mission statement are descriptions of how that mission is now or could be served through a focus on foreign language learning.

Table 1: Museums and the Benefits of Foreign Language Education Initiatives

Institution	Mission statement excerpt	Current FL initiative	Possible advantage of FL initiative (in regard to the museum’s mission)
Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute	“advancing and extending the public understanding of art”	Virtual exchange partnership between French classes in the U.S. and English classes in France	Students use the target language to teach exchange partners about art at their respective museums, thereby “advancing and extending” their understanding of art.
Walker Art Center	“examine the questions that shape and inspire us as individuals, cultures, and communities”	None	Studying culture through the lens of language allows students to examine what “shapes and inspires” different cultures.
Denver Zoo	“secure a better world for animals through human understanding”	Spanish-language program on rainforests for Spanish classes	While conversing in Spanish, students are also increasing “human understanding” of rainforests.
Shedd Aquarium	“animals connect you to the living world, inspiring you to make a difference”	None	Students see connections between animals in nature (“the living world”) and in human cultural tradition.
Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame	“to nourish and challenge the human spirit and enhance understanding of world cultures”	Tours offered to students in a variety of foreign languages, focused on target culture	Students learn about the cultures of target language speakers and can thereby “enhance understanding of world cultures” while practicing communicative language skills.
Muscarella Museum of Art, College of William & Mary	“to foster the full integration of a dynamic art museum into the life and liberal arts mission of The College of William & Mary”	None	Integrate the museum into the university by serving as a resource for foreign language classes.

In a variety of ways, museums clearly stand to gain from working with teachers and learners of foreign languages. What remains to be explored, though, is why foreign language classes might be drawn to museums. This question will be the focus of the following chapter.

Chapter 2: Why Museums?

American schools in the twenty-first century are under more pressure than ever before. Juggling budgetary uncertainties, population changes, and the requirements of standards-based education initiatives, today's schools often find themselves having to do more with less (Marable-Bunch 9). On the surface, museum visits seem like a luxury many schools can't afford: bus drivers and museum admission can be costly, and field trips take away from "seat time" that could otherwise be used preparing for standardized tests (Lewin). What attraction, then, might museums hold for foreign language teachers and their students? What might lead a foreign language class to give up valuable class time and money in order to participate in a museum program?

To answer this question, it is helpful to examine how museums foster learning in general and the ways that they can enhance the study of any subject. Many years of research into informal and object-based learning have shown that museums have distinct educational advantages. For example, because they offer access to physical collections – "real stuff" – museums have the ability to engage many of the multiple intelligences described by developmental psychologist Howard Gardner. According to Gardner's model, all people have diverse abilities in such fields as bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, and linguistic intelligence; activating more than one of these fields during learning not only gives confidence to students with differing strengths and weaknesses, but also helps solidify students' grasp of the concept being studied (Darling-Hammond et al. 78). Museum educators, well-versed in the use of objects to present information, are able to engage a variety of these intelligences.

In addition to providing multiple ways for students to learn, museums have long been celebrated as the sites of powerful, almost magical learning experiences. This sense of enchantment has been described as “the magic of encounter,” a chance to see history (or geography or physics or any number of other abstract concepts) come to life through interaction with museum artifacts or exhibits (Fortney and Sheppard 1). There appear to be several aspects of learning theory at play in creating this effect. First, the act of seeing and even handling concrete, tangible things facilitates learning throughout childhood, giving younger students the chance to literally “learn by doing,” and providing older students with a solid base for more abstract explorations (Donato and Terry 86). Furthermore, the experiential nature of museums as “environments rich with evocative objects and experiences” encourages visitors to engage in active learning. In this process, learners actively make connections with their own knowledge, construct interpretations from the information they’re given, and analyze information in light of their own reactions and questions (Tishman 12). Active learning has been shown to produce deep, long-lasting memories; when considered alongside the benefits of concrete encounters, the “stickiness” of museum learning presents a strong case for incorporating museum experiences into the classroom curriculum.

These general advantages of museum-based learning have relevance for the more specific field of foreign language education, as well. In learning a foreign language, students acquire skills through a number of different methods and for a number of different purposes. Recognizing this, ACTFL and a host of other language-specific professional organizations recently published learning standards for K-12 foreign language education in the United States (illustrated in fig. 1 below). These standards are organized around 5 key aspects of knowing and using a foreign language: Communication, Connections, Communities, Cultures, and

Comparisons (*Standards* 31). Museums have something valuable to offer in each of these domains.

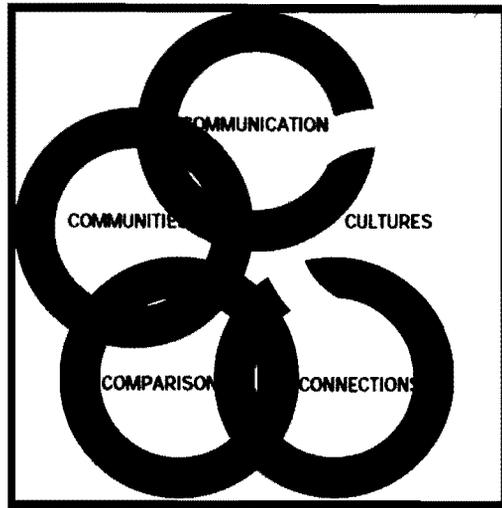


Fig. 1. The Five C's of Foreign Language Learning from *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century: Including Chinese, Classical Languages, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish*. (Lawrence: National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999.) 31. Print.

Communication is likely the term that comes most readily to mind when thinking of foreign language learning. Since the 1970s, language instruction in the U.S. has been focused on teaching students how to understand, interpret, and produce speech or writing in a language other than their own, with the goal of functionally communicating with other speakers (Burke 441). Unsurprisingly, communication is the first area of language learning to be addressed in the ACTFL standards. It is also one of the most studied aspects of the discipline; researchers have identified a number of key components needed for producing communicative competence among foreign language learners. According to Richard Donato and Robert Terry, learners must be exposed to rich and varied inputs in the language being studied – in other words, they need to be given many examples of the language in different formats (both oral and written), produced by different people, and containing different linguistic and stylistic content. They also need many opportunities to use their knowledge of how the language works to produce their own outputs. Finally, they need to be placed in situations that require linguistic negotiation and interaction,

where adjustments must be made to accommodate another speaker's (or reader's) intentions (Donato and Terry 56). With their wealth of visual stimuli, unfamiliar objects, and written or spoken texts, museums and other cultural institutions are well positioned to address each of these needs. They can give students something compelling to talk or write about, encouraging the production of meaningful outputs. Depending on the available resources, museums can even provide linguistic inputs in the target language.

The Connections and Communities standards both expand on the idea of communication by encouraging an understanding of how language fits in with other learning domains and situations. Connections across academic disciplines are crucial to reinforcing and integrating students' knowledge in all subjects (*Standards* 54). Since museum collections are typically organized around particular content areas, museums are naturally suited to presenting programs that tie language use to other types of knowledge. The Communities standard calls for foreign language use to break free of the traditional, formal classroom setting, requiring students to use the language both within new and varied settings and for their own enjoyment and enrichment. Once again, museums can serve to enhance classroom learning, in this case by providing an alternative, real-world setting for language use and a free-choice learning environment that encourages students to pursue their interests while using the target language.

The three standards discussed so far all relate to various uses of the target language itself. However, researchers in recent decades have increasingly looked beyond the formal properties and functional implementation of foreign language learning toward its sociocultural underpinnings ("Ideology, Identity, Culture" 891). Educators have realized that "language use is indissociable from the creation and transmission of culture" and that understanding how people in a given language group perceive the world is an inherent part of communicating with them in

a meaningful way (Kramsch 8-9). The remaining two standards, Cultures and Comparisons, address this important aspect of foreign language learning. For ACTFL, the key element of cultural understanding for language classes is the interplay of three cultural components: perspectives, practices, and products. The Cultures standard calls for students to examine these connections in an effort to move beyond cultural misunderstandings, ethnocentrism, and stereotyping (*Standards* 47-48). The Comparisons standard, in a related way, outlines the need for students to define culture as a concept by comparing their own culture with those of the target language (*Standards* 60). Museums may have more to offer foreign language classes in this regard than in any other aspect of language learning. As repositories for the products of culture, museums have a long history of using their objects to facilitate explorations and comparisons of cultural perspectives. They are uniquely positioned to serve as a platform for discussing the complex notion of culture.

The analysis above demonstrates that, in each aspect of foreign language education defined by ACTFL and its partners, a contribution on the part of museums is both possible and mutually advantageous. As a final consideration, it is worthwhile to examine one more purely practical benefit of museums and foreign language classes working together. In a 2010 AAM survey, 67.1% of museums reported experiencing financial stress in the preceding year, with 17.8% characterizing that stress as very severe (Katz 2). Foreign language education, meanwhile, is facing limited resources and growing class sizes; as a subject not included in standardized tests, it is low on the priority list for administrators (Heining-Boynton 9). Advocates for language learning are already eminently aware of this problem, emphasizing the need for foreign language educators to form partnerships “not only together with colleagues from numerous disciplines across the institution, but also with partners from the private and public

sectors” (Grandin 196). In doing so, they can find opportunities to share resources, exchange ideas, and gain recognition for their subject. Museums, likewise, could gain from these partnerships in the expanded grant opportunities available to them and the increased reach of their community engagement.

Chapter 3: Existing Programs

Taken as a whole, museums have not made the enhancement of foreign language education a major focus of their educational efforts. However, individual museums are hardly oblivious to the mutually beneficial possibilities of working with foreign language learners. A number of museums and cultural institutions across the country have developed programming specifically aimed at students studying foreign languages. These offerings range from traditional, introductory gallery tours conducted in the target language to full-fledged museum/school partnerships entailing multiple visits and outreach sessions. A selection of relevant programs from a range of institutions will be briefly examined below.

One of the most common ways that museums engage foreign language classes is by offering tours in the target language. The Cleveland Museum of Art, the Milwaukee Art Museum, and the National Gallery of Art are among the many museums that advertise school tours conducted in Spanish, French, and/or German that are specifically geared to classes studying those languages (“School Tours”; “Learn + Play”; “School Tours French- and Spanish-Language”). These tours may focus on works of art from cultures that speak the language under study, or they may be general tours that provide an overview of the museum’s collections. Either way, this type of programming gives language learners exposure to other speakers of the target language, contributes to the development of auditory interpretive skills, and involves students in producing their own spoken outputs as they interact with their guide and one another.

At the University of Notre Dame’s Snite Museum of Art, Curator of Education Diana Matthias has developed an especially rigorous and well-articulated version of the foreign language tour. As a service to language classes at Notre Dame and at secondary schools in the surrounding area, the Snite offers tours conducted in French, Spanish, or German, with a special

emphasis on the art of the target language community (“Curriculum Structured Tours”). Designed to “combine language teaching with learning about art and civilization, to encourage the concept of being a citizen of the world, not just of one particular nation,” these tours expose students to the cultural products of the people who speak the language they are studying (Matthias “Inquiry”). While examining these objects, students use pre-selected vocabulary words in the target language to discuss their visual appearance and their historical and geographic contexts. Snite educators work with foreign language faculty and teachers to ensure that each tour suits the class’s language ability and learning needs.

The foreign language tours at the Snite go beyond typical tour engagement by involving students in another way. Each year, several students from Notre Dame and a neighboring university are selected to serve as student docents for the foreign language tour program. These students are usually native speakers of the target language, a fact that adds an additional dimension to the experience for everyone involved in the program. Students on the tours have the chance to hear the language spoken by a native speaker with what may be an unfamiliar accent or speaking style, while the student docents themselves find enjoyment in “learning about their own cultural background and then teaching it to others” (Matthias “Inquiry”).

The Snite Museum is able to engage French, German, and Spanish learners both through language and through cultural exploration due to its significant holdings in European, Meso-American, and Spanish Colonial art. At a very different type of institution, educators have developed a program that utilizes their unique available resources to enhance students’ study of one particular target language. The Denver Zoo, located in a region where 50% of the public school population is Latino, offers a pair of school programs for students of Spanish as a Second Language (Herbert). Titled *Explorando la Selva Tropical* (Exploring the Rainforest) and

Colorado Vivo (Colorado Live), the programs incorporate live animals, PowerPoint demonstrations, handling objects, and Spanish conversation or repetition into a presentation by a Spanish-speaking zoo interpreter. Students in grades five through twelve gain experience in using interrogative language forms and cognates as they talk about the ecosystems of Colorado and the rainforest in a full immersion environment (“Zoo Programs”).

The Spanish language programs at the Denver Zoo were developed to meet the needs of teachers and Spanish language learners in the local community. Created with the input of a local Spanish teacher, *Explorando la Selva Tropical* and *Colorado Vivo* focus on encouraging the oral and written use of Spanish in keeping with Colorado state standards for foreign language learning. Many teachers choose to extend the language practice offered through these programs by incorporating them into a classroom study of cultures in rainforest areas or by highlighting the “real-world” aspect of using Spanish in the workplace – in this case, the Zoo itself (Herbert). In this way, students develop an appreciation for the Spanish language and see its relation to their own community and others. On the other side of the coin, the Spanish as a Second Language programs have benefitted the Zoo by establishing connections with new audiences, engaging more middle and high school students, and bringing in higher levels of revenue tied to increased visits by secondary school classes (Herbert).

In 2007, the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts piloted another approach to partnering with foreign language learners. In this case, funding from the Annenberg Foundation through the FRAME consortium (French Regional American Museum Exchange) allowed the Clark Institute to collaborate with a number of domestic and international partners to facilitate language learning both at home and abroad. A four-way partnership was formed; museum educators from the Clark Institute and from Montpelier,

France's Musée Fabre worked with a U.S.-based French teacher and a France-based English teacher to develop resources (lesson plans, vocabulary lists, images, computer discs) that could be used to discuss art in the classroom ("Foreign Language Project"). Each participating high school class exchanged curriculum materials that dealt with works of art at their respective museums, and these resources were used to facilitate class activities in the target language. As a capstone project, each class visited its partner museum (the U.S. class to the Clark Institute and the French class to the Musée Fabre), where they created video tours of the collection in their native language. The videos were then exchanged, so that students could hear the voices and interpretations of their "pen pals" spoken in their own native language (Steinmann et al.).

This multi-contact initiative addressed many of the aspects of foreign language learning articulated by ACTFL. American students practiced their French reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills as they discussed works of art in class and exchanged postcards and emails with their counterparts in France; the reverse held true for French students and their use of English. In this process, students in both countries were able to connect the use of their target language to other disciplines and scenarios, use the language in a new, authentic way, and gain experience in negotiating meaning from the spoken and written word. A primary outcome of the project – the increased cultural knowledge and appreciation that students derived from their exploration of the museums' collections – served the interests both of the Clark Institute and the language classes themselves.

Chapter 4: The Case for Culture

As each of the programs examined above demonstrates, museums have already found ways to collaborate with foreign language classes in innovative and mutually beneficial ways. By providing varied inputs and interactive situations in which students must produce their own outputs, programs like the Denver Zoo's *Explorando la Selva Tropical* help foreign language learners develop their language skills in the areas of communication, cross-disciplinary connections, and community-based applications. By connecting students to the products of foreign cultures, programs like the Clark Institute's French language exchange help students gain an understanding of how the people(s) who speak the language being studied view the world and their place in it. As a result, participants in these programs expand on and solidify the learning that goes on within their foreign language classrooms.

There remains, of course, a tremendous amount of undiscovered territory for museums to explore in regard to partnering with foreign language learners. In the area of language skills, new initiatives could include supplementing spoken language inputs (tours) with written components (i.e. artist's statements, historical documents, or relevant literary texts in the target language). More museums with specialized collections could look for ways to forge cross-disciplinary connections between their subject area and foreign languages, and museums could be proactive in serving as alternative community spaces for the "beyond the classroom" use of the target language. While efforts focused on improving language knowledge and skill are a promising avenue for museums to pursue, the most fruitful possibilities may lie within the area of cultural awareness. For a variety of reasons, the cultural aspects of language study form an especially appropriate and pressing curriculum component for museums to tackle. These reasons will be briefly explored below.

As discussed previously, museums are ideal resources for the study of foreign cultures due to the fact that they are, in a sense, storehouses of human cultural production. Beyond their suitability to the task, though, museums might feel motivated to teach culture due to its central importance for language learning. As foreign language educator Claire Kramersch notes:

Culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they least expect it, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them. (1)

Kramersch illustrates her point with an anecdote from a German language class at a school in Cameroon; as the teacher leads his students in a textbook lesson entitled “Toursim: The Mueller Family Spend Their Vacation in Africa,” the students struggle to make sense of the provided dialogue and the teacher’s questions pertaining to it. The problem lies not in the students’ ability to understand and produce grammatical constructs, since they are able to deftly provide a dictionary definition of tourism in clear German (“*Tourismus bedeutet eine Reis auf ein andere Land, wenn man macht eine Resise in eine andere Land*” / “Tourism means a trip to another country, when one makes a trip to another country.”) Rather, the concept of tourism is so far removed from the students’ own cultural experiences that they are unable to understand the steps Mrs. Mueller takes to plan her trip, her reasons for wanting to visit Cameroon, or the motivation for such a trip in the first place (Kramersch 63-66). One assumes that, were these learners of German to encounter an actual Mrs. Mueller, their exchange of ideas and information would be fraught with misconceptions and confusion on both sides. Any foreign language student, in virtually any setting, could be subject to similar communicative limitations when dealing with unfamiliar cultural contexts.

Not only is cultural understanding essential to meaningful communication in another language, it may be a prerequisite for the successful study of a foreign language in the first place. Researchers have found that students' general attitudes and beliefs about foreign languages and cultures can have a strong impact on their motivation for foreign language learning (Oxford 4). Specifically, foreign language students with negative feelings directed toward the target language or culture in particular are less engaged, persistent, and active in their attempts to learn the language (Okada, Oxford, and Abo 106). A positive disposition toward the target culture group or, even more significantly, the ability to *identify* with that culture, makes for a more motivated foreign language student (Ricento 897). Building cultural sensitivity, then, leads to higher interest in and dedication to foreign language study – which, as explained above, has positive implications for students and society alike.

Cross-cultural understanding has great importance for today's students in its own right, even apart from the confines of language learning. In the decade that has passed since the beginning of the new millennium, social and economic researchers have articulated a growing need for intercultural competence in today's global society, stating that such attributes as “cross-border perspectives and solutions” and “greater sensitivity to cultural differences” will be crucial to ensuring the United States' future in business, international relations, and social harmony (*21st Century Skills* 6). In other words, our nation's ability to compete and collaborate with other countries while maintaining a healthy diverse society at home is predicated upon a culturally competent citizenry.

Realizing the importance of these skills, a number of philanthropic organizations, government entities, and private corporations joined together in 2002 to form the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, an organization dedicated to preparing students for life in today's world. The

Partnership formulated a framework of key learning themes and abilities necessary for success in the twenty-first century; included among them are global awareness, communication, and collaboration. Each of these skills is tied to the awareness and understanding of cultures other than one's own. The Partnership's current long list of member organizations and leadership states (including New Jersey, as will be discussed below) speaks to the urgent importance that educators, administrators, policy makers, and employers ascribe to teaching students to "appreciate all that makes other cultures and nations distinctive, even as [they] embrace all that they have in common" (Duncan). By focusing on culture as their area of language teaching expertise, museums can address a major concern of educational reformers both within the field of foreign language education and in the broader national context.

A final case can be made for museums to focus on the cultural aspects of foreign language learning: it is an incredibly difficult curriculum element for language educators to teach. Even defining "culture" as a concept is challenging; as the critic Raymond Williams succinctly noted, "Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language" (qtd. in Kumaravadivelu 9). As a multilayered, shape-shifting concept, culture has long resisted a simple description. Language educators have made many attempts to classify cultural components (including the perspectives--practices--products approach codified in the most recent national standards), but these systems remain confusing, insufficient, or incompletely articulated for many foreign language teachers (Byrd et al. 22). Furthermore, language educators may feel uncomfortable or unprepared to teach a subject that, in the words of one college-level French instructor, "is the traditional domain of anthropologists and not ours" (Furstenberg 329). Lack of authentic cultural resources and time are also cited as barriers to teaching culture within the foreign language classroom (Byrd et al. 18). Given the challenges

foreign language educators face in teaching culture, there is great potential for museums to enhance and expand their work by tackling this part of language learning. The ways that they might do that will be examined below.

Chapter 5: Approaches to Teaching Culture (FL Context)

Before putting forth some ideas on how museums can work with foreign language classrooms to teach culture, it is necessary to reflect on existing approaches to teaching this complex and indeterminate concept. As stated previously, culture study as an overt objective of language learning is a fairly recent pedagogical development. It was only after World War II, when military activities made the United States' need for culturally and communicatively competent speakers of foreign languages distressingly obvious, that educators began actively looking for ways to tie cultural understanding into their curriculum (Jackson and Malone 1). Early solutions focused on "big C" or "high" culture, comprised of the artistic and literary products of the target language group and the noteworthy figures in their political and ethnic history (Kumaravadivelu 92). This approach grew out of a longstanding tradition of teaching classical languages through the works of great writers; as a result of World War II initiatives like the Army Specialized Training Program in foreign languages, the tradition was applied likewise to the teaching of modern languages, with the intent of increasing soldiers' on-the-ground efficacy in dealing with native speakers (Kelly 379). Language learners were expected to become familiar with the native speaker's "intellectual and social background" through the study of factual information related to their artistic and literary traditions (Kelly 315).

By the 1960s, "big C" culture study in language learning began giving way to a focus on "little c" culture – the anthropological aspects of a target language group, including social taboos, popular holidays, and customary patterns of address. Part of the general overhaul of foreign language education that accompanied the turn toward communicative competence, this approach to teaching culture encouraged the observation of sociolinguistic norms of appropriacy (what to say when, and to whom) and the integration of language, communication, and culture

(Savignon 637). Under this system, culture was subordinate to language, serving primarily as a framework for understanding “possible roles and contexts for participants in communication” (Scarino 326).

In addition to positing culture – whether it be of the “high” or “low” variety – as a tacked-on addendum to language study, both of the approaches described thus far involve the presentation of cultural information in the form of “random factoids” or discrete, fragmented tidbits (Phillips 90). Thus, while language learners following these methods may, for example, become familiar with the artistic contributions of Pablo Picasso, the social significance of the *quinceañera*, and the etiquette rules governing the use of *tú* and *usted*, they will lack an integrated understanding of how these separate components contribute to broader cultural values or worldviews. Recognizing the need for a more thorough approach, foreign language educators in the 1980s and 1990s began searching for a way to make culture a more central part of the curriculum. A popular solution came from the field of anthropology and its well-established process for ethnographic observation and analysis (Byram and Fang 912). In adapting the ethnographic process for use in the foreign language classroom, educational theorists emphasized the importance of descriptively, analytically, and interpretively engaging with cultural artifacts and practices in order to gain a unified understanding of the culture that created them and, most importantly, to move closer to a true understanding of the native speaker’s perspective (Byram and Fang 913). This approach to teaching culture combines the examination of cultural artifacts (“big C” culture) with an interrogation of culturally-determined language use scenarios (“little c” culture); by then emphasizing the interpretation of these two interconnected factors, it helps avoid the narrowness and fragmentation of earlier methods. The ultimate goal is to identify the

target language group's "ground of meaning," the cultural code that goes beyond "customs and proprieties" into fundamental assumptions about life and society (Kramsch 177).

The ethnographic approach to culture study in foreign language education developed concurrently with related changes in how Americans viewed other cultures. In the years after World War II, many Americans were engaged in thinking about how the United States could interact with people from other cultures, both at home and abroad, in ways that were consistent with what they believed American values to be. Major strides were made in eliminating racism against African-Americans, Native Americans, and other minority ethnic groups, and public opinion began to turn away from the idea of the American "melting pot," where individual cultural differences were erased or neutralized during the process of cultural assimilation (Kumaravadivelu 100-103). By the 1980s and 1990s, these developments led to the popularity of multiculturalism, an ideology that celebrates "diversity within unity" and the unique contributions of all culture communities (Banks et al.). Such an ideology was perfectly suited to the process of ethnographic analysis; as language learners endeavored to observe and interpret a cultural practice or tradition among their target language group, they would also, presumably, gain an appreciation for the culture that produced it – and vice versa.

While the influence of multiculturalism and ethnographic teaching methods on foreign language study remains substantial – the most recent ACTFL standards call for students to identify "cultural attitudes and priorities" by studying "everyday life and social institutions," "contemporary and historical issues," and "significant works of literature and art" (*Standards* 34) – scholars in the past two decades have identified several problems with this approach. First, the emphasis on helping students achieve the perspective of the native speaker necessitates a certain disregard for individuality. In truth, there is no such thing as *the* native speaker, since

any one member of a particular language community has his/her own ways of using the language and reacting to the larger cultural context (Kumaravadivelu 112-114). Striving for a holistic understanding of an imagined native speaker can lead to reductionism; students who are presented with selected cultural artifacts or practices as representations of an entire cultural worldview may develop a “unidimensional understanding of cultures as sightseeing curiosities,” a kind of “boutique multiculturalism” that has room only for traditional or mainstream cultural elements in its understanding of the culture under study (Harklau 122; Kumaravadivelu 108). The line between such a perspective and the practice of cultural stereotyping is dangerously thin. In a related way, ethnographic analyses of foreign cultures have a tendency to reductively equate cultural borders with their respective national or linguistic borders, overlooking significant cultural differences between, say, French speaking Arab immigrants in Paris and rural landowners in southern France. The process of describing and interpreting cultural practices in detail may also lend itself to cultural chauvinism, as it is all too easy to set cultures up in opposition to one another, with a resultant interpretation that unavoidably favors learners’ own cultural milieu.

Perhaps the most intractable problem with the ethnographic, multiculturalist approach to teaching culture has to do with its implied definition of culture itself. As one critical appraisal of the new ACTFL standards noted, treating culture as a set of static facts and meanings – even a unified, rigorously examined and interpreted set of facts and meanings – presupposes that culture is something “out there” that can be ingested and mastered by the learner (Kumaravadivelu 25). Such an understanding of culture leads to an impossible situation: foreign language teachers, as the classroom experts on the target language group, are compelled to help students “reify their own interpretation of culture, making static something that is in constant flux, and making

unified something that is inherently multiple” (Harklau 110). Analyzing a foreign culture as if it is a concrete, non-constructed entity has a whitewashing effect on the complex interplay between individuals’ selected affiliations, intended meanings, and lived experiences. This approach does nothing to help language learners integrate knowledge of the foreign culture with their own cultural experiences and with their understanding of how cultural identities are formed (Kramsch 23).

In response to the shortcomings of multiculturalism and its implications for culture study in language learning, educational theorists have in recent years articulated alternative approaches to the teaching of foreign cultures. The first, interculturalism, replaces the multiculturalist goal of understanding a mythical “native speaker” with an aim to develop in learners the habit of critical self-reflection and identity negotiation (Byram 320). First articulated by educational theorist Michael Byram, the intercultural approach to language learning stresses the idea of culture and language as constructed systems of meaning, making students aware of their own culture as they simultaneously become familiar with another. “As a consequence,” one educator states, “they learn to decenter from their own social, linguistic, and cultural world and thereby come to a different understanding of themselves in relationship to others” (Scarino 326). Rather than multiculturally sensitive appreciators of culture, learners following this approach should develop into modern-day cosmopolitans, self-reflective critics who are aware of the many layers that go into cultural identity and context and who are therefore able to transcend narrow boundaries of ethnicity or nationality (Kumaravadivelu 131).

Foreign language educator Claire Kramsch promotes a version of interculturalism that is rooted in spatial metaphors. No longer assured of sharing the same cultural “space” as their ethnically and culturally diverse students (something that was, perhaps erroneously, assumed in

previous decades), today's language teachers are finding that it is increasingly difficult to integrate elements of the target culture into their students' own cultural concepts, precisely because these concepts vary so widely among individuals (Kramersch 49). At the same time, the pre-existing beliefs and attitude that students bring to culture study make it impossible for them to fully "cross over," to metaphorically leave their own culture and enter into the cultural space of the target language community (Savignon 644). Unable to effectively bring foreign culture *in* or move their students *out* of their own cultural contexts and into the foreign one, language educators need to actively pursue alternative methods for comparing and discussing cultures. These methods, Kramersch argues, should emphasize the creation of a "third place," a metaphorical neutral zone between learners' own culture and the foreign culture being studied, from which they can examine the values, assumptions, meanings, and perceptions of each (49).

For Kramersch, the key to interculturalism is to use this "third place" to help students investigate and reflect on both the target culture and their own from an insider's and an outsider's perspective. This reflection, it is hoped, will lead them to a better understanding of the idea of "foreignness" and prompt them to construct a new, personal culture using both sets of cultural symbols (Kramersch 49). Thus, by developing teaching approaches and materials that avoid generalizations, encourage students to interrogate their own cultural assumptions, and highlight the relational nature of cultural interactions, Kramersch believes foreign language educators can help students understand the boundaries between cultures and feel prepared for resolving the distance between them (228). When followed correctly, such an approach avoids the reductionist pitfalls of multiculturalism while bringing about the added benefit of promoting critical thought and cultural awareness.

Foreign language educator B. Kumaravadivelu extends and revises Kramsch's "third place" approach. Himself a product of two distinct cultural contexts, Kumaravadivelu examines cultural education in the current international context of globalization. He notes that, while interculturalism provides a way for learners to examine their own and others' cultural affiliations, in placing its emphasis on transcending cultural boundaries – on choosing, in historian David Hollinger's words, "where to draw what circles with whom, and around what" – it suffers from a hint of elitism (qtd. in Kumaravadivelu 127). Rather than encouraging the somewhat condescending practice of remixing cultural symbols at will to create a unique identity, Kumaravadivelu believes foreign language educators should help their students learn *from* other cultures, growing through reflection on "what is good and bad about our own culture, and what is good and bad about other cultures" (5). Like interculturalism, Kumaravadivelu's approach, called cultural realism, involves critical examination of both the target culture and students' own; unlike interculturalism, it demands that students jump between cultural domains and systems as globally conscious individuals engaged in "receiving, understanding, exchanging, and judging cultural information" (165).

Chapter 6: Approaches to Teaching Culture (Museum Context)

For museums, the teaching of foreign cultures has developed in ways that both resemble and diverge from the context of foreign language education. Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic for museums in this regard is the fact that, in their modern form, museums have always placed culture at the center of their pedagogical efforts; there has never been a question of whether culture should be included as a legitimate component of the museum experience. Rather, from their beginnings as sixteenth-century cabinets of curiosities through their evolution into institutionalized public spaces, museums have made the collection and display of human cultural production their collective *raison d'être*. In a related way, museums differ from foreign language educators in that they go beyond explicit instruction and teaching of culture. Doubtless, museums do teach culture – the myriad educational talks, films, guided tours, and printed resources produced by museums for the use of their visitors attest to this fact. But, as “a medium for mass communication [...] with a powerful, perceived cultural authority or ‘weight’” (Sandell 9), a museum also “teaches” culture by displaying, interpreting, representing, and/or omitting cultures in ideologically loaded ways. Thus, when we talk about the teaching of foreign cultures in a museum context, all aspects of museum practice – from direct instruction to curatorial stance – are worthy of examination.

Despite these differences, the museum context and the foreign language context of teaching culture intersect within a shared history of dramatic change and development over the past several decades. Like the educational theorists examining foreign language learning, museum scholars, anthropologists, critics, and curators have spent recent years discussing the most appropriate way of defining culture and transmitting cultural information to others. Early approaches to presenting foreign cultures in Western museums ranged from paternalistic to non-

existent. In the ethnographic museums of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, products of non-Western cultures were presented in ways that either romanticized their creators as members of static, uncorrupted societies or positioned them as lower rungs on the ladder of cultural evolution (Kreps xi). In Western art museums, accepted curatorial practice went from essentially ignoring the artistic products of many foreign cultures and excluding them from the art historical narrative to fetishizing them as primal sources of modernist inspiration and defining them in terms that suited a Eurocentric, aesthetic outlook (Bennett 54). In each case, the implied message was that the culture of the Western museum-goer was more advanced, complex, or historically significant than the culture being “taught.”

With the birth of “New Museology” in the 1970s and 1980s, museums began to rethink their approach to presenting different cultures. Due to increased globalization and population mobility following World War II, museums in Western countries found that the publics to whom they were speaking now included, sometimes in large numbers, members of the very “foreign” cultures they had previously attempted to represent (Bennett 58). In response, museums began embracing the same multiculturalism movement that was simultaneously sweeping through foreign language education. Inclusion efforts became commonplace as museums worked to make their version of history, art, or anthropology more fully reflect the community around them.

By the end of the millennium, museum critics began voicing the same sense of disenchantment with multiculturalism that their counterparts in language education were expressing. In a series of public conversations held at Chicago’s Field Museum in 1995-1996, museum anthropologists articulated the dangers of allowing difference multiculturalism to turn into ethnic essentialism, whereby culture is, in the words of anthropologist Terry Turner, made

into “a tag for ethnic identity and a license for political and intellectual separatism” (qtd. in Wali and Khan). Sociologist Tony Bennet further developed this point, arguing that the model of a museum as a “differencing machine” – a tool for collecting and presenting cultural diversity – is simply cultural paternalism hiding behind a mask of tolerance and cosmopolitan virtue (61-63). Other scholars, such as museum critic Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, echoed interculturalists’ critique of the essentialism and fixedness of the multicultural approach; Hooper-Greenhill noted that the prior knowledge, experiences, and prejudices of museum visitors cannot be separated from their understanding of the cultures on display (124). Since culture is, as Hooper-Greenhill and others have argued, a socially and individually constructed set of meanings rather than an “elemental force,” museums must approach teaching culture not as experts disseminating discrete facts, but as facilitators committed to helping visitors construct their own notions of culture, identity, and difference (Wali and Khan).

A particularly robust and compelling source of current developments in museums and the teaching of culture is the European Union. Between 2007 and 2009, a number of European countries collaborated on a series of projects aimed at involving museums in the process of cultural education (Bodo et al. 6). Echoing the language of contemporary foreign language educators like Claire Kramsch, the MAP for ID initiative (Museums as Places for Intercultural Dialogue) called for museums to become “third spaces,” intercultural neutral zones where people from different backgrounds could meet to construct their own intermediary culture (Bodo *Guidelines* 3). While the programs enacted through MAP for ID were focused on the specific needs of bridging autochthonous and immigrant populations in European countries dealing with ballooning immigration rates and racial tensions, their organizing principles are much in line with contemporary models of culture study as it relates to foreign language education. A

rejection of static notions of culture, an interest in dialogic interactions, and an emphasis on building critical, rational thought all characterize the MAP for ID approach and align it with the teaching of cultures in foreign language learning and in the general museum context (Bodo *Heritage Education*).

As demonstrated above, the thinking surrounding how museums can, should, and do teach culture has evolved in recent decades. Cultural concerns in foreign language education have developed along similar lines, and the parallels between the two fields in this matter will necessarily have great bearing on any coordinated efforts to incorporate museum learning into the study of foreign languages. But how, specifically, should educators bring about these coordinated learning experiences? What form might foreign language study in a museum take? And what best practices should museums remember when determining how to enhance the cultural aspect of language education? These questions will be examined below.

Chapter 7: Recommendations for Culturally-Focused FL Study in Museums

For museums interested in pursuing collaborations with foreign language classes, a great deal of guidance can be distilled from current museum programs and research related to general partnerships between museums and schools. Decades of working with schools have helped museum educators establish a number of dependable strategies for creating mutually beneficial school programs for all content areas. The first crucial step is for museums to get to know the audience they wish to serve. For programs relevant to our theme, this process should include gathering information on the local foreign language education landscape, such as the primary languages studied and the distribution of classes by grade level. Teacher input is also a key component; Maria Marable-Bunch recommends that museums “involve teachers [...] in planning, implementation, and assessing” any programmatic offerings, “visit schools to better understand the ‘Life of a Teacher,’” and seek out “teacher input (to) complement and enrich classroom instruction” (13). Likewise, any collaborations between a museum and school-based foreign language classes should start by gathering information and developing connections with classroom teachers, who are in the best position to articulate what their students need to get out of the program and how they might work together to achieve those goals. The *Explorando la Selva Tropical* program at the Denver Zoo, which developed as a joint project of the Zoo’s education staff and a local teacher, is an example of how this step in the process can work.

In discussing with foreign language teachers their specific needs and objectives for museum-based programming, museum educators are likely to hear references to district, state, or federal learning standards. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 set U.S. educational policy on a determined course toward standards-based learning for K-12 students (*Education and No Child Left Behind*). While controversial, NCLB has led a number of states to embrace the standards

approach in all areas of K-12 schooling, including foreign language learning. With the implementation of standards and performance-based assessments, teachers are more pressed than ever to ensure that their students receive ample “seat time” – hours spent in the classroom, learning the material and strategies called for in their content standards (Schlageck 15-16). Even foreign language education, which falls outside the range of NCLB-tested subjects, is bound by standards; the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*, developed by ACTFL and its professional partners, have been widely disseminated and have formed the basis for learning standards in many states (Phillips and Abbott). Given this focus on standards-based learning, it is essential that museums tie any educational offerings they develop to the local, state, and/or national standards that language learners are expected to meet. This step ensures the ability of museums to “articulate the value of the experience for students in relation to what is being learned at school in addition to its value as an engaging and memory-making break from the routine” (Fortney 32).

In addition to eliciting input on student needs and thinking about how to tie programming to learning standards, museums contemplating foreign language initiatives must take a careful assessment of their own resources and abilities. Often, strong collections in a particular cultural milieu are an important resource for supporting foreign language partnerships; the Snite Museum’s rich European art collection and work with French, German, and Spanish classes attest to that fact. A lack of objects from a particular language community need not necessarily preclude a museum from engaging with students learning that language, but the museum must carefully consider which language learners it could best serve and in what way (Matthias “Education” 95). The other major decision to contemplate is how extensively language elements will be incorporated into the program. If actual materials in the target language will be used, or

if interaction in the language is built into the program, then the museum will need to have access to staff members or volunteers conversant in the language. Once again, the foreign language tours at the Snite Museum provide an example; the Snite is able to conduct numerous Spanish-language tours because it has a pool of native Spanish speakers readily available. Museums considering this type of project need to take stock of what language knowledge or potential exists on their staff and plan how they might use it in service of a foreign language partnership program.

Another major consideration when planning collaborations with foreign language classes is how the final project will operate. Will students arrive at the museum for a traditional one-day “field trip” experience, or will the partnership be something more extensive, with multiple visits, a classroom component, and/or virtual encounters? Will museum-produced resources be used only during the students’ on-site visit, or will pre- and post-visit materials, in-school presentations, or online resources be made available? The existing programs examined above show that success can be had at any point on the involvement spectrum. While many educators still extol the importance of field trips as highly impactful experiences, others note that “these old models of museums as a field trip destination are wonderful, but they’re not sufficient” (Blair). Conversely, a more long-term project may attract some classes with the promise of thorough exploration of a topic but dissuade others with its significant requirements for time and planning. The key is for a museum and its partners in foreign language education to honestly assess what they would like to accomplish and what restraining and enabling factors will affect their ability to use the museum as a resource for accomplishing those goals.

In addition to preparing organizationally for a partnership with foreign language learners, museums must prepare ideologically for their role in the teaching of language and culture. By

synthesizing information from existing programs and from research on pedagogical approaches to culture study, it is possible to sketch out a set of best practices for museums to use in their efforts to enhance foreign language learning. In order to align with current museological theories, the most important thing for museums to do is recognize that “culture” cannot be fully captured in the static, sweeping narratives of the Western tradition. Nor can it be understood as an ethnically, racially, or nationally distinct entity, something that exists outside of and acts upon individuals in society. Rather, a “dynamic, dialogic, process-oriented notion” of culture holds that individuals both act upon and are affected by the many cultural symbols that surround them (Bodo *Guidelines* 3). This approach is exemplified in “American Identity,” a series of lessons developed by the New Museum for use either on-site or in classrooms; in these lessons, students examine the many overlapping elements of cultural identity that define their experiences as Americans and the ways that they themselves contribute to formulations of American culture (Bardeguez and Kocur 233). Museums that, like the New Museum, embrace culture as a bi-directional, ever-evolving process, and that are willing to become “third spaces” for cultural encounters, will be able to lead students to a better understanding of themselves and others through explorations of target-language cultural elements.

In arranging these cultural encounters, museums should aim to strike a thoughtful balance between the familiar and the “foreign,” avoiding the opposing traps of interpretive bias and cultural chauvinism. As Ivan Karp and C.A. Kratz note, “stressing similarities produces an assimilating impression,” which, in extreme cases, can lead participants to overlook real differences or assume that their own interpretive framework for cultural elements can be universally applied. On the other hand, “assertions of unbridgeable difference [...] exoticise by creating relations of great spatial or temporal distance” (qtd. in Sandell 14). A goal of any

culture-focused foreign language program in a museum should be to help students recognize differences between themselves and others while placing equal stress on the similarities that connect their lived experiences to those of members of the target language community.

One way to achieve balance between students' own culture and others is to center the learning experience around a unifying, universal theme. The City Museum of Mirandola, Italy, provides an example of how such a program might look. As part of the MAP for ID project, the Museum developed a multi-visit secondary school program that was intended to "help [students] develop an open and critical approach to other cultures" while also recognizing "the historical and spiritual roots belonging to all human beings" (Bodo et al.). Themes for the visits centered on such universal concepts as families, journeys, and metamorphosis. By adopting a similar focus on themes and concepts that reveal individual differences while cutting across racial, ethnic, and national lines, museums can use foreign language programs as an opportunity to promote a non-essentialist, balanced view of cultural difference.

A final recommendation for museums targeting foreign language learners is for museum programming to tie in with what students already know. As noted previously, it is impossible to separate students' perception of other cultures from the values, preconceptions, and experiences they have accumulated within their own cultural framework. In order to encourage students to critically analyze their own and others' cultures, museums need to present objects and ideas that are relatable and relevant to their lives. Once again, choosing a universal theme can be helpful in this regard. Ireland's Chester Beatty Library and Draíocht Arts Centre, for example, developed a school-age program focused on the idea of storytelling (Bodo et al.). The theme allowed participants to both reflect on their own notions of storytelling as a social and cultural activity and connect their own experiences with what they were learning about storytelling around the

world. Such attention to students' existing knowledge and interests makes for more meaningful learning experiences (Roschelle 44).

Chapter 8: Program Proposal for the Newark Museum

This paper has thus far demonstrated the reasons why museums should reach out to foreign language classes, the ways in which some museums already do, and the research that supports particular approaches to teaching culture in the context of foreign language education. What remains is to provide a concrete example of how those three themes might come together in a real-life museum setting. To conclude this paper, I will propose a potential foreign language partnership for one museum, detailing how the ideas described above might actually be carried out.

The Newark Museum has been located in downtown Newark, New Jersey since its founding in 1909. Its collections span art, science, and history, with objects as diverse as plant and animal specimens, a restored Victorian mansion now listed as a National Historic Landmark, decorative and fine arts from nineteenth- and twentieth-century America, and a world-renowned collection of Tibetan artworks and artifacts (Newark Museum Association). Art from Japan, China, Korea, Native North America, and Africa rounds out the Newark Museum's collections and provides potential source material for exploring target cultures with foreign language learners. All told, over 110,000 collection objects are at the disposal of the Museum and its education department (Newark Museum Association).

Dedicated to the idea that museums “have the power to educate, inspire, and transform individuals of all ages,” the Newark Museum directs a large part of its resources to innovative and widely-respected educational programming (Newark Museum Association). Program offerings for school groups are designed to align with the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards, enhance students' academic skills, and engage learners through object-based inquiry (“Your Partner”). Currently, the Museum offers single-visit school programs on such culture-

based topics as African-American art and Egyptian art; more extensive projects include grant-funded professional development initiatives related to the cultures of Africa and Asia.

Given its commitment to education and engagement with school groups, the Newark Museum seems naturally suited to collaborating with foreign language classes. In a complementary way, the elementary and secondary education landscape surrounding the Museum is filled with potential partners. Essex County (the home of the Newark Museum) and its surrounding northern New Jersey counties are extremely diverse and densely populated, containing no less than 800 public schools offering K-12 foreign language programs. All told, over 900,000 New Jersey students in kindergarten through twelfth grade were enrolled in foreign language classes according to the most recent survey by the state’s Department of Education, with many of them living near the Museum (New Jersey Dept. of Ed. 5, 16).

These high numbers reflect the state’s deliberate effort to encourage foreign language learning. The New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standard for World Languages, adopted statewide in 2009, calls for instruction in foreign languages to take place at every grade level, with students receiving sufficient preparation “to communicate face-to-face and by virtual means in appropriate ways with people from diverse cultures” (*New Jersey Core Curriculum*; see also fig. 2).

**NJ World Class Standards
Content Area: World Languages**

Content Area	World Languages
Standard	7.1 World Languages All students will be able to use a world language in addition to English to engage in meaningful conversation, to understand and interpret spoken and written language, and to present information, concepts, and ideas, while also gaining an understanding of the perspectives of other cultures. Through language study, they will make connections with other content areas, compare the language and culture studied with their own, and participate in home and global communities.

Fig. 2. New Jersey Curriculum Standard for World Languages, from “NJ World Class

Standards: Content Area: World Languages,” *Core Curriculum Content*

Standards, New Jersey Dept. of Education, 2010; Web; 6 May 2012;

<<http://www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/standards/7/7.1.htm> >.

A related state standard in 21st-Century Life and Careers, inspired by New Jersey’s involvement in the Partnership for 21st Century Skills’ State Leadership Initiative, requires instruction across the disciplines in cross-cultural understanding and interpersonal communication (see fig. 3). Both of these standards demonstrate New Jersey’s commitment to linguistic and cultural education and suggest that any initiatives on the part of the Newark Museum to enhance foreign language education would be largely in keeping with the Department of Education’s own efforts.

**NJ World Class Standards
Content Area: 21st-Century Life and Careers**

9.1 21st-Century Life & Career Skills	
Content Area	21st-Century Life and Careers
Standard	9.1 21st-Century Life & Career Skills All students will demonstrate the creative, critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills needed to function successfully as both global citizens and workers in diverse ethnic and organizational cultures.

Fig. 3. New Jersey Curriculum Standard for 21st-Century Life and Careers, from “NJ World Class Standards: Content Area: 21st-Century Life and Careers,” *Core Curriculum Content Standards*, New Jersey Dept. of Education, 2010; Web; 6 May 2012; <<http://www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/standards/9/9-1-D.htm>>.

With such a wide audience for potential foreign language programming, one initial challenge for the Newark Museum is determining what kinds of partnerships could prove most fruitful. This decision requires taking a closer look both at the state of foreign language learning in the nearby area and at the resources that the Museum could realistically bring to the table. Over 90% of New Jersey schools offer the chance for students to study Spanish, and it is by far the most commonly studied foreign language at every grade level statewide (New Jersey Dept. of Ed. 5-16). However, the Newark Museum’s collections contain few examples of art or artifacts

from Spanish-speaking communities; a few post-contact Native American objects from the American Southwest are the Museum's only direct examples of Spanish-speakers' cultural heritage currently on exhibit. While programs for Spanish speakers might be able to enhance students' language skills by talking *about* objects in the target language, cultural tie-ins would come much less naturally. A similar situation arises for French – while French (distantly) trails Spanish as the second most commonly studied foreign language in New Jersey, the Museum's collection of cultural objects from French speakers is limited to a few examples from francophone Africa.

While examining “French” culture in the context of post-colonial African communities could prove to be an enriching learning experience, another language option seems better suited to the Museum's collections and to the interests of select nearby schools. The study of Mandarin Chinese is not yet widespread in New Jersey; in 2003-2004, 2,572 students in grades K-8 and 507 students in grades 9-12 were enrolled in Chinese language classes, compared with 624,434 and 163,871 studying Spanish in the respective grade categories (New Jersey Dept. of Ed. 9, 16). However, these low numbers belie the fact that Chinese as a foreign language is growing rapidly in popularity across the United States. In 2010, the *New York Times* reported that the number of schools offering classes in Chinese rose from 300 to 1,600 in ten years, and that Chinese was set to overtake German as the third most-tested foreign language on AP exams behind Spanish and French (Dillon). These trends are reflected in a unique program currently in place in Bergen County's Englewood Public Schools. From pre-kindergarten, Englewood students have the option of participating in a Mandarin Chinese immersion program that extends through middle school. In high school, students can continue with traditional foreign language classes in Mandarin that fulfill district graduation requirements (Englewood Public School District). The

immersion model's focus on critical thinking and global competence, along with the more flexible class schedule afforded by longer foreign language instruction periods, makes Englewood Public Schools a promising partner for a museum program aimed at enhancing the cultural aspects of foreign language learning.

The program outlined below is designed to serve as a starting point for developing a partnership between the Newark Museum and Englewood Public Schools' Mandarin Chinese immersion program (see appendix for complete lesson plan). While a standard, two-hour museum visit has been used as the template for describing possible learning activities, this program could be scaled up to fill a full-day museum experience or worked into a more integrated series of museum, classroom, and/or virtual visits. The language-based activities are optional and can be adapted to various ages and fluency levels. In keeping with current research about the teaching of culture in the context of object-based learning and foreign language education, the program attempts to present cultural objects from China in a way that leads students to critically examine their meaning and relevance to both the people who made and used them and to their own lives as twenty-first-century American students. Activities are meant to encourage an intercultural analysis of the artworks and artifacts under study. Within this program, students will engage critically with both historical and contemporary Chinese objects along with related examples from contemporary and nineteenth-century America. The goal of the program is to foster students' awareness of the complex nature of culture and its meaning for their lives as global citizens.

Built around the universal theme of "life at home," this program begins with students exploring the notion of what it means to be "at home" in a place. Reflecting on times when they have returned to their homes after an absence, students discuss what in particular

made them feel like they were truly home. They then watch the BBC Learning Zone video clip “Living in Beijing’s Old Dwellings.” Vocabulary lists of the words highlighted in this clip may be distributed; according to the teacher’s specifications, lists of additional vocabulary words related to homes, families, and other key concepts (“privacy,” “comfort”) may also be utilized. Depending on their fluency level and the teacher’s willingness to participate, some of this discussion could be conducted in Chinese using the new vocabulary. During this first part of the program, students receive a worksheet that they will complete over the course of the visit (see appendix).

After facilitating a discussion on the aspects of Beijing homes shown in the video clip, the educator leads students to the Asian art galleries. Here, their first stop is the eighteenth-century Chinese alcove bed. Students engage in a visual analysis of the bed, examining and suggesting explanations for the bed’s unique construction. Revealing that the outer part of the bedframe would have housed benches for sitting with visitors, the educator leads students in discussing the implications of this arrangement. The nearby wooden screens used for dividing rooms can also be examined to give students a better sense of how an entire room might have looked. Students should spend a few moments completing the first portion of their worksheet. Then, the group can fill the rest of their time in this gallery with a discussion of the places in their own homes where they spend time with friends and family, the ways that spaces used for different people or functions are marked off, and the degree to which they have their “own” space within their homes.

From the alcove bed, students travel to the Tibet Information Zone, where they can view photographs, murals, and models pertaining to life in Tibet. The educator should provide students with some contextual information about Tibet, its connection to China and the Chinese

language, and the lifestyle of Tibetan nomads. The group then turns its attention to the model tent, which they use to further explore the concept of “home.” Students can discuss how a nomadic lifestyle changes the meaning of home – how does someone feel “at home” when their dwelling space regularly moves from place to place? Before leaving Tibet, students complete the next section of their worksheet.

The remainder of the gallery time for this program is spent in the Ballantine House, the nineteenth-century mansion built by Newark residents John and Jeannette Ballantine. Students focus specifically on the master bedroom, which serves as a counterpoint to the Chinese alcove bed and room screens seen in the Asian art gallery. Once again, discussion centers on how family members and friends might have used this space and how space is divided for different functions. The educator leads students to the understanding that, while there are chairs and areas for sitting in the room, visitors would not typically be invited to sit there with the family. The educator also engages the students in looking at the room’s furnishings and decorations, encouraging them to point out objects that might have had special meaning for the people who lived in the house. In pairs, students can discuss objects that they own that they associate with the idea of being at home. The final section of the worksheet is completed before leaving the Ballantine House.

The second half of this program takes place in one of the Museum’s classrooms, where students participate in a creative art activity meant to reinforce and expand on the ideas presented in the gallery visit. The session begins with students dividing into pairs and receiving sets of “American Home” images, showing types of dwellings common in the United States in the twenty-first century (see appendix). Each pair works together to arrange the images in order from the place where they would feel *most* at home to the place where they would feel *least* at

home. Students willing to share can explain their reasoning to the group. After briefly discussing what this activity says about American culture (namely, that it is many-sided and uniquely interpreted by each individual), the group begins work on the art project. Students use computers in the classroom to type their address into Google Maps; they use the Street View image of their actual home to form the basis of a collage. Using pre-cut images from magazines, catalogues, real estate guides, and photograph reproductions, students create an image of a home that combines elements of Chinese and Tibetan homes with elements of homes in Victorian or modern America. Based on teacher input, the museum educator can also instruct students to label the various features in their collage in Chinese and English, or to write a few short sentences in Chinese describing what they have created. The program concludes with a recap of what students have seen and learned.

While this program is here put forth in a very preliminary state, it has been designed to bring about a number of positive results for participants. By using Mandarin Chinese to discuss art in a new setting, students will have the chance to sharpen the communicative aspects of their language learning. By examining works of art and artifacts produced by Chinese speakers (including both native speakers from China and second-language speakers from Tibet), students progress toward mastering state learning standards in World Languages and 21st-Century Life and Careers. By exploring those cultural products in terms of a universal theme like “home,” one which emphasizes the connections among cultures and the individual diversity that exists within them, students grow in intercultural understanding. Finally, by synthesizing various cultural elements from different sources into a personal vision of home, students move closer to acting within the “third space” promoted by language educators and museum theorists alike.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to establish a compelling argument for museums and foreign language classes to work together, has described how museums currently are or hypothetically could use their collections to enhance the cultural aspects of language learning, and has presented a concrete example of how such an initiative might look. All of this has been driven by two fundamental beliefs. First, that an understanding of culture, both our own and that of others, is a crucial component of any student's education. For the sake of our collective future, America must invest in preparing students to communicate and engage with culturally diverse members of the world population. And second, that museums are uniquely positioned to use their collections in support of this effort. As arts education advocate Josey Stamm notes, "Cultural institutions such as museums can help people become human Rosetta Stones through the presentation of works placed in cultural contexts" (*Museums in the Social and Economic Life* 27). I would extend this statement to say that museums can themselves serve as a kind of Rosetta Stone for foreign language learners, helping them navigate the complex interactions between language and culture, familiar and foreign, self and other. Stamm issued her Rosetta Stone challenge in 1996, a full decade before ACTFL's "Year of Languages" and AAM's "Year of the Museum" overlapped in serendipitous fashion. The time has come for museums to acknowledge this connection and take on the important work of enriching foreign language education.

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Appendix A: Lesson Plan for Newark Museum Mandarin Chinese Program

- Big idea:** Life at home
- Essential question:** What does it mean to be “at home” in a place?
- Grade level:** 5th – 8th
- Content area:** Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language
- Duration:** 120 minutes
- Locations:** School Programs classroom; Asian Art gallery; Tibet Information Zone; Ballantine House
- Materials:** Computer with projector, printer, and internet access; BBC video clip, “Living in Beijing’s Old Dwellings”; vocabulary lists (if applicable); worksheets; pencils; clipboards; photographs and handling objects from Tibet collection; “American Home” image cards; construction paper; pre-cut images from assorted print materials (magazines, catalogues, photocopies of historic and modern Chinese homes, etc.)
- Standards met:** World Languages 7.1; 21st-Century Life and Career Skills 9.1
- Objectives:**
- Participants will identify and describe aspects of modern urban Chinese homes
 - Participants will analyze an art object to determine its function and cultural significance
 - Participants will make comparisons between their own home lives and the home life implied in the objects they view
 - Students will explain how nomadism affects the concept of “home”
 - Students will relate an art object’s function to its historical and cultural context
 - Students will acknowledge the complexity of culture both in their own community and around the world
 - Students will create an expressive artwork that ties their own notion of home to the Chinese versions viewed in the Museum

Location #1: School Programs classroom

Educator introduction – Have you ever returned to your home after spending a long time away? Was there a specific aspect of arriving that made you feel like you were truly “home” again? What was it? Today, we will be examining the idea of being “at home” in a place. We will be looking at several examples of homes from Chinese-speaking countries and from different time periods in the United States.

Language activity – Vocabulary lists for the video clip and, if pre-arranged with the teacher, lists for general “home” terms can be handed out now. Teacher can review and practice the words with the class.

Video – Play the BBC video clip, “Living in Beijing’s Old Dwellings” (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/living-in-beijings-old-dwellings/1323.html>). What do you notice about the homes in the video clip? Describe how people live together in these homes. Does every person have his/her own room? How/where do family members spend most of their time at home? Imagine if one of the children in the video came to stay in your house. What would be familiar? What would be different? Do you think they would feel “at home”?

Before leaving the classroom, distribute copies of the worksheet that students will be filling out, along with pencils and clipboards.

Location #2: Asian Art gallery

Alcove bed

Jiangsu Province, China

18th c.

Southern elm (*jumu*) with red lacquer

Purchase 2004, The Members’ Fund

2004.28

Visual analysis – What are we looking at? When you look at this bed, what do you see? What part of the bed would people sleep on? What is the other part of the bedframe for? What does it remind you of?

Information – Explain that the bed would have been part of a bride’s dowry, the gifts and supplies she brought with her when she got married. The outer part of the bed was for receiving visitors; friends and family would sit and visit with her on benches that fit into the alcove. The bedroom was a place for entertaining guests as well as for sleeping.

Latticework door panels

China

19th c.

Elm wood

Purchase 2004

With funds from Mrs. Carl Szego in memory of her husband

2004.6.2.1-7

Discussion – These latticework doors would have allowed people to pass from room to room in a Chinese home about 200 years ago. How are rooms divided in your home? Do you keep doors open or closed in your home? In what spaces do you entertain your guests, family members, and/or friends? Are there spaces where guests *don't* go?

Worksheet – Students complete the first section of their worksheet.

Location #3: Tibet Information Zone

Exploration – Explain to students that the objects and images in this room all pertain to the land of Tibet, a once-independent region near the Himalayan Mountains that is now part of China. Many Tibetan people have lived for centuries as nomads, herders who graze their yaks on high plateaus. They developed their own style of dress, housing, customs, and religious traditions. Since Tibet became part of China, many Tibetans are learning to speak Chinese and are blending aspects of Chinese culture with their own. After this contextual explanation, students can explore the Information Zone on their own while they fill out the second section of the worksheet.

Location #4: Ballantine House Master Bedroom

Transition – So far we have seen several examples of home life in Chinese-speaking countries from different time periods. Now we will look at a home in our own country, the United States, and see how it compares both with the Chinese examples and with your own homes.

Visual analysis – Describe the appearance of this room. What do you see in this space? What do you think it was used for? Who might have slept here?

Information – Explain that this was the room of John and Jeannette Ballantine, the wealthy New Jersey couple who built this house. The Ballantines lived a little over 100 years ago and were extremely wealthy for their time. They lived in the house with their four children and as many as sixteen servants.

Discussion – How is this space divided from the other rooms? Think back to the Chinese alcove bed – do you think guests would have been invited into this room to socialize? What objects in this room do you think might have been particularly important to the Ballantines? Which of them do you associate with the idea of being “at home”?

Location #5: School Programs classroom (again)

Hands-on activity – Students divide into pairs and are given sets of “American Home” images. Instruct students to look at the pictures from different kinds of homes that are found in the United States today. With their partners, they should arrange the images in order from where they would feel *most* at home to where they would feel *least* at home. Pairs can share their responses with the group.

Art activity – As we have seen today, people differ in how they arrange their homes, what they put in them, and how they act within them. This can differ between cultures, but it can also be different among people from the same culture. All of you are Americans, you all live in New Jersey – but you had different responses to the images you just saw. Each one of you has your own way of feeling “at home” in a place. In our last activity, you will be combining elements of your own ideas about home with elements of what you’ve learned about Chinese and Tibetan homes.

To begin, students look up their addresses on Google Maps to find and print an image of their own homes. (Drawing may be substituted for the computer printout if desired.) Students then look through the provided pictures from magazines and catalogues for images that represent aspects of their own homes here in America. They also select pictures that remind them of some of the aspects of Chinese and Tibetan homes that they saw in the Museum. Students then glue the various “home” elements onto their collage, labeling them in Chinese if the teacher deems it appropriate.

Conclusion – Students may share their collages with the group, describing how they made a hybrid American-Chinese version of a home. Conclude by reiterating the main idea of the day – that all people want a place where they can feel at home, but that our ideas about how to be “at home” in a place vary among individuals living in different places and at different times.

Appendix B: Student Worksheet for Newark Museum Mandarin Chinese Program

Name (English): _____

Name (Mandarin): _____

Section 1: Homes in China

- 1) How do the people in the video say homes in Beijing have changed in recent years?

- 2) What is similar between the Beijing apartments and the bed/doors from the ancient Chinese house?

- 3) Would you feel at home in the apartment or the house? Why or why not?

Section 2: Homes in Tibet

- 4) Choose one of the photographs or models in this gallery. Describe the home shown in the image. What might it be made of? Does it have rooms on the inside? What are they like? Why do you think Tibetans made a home like this?

5) Do people who move from place to place all their lives still have a “home”? Circle one:

Y / N

6) If home is not defined by a particular location, what is it that makes a place a home?

Section 3: Homes in the United States

7) How is this home similar to what you saw in China and Tibet? How is it different?

Similar: _____

Different: _____

8) Do you have your “own” space in your home? How do you mark it off from the rest of the house?

9) Would you feel at home living in the Ballantine House? Why or why not?

Appendix C: Images of American Homes for Newark Museum Mandarin Chinese Program



From janetnck



From thekitchendesigner.org



From adambermingham



From jonmcalister



From Michal Fabry



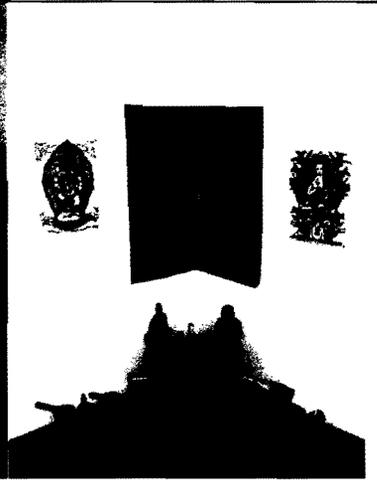
From goldberg



From bogowonto2010



From sammie619



From mscaprikell



From Zolakoma



From Marion Doss



From Dana Spiegel