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“The West that Got into His Bones:”

Key Perspectives on Clyfford Still at the Inauguration of His Museum

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August 2009
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Introduction

One of the newest additions to the museum paradigm is a private collection of works that recently awoke from a dormant state. The Clyfford Still Museum (CSM), the seventh single artist museum (SAM) in the United States (U.S.), will open in Denver, Colorado, in 2010.¹ The collection of works of Clyfford Still (1904-1980), nearly 92% of his oeuvre, will constitute the museum's permanent collection. It is Still's wish, as stated in his tersely written will, to "give and bequeath all the remaining works of art executed by me [Still] in my [his] collection to an American city that will agree to build or assign and maintain permanent quarters exclusively for these works of art and assure their physical survival with the explicit requirements that none of these works of art will be sold, given or exchanged but are to be retained in the place described above exclusively assigned to them in perpetuity for exhibition and study." (SEE APPENDIX B FOR FULL TEXT)²

Still's guidelines are very stringent, often going against the principles of today's visitor-based museum agenda and instead favoring the artist's idealized conceptual environment. Because of this discrepancy, CSM professionals are faced with the

¹ The American Association of Museum guidelines require an institution to be in operation for at least two years before applying for accreditation. The Clyfford Still Museum intends to apply for accreditation when that requirement has been satisfied. This will make the CSM the seventh accredited single artist museum in the U.S. (APPENDIX A)

² Clyfford Still quoted from Temchine, Michael, "Revealing the Hidden Clyfford Still," *ARTnews*, January 2009, 18 May 2009

<http://www.artnewsonline.com/issues/article.asp?art_id=2605>.

challenge of understanding and incorporating Still's interests as it develops exhibitions, programs, community relations and scholarship. It is an ethical prerogative unique to SAMs that work to maintain a sense of the artist's personality and character. The museum achieves this by prioritizing the artist and his or her ideals however radical or lofty they might be. With a little inventiveness and careful consideration, the artist's peculiarities can be a launching pad to engage important issues.

SAMs operate under different conditions than do other museums. Their uniqueness gives them license to depart from standard chronological displays and offer visitors an alternative view on history as seen through the lens of the artist. This subsequently lends itself to thematic and aesthetic displays. These alternative displays often resonate with visitors because the SAMs deal only with the lifespan of one artist; unlike survey museums. The vast art historical canon is abridged in SAMs, rendering the museum experience less daunting and intimidating. This narrower spectrum of content increases the artist's accessibility. SAMs can focus on artistic influences, historical context, and/or societal impact in great detail. There is the added benefit of seeing an artist's career encapsulated in one space because the audience is given a sense of his/her process adding new meaning to the term "art appreciation". This level of commitment helps keep SAMs deeply rooted in their communities.

SAMs can be a central depot for information pertaining to the artist, making them a one-stop shop for visiting scholars. Being a representative of the artist, posthumously,

the museum strives to renew interest in the artist and to connect relevant people with resources, whether the focus is favorable or critical. It is not the institutions place to censor what is being analyzed, but rather to help facilitate the analytical process.

Otherwise, there is a risk of SAMs becoming hagiographic, especially when the collections are directly gifted from the artist. While it's the goal of SAMs to perpetuate an artist's legacy, there must be ways to build platforms that allow diverse perspectives and critical assessments -the museum should convey the artist ideals, but also invite discourse. If not, the museum becomes a stagnant sanctuary. This is one area that might be a challenge for the CSM because Still was unwavering in his philosophy which is evidenced by the restrictions outlined in his will. What Still requested is simply not realistic in today's museum culture.

Clyfford Still was a reclusive artist who left New York at the height of his career. As a proponent of color field and abstract painting, he staunchly stood behind the principles of formalism. Often conveying his abhorrence of museum and gallery culture in the 1960s, Still sought to pave his own path -free from what he called "institutional culture." He never titled his works claiming that titles would encourage people to impose narrative and figurative element—a practice Still condemned. He also preferred his works be displayed alone, not with other artists because he believed it suggested he was part of a school. Today that preference is being honored by the few select museums that own works by Still. The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and The Albright Knox Art

Gallery both hold substantial Still collections and have designated gallery space catered to Still.

After Still died in 1980, his widow and executor, Patricia Still, stowed away his collection in a storage facility in rural Maryland, preventing Still's works from being scrutinized by museum professionals, scholars and press...until now. This long awaited gift, arranged by Still's widow, is a significant boon to the art world. Even after 30 years, Clyfford Still continues to have a grip on his collection. Patricia Still, working as his proxy, was very careful to consider all aspects of the gift agreement to ensure that Still's legacy was to be honored. Does any artist have the right to control his or her legacy to the degree that Still demands? Similarly, is it fair for Still to hide his work, avoiding critical analysis and public commentary? Further is it then fair for artists to pop back into the art world at will without contention or repercussion? Or is it a brilliant albeit manipulative, plan orchestrated by Still?

Still took a huge risk in hoarding his works all of these years. Because of this, the value of a single Still painting is high. Still sold fewer than 180 paintings to the private sector during his active career so it is rare to find a Still on the market, but when one surfaces, it fetches top dollar.* Key questions emerge about the real value of the CSM's collection. The reality is that most of the works are unknown; therefore determining the value becomes a guessing game. Under an insurance umbrella, one key question is, will the works be under or over valued? How does the museum value when there is no comparable? Will the museum's presence help or hurt Still's market value? This is just

* In 2004, a Clyfford Still painting was presented on PBS's *Antiques Road Show*, fetching the highest appraisal in the show's history. The early figurative painting was appraised at \$500,000.

one example of how the disconnect from the art world might affect the CSM.

At a time when SAM museums must evolve to stay relevant to their audiences, CSM prefer to make its own rules. In less than a year, the museum will open its doors and re-introducing the artist. How will this new institution fit into the museum paradigm? Will it change the museum paradigm? Will the existing museum culture be accepting of CSM's method? New ideas about museum practice are a welcomed effort in the profession, but unfortunately audiences have expectations when it comes to their museum experience which can result in some form of regression-people want museums to be approachable, inventive, and dependable. Can Still meet their expectations? Visitors of the CSM will discover there will be no lending, no context and no programming in the galleries. There will be a small gift shop, but no auditorium. As we look at the artist's requests with the benefit of hindsight we are able to see that Still's guidelines are ethically outdated making it difficult to operate like it SAM predecessors. How the CSM's staff handle these philosophical constructs?

All SAMs have unique origins that mandate them litigiously and ethically to occasionally step away from the typical museum doctrine set forth by the American Association of Museums (AAM). This thesis will trace the imminent opening and operations of the newest SAM to determine if this museum will follow its predecessors to become visitor oriented or if the museum will operate for its central artist, posthumously. This paper will also discuss the artist's career to see how his philosophies have shaped his will and thus the museum. For all its peculiarities, a museum devoted to Still in Denver is not as outlandish as it seems. This museum has antecedents to the West, the Abstract Expressionists and ancient philosophy. These deep intellectual roots suggest

that the CSM will provide the world with a different way of seeing the museum. The question is, will people like what they see? Now that you've built it, will they come?

Chapter 1 Conventions of the Single Artist Museum

For nearly thirty years, SAMs have been striving to perfect the balancing act between artist and visitor. Ever since Norman Rockwell generously donated his estate to the struggling Stockbridge Historical Society in 1973, the SAM paradigm has been in constant flux. To be successful, each SAM since the Norman Rockwell Museum has tailored its programming, exhibitions, marketing and scholarship to reflect the character of its central artist while meeting the needs of their audience. Today the SAM “network” is facing a new challenge. The newest addition to the SAM group revolves around the ideals of a cantankerous, individualistic artist who in his will insisted on clinging to conventions of the past to create a space that will only house his work. Without the aforementioned attributes of a successful institution, Still and his self-titled museum will likely face many challenges.

The success of the early SAMs has rested on their ability to constantly evolve from the moment they open their doors, reevaluating themselves so that they stay relevant to their audiences. They deconstruct, scrupulously analyze, and contextualize their collection and their artist to call attention to his or her contributions to history. The American Association of Museums categorizes SAMs by type; “art museum/center” is the primary and “Specialized” is the secondary.

Ideally, SAMs should function as the archival center for the artist. This helps propel scholarship because visitors can travel to one place (the museum library/archive/resource center) for most of the answers. This concentration of resources

also encourages programming activities such as conferences and lectures that are based on the artist. Furthermore, visiting scholars will have access to the curatorial staff and vice versa which keeps all abreast of new ideas.

Programming

Museum programming can include anything from discussions, film and lecture series, music concerts, special events, to creative workshops. It's an effective alternative that breaks up the monotony of the gallery presentation. It helps bring visitors back. The Norman Rockwell Museum provides the perfect programming model. It's based on its drive to show "the evolution and significance of illustration in relation to pop culture, social history, mass media and traditional art history."³ As the museum's mission statement highlights:

The Norman Rockwell Museum is dedicated to education and art appreciation inspired by the legacy of Norman Rockwell...the museum is a gathering place for reflection and involvement and discovery through the enjoyment of the artist's work. Norman Rockwell's unique contributions to art and society, popular culture and social commentary influence the museum's programs and interpretations.⁴

In recent years, its programming has included young illustrators and comic book artist workshops; a special event, *All-American Weekend Baseball: America's Favorite*

³ Clowe, Jeremy, (2007, April 02) "Norman Rockwell Promotional Video," Norman Rockwell Museum, 02 April 2007 <<http://www.best-norman-rockwell-art.com/norman-rockwell-museum-of-massachusetts.html>>.

⁴ "Mission Statement," Norman Rockwell Museum, 1 January 2009 <<http://www.nrm.org/page43>>.

Pastime; political art discussions; and adult workshops such as *How to Write a Graphic Novel*. By establishing such dynamic programs, the Norman Rockwell establishes an identity as a place that fosters relationships with emerging artists.

Clyfford Still requested that the works presented at CSM be void of context or influence. If this is the case, how is the CSM going to carry without this process? How are they going to carry out Still's mission to enlighten people with his philosophies if there isn't any variety or dimension? Is the display of paintings enough to keep visitors interested year after year?

Exhibitions

The most effective way to deliver the artist's message has been through exhibition development. For SAMs with small collections, this usually means reinventing the wheel. One approach is to borrow works from other institutions or private lenders to help revive the collection, but unfortunately loans are often expensive so they can't always be made. A second idea is to introduce contemporary works that have lineage back to the artist. The Salvador Dali Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida provides a perfect example. In 2003, the museum opened its gallery *Traces of the Avant-Garde*, also known as the *Traces Gallery*. Each year the museum commissions an installation from a living artist in Catalonia, Spain (Dali's homeland) to demonstrate his or her interpretation of Dali's work. The medium is not limited to painting. In fact, the most recent commissions have involved film and photography. It is an interesting and inventive way to keep the Dali

Museum's community abreast of the current artistic trends in Spain and how their artist influenced them. It also quietly reminds the people of St. Petersburg the way in which Dali has influenced younger generation. It instills an appreciation for locals who recognize that a collection of works by a famous artist found its way to their city. This crossover of cultures also establishes The Salvador Dali Museum as an international institution. As a result, this heightened profile attracts an astounding number of international visitors each year. The Salvador Dali Museum is the third largest tourist site in the state of Florida, behind Disney World and the sunny beaches. With nearly 250,000 visitors each year, the Dali Museum continues to be proactive, bringing more than just the permanent collection to its community.

SAMs offer a unique opportunity to break up the typical chronological gallery layout to effectively introduce thematic displays. The Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for example, has an extensive exhibition program that addresses causes Warhol was passionate about in his lifetime, including issues such as natural disasters, corporate power, religion, carbon production in the food industry, sexuality and commercialism. Consequently, the exhibition topics inform the museum's programming.

With a display of only one artist, all the time, the CSM exhibition schedule is likely to be its greatest challenge. After its inaugural year, how is the museum going to encourage return visitation? If only the permanent collection can be shown, how will the

museum sustain itself? This sort of presentation suggests CSM is a sanctuary, reminiscent of the Rothko Chapel in Houston, Texas rather than a museum.

In 1971 John and Dominique de Menil philanthropists commissioned Mark Rothko, Still's contemporary and close friend, to create fourteen monumental canvases. The Menils gave Rothko license to create a quiet, meditative environment, which he adorned with, large, black, washed canvases. According to the Rothko Chapel website, it "functions as a chapel, museum and forum. It's a place where religion, art and architecture intermingle."⁵ Was Still conscious of the Rothko Chapel when he created his will? Given his vague direction, choosing to give his estate to a city, was he really hoping for a chapel and not a museum or a chapel disguised as a museum? Because he never used the word museum in his will, are we sure the CSM is what he wanted?

Urban Identity

The Andy Warhol Museum, guided by zealous and inventive Executive Director Tom Sokolowski, has always kept the city of Pittsburgh, central to its operations. Its projects have kept its community entertained, stimulated and appreciated. The local community is never alienated because the Andy Warhol Museum recognizes that museum and community go hand in hand. The museum's website outlines its intentions:

Programs explore and use the art, life and practice of Andy Warhol and the work of practicing artists as a springboard

⁵ "History of the Chapel," Rothko Chapel, 2004, 24 May 2009
<<http://www.rothkochapel.org/history.html>>.

to: respond to community needs, issues or concerns;
examine diverse aspects of contemporary art and culture;
develop mutually beneficial collaborations and sustainable
relationships, and celebrate creative interests of individuals
and groups.⁶

The museum offered a program called *Flashbulb Memories and Warhol's Flash* to accompany the exhibition *November 22, 1963: Image, Memory, Myth*. This activity invited members of the local community to reflect on their memories of John F. Kennedy's assassination. Participants were from diverse backgrounds and their ages spanned from teenagers to senior citizens. While some were alive on 1963 others hadn't been born by then and therefore and only knew of the president's assassination through textbooks, movies and oral histories. Nonetheless, the activity provided many different perspectives surrounding one moment in time, and those narratives were shared in the gallery space through audio recordings.

Andy Warhol championed his hometown, Pittsburgh, and its urban identity. With time, his Foundation (which donated the works to create the museum's permanent collection) has given Pittsburgh a new identity. Today, every exhibition has a local community element to fortify the display. It is a constant reminder that this museum is a Pittsburgh museum. Because of this, the Warhol Museum can push the boundaries in ways other museums can't because the relationship gives license to the museum's programming. As a result, there is a longstanding rapport; they both can take risks.

⁶ "The Warhol: Education," Andy Warhol Museum, 2007, 24 January 2009
http://www.warhol.org/education/community_programs.html

Chapter 2 Philosophies of Art

Still once said, “I never wanted color to be pure color. I never wanted texture to be texture, or images to become shapes. I wanted them all to fuse into a living spirit.”⁷ The living spirit Still speaks of is embodied in his epic and ambitious collection of paintings. The artist’s oeuvre, consisting of countless series of untitled, abstract forms is the product of Still’s conscious removal of subject matter, context and influence. The works represent art in its most primary state. For Still, art was supposed to liberate the viewer, free him from the constraints of the modern age –an age which Still detested. Still wrote, “A man’s ‘time’ limits him, it does not *truly* liberate him. Our age...is of science—of mechanism—of power and death. I see no virtue in adding to its mammoth arrogance, the compliment of graphic homage.”

According to Katerine Kuh, the first Curator of Modern Paintings and Sculpture at the Art Institute of Chicago and author of the *Clyfford Still* essay in the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s retrospective catalog, Still “was among the first to realize that a painting need not depict, suggest or symbolize anything. For him it exists as a totality in its own right.”⁸ This radical idea took the expression, “art for art’s sake” to new heights. Leading the way to this new thought process, with Still, were his contemporaries Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, Barnett Newman and Robert Motherwell, among others.

⁷ Kuh, Katherine, *My Love Affair with Modern Art*. (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2006) 199.

⁸ Kuh, Katherine. *Clyfford Still Retrospective catalog*. (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1979) 11.

Unlike the European Dada and Surrealists who were new to the New York art scene in the 1940s and 1950s, the New York School of abstract painters sought to shed all the political and cultural decadence associated with European movements and strip art down to its purest form. The product was not to depict anything, but to evoke a feeling or emotion. All abstract artists of this time set out to accomplish this individually. For Pollock it was his gestural drips while Rothko cultivated the color field blocks. Still developed jagged “voids” when he applied paint to expansive canvases with a palette knife. The truth is Still was probably the only artist to carry out these intentions to the fullest. As Jackson Pollock once said, “Still makes the rest of us look academic.”⁹ What Pollock meant was that Still’s ideas came from within him. His life *was* his work.

Irving Sandler, author of *Triumph of American Painting: The History of Abstract Expressionism*, wrote about Still’s quest for the sublime and its origins which are based on the writings of Greek philosopher, Longinus, who penned the treatise, *On the Sublime*. Longinus valued the notion that a style of writing should elevate itself above the ordinary through “great thoughts, strong emotions, certain figures of thought and speech, noble diction, and dignified work arrangement.”¹⁰ <whitney notes FIND FOOTNOTE>

According to David Marvin Quick’s PhD Dissertation, “Meaning in the Art of Barnett Newman and There of His Contemporaries: A Study of Content in Abstract

⁹ Demetron, James T, “Introduction,” *Clyfford Still: Paintings, 1944-1960*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001)11.

¹⁰ Leitch, Vincent B. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001) 135-54.

Expressionism,” Longinus put great stress on how the artist should behave, and recognized that the precondition for his whole concept of the sublime was the freedom of the artist. These philosophical elements articulated Still’s position against the art world, or as Still called it, “institutional culture.” The term, “institutional culture” represented everything Still’s art was against: commercialism, association, contrivance and wealth. Not coincidentally, these are characteristics of the post-war New York City’s art scene which was championed by art critics like Harold Rosenberg, Clement Greenberg and Dore Ashton.

Still had torrid relationships with fellow artists, gallerists, curators, museums and art critics. For whatever reason, be it sensationalism, contrivance and/or the naivety of the New York City art scene, Still avoided the art scene by staying focused on his own course even if that meant vilifying people around him. At the height of his career in 1961, Still left the constraints of the city behind and moved to an isolated space in rural Maryland where he could be “free”. He sold less than 180 paintings in his life which provided a decent income for his family to live comfortably, but not lavishly. It was Still’s plan to transcend time by extracting himself from the art world. In a recent interview, Still’s two daughters, Diane and Sandra, remarked on their time in New York City and the disappointment their father felt:

The disappointment of finding out what was really important to them [other artists], which was to be a member of a gallery. How terrible how political the art scene was there. It was horrible, the humiliation the artists were put through to just be part of a gallery. That’s why he [Still]

never signed a contract with them. They virtually signed their lives away. It disappointed Dad.¹¹

Before moving to Maryland, Still elaborated on his self inflicted alienation in a letter to gallerist, Betty Parsons:

I am always amazed when people think of me bitter about my time....I have played all the games my time has to offer, and found them boring, stupid or mean; I am simply not interested in corroborating its values. But I know these (my) works contain a force which can be used against the principles which were born within them if they are left to the devices of unscrupulous or vicious men.¹²

One reason Still became so disenchanted with the gallery scene in New York City was because his work was often grouped together with other artists. He felt the group shows he participated in suggested that he was part of a school. True he ushered in the color field movement and aligned himself briefly with many abstract expressionist artists but that was the extent of his interest in association. As mentioned before, these artists had a similar goal in mind but preferred to go about achieving it as individuals. Art critic Pamela Franks notes:

the exhibition (*Clyfford Still: Paintings 1944-1960*) validates the artist's insistence that his paintings be seen together rather than singly in group exhibitions whose organizing principles were formed outside the realm of his conception. Such group shows diluted the purity of his vision and undermined the paintings' impact.¹³

¹¹ Voelz Chandler, Mary, "Still the Master," *Rocky Mountain News*, 5 January 2008, 23 July 2009 <<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/news/2008/Jan/05/no-headline---2008-01-04-181445569843/>>.

¹² Clyfford Still letter to Betty Parsons Sept 26, 1949, Whitney Museum of Art Library.

¹³ Franks, Pamela. "On Clyfford Still Paintings, 1944-1960" *Archives of American Art Journal* 42/1-2 (2002) p. 38.

According to David Anfam, prominent scholar and advisor to the CSM who has been privy to the artist's private estate in recent years, Still can only be seen in a single artist venue where his works are shown chronologically. Anfam explains, "without the long prehistory of his oeuvre, such a zenith would have been incomprehensible. This is why the earlier work counts for so much, especially as Still stressed the internal consistency of his evolution."¹⁴ In other words, Anfam is supporting Still's desire to keep his collective body of work together to demonstrate the natural thinking process of an artist. Without a comprehensive collection and eloquent pronouncements, Still stood to be misunderstood, trivialized or forgotten. A group show was never going to supply the same revelations because one painting would not be capable of encapsulating him as an artist. Still felt each work hinged on his previous work so showing only selections would be a disservice not only to the artist, but the viewer.

Given Still's public persona, some critics, scholars, fans and museum enthusiasts might be surprised to know that Still was very conscious of the visitor. Because of the artist's personality, the CSM concept was wrongly presumed to be elitist, overly academic and/or inaccessible-characteristics that undoubtedly would have had an impact on their American Association of Museum accreditation process.* Contrary to this presumption Still was very concerned with the viewer. For example, Still wants viewers to arrive at their own reactions and feelings. Kuh wrote about Still's intentions in the Metropolitan Museum of Art retrospective catalog:

¹⁴ Anfam, David, "Clyfford Still's Art: Between the Quick and the Dead" Clyfford Still: Paintings 1944-1960. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) 11.

* AAM accreditation are pursued after at least two years of operation. CSM professionals plans on applying for accreditation.

The viewer participates actively in these paintings as he reaches beyond what meets the eye to explore unknown territories. No single element is the final answer, nor are those seemingly spontaneous, yet calculated fields of color. It's only together that all elements merge into paintings that resemble forces of nature, yet are in fact themselves elemental forces.¹⁵

Still set the stage at the MET by removing titles, hanging pictures without frames, and eliminating literature. Presumably, he imagined the same for his new museum in Denver. With all ancillary museum devices removed, Still encourages museum visitors to dig deep within themselves to arrive at a very personal revelation. Paradoxically, this lack of context also suggests that Still is trying to manipulate what perceptions can be gleaned from his museum.

This paradox is going to require museum professionals to intervene. They will have the added challenge of making visitors comfortable with Still's method. People will need to understand why there aren't titles attached to artwork, why there's a lack of literature and text panels. And most importantly, why there are no other artists shown in the museum. Without artists, how will the museum avoid seeming repetitive? These obstacles will force the CSM to prompt area museums to generate content based on the artist's process as well as the final product of works to begin to address visitor's questions.

¹⁵ Kuh, Katherine, Clyfford Still Retrospective catalog. (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1979) 10.

Chapter 3 Artist Gifts

Still made substantial contributions to the Albright Art Gallery (currently the Albright Knox Art Gallery) in Buffalo, New York and San Francisco Museum of Art (currently SFMoMA)*. It is certain that Still said “no” more than he ever said “yes” to museum exhibitions and gift proposals, but these two institutions managed to penetrate Still’s tough exterior. One factor these institutions have in common is that they had worked with Still prior to his donation. Another factor was the ardor of the museum directors who understood how serious Still was about his art and the statement he was trying to make. This meant directors had to surrender most of their control to Still.

Albright Art Gallery (Albright Knox Art Gallery)

In 1957 board president of the Albright Art Gallery, Samuel H. Knox funded the purchase of a Still painting for the museum’s permanent collection. Still gave gallery Director, Gordon Smith, only three choices during his studio visit in Maryland (the other paintings in the room were turned facing the wall). When Smith asked to borrow two paintings to present to the board for approval (in Buffalo), Still refused saying he didn’t like the idea of being judged by unknown museum patrons. Still told Smith if the painting is important then the museum should just make a decision.¹⁶ After a few phone calls from the studio in Maryland to Knox, Smith convinced him to go ahead with the purchase (without seeing the painting). According to Knox, “the swiftness of our action

* Patricia Still made a gift of 13 paintings to the Metropolitan Museum of Art after her husband’s death in 1980.

¹⁶ Kellein, Thomas, Clyfford Still: 1904-1980 The Buffalo and San Francisco Collections, (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1992) 28.

– our quick commitment – endeared us to him.”¹⁷ This transaction marked the beginning of a lasting association between the artist and institution. The purchase resulted in a gift of 31 paintings to be held in perpetuity.

Buffalo seems like an unlikely place for an abstract expressionist, but scholar Thomas Kellein offers a few suggestions as to why Still chose a museum in a small city. Along with the rapport he built with Gordon and Knox, the small cities appealed to Still. The first consideration is that Still was consciously or unconsciously emulating his thesis subject, Paul Cezanne. Cezanne was notoriously reclusive, preferring to present his art strictly under his terms -much like Still, who insisted on having complete control all the time. The second consideration is that a city like Buffalo (and Denver) are “neutral ground, where he could, on one hand, distance himself from the competitiveness of the New York School”¹⁸ and, at the same time, find the freedom to present his work on its own terms, giving his followers a full blown view of what he had done and when. In a place like New York City, there would always be compromises.

San Francisco Museum of Art (SFMOMA)

Still had often considered San Francisco to be his second home. In 1941-43, he worked in various war industries in Oakland and San Francisco. In 1946, returned to teach at the prestigious California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute) and continued teaching until 1950. The school was “generally recognized (even by the East Coast press) as the most avant-garde in its commitment to experimental

¹⁷ Kellein, Thomas, Clyfford Still: 1904-1980 The Buffalo and San Francisco Collections, (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1992) 26.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

abstraction”¹⁹-it was a perfect fit for Still who subsequently proved to be an inspiration to the West Coast abstract expressionists in the 1950s and 1960s. With a venue like the San Francisco Museum of Art championing modernism, Still was sure to fit in.

In 1974, Still visited his daughter who lived in San Francisco and decided to go the San Francisco Museum of Art to see a loaned work of his (*Untitled-1960* from private collector Harry W. Anderson). Dropping by to check up on his paintings unannounced was not uncommon for Still, so Henry T. Hopkins, museum director at the time, was not surprised when he received a phone call from Mrs. Still asking Hopkins if she and her husband could meet briefly with him. All of Hopkins fears of being reprimanded for failing to meet Still’s standards were quickly put at ease during the meeting and the three stayed in touch through frequent correspondence. Hopkins was invited to visit Still’s studio in Maryland to discuss the possibility of a gift to the museum just two months after their first meeting in San Francisco. The trip to the studio had a number of topics on the agenda: Still was exploring the idea of a gift, while Hopkins had additional plans to organize a Clyfford Still one-man exhibition. After deliberation and compromise (on the museum’s part), both projects came to fruition.

Still proposed that the gift could go in one of two directions; “It could be a presentation of all newer works or it could be historical/educational in nature.” Hopkins chose the latter because of “Still’s California importance and the dearth of in-depth collections on the West Coast.”²⁰ By 1975 an agreement was drawn up between Still and

¹⁹ Landauer, Susan, The San Francisco School of Abstract Expressionism. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

²⁰ Hopkins, Henry T. Clyfford Still, (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1976) 21.

the San Francisco Museum of Art (APPENDIX C). The gift satisfied both institution and artist on so many levels. For one, the allure of a Still installation reignited some interest in the museum. Furthermore, it established SFMoMA as the modern art destination of the West Coast. Also, scholars were happy to have a facility that could accommodate research inquiries. Finally, Still and Hopkins felt the gift was mutually beneficial because both were able to come up with solutions to museum practices they felt needed to be addressed; mostly regarding the shortcomings of large survey museums in the U.S. Hopkins explains:

Interestingly, this concept is frequently discussed among museum professionals [and artists] who recognize that museum with less than perfect collections would be well served by housing and maintaining in-depth collections of one or more artists where they would become the recognized study center for that artist and his work. Certainly, such collections would make cross-country museum-going more interesting.²¹

Still's gift of 38 paintings, selected by the artist and director debuted in 1975. Coincidentally, that same year, the San Francisco Museum of Art's name changed to San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMoMA) on its 40th anniversary. The Still paintings were stored in a "vault" gallery so as to minimize the movement of works. Architect David Robinson designed storage within gallery walls, with panels that opened and closed. These facilities were able to show the storage space with ease so that scholars and students could have more access -one complaint Still had with Albright Art Gallery was that the stored paintings were not easily accessible.

²¹ Ibid., 24.

The Last Gift

These gifts undoubtedly helped Still formulate his will. There is evidence of this during the gifting process to SFMoMA where Still often refers to “what he wished would be different” with the Albright Art Gallery installation. This shows an evolution of thought about the distribution and handling of works. The gift to SFMoMA, for example, raised many conservation issues which subsequently have impacted the CSM’s plans. SFMoMA’s gift has had to deal with the unfortunate inevitability of discoloration. Former Chief Conservator at SFMoMA, Will Shank, recently discussed the condition of the works in CSM’s permanent collection (most of which have been rolled up in a storage locker since the artist’s death in 1980) compared to SFMoMA’s gift (which has been on display for over 30 years), “They have not been handled. Their colors have not been faded by exposure to light and air, as is the case with some of the San Francisco pictures.”²² Estate conservator Barbara Ramsey highlights some of Still’s storing sensibilities. It seemed counterintuitive at first, but Ramsey supports Still’s methods which included rolling up 11 paintings (with nothing in between) in one bundle, face out, with a cardboard tube, secured with masking tape and plastic sheeting. There was some debris, but, all in all, the CSM’s permanent collection is in relatively good shape.

Still has requested that a conservation lab be on sight at his museum. CSM Architect Brad Cloepfil of Allied Works Architecture of Portland, Oregon, designed the museum’s 31,000 square foot exhibition space, the heavily-wooded exterior, the open storage and conservation lab which is slated to have windows along its perimeter so

²² Hockfeild, Sylvia, “Revealing the Hidden Clyfford Still.” *ArtNews*, January 2009, 15 June 2009 <http://www.clyffordstillmuseum.org/news/2009_January_ARTnews.pdf>.

people can have a portal into the artist's working process. More importantly, this design element helps the CSM museum adhere to some of the standards set forth by AAM and SAMs. In other words, the window conveys a feeling of transparency -an integral component of any museum in the U.S. today. This echoes CSM's compensating for Still's ideas by making strides to erect innovative models of accessibility to the institution and ultimately the artist (APPENDIX D).

Estate Planning

An artist must do a fair amount of estate planning ahead of time if s/he intends to start a SAM. Still's wife and two daughters, Diane and Sandy must have been informed of the artist's intentions ahead of time, thus avoiding potential litigation. In the late 1970s, and shortly before Still's death in 1980, the tax structure in the U.S. changed so that collectors and/or executors had to determine the fair market value of their property – instead of using the purchase price. This, of course, affected executors of estates who received high valued gifts from artists. A person could be rich in assets, but low on cash if s/he had to pay a gift tax. In Still's case, because he hoarded so much, the taxes on his estate would be exorbitant if he were to bequeath everything to his daughters. By law, an artist may transfer ownership to a living spouse without incurring any estate tax, but after the spouse dies, the subsequent executors would incur the capital gains tax on the estate. This meant that if Diane and Sandy were to be the inheriting the estate, they would have to pay taxes on the appreciated value of their father's work.

There are a number of options for an artist at this point. Artists can start a foundation where the value of the estate endows a charitable cause. The ownership of the

works immediately transfers from the artist to the charity in order to avoid estate tax. Another option is to donate works to a museum. The issue with this option is finding a museum that will accept a large gift. Many institutions do not have sufficient space or resources, nor do they want to be tied down by stipulations, as Still was known to do. A last option is for an artist to start his or her own museum. For Still, this was the best option because he was concerned with people seeing and contemplating his work under conditions that he set. A SAM provides the artist with an environment s/he can control, while leaving a legacy. Hopkins outlines the necessary conditions which an artist must satisfy in order for a SAM to be successful. Unfortunately, as Hopkins points out, there isn't any monetary incentive -the benefits arrive after an artist's death:

Paradoxically, most artists who museums would wish to show in the kind of depth are valued beyond what most museums can afford. Therefore, such in-depth presentations must be as much a responsibility of the artists as it is the museum. The artist must be willing to hold back from the market significant examples of his work over the years and he must be able, by virtue of the strength of his work, to require in-depth museum representation. The artist must also, for the privilege, be willing to forego remuneration except in the form of a catalog or future service on the part of the museum. He cannot, today, even expect a reasonable tax advantage.²³

Still and the SAM

In researching Still's gifts, it was revealed that Still was an early proponent of SAMs, even before any existed in the U.S. According to Hopkins:

Mr. Still first visited the MET in 1925 and later MoMA [and] he has retained the strong belief that the permanent

²³ Hopkins, Henry T, Clyfford Still, (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1976) 24.

collections of American art museums do art and artists a disservice by presenting single, or a limited number of masterworks by different artists one after another. He feels that serious art viewers should have more opportunity to see, in other than short-term exhibitions, the creative force of the individual artist in depth.²⁴

Still wanted people to understand the evolution of an artist. In 1947, he removed all titles from his works for fear that they would suggest a subject matter. He wanted people to move beyond the title when viewing the art. Still would rather people see how the works hinged on one another (Still always hung works chronologically to encourage viewers to see it his way). Still knew it was up to him to inaugurate his SAM during his lifetime if the museum space was going to turn out as he wished. This meant Still had to hoard his works so that there would be a permanent collection to endow the museum. He had to carefully orchestrate the distribution of assets and organize an archive. It is worth mentioning that Still was willing to let his estate join a large museum if the museum would build permanent quarters solely devoted to his works. He also required that a conservator be assigned to his paintings.

New priorities, initiated by museum advocate AAM, have kept the focus of museums on the community. With tightening budgets, reduced corporate sponsors, limited space and staff, a gift the size of Still's estate for a large public museum was not likely for many reasons. For one, there are just too many gifts for large survey museums to accommodate because every donor has stipulations attached to their gift. Most donors want to be prominent in the museum's display (which is evidenced by Still's desire for a new wing) and to have their gift be held in perpetuity. Satisfying the conditions often takes a lot of time and resources.

²⁴ Ibid., 23.

Of the few gifts and exhibitions Still agreed to after 1960, all were carefully orchestrated transactions micromanaged by Still. While negotiating Still's gift to SFMoMA, for example, Still wrote to then Director Henry T. Hopkins about the catalog:

First, I consider the reproductions of my work would be most effective with very thin margins of white where the proportions of the page permit it—crowding but not bleeding off the edge. Also I would have each work reproduced large enough to fill most of the page regardless of its physical size relative to other works.²⁵

Scholar Katherine Kuh reflects on her time working with Still during the Metropolitan Museum of Art's retrospective (which turned out to be the final months of his life).²⁶ Because he felt it imperative to plan and oversee every detail of the exhibition, he insisted on delaying any surgery until after the show opened.²⁷ Kuh continues:

The Metropolitan arranged a small opening luncheon in Clyff's honor...I recognized just a handful of guests from the contemporary art world, presumably because Clyff had vetted – and vetoed – the invitation list.²⁸

These testimonies show Still's devotion to his art; an art he could only see in terms of how it related to him. Like his contemporaries, Still saw his legacy, in the form of a museum, as a portal into his thought process. Unfortunately many artists didn't have the same foresight as Still. Many of them relied on patrons to perpetuate their legacies. It is important not to forget, once an artist sells his or her artwork, where it ends up, how it is treated is out of their control. By securing his works, Still has eliminated the private collector and subsequent donor from the equation. As a result, he had a lot more

²⁵ Letter to Mr. Henry T. Hopkins June 1, 1975 Director of SFMOMA as part of gift agreement.

²⁶ Still had been diagnosed with stomach tumor while working on his retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1979.

²⁷ Kuh, Katherine, *My Love Affair with Modern Art*, (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2006) 199.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 199.

persuasive power in the museum arena. The story of Clyfford Still is unique in that his initiative was not subsidized –Still’s estate has been totally self sufficient. Since there is no art patron-museum relationship associated with the gift, Still can continue to push the boundaries and venture off in unorthodox museum practices. Patron-museum associations have always been fundamental to the livelihood of museums in the U.S. This departure from tradition, where an artist (despite the legalities) has managed to come out on top is a significant change in the museum climate. In the end, it’s fair to say that Still only saw room for himself in his art world and a SAM as the only repository where his ideas could fully resonate. How many artists will look to Still’s story as a model remains to be unknown.

Chapter 4 "Big Sky"

Knowing where Still stood philosophically, New York City would be the wrong place for the CSM. New York represented Still's career at a time that he was least fulfilled. In Katherine Kuh's book, *My Love Affair with Modern Art*, she addresses Still's resentment and frustrations:

...in 1959 he [Still] castigated his New York School contemporaries with the wrath of Jehovah and insisted on having his words reprinted in his Metropolitan Museum of Art catalogue twenty years later:

The men and their work and their agents [dealers] became as one, and no borrowed images, political illustration, Bauhaus sterilities, symbols of potency, pseudo-religious titles, nor any concealment behind that most faceless of apologies, "Art," should hide the puerility and meanness of their purpose and games. And they are all amply worthy of the contempt and hatred they secretly exchange with one another even unto their deaths.²⁹

The West, however, is a recurring source of inspiration for Still. His earliest works are figurative representations, capturing the grueling physicality of a farmer's life in Western Canada (Appendix D). As his career progressed, there are elements in his works that begin to evoke the Western landscape such as the rich colors and tones that saturate Still's painting surface, the heavy impasto of paint, organic textures and the sheer scale of his canvases. The unframed works expand beyond the viewer's peripheral-much like the distant horizons in the West. According to the CSM website,

Abstract Expressionism is marked by abstract forms, expressive brushwork, and monumental scale, all of which were used to convey universal themes about creation, life,

²⁹ Kuh, Katherine, *My Love Affair with Modern Art*. (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2006) 192.

struggle, and death ("the human condition"), themes that took on a considerable relevance during and after World War II.³⁰

According to Kuh, who also penned *The Open Eye: In Pursuit of Art*, "it was the spirit of the West that got into his bones."³¹

Still's life has taken him from Washington State, to California, to New York City, retreats at the famous Yaddo community in upstate New York, back to Northern California, ultimately arriving at a farm in Maryland –thus it would seem logical that one of those cities would be selected for the site of his museum. New York City seemed like an obvious choice at first, but Still and many of his contemporaries filtered through the West before going New York City. For example, Mark Rothko immigrated to Portland, Oregon, from Russia when he was a child and Robert Motherwell is from Washington State. Jackson Pollock is from Wyoming originally and traveled all around the West with his father, a farmer and land surveyor. Denver is a picturesque Western landscape with city amenities—a perfect blend of inspiration and function. By not choosing New York City as a location for the CSM, people can see the abstract expressionist movement from a polarizing perspective. This is an important consideration because this different view of abstract expressionism has the ability to show that it's more than a New York City movement, but a movement with roots in the West.

Project Coordinator for the CSM, Chase deForest said in a phone interview that the museum has every intention of carrying out Still's wishes, but recognizes that there

³⁰ Clyfford Still Museum Website, 2009, June 8, 2009
<<http://www.clyffordstillmuseum.org/clyfford.html>>.

³¹ Kuh, Katherine, *The Open Eye: In pursuit of Art*, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1971) 28.

will be challenges. Regarding scholarship, deForest said the museum will have an archive and study center devoted to abstract expressionism.³² The location, in Denver, encourages CSM professionals to embrace the movement's Western roots, which subsequently laid the groundwork and identity for which the abstract expressionists are remembered today. This is an important aspect that is often lost when a movement becomes engulfed in big city hype. Having a prominent institution added to the West is one way to break through the New York City facades as it reaches for some deeper thoughts surrounding the movement. Lastly, the CSM continues to legitimize a single artist venue as a viable supplement to the survey museum. It is a specialized collection that has the ability to push boundaries and take chances.

It was Still's wife's last duty before her death in 2001 to find a home for the collection. In 1999, Patricia Still's nephew, Curt Freed, head of clinical pharmacology and toxicology at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, suggested Denver. With Patricia Still's blessing, Freed started having preliminary conversations with Dianne Perry Vanderlip, the Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Denver Art Museum to see "if the museum would be interested in some sort of affiliation with the Still collection."³³ The museum was interested, so Vanderlip, and the Denver Art Museum's Director, Lewis Sharp, and representatives from the mayor's office went to visit the elderly widow in Maryland. After many negotiations the deal fell apart because Still and Freed didn't feel the language of the agreement was wholehearted enough about

³² Telephone conversation with Chase deForest, Program Coordinator, Clyfford Still Museum, May 19, 2009.

³³ Temchine, Michael, "Revealing the Hidden Clyfford Still." *ARTnews*, January 2009, 18 May 2009 <http://www.artnewsonline.com/issues/article.asp?art_id=2605>.

the independence of the CSM. Years later, however, under a new mayoral administration, the project was revived. New mayor John Hickenlooper started gathering local supporters for the project to raise money for the CSM's capital campaign (\$33 million).

Since that time, Mayor Hickenlooper's zeal for urban development has initiated a simultaneous cultural renaissance in Denver. In 2008, Denver, in celebration of its 150th birthday, was able to show the fruits of its labor when it hosted a series of social, political and cultural national events. In one year, Denver hosted the Democratic National Convention, National Performing Arts Convention, Congressional Medal of Honor Convention and the American Association of Museums (AAM) Annual Meeting and Expo. The AAM conference came in the wake of the opening of the Daniel Libeskind-designed wing of the Denver Art Museum, The new Contemporary Art Museum (designed by David Adjaye), the River North Art District expansion and news of the Clyfford Still collection arriving in Denver. It's an exciting time for Denver as it becomes a more established cultural destination.

The Clyfford Still Museum, just one of Hickenlooper's projects will open in 2010. Hickenlooper has arranged for Denver to host of the world's newest international contemporary art biennial in summer of 2010. *The Denver Biennial of the Americas* will feature two major cultural exhibitions that focus on contemporary art and ideas. Mayor Hickenlooper said, "Denver is a young city that captures the vitality and energy of the Americas through our heritage our diverse contemporary culture." Hickenlooper continues, "We look forward to focusing the world's attention on the art and ideas

important to our hemisphere every two years.”³⁴

The Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) is partially responsible for Denver’s cultural gentrification. Nearly \$40 million dollars are distributed to cultural organizations in the seven-county area around Denver each year. With frequently sponsored “Free Days” to Denver Art Museum, Denver Botanic Gardens, Denver Museum of Nature and Science, The Denver Center for the Performing Arts and the Denver Zoo (and the soon to be the Clyfford Still Museum), the community has access to the Arts more than ever. The money comes in through a small sales and use tax of 0.1% (or 1 cent for every \$10 purchase) which is issued and redistributed to participating counties and their cultural organization. According to the SCFD website, “the SCFS believes culture should be available to all people. Its funding provides opportunities to children and adults with disabilities, seniors, and children at or below the poverty level.”³⁵ Without a doubt this is a special time for Denver’s history. More importantly, smart economic systems have been implemented to help Denver sustain its standing. With more people having access to the institutions, the possibilities for further cultural enlightenment is achievable -a refreshing outcome given the current financial hardships many cultural institutions in the country face.

³⁴ “Denver Arts,” *Visit Denver*, 2008, 26 January 2009

<<http://www.denver.org/metro/features/denver-biennial>>.

³⁵ *Scientific & Cultural Facilities District Website*, 2007, 19 May 2009

<<http://www.scfcd.org/?page=about&sub=1>>.

Chapter 5 Perpetuating the Still Legacy

On May 19, 2009, Project Coordinator for the CSM, Chase deForest helped demystify the CSM quandary. deForest believes that the circumstances which gave rise to the CSM are not any more challenging than what other SAMs have endured, noting they were all born out of unusual circumstances. On the other hand, there are museum professionals who think Still's anonymity will add another obstacle to the CSM project because he is unknown outside the art world. Curator of the Georgia O'Keefe Museum, Barbara Buhler Lynes explains,

"O'Keefe's work is not difficult. People love it. But when you're dealing with the degree of abstraction and the level of abstract ideas that are lying behind abstract-expressionism, this isn't something that the general public cottons up to right away."³⁶

Still's elitism about art and the power of installation often undermines the curatorial process, yet he makes an interesting point that art should be left to the artist and be a representation of him and nothing else. This position, combined with the philosophies of Longinus, clearly shapes Still's will which carefully positions Still's oeuvre over 30 years later, displaced from his time, free from the art culture from where it emerged. Still has been able to effectively defend his reasoning, but fails to recognize the possibility of evolution and refinement, particularly regarding curatorial practice. Today, it is fair to say curators have made great strides to make sure they are not competing with or defying artists, but working with them, a point deForest reiterates when she discusses the

³⁶ MacMillian, Kyle, "Is Still Worth It?" [Denverpost.com](http://www.denverpost.com/art/ci_3610045), 19 March 2006, 25 July 2009 <http://www.denverpost.com/art/ci_3610045>.

museum's staff structure. The CSM will have a small core staff of a Director/Curator, a conservator, and periodic guest curators.

The CSM, according to deForest, will seek accreditation from AAM. According to AAM's Eligibility Criteria, the museum must be open to the public for at least two years so the evaluation process is still far off. (APPENDIX A) The CSM staff (currently Director Dean Sobel and deForest), during the conceptual phase, corralled a Board of Directors and an Advisory Committee to lay the foundation. After careful assessment the team realized that there would be a strong learning curve. As with any museum, public response is integral. deForest is expecting that Still's no lending policy could potentially hinder projects, therefore it is the museum's plan to reassess that stipulation after a few years, recognizing that they have to prioritize the public over the artist if they are going to operate as a successful non-profit entity.

According to Director, Dean Sobel, the CSM will partner up with the Denver Art Museum (DAM) to help provide context. Recently, DAM started acquiring abstract expressionist works to fortify their permanent collection and to compliment Still's presence. Another recent collaboration effort was the *Color as Field* exhibition in 2007. The display ran simultaneously with the CSM preview show to make the partnership between the institutions more apparent. The DAM is expected to shoulder a lot of the programming and education responsibilities in the future – does this mean the DAM will take on a new shape after the CSM opens?

Conclusion

AAM posits two core questions for museums seeking accreditation (APPENDIX E). How well does the museum achieve its stated mission and goals? How well does the museum's performance meet standards and best practices, as they are generally understood in the museum field, as appropriate to its circumstances? The response to these two questions depends on time. Currently the museum website does not have a mission statement posted. It is unknown when the CSM will present this to their public. Based on deForest's commentary, it appears that the CSM is introspective and responsive to the public at large and has taken careful measures to consult all of the right people for this project. The breadth of the museum's advisory committee proves that the CSM has been diligently conducting research-it's not just familial and scholarly participants. With committee members like George King, Director of the Georgia O'Keefe Museum*; Louis Grachos, Director of Albright-Knox Art Gallery; Henry T. Hopkins, former Director of SFMoMA; Neal Benezra, current Director of SFMoMA; and Museum of Contemporary Art's Chief Curator, Paul Schimmel, the CSM appears to be in good hands.

The fact that there is only one committee member representing the SAMs could mean the CSM sees itself differently than presented in this paper. Maybe the museum doesn't want to be categorized as a SAM? -maybe it wants to be completely autonomous. With perspectives coming from different angles, is it possible that the CSM is paving an even more remote path than we originally thought? If so, how with AAM respond to this?

* George King has recently left his position at the Georgia O'Keefe Museum. He is the Executive Director at the American Federation of Arts.

Still and his museum breaks down the barriers between artist and museum visitor by bypassing certain museum practices. While it might not be the methods encouraged by an organization like AAM or networks like SAM, does that mean his museum will be unrecognized? This is a crucial time for museum lobbyists to recognize that this unconventional method of educating has the potential to be effective. Now more than ever a “rogue” museum like the CSM needs support. The museum is pushing the boundaries just enough to come under museum professional’s radar. Time will tell with the CSM. Art critic Robert Hughes described Still as a “singular talent whose dimension will not be fully known in his own lifetime.”³⁷ The CSM will finally shed some light on a collection that has been hidden in the shadows of Still’s personal legacy for over 30 years. In 2010 people will once again see the breadth of the artist’s career and begin realizing that his intentions were to make an impact on the art historical canon. More importantly it will alter the museum canon with respect to education, enlightenment and discourse. It is progressive and regressive at the same time. It is a new practice in museums in the U.S., yet it takes people back to the essence of the modern museum.

How the museum evolves is dependent on the symbiotic relationship of the CSM and AAM. CSM needs to adhere to the basic fundamentals laid out by AAM. AAM needs to be pliable enough to recognize the CSM is one of the most authentic museum presentations to which visitors will have access. The CSM undoubtedly has its quirks, but one thing that eclipses its peculiarity is that it attempts to tap into the individual. This museum is not about group tours, big crowds, endless brochures and lectures. The artist

³⁷ Hughes, Robert quoted in Clyfford Still: Paintings 1944-1960, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) 17.

spent his life trying to set the stage for people to have a personal revelation when viewing his work. Now that the opening of his museum is imminent, will Still be able to deliver?

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Appendix

A. American Association of Museum Accreditation criteria



*Museum Advancement & Excellence
Accreditation Program*

Eligibility Criteria

To Participate in the AAM Accreditation Program

Approved by the Accreditation Commission on December 3, 2004

Effective January 1, 2005

Eligibility Criteria

To participate in the AAM Accreditation Program, a museum must:

- be a legally organized nonprofit institution or part of a nonprofit organization or government entity
- be essentially educational in nature
- have a formally stated and approved mission
- use and interpret objects and/or a site for the public presentation of regularly scheduled programs and exhibits
- have a formal and appropriate program of documentation, care, and use of collections and/or objects
- carry out the above functions primarily at a physical facility/site
- have been open to the public for at least two years
- be open to the public at least 1,000 hours a year
- have accessioned 80 percent of its permanent collection
- have at least one paid professional staff with museum knowledge and experience
- have a full-time director to whom authority is delegated for day-to-day operations
- have the financial resources sufficient to operate effectively
- demonstrate it meets the Characteristics of an Accreditable Museum

B. Clyfford Still's Will

The Will of Clyfford Still provides for the bequest of the Clyfford Still Collection "...to an American city that will agree to build or assign and maintain permanent quarters exclusively for ..." the Collection. The Will also places strict limitations on the sale and exchange of the works contained in the Collection upon receipt by the designated city. The Agreement between the City of Denver and Patricia Still provides that the Grantor agrees to donate the Collection to the City and County of Denver only if the City is able to meet the following requirements that are detailed in the Agreement:

- The City must procure museum quarters for the Collection which meet the requirements of the Will and the Agreement.
- The City must designate a City Agency to act as caretaker for the Collection.
- The City must provide for governance of the museum and Collection through the appointment of a standing trustee committee and Collection curator.
- The City must maintain, exhibit and handle the Collection in accordance requirements of the Will and Agreement.
- The City must raise or otherwise designate funding sufficient to procure the museum and provide for a maintenance and operation endowment.

Under the terms of the Agreement, the City will have ten (10) years from the date of execution of the Agreement to identify funding adequate to meet its obligations. If the City fails to do so, the Agreement may be declared null and void and the City will have no continuing financial obligation with respect to the Collection.

C. Agreement between Clyfford Still and the San Francisco Museum of Art

I. Mr. Still will give the Museum a grouping of his works which will be selected by Mr. Still and approved by Henry Hopkins, Director of the Museum.

II. The Museum will accept these works into the permanent collection with the understanding that the works will not be sold or exchanged or loaned without the Still's permission.

III. The display and storage of these works will be in what is now referred to as the "Vault" Gallery according to a plan approved by Mr. Still and Mr. Hopkins and will not be hung with the work of other artists.

A. Works on display will be open during regular museum hours, and upon request, arrangements will be made for art scholars to view and study the works in storage.

B. In order to take advantage of Mr. Still's splendid gift, it is the expectation of the Museum that for many years to come some of the paintings will always be on display, and the Vault gallery installation will be designed and constructed with that in mind.

C. If the Museum should expand its space or develop new spaces where it would be advisable to re-install the Still collection in another Museum location (for the purpose of continuity), the new space will be at least comparable to the existing "Vault" gallery*.

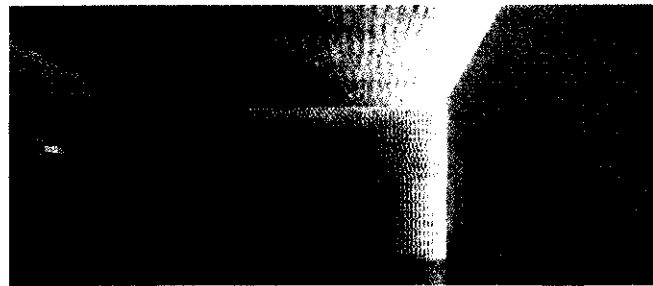
IV. The museum will publish a catalog that will reproduce each of the works in the Still collection in color. The catalog, copy and color reproductions will be developed in consultation with Mr. Still.

* In 1995, the Clyfford Still Gallery was moved to a new museum space designed by architect Mario Botta.

D. Photographs



Portrait of Clyfford Still



Proposed renderings of the Clyfford Still Museum
Created by Brad Cloepfil of Allied Works Architecture

E. AAM Core Questions



*Museum Advancement & Excellence
Accreditation Program*

Accreditation Program Standards:

The Two Core Questions

Approved by Accreditation Commission on December 3, 2004

Effective January 1, 2005

Two core questions guide every accreditation review.

- How well does the museum achieve its stated mission and goals?
- How well does the museum's performance meet standards and best practices as they are generally understood in the museum field, as appropriate to its circumstances?

See also: Characteristics of an Accreditable Museums (1-1-05)
Accreditation Commission Expectations (1-1-05)

