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Saving a Progressive Vision: Moving the Barnes Collection[1]

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Abstract

This paper examines the progressive understanding of art advanced by Albert Barnes, and asks how the educational vision for his large collection of art might be preserved as it has now moves from its location in the idyllic suburban setting in Merion, PA to the hustle and bustle of central Philadelphia. I submit that the vision will be endangered unless the intent of the collector, Barnes, is clearly understood. For Barnes the collection was for the purpose of educating and not just for viewing. While the move in itself need not diminish this purpose it will take considerable attention to realize the education vision in the way that Barnes intended. In the process of making this argument I examine the mutual influence of Albert Barnes and Dewey on progressive views about aesthetic education and also on their views about the role that aesthetics plays in democracy. I conclude with my own impression of the new home for the Barnes.

Keywords: Barnes, Dewey, Art, Progressive education, Aesthetic experience

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Introduction

After the Donor's death no picture belonging to the collection shall ever be loaned, sold or otherwise disposed of except that if any picture passes into a state of actual decay so that it is no longer of any value it may be removed for that reason only from the collection.

The Barnes Foundation By-laws, Article IX Management of the Corporation, Amended Dec.6, 1922. http://www.barneswatch.org/main_bylaws.html

The first time I visited the Barnes collection it was still in Marion, a suburb of Philadelphia shortly before its move to the center of Philadelphia in the midst of the controversy that has surrounded the long-standing attempt to break Barnes's will and change the location of the collection. The second time it was in Philadelphia a few months after the move was complete. Once inside it was hard for me to tell the difference between the old and the new space and experts agree that the interior space of the collection's new home is a stunning rendition of the old. The walls are the same fabric and color as in Merion, and the curators have reproduced the arrangement and spacing of the paintings exactly as Barnes had done just prior to his death in 1952. The decorative items and hardware pieces are situated in exactly the same way as in Merion. The minor material changes, for example the lighting and comfortable restaurant, are improvements.

The controversy surrounding the move involved legal questions such as whether it violates Barnes's Will and if so whether the violation was justified. And while the controversy continues the care that has gone into the collections new home and the meticulous way in which the curators have reproduced Barnes's arrangement of paintings and artifacts has muted much of the criticism. For example, consider the title of the review by a former critic of the move, Roberta Smith in the New York Times. "A Museum, Reborn, Remains True to Its Old Self, Only Better."[2] Most of the remaining critics are largely concerned with the legal/moral question: was it justified to break Albert Barnes's explicit instructions in his Will not to remove any picture from the collection. The debate over whether the indenture of trust in his Will was followed was certainly the main point of the highly controversial film, "Art of the Steal"[3], which came out in 2009, a couple of years before the new facility was completed. *The Steal* develops the case that major Philadelphia Foundations, such the Pew and Annenberg, together with the Philadelphia art establishment, colluded to violate the collector's Will and to steal the collection for the sake of tourism. Both the boosters and the critics of the move see fidelity to Barnes's intentions as the main issue here. To the former fidelity is achieved by a new arrangement that is virtually indistinguishable from the old. To the critic fidelity entails nothing short of maintaining the collection in its original home. While these are important questions the deeper issue concerns neither the move nor the arrangement but Barnes's educational vision for his collection and whether this vision will be maintained given the new situation, and the viewing experience the new environment promotes. This question goes deep into the roots of progressive education and Barnes's relation to one of its principal figures, John Dewey. It also goes well beyond the physical arrangements of the paintings or the way the space is illuminated. This essay is an attempt to reconstruct that vision, a vision where educational enlightenment was the central aim of the collection.

Background: Barnes and his Art

Albert C. Barnes, who distained museums for their pretentiousness and snob appeal, died in 1951 and willed his extensive collection of art works to his educational foundation in Merion leaving an additional multimillion dollars to care for the building and the artwork. Over time the money proved to be insufficient and the collection was in danger of disintegrating.

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Born into a poor family, the son of a butcher who lost an arm in the Civil War, Barnes boxed to support his way through the University of Pennsylvania medical school. He later made a fortune as an inventor and industrialist and then began collecting art. He is said to have selected, bought and arranged every single one of the paintings himself. The collection contains classical Greek and Egyptian art as well as those of well-known nineteenth and twentieth century artists, some of which have been stored since Barnes bought them in the 1920's. What is displayed, a fraction of the total collection, was quite amazing from anyone's standpoint. What is displayed, a fraction of the total collection was quite amazing from almost anyone's standpoint. The collection includes 181 by Renoir, 69 by Cézanne, and 59 by Matisse. There ae works by Van Gogh, Gauguin, and El Greco, Goya, Manet, Monet, Modigliani, Utrillo and Picasso. Today many regard the collection as priceless and refuse to place a value on many of the individual works. However, a general consensus is that the entire collection would be worth about twenty five billion in today's US dollars. Indeed it is reported that there are more Renoirs in the Barnes collection than in the entire city of Paris.

Some critics of the move claim that when the endowment ran out of funds it should have been relatively easy to have sold a few of the works, especially those in storage, to save the collection. Those in favor of the move point out that Barnes's Will stipulated that nothing was to be sold or loaned unless so deteriorated that it was valueless. They argue that this made it difficult to use the collection itself to raise the funds required to support it. Moreover, the Will also stipulated that the arrangement of the art and artifacts, which he had personally prepared, should not be changed.

As the endowment dwindled the trustees, five of whom were appointed in accordance with Barnes's will by Lincoln University[4], at the time, a prominent but not wealthy Black Institution located in the Philadelphia area, were severely limited in their options to maintain the original arrangements. Indeed they had to get Court permission to allow some of the works to travel elsewhere to raise money needed to save the building from deterioration.[5]

A number of schemes were hatched to keep the Barnes collection in Merion. For example, the collection was opened to the public on a limited basis, but more parking had to be secured, and this infuriated the neighbors who objected to the disruptions that this introduced into their quiet wealthy suburban community. Eventually a suit was successfully brought limiting parking in the neighborhood, hence limiting the options for increasing public access.

In fact Barnes's intentions were more complicated than can be gleaned from a surface reading of the Will and the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Annenberg Foundation maintained that in moving the collection to Philadelphia they were honoring a deeper intent than merely maintaining the collection in its original building. The Head of the Pew Foundation argued:

> "I believe that art in the public domain ought to be accessible to all who want to see it.'" Dr. Barnes, Ms. Rimel said, wanted the collection to be accessible to "plain folk." And, she added, he wrote an "if all else fails" clause, which suggested that if ever his restrictions made life for the Barnes impossible, the collection could be moved to Philadelphia.
> Ms. Rimel called the idea of a Pew takeover "nonsense." Rather than control the Barnes, "we are passing the baton to the Barnes, which is building a national board."[6]

In fact, Rimel has part of the story exactly right. Barnes did want the collection available to "plain folk," but not just as a collection to be passively admired. Barnes had a fervent commitment to the education of the working class even before the formation of his Foundation. As an industrialist in the early 1900's, when a ten-hour workday was the norm, Barnes instituted a six-hour workday, and sponsored educational lectures for his workers. In

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addition, years before African and African American art received significant recognition from the art establishment, Barnes was collecting it and promoting its aesthetic worth.

Certainly, his collection in Merion it was not very accessible to the vast majority of working people and blacks, most of who lived elsewhere. Still, Barnes promoted his Foundation as an educational organization and not a museum, and there are a number of ways other than direct viewing that could serve this group. Educating teachers is one of them. As with many educational institutions the Barnes Foundation was very restrictive—one might say even dictatorial--in determining who could view the collection. It required an application for admission and Barnes did delight in turning down the rich and powerful on a seeming whim. In Barnes's view he was doing exactly what all private, educational institutions were doing: discriminating against some and accepting others, only his may have been the earliest example of a "reverse discrimination" practice. During his lifetime private schools and colleges openly discriminated against workers children, Jews, Negroes, and women, e. All of which was perfectly legal. Barnes did the reverse, and favored working class students and provided greater access to those of color, and independent of religion.[7]

Rimel's mistake is to collapse the distinction between a museum and an educational institution that Barnes had worked hard to maintain. For Barnes this collection was first and foremost for educations. Certainly he ran his admissions process in an unorthodox and dictatorial way, which favored the working class. When he wanted to be particularly insulting, Barnes might sign the rejection letter, using the name of his dog, or require an IQ test, as he did when the President of Bryn Mawr College applied to see the collection. (As far as I know she did not did take it.)[8] On the other hand, he was quite permissive when it came to the application of working class people. James Michener, as a student at Swarthmore, applied, was rejected, reapplied pretending to be an "'illiterate' steel worker and was admitted to view the collection.[9] Otherwise, as with most educational institution, the collection was restricted to the general public and this restriction lasted until the early 1960's, nine years after Barnes died, when its tax-free status was challenged. Yet the challenge could succeed only by collapsing the distinction Barnes wished to maintain between a museum and an educational institution.

The supporters of the move of the collection to Philadelphia agreed to keep the arrangements of paintings, furniture, and artifacts intact, but the educational reasons for doing so may have been obscured. The arrangement was important for Barnes because he felt that it augmented the educational intensity of the viewing experience. As George Hein put it: "The arrangements were a deliberate, calculated manner of juxtaposing and complementing works of art so that similarities and differences in form would be better understood by the students. Barnes changed the arrangements from time to time, but the intention was always to provide the best pedagogic arrangements he could develop."[10] Barnes was skeptical about the value of modern museums and not just because he saw them as palaces for idle admiration, and false worship, which he did. He was also skeptical because he saw them advancing a passive conception of seeing, and because he believed that museums had a pernicious influence on art education.

For Barnes the purpose of his collection was for not for museum aims but for educational ones. Hence, for example, the odd metal pieces placed carefully around the paintings are intended to illustrate some shared qualities among the paintings they accompany. And even though the original collection was located in a quiet suburb, the idea was to provide a setting where educators and art lovers could learn to see in new ways, and then extend that way of seeing to others who might not have the means or the time to come to Merion.

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As the court battles went on the educational mission of the collection was obscured. One of its students correctly argued that it was not a gallery, or even just a collection of papers. It was an educational institution and thus deserved its status as an exclusive and tax-exempt enterprise.[11] Immediately after his death, a court was unwilling to assess the educational status of the Foundation and in 1953 it upheld its tax-exempt status as well as its right to restrict the public from viewing the collection. The question for the Court, however, was not whether it was an educational enterprise, or whether it was a good educational enterprise. It was simply who had the right to sue. On this account it allowed that only the state could do so. This court opinion was modified in 1961 when restricted public access was granted, and for the first time critics were also allowed in to assess the works.

Many who praised the collection[12] were not impressed by its educational program, which was faulted for failing to turn out "a single painter of value,") or any notable art historians. Thus, for these critics Barnes failed to meet their standard measure of educational value. Yet the rationale behind this judgment may well be the reason that Barnes both detested the art establishment and feared that they would gain control of his collection. For here the issue is not art but a philosophy of art education. The clash is not about what is great art, but rather it is about the purpose of art education. Barnes was not concerned with turning out great painters or scholars, as he was criticized for failing to do. His concern was elsewhere.

Art as Education: Barnes and Dewey

Barnes was interested in education from the very beginning of his career as an industrialist. Well before he met John Dewey Barnes began to implement Dewey's ideas in his factory. He involved his racially integrated, minimally educated work force in his chemical plant[13] in planning and organizing their work, and in doing so reduced the workday from ten hours to six hours. With the time saved Barnes provided workers with lectures on a variety of topics and authors including works by Dewey. Interestingly the lectures were not on technical matters intended to improve productivity but rather on topics in psychology, philosophy and aesthetics. In addition, many of his art purchases were displayed for his workers to view. The Foundation grew out of these lectures and exhibitions of paintings for Barnes's workers and its charter was granted in 1922. Dewey continued to influence Barnes's views and served as the first educational director of the Foundation, an honorary position with no responsibilities.

Barnes struck up his personal relationship with Dewey when he took a seminar from him at Columbia University in 1918. The two were an odd couple. Even those who did not agree with Dewey's pragmatic philosophy generally praised him for his gentleness and kindness. And while Dewey had many philosophical disagreements, he seemed to have made few real enemies. In contrast Barnes is seen as a tyrant who tried to impose his taste on others and would do anything he could to humiliate those who disagreed with him, or did not share his vision. For example, about the writing of the famous art connoisseur, Bernhard (Bernard) Berenson, Barnes Writes: His work "would be unworthy of serious attention except for the regrettable influence his writings have had in filling our Universities with bad teaching on art and our public galleries with bad Italian paintings."[14]

And again referring to Berenson, "The host of bad paintings in the public galleries of Boston, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Detroit and other cities, especially in the Johnson Collection in Philadelphia, show the sad results of the expert-dealer author-university method of propagating counterfeit thinking and counterfeit art." Barnes objects to Berenson's "mechanical standards and his reliance on irrelevant sentimentalities in his judgments of paintings."[15]

Besides their very different personalities there is something quite un-Dewey like in Barnes's appropriating his collection to maintain a Dorian Grey-like monument to his values and tastes. For Dewey standards evolved and grew with changing time and circumstance. To try to freeze time in the way that Barnes's will does is inconsistent with the spirit of Dewey's philosophy. Yet despite vast differences in temperament, and perhaps more subtle ones in philosophy, the Barnes collection in Merion stood as a continuous exemplar of Dewey's (and Barnes's) understanding of art as education.

What joined Dewey and Barnes was a certain understanding of democracy, and the view that people learn through shared activity.[16] Barnes not only sat in on Dewey's 1918 seminar, he financed a controversial study by Dewey and his graduate students on the immigrant Polish community in Philadelphia.[17] After that, their close relationship developed. While Dewey is often credited with influencing Barnes, there is evidence that the influence was mutual, especially where specific artists are concerned. The preface to Dewey's *Art as Experience*, a book dedicated to Barnes, includes a striking acknowledgment of Dewey's debt to Barnes crediting him not only with influencing his own ideas, but also comparing Barnes's work to "the best that has been done in any field during the present generation, that of science not excepted."[18] While Dewey did have a reputation for personal generosity, unconditional praise was largely reserved for a few like-minded philosophers like William James. And given the accomplishments in science during this time Dewey's praise for Barnes is truly amazing.

A close reading of other works by Dewey suggests that Barnes may have initiated a brief detour in Dewey's overall views. While in some respects Dewey's *Art as Experience* is continuous with other aspects of Dewey's philosophy, it also seems to endorse a kind of value absolutism that is consistent with Barnes but that contrasts quite markedly with Dewey's other works on values.[19] Nevertheless, the wider outline of their view on art is largely the same.

Both believe that to intelligently appreciate a work of art, the viewers need to put themselves into the situation out of which the artwork arose. This does not mean that we must understand the personal situation of the artists, their relation to their spouse, or children, etc. Indeed for Barnes this kind of information is a distraction. What it does mean is that we need to be aware of the problem the artist set out to address and the intellectual tools and techniques that the artist's tradition has provided to address it.

Barnes on Education

Barnes and Dewey shared a concern about the quality of art education, the area that the Barnes Foundation was meant to advance. For both Dewey and Barnes art needs to be understood as education. For both art teaches us how to experience the world of everyday life more fully. For Barnes and Dewey learning to paint and learning to "appreciate" painting is akin to learning to see. Here is where the greatest danger for the loss of the Dewey/Barnes's vision is likely to occur with the Foundations move to a museum setting.

For Barnes and his colleagues at the Foundation, art education failed on two fronts, first at the specialized art academies and then again in the public schools. In both cases the problem was a "demonstrable inability to see."[20] For Barnes, traditional museum experiences and institute trained students were wrongly taught to think of painting as representing fixed rules and patterns or historical or moral narratives. Barnes's staff, like Barnes, was committed to exposing this "charade," and was infused with his combative spirit, a factor that assured the Foundation would have some enemies in high places. Without naming antagonists Mary Mullen, one of the staff, accused the instructors from well-known academies of an inability to

see anything more than the decorative character of the work, and writes of "the "utter blindness in people who are supposed to know something about art." [21]

For Barnes the art establishment had sabotaged public education in Philadelphia by promoting a "free-expressionist" art program where "zest and eagerness for expressing is allowed to go unhindered, come what may."[22] This criticism of art education is mirrored in Dewey's later criticism of what he saw as the excesses of progressive education.[23]

In his criticism of the "free-expression" school of art Barnes cites, as he often does, Dewey as his authority, and in the same essay he quotes Dewey's public statement denouncing the same museum exhibit. And, as mentioned above, Dewey in his now classic *Art as Experience*, frequently cites and quotes Barnes approvingly. Dewey's vision was complex, and he was fortunate to have in Barnes, a person who not only shared his vision but who had the material means and the intellectual capacity to instantiate it in an institutional form. To be generous, even Barnes's combativeness could be likened to the mother eagle protecting her newly hatched chicks, his theory of art, from stronger predators, until they developed their own strength.

The Vision: Art Education as Learning to See

Dewey rejected both formalism (the view that there was a formula that determined the goodness of a work of art), and romanticism (the view that authentic art was an objectification of a subjective experience). The art object neither stood apart from everyday human activity as an object for contemplation alone, nor was good art a matter for every person to determine for herself. Dewey saw art as intimately and organically connected to human life in the way building a dam is organically connected to being a beaver, or building a nest is to being a robin. If we could understand and feel the world as the beaver or the robin, then the dam or the nest would have the quality of a consummation. It would be what the swimming or the flying, the twig gathering and the weaving is for—together, and as a whole -- these undertakings would constitute what Dewey called "an experience". The goodness of the dam, or the nest, or a fine meal, or a wonderful painting involves a rhythm of doing and undergoing. Without this completion activity is fragmentated and perhaps futile, without meaning. As Thomas M. Alexander so nicely puts it:

> Dewey . . . searches for the aesthetic initially by consciously ignoring works of fine art. The origin of art is not to be found in the desire to become housed in a museum. Instead, art originates when life becomes fulfilled in moments of intelligently heightened vitality. When the potentialities of experience are intentionally utilized toward such a complete end, the sense of its own meaning becomes intrinsically present as a consummation of the event… In *an experience,* we genuinely come to inhabit the world, we dwell within the world and appropriate its meaning.[24]

Through art, individuals and their culture makes sense of themselves. Art gives expression to the controlling forces of a culture.

For Dewey seeing is not just a contemplative act, and the eyes are not simply a conduit for impressions on the retina and then the brain. Seeing is an organic act. It engages us in experience. In his classic work in psychology, "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology"[25] Dewey refutes the idea that the stimulus is one thing, the idea another and the response a third. A child reaching for a candle is "seeing- for-the-sake-of -reaching". The seeing and the reaching are not two separate acts. They are a part of one co-coordinated purposeful activity. And the stimulus is not something that can be defined outside of the subject. A loud noise is one thing when studying in a library and another when in Wrigley Field rooting for the Cubs.

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Perception is tied up with emotion, and with the rhythm of appointment, disappointment and satisfaction. The child who sees, reaches, and misses is disappointed, while the child who adjusts and reaches again is satisfied. Obviously there is more to art than reaching and touching. There is acting and undergoing, or, as Dewey put it: "Art is the living and concrete proof that man is capable of restoring consciously, and thus on the plane of meaning, the union of sense, need, impulse and action characteristic of the live creature."[26] Of course humans are more complex than birds and beavers and so too is their experience. "As an organism increases in complexity, the rhythms of struggle and consummation . . . are varied and prolonged, an they come to include within themselves a variety of sub-rhythms.. . . Fulfillment is more massive and more subtly shaded."[27] In everyday life, the lives we lead at home and at work, there are many distractions and interruptions making it hard to take full advantage of the possibilities perception provides. Thus, fulfillment is interrupted or partial and often gives way to fragmented meaning. For Dewey and Barnes art addresses this fragmentation of meaning in two ways. First, it provides the experience of fulfillment where all of the parts of the object are "interdermined" and where learning to see, as opposed to recognize, is to perceive this interdetermination from the standpoint of the artist and the process of its creation. To appreciate a work of art we need, as Barnes puts it, to place ourselves into the situation out of which the work of art sprang[28]. This does not mean that the viewer needs to know about the artist's personal life—Picasso' relation to women, Van Gogh's relation to Gauguin. It means that the viewer must understand the problems the artist confronted as artist; the tools and traditions available, the color possibilities, shapes and the reason the artists puts them in relation to one another in the way that he did—what Dewey and Barnes call the form of the work. Perceiving entails understanding the possible paths the artist might have taken, the constraints that were operating and the reasons for making some choices and not others. Barnes and De Mazia call this "learning to see pictures": "Learning to see pictures as records of enriched experience is of necessity slow, even when interest is genuine and application wholehearted. A set of habits essentially new and of a very special character must be gradually built up to supplement those ingrained in us." [29] But "learning to see pictures" also functions to teach us to see better the objects of everyday life. As Dewey puts it: "We are carried to refreshed attitude towards the circumstances and exigencies of ordinary experience"[30] and Barnes expresses the same idea when likening the congruence of a painting to that of a well-designed automobile or piece of furniture.[31] Hence, the second function of a work of art is to help us learn to see the everyday workings of life more intensely. This purpose is what Dewey calls its instrumental function. In both cases the movement is from felt discrepancy to harmony.[32] The interdetermination of parts in an artwork also expresses the unique individuality of the artist. As Dewey explains:

> Every work of art uses a medium associated with different organs. Art intensifies the significance of the fact that our experience is mediated through these organs. In painting, color gives us a scene without mixture of the other senses. Color must then carry the qualities given by the other senses, thus enhancing its expressiveness. There is something magical in the power of flat pictures to depict a diverse universe, as also in the power of mere sounds to express events. In art media all the possibilities of a specialized organ of perception are exploited. Seeing, for example, operates with 'full energy' in the medium of paint. Medium is 'taken up' into it and remains within the result.[33]

Color, contrast, shape and form and the relations between them constitute the tension and resolution that comprise the rhythms of a human life. Learning to see then is learning to understand how such tensions and resolutions are reflected in color, shape and shade on a flat surface. Thus art is *education* in ways of seeing both with and through every day life to something deeper, perhaps more universal. But then learning to see is hard work, where new habits must be acquired and old ones, such as sentimental associations, discarded.

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The Dangers of a Museum

One of the features of the Barnes collection that many people comment on is the rather odd arrangement of the different works, and it might be hard for a typical museum patron to understand why works from very different periods might be placed next to one another and with no identifiable marker. A Dutch master may be placed alongside of a modern painting and both alongside a craft object like a simple chair. Barnes's idea was to use these arrangements as illustrations of some of the perennial qualities of art—form, or color or rhythm and to enable students to grasp the continuity of traditions across time and space. Matisse captured this idea exactly when he wrote in 1930.

> One of the most striking things in America is the Barnes collection, which is exhibited in a spirit very beneficial for the formation of American artists. There the old master paintings are put beside the modern ones ... and this bringing together helps students understand a lot of things that academics don't teach [34]

Matisse was correct in calling it a "collection" and *not* a museum. For Barnes museums provided labels that encouraged memorization, rapid identification and nurtured snob appeal. It would be generous, but perhaps not too far off the mark, to see Barnes's rudeness to the American art establishment, and his dismissal of establishment canons as protective moves designed to guard his vision from the habits of the art establishment. This certainly could explain why his decisions about displaying works of art excluded anyone who might have had an eye that was "refined" in a traditional way. He tried once in his public exhibition in 1923 at the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Art to engage the establishment and was slammed for his taste.

If Barnes was hard on the art establishment and its critics it likely was not only because he distrusted their motives, but also because he distrusted their encrusted habits. He was burnt once in the scathing reviews the critics gave to his first and only showing in 1923—where they dismissed the Renoirs and Cézannes as inconsequential or worse. He certainly was in no mood to subject himself again to such abuse now that his collection was recognized -- Matisse said it was the only place to view art in America[35]. He did not think that the "experts" were educable. True, his continuing rudeness was a grand way to thumb his nose at the establishment that had belittled his work, but it was also an expression of frustration at the unlikely possibility that this establishment could ever be taught to see art, in the way Barnes thought art should be seen.

Even without his early rejection Barnes might have been weary of museums. To place a work in a museum often prompts a certain kind of behavior and promotes certain kinds of habits. A museum-goer will often look at a painting for a brief moment, identify the object in the painting, and go up to the wall and read the card: "'Blue Boy,' Picasso" after which he then moves on. The next trip in the museum, when he passes the painting, he can think or say, "Oh! That is Picasso's Blue Boy." For Barnes and Dewey this mere recognition is not enough. Dewey puts it this way:

> Bare recognition is satisfied when a proper tag or label is attached, "proper" signifying one that serves a purpose outside the act of recognition—a salesman identifies wares by a sample. It involves no stir of the organism, no inner commotion. But an act of perception proceeds by waves that extend serially throughout the entire organism. There is, therefore, no such thing in perception as seeing or hearing plus emotion. The perceived object or sense is emotionally pervaded throughout.[36]

Hence for both Dewey and Barnes the aim of art education is not recognition, but seeing. Seeing is not passive as recognition is. It requires work and tutoring. It is not something that occurs just in museums but in life. Seeing is not just contemplative, although there are contemplative moments. Nor is it subjective appreciation. Rather, seeing, like art, is a creative experience where the potentialities of nature are discovered and realized through guided action.[37] As if, perhaps, the beaver could look at the twigs and mud around him and contemplate a dam, and then, after his dam is built, step back and say, now that is a damn good dam, meaning that all the potentials of the material were put in use and that from now on any beaver that wants to build a dam better take a look at this one—because this *is* a dam. For Dewey the seeing involves not the bare impact of color and shape on the retina, but a movement—back and forth—from the material to the vision, to its execution. Each step, each movement works toward a whole and the whole is comprehended as the culmination of these movements.

For both Dewey and Barnes, inquiry, whether intellectual, scientific or philosophical, has an aesthetic quality about it, as do other acts of everyday life.[38] Walking, bending, pouring, embracing all can be done with care and grace, or not. Yet in each case there is also another purpose--to get to the store, to pick up a shoe, to quench a thirst, to comfort a crying infant. The difference between these experiences in everyday life and the aesthetic response to a work of art is the difference between something that happens along the way and something that is the very purpose of the activity. The thirst will be quenched even if some of the tea is spilled and the child comforted even if her parent's embrace is not as graceful as some other parents. For the aesthetic experience, what counts is the integration of the experience on its own account. The aesthetic experience is like these experiences in everyday life because it fully involves the self. One might say it is not just the self having an experience; it is the self as experiencing. In seeing art one enters it. As Dewey puts it:

> To perceive a beholder must create his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent. They are not the same in any literal sense. But with the perceiver, as with the artist, there must be an ordering of the elements of the whole that is in form, although not in detail, the same as the process of organization of the creator of the work consciously experienced.[39]

There are two activities that come to my mind when reading the above quote. The first is sports. Here the fan may follow the path of the ball or the runner with the intensity similar to the players themselves. Indeed, the true fan will know a great deal about the tradition of the game; be able to put this play into a historical context; compare it to others similar games, and project the potential of the present situation onto the next play, and then make a judgment about the goodness or badness of the actual next move. The other activity is jazz where the audience enters into the music, by tapping their feet, clapping their hands, applauding at the intervals so that music and applause merge. Of course painting creates different educational challenges.

Contradictions and Possibilities

A new building for the Barnes collection might or might not serve the collection as well as the old. However, the threat to Barnes's vision is neither in the building nor in the move itself or even in the arrangement of the works of art. Rather it is in the practices of some museums and the habits of some museum-goers. Barnes and Dewey agreed that the aim of art education was enable the student to refine and the act of seeing. He held that some art was a better expression of this act than others, and that some arrangements were more effective in shaping this refinement and enrichment than other arrangements. Thus, good art is also good education. And he felt that good seeing brought out the essential reality of the thing.

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Rembrandt and Renoirs did this better in his mind than Botticelli and other artists whose work he labeled as superficial and decorative.

Perhaps what is most interesting and most revealing about his vision is that he does not confine it to seeing art. It is the vitality, the dynamic character of the reaction that is evident by the "familiar warmth and glow pervasive of the whole self when a new experience is born. . . . The prevalent tendency to confine aesthetic enjoyment to a work of art has no sound psychological foundation."[40] Aesthetic enjoyment can include a piece of furniture or even a nice automobile. The object then of art education is not just to recognize art, but learn to see, and seeing involves understanding the moves that result in one arrangement, color, form, etc rather than another. Barnes believed that such learning is unlikely to happen in a museum, given its task to move people in and out and to get the biggest artistic bang for the buck. He preferred retail, even boutique art not the wholesale dynamite block-busters that characterize many of today's museum exhibits. Dewey actually held a more moderate view and in a talk given in 1944 expressed the hope that new methods or reproduction would enable many more people to be exposed to great art. Nevertheless the guiding vision for both was education and growth not passive contemplation, or worse, memorization.

There are difficulties that arise from confusions within Barnes's vision, partly as a result of his snobbish dogmatism, and partly as a result of his unquestionably exquisite taste. His saving grace, given the difficult character that he was, is that he actually had a lot to be snobbish about. Nevertheless, despite his closeness to Dewey and his idea of democratic education it is more than Barnes's personality that is autocratic. Dogmatism is present in his conception of great art. He emphasized a kind of deep structure that he believed good art has and other "art" does not, and that great art has more of than good art. He held, for example that the rhythmic sequence of themes and variations in Beethoven's symphonies were reflected again in Renoir's art.[41] Here Barnes seems to emphasize some *essential* rhythms and forms and in doing so sounds more like Plato than Dewey, at least Dewey as he expresses himself in his social and political thought.

These essential elements enable Barnes to make his strong judgments about who should be in and who should be out and why. For Barnes Monet, although not bad, is not up to the standard of Renoir or Cezanne. Yet Barnes never qualifies his opinions with, "in my judgment" or "in my mind" or "in my opinion" or, "I believe". In other words, he rarely reflected the tentativeness of judgment that was associated in other places with Dewey's philosophical method. Part of his arrangement of art objects and furniture together was to display the shared qualities, the rhythms, textures and the like that they had with great art.

Yet there is also that side of Barnes, I think the more Deweyian side, that sees the aesthetics in the composition of a bolt or the curve of a car, where the role of art education is to help us all see this better. As Dewey puts it: "We are carried to a refreshed attitude toward the circumstances and exigencies of ordinary experience. The work, in the sense of working, of an object of art does not cease when the act of perception stops. It continues to operate in indirect channels."[42]

It is hard to see how these two sides—essentialism of the art object and Barnes's dogmatic hierarchy of artistic quality, on the one hand and the affirmation of beauty in the curve of a Chevy on the other—go together and Barnes fails to address the question. It would seem that an education guided by this essentialism would require something quite special, and is a vision, which if true, is endangered by the move to a big museum, especially if it did not take care to provide a special educational environment. Further, this affirmation seems somewhat less precious, and is one that is actually promoted by some contemporary museums when they give a common place object, say Duchamp's "Fountain", or McQueen's "Static,"

a place of prominence. Both of these works, however, are better understood in the Deweyian dialogical frame than the Barnes's monological one.

The Move and the Vision

There are potential issues that will need to be addressed if a progressive vision is to be maintained. To enter the new building for the Barnes collection is clearly to enter a museum not a school. There is no elaborate application process, as Barnes required, and the place is so crowded that one needs to order tickets well in advance. Once there it is really hard to concentrate on seeing pictures in the way Barnes would have liked since, as with other block buster shows, people are virtually stepping over one another as they compete for viewing space.

From an educator's point of view the contemplative simplicity of the interior space is compromised by the crowd as it move through the different rooms. Whereas Barnes had an *educational* reason for arranging the paintings the way he did—some element of form, color, or line that he wanted students to see—now, in the absence of his educational vision, many of the walls just seem cluttered as one wonderful painting lures the viewer away from another, and one reaches for the catalogue located on the benches to identify the artist and the name of the work—an exercise that Barnes wanted his students to avoid. These catalogues are a necessary addition for a museum but Barnes did not believe that labeling artist and work is the most important feature of art education. Indeed although it is claimed that Barnes had a particular reason for the arrangements of the paintings and for the placement of the hardware around trying to figure out what his reason might have been distracts from the viewing experience. Merion's intimate and restricted setting was a more likely place to replicate Barnes's pedagogy and help students mirror his way of seeing than the hustle and bustle of a new building in Philadelphia. This new building has become much more a museum and much less a school, and it is a museum that is haunted by Barnes's ghost.

The question then is what aspect of Barnes's or Dewey's vision might the new location endanger, and here I want to suggest that there is a subtle difference between the two. Both Barnes and Dewey believed that great art could teach us how to see, and to reach beyond the immediate art object to perceive the everyday world in a deeper and richer way. The difference is that for Barnes the individual seeing was the most important feature of the experience and it is clear that given his understanding of the underlying structure of the object he was certain just *how* we should see. The new location does not do violence to this feature of Barnes's vision for each one of the viewers largely goes their separate way untouched by the experience of the other. Barnes's vision here would be violated only for those who did not come to see in the right way—i.e. in his way. Given Barnes's devotion to Dewey's understanding of education it is incomplete.

Dewey's philosophy had the potential to understand the experience somewhat differently, and Dewey would likely be more understanding of the move. Although his *Art as Experience* reflects much of Barnes's ideas, Dewey's larger educational philosophy emphasizes the importance of community and has a significant dialogical (as well as "scientific") dimension which might best be expressed in small groups engaged in conversation about their experience with the artwork rather than in trying to simply comprehend and mirror Barnes's way of seeing. Sadly, in honoring Barnes's mechanical directions for painting the walls and hanging the pictures his monological dimension is intensified while Dewey's dialogical opportunities are reduced.

It would take an imaginative curator to suggest that more dialogical opportunities be developed in the new facility but it is certainly not impossible. To achieve this aspiration would require that the objects not just replicate Barnes's arrangements. It would require

educational experiences focused on students and not just museum goers and that helps students understand the relationship between art and life as Dewey understood it and as Barnes tried to display it. It would also require a staff that does not draw a sharp distinction between art, education and life, and, that can rescue Barnes from Barnes by appreciating the paradox of a man who warned against deifying art, but then dictated a Will that deified his *arrangement* of his art objects.

Notes

[1]My appreciation to Kazuyo Nakamura from Hiroshima University. Also I am indebted to George Hein for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper.
[2] Roberta Smith, "A Museum, Reborn, Remains True to Its Old Self, Only Better, *New York Times*, May 17, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/18/arts/design/the-barnes-foundation-from-suburb-to-city.html?pagewanted=all
[3] "*The Art of the Steal"* Don Argott (director) Philadelphia: 9.14 Pictures, 2009.
[4] Lincoln later was partly taken over by the state.
[5] George Hein notes in our correspondence that "The authority granted by orphan's court in the early 1990's to break the trust agreement was the first breach of Barnes's' stipulation. The 20 million raised was to be spent on security and air-conditioning (maybe also building repairs?) Every time the Foundation wanted to spend, they had to get permission from the court, which involved lawyers' fees and time."
[6] Judith H. Dobrzynski, "A Foundation Head Central to the Philadelphia Story" *The Wall Street Journal.* Feb 8, 2007. http://www.judithdobrzynski.com/2988/a-foundation-head-central-to-the-philadelphia-story
[7] Abe Chanin is an example of a poor Philadelphia kid who had talent that Barnes admitted to his classes, sent to Europe and got him going as an artist and art educator. My appreciation to Geoge Hein for this information
[8] A year before he died he explicitly rejected any ties to the Philadelphia elite organizations. "No Trustee," he wrote, "shall be a member of the faculty or Board of Trustees or Directors of the University of Pennsylvania, Temple University, Bryn Mawr, Haverford, or Swarthmore Colleges, or Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts." From James Panero, "outsmarting Albert Barnes" *Philanthropy Round Table*, http://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/topic/donor_intent/outsmarting_albert_barnes.
[9] E. Garfield, "The Legacy of Albert C. Barnes Part 1: The Tempestuous Life of A Scientist/Art Collector", *Essays of an Information Scientist, Vol: 5,* p. 387-394.
[10] George Hein private correspondence, March 14, 2012.
[11] Garfield Part 2 p. 459
[12] Not everyone was so impressed, including the Chairmen of the fine Arts Departments of both Harvard and The University of Pennsylvania who claimed to have detected some forgeries while others found some of the paintings sub par and of minor significance. (Garfield Part 2, 459-461).
[13] Barnes was the co-inventor of Argyrols, an important product for preventing blindness in infants. The company was very successful, and he sold it just before the depression, and at a time just before the price of art was to fall.
[14] Albert Barnes, "The Esthetics of Bernhard Berenson, in Dewey, J. Barnes, A. et al. (Merion PA: *Art and Education,* Barnes Foundation Press, 1929), 223.
[15] Ibid.
[16] De Mazia, V. Barnes, A."The Esthetics of Bernhard Berenson, in Dewey, J. Barnes, A. et al. *Art and Education,* (Merion: Barnes Foundation Press, 1929), 223.
Barnes and De Mazia, "Expression and Form" in Dewey, Barnes, et al. 169.
De Mazia, V. "An Experiment in Educational Method at the Barnes" Foundation, in Dewey, Barnes, et al. 134-144
[17] Feinberg, W. *Reason and Rhetoric: The Intellectual Foundations of Twentieth Century Educational Reform*: (New York: Wiley, 1974.)
[18] Dewey, J *Art as Experience*, (New York: Capricorn, 1934) p. viii.
p. Ibid., viii.
[19] Dewey, *Theory of Valuation,* (Chicago: International Encyclopedia of Unified Science, 1939).
[20] Mullen, M. "Problems Encountered in Art Education" in Dewey, Barnes et. al p. 252
[21] Ibid., 254
[22] Barnes in Dewey, Barnes, 1929
[23] Dewey, *Experience and Education,* (New York: Collier Books, 1938).
[24] Thomas M. Alexander, *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987) XIX
[25] John Dewey, "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology", (*Psychological Review, 3.* 1896) 357-370.
[26] Dewey, 1934 p. 25
[27] Ibid., 23
[28] Barnes in Dewey, Barnes 1929
[29] Barnes and De Mazia
[30] Dewey, 1934, p. 139
[31] Barnes, in Dewey, Barnes 1929, p. 151
[32] Barnes and De Mazia, in Dewey, Barnes et al. p, 161.

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[33] Tom Leddy, "Dewey's Aesthetics" (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Sept*. 21, 2011) http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dewey-aesthetics/
[34] Roger Kimball, "We Appeal to You, "Betraying a Legacy: The Case of the Barnes Foundation, *The New Criterion, June 1993, http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/Betraying-a-legacy--the-case-of-the-Barnes-Foundation-4775*
[35] Ibid.
[36] Dewey, 1934, 53
[37] Alexander, 102
[38] Dewey, 1934, 55
[39] Dewey, 1934, 54.
[40] Barnes and De Mazia, 151.
[41] Barnes and De Mazia, 169
[42] Dewey, 1934, 139.

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