Interaction in the museum: Observing, supporting, learning
Bradburne, J.M.

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: http://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
Acknowledgements

When one starts off on a journey into largely uncharted territory, one never knows when the journey will end, nor through what territory it will lead, nor what adventures may befall along the way. As a consequence, by the time it is over, any ambitious project necessarily owes many debts, both intellectual and emotional, which no amount of gratitude can ever fully repay.

The intellectual roots of this study are buried in over twenty five years of academic and professional curiosity, and some of the questions raised in these pages have held me in thrall since my earliest explorations into philosophy and hermeneutics over twenty-five years ago. My appetite for these questions was first whetted by my teacher Douglas Parker, and Professors Emile Fackenheim and Kenneth Schmidt, an appetite rekindled years later in Cambridge by Colin McCabe and John Forrester, and later still in London, at the Architectural Association, by Mark Cousins, John Frazer, and Cedric Price.

More recently, the arguments finally elaborated in this thesis have benefited from discussions with countless colleagues and friends over the years, of whom Jean Davallon, Jacqueline Eidelman, Paula Findlen, Elisika Fučíkova, J. Roderick Grierson, Nicole M. Holland, Daniel Jacobi, Bruno Jacomy, Elisabeth Merritt, Blanca and Ricardo Muratorio, June Power, Barbara Regeer, Denis Samson, Bernard Schiele, Joaneath Spicer, Gillian Thomas, Gary Vikan, Jorge Wagensberg, and Hal Wake are but a few of the most significant. All those who have worked with me, and for me, on projects over the past decade have also played an indispensable role in refining my thinking. They have not always realised the degree to which their work was shaped and directed by the ideas maturing in this study, but their complicity is no less appreciated for having been unwitting.

Several thinkers have been particularly critical to the way in which my approach to the subject of museums and museum labelling has evolved. Some of them are friends, such as John Bowlt, Sally Duensing, Richard Gregory, Kenneth Hudson, Jean Marc Levy-Leblond, Caryl Marsh, and Jonathan Miller, and have contributed to my thinking through long hours of conversation. Others, such as Gaston Bachelard and Michael Baxandall, I know through their writings alone, but have been inspirations to me nonetheless. In both cases, the intellectual debt I owe is substantial. No undertaking of this scope can be completed without the support of family and friends, whose patience, counsel and forbearance give one the strength to
continue thinking and writing in moments when the prospect of ever finishing seems to vanish past the horizon of the possible. This thesis owes a great deal to the early support of Holly L. Bradshaw to Jan C. Jacobsen, whose unshakeable friendship continues to be a source of strength and inspiration, to my late father, Michael Granville Bradburne, to his brother C. Philip Bradburne, whose hospitality and wisdom helped me more than he realised, and finally to my wife, Marina, without whose patience this thesis would have foundered on many occasions.

To four people I owe a special debt.

To Gordon Pask, I owe years of friendship and counsel. It was Gordon who first encouraged me to roll up my sleeves and tackle the problems of meaning anew, and who never failed to indulge encourage my intellectual gourmandise, as I grazed happily in fields as disparate as critical theory, hermeneutics, knot theory, cybernetics, literary criticism, musical theory and architectural history. Since his death in 1996, the world has lacked for his humour and intelligence.

To Mary Ann Caws, I owe a turning point. It was Mary Ann who prompted me to move to Paris in 1989 – a decision which shaped my intellectual, professional and emotional life. More important still, from Mary Ann I learned of the cardinal virtue of writing honestly. As Mary Ann writes ‘Intelligent reading is what we hope for, trusting that the growing process has as many participants as there are readers for our tales ... If telling the truth means speaking it out to the end of creation, then reading the truth and knowing how to read it is surely about knowing how to read to the end.’ More than anything, Mary Ann showed me a model for reading and for writing to the end.

To my colleague and friend Drew Ann Wake, I owe more than can ever be acknowledged or even named. For over twenty years, Drew Ann has been my fellow-traveller in developing new approaches to museums, science centres and exhibitions, and substantial parts of the thinking on which this study is based, the papers by means of which this thinking was presented, and the concrete proof of these theoretical positions, have been developed together. As a consequence, in particular when I write about the exhibitions which we have conceived, designed, realised, and written about together – there are moments when our voices merge through the work, and the words can be said to be as much hers as mine. As colleague, as friend, as amanuensis, as nemesis, Drew Ann Wake has been an integral part of this study. Though she may find much with which to disagree in my analysis of the
work we have done, without her insight and intelligence, there would have been substantially less work to analyse.

To Gerard de Zeeuw, I owe this thesis. It has been Gerard who as mentor, friend and shepherd, has guided me along the road, and who has both pushed me unfailingly to refine, deepen and clarify, while at same time enriched my own understanding of the work I continue to do. It has been Gerard who has kept me from blindly following the conventions of the museum profession, from uncritically using its languages, from unquestioningly accepting its distinctions. It has been Gerard who has helped in shaping the theory in which the museum and its activities can be seen in another light. Finally, it has been Gerard who has shown me the value of perseverance, for which I will always be grateful.

Finally, as with any work that participates in and takes advantage of the labours of others, if this thesis is deemed to contribute in some small way to the debate on the role of museums in contemporary society, its strengths are due in large part to their support and insights. If, on the other hand, it falls short of the goals it has set for itself, by miscalculation or over-ambition, these failings are entirely my own.