EXHIBITION REVIEW INSTRUCTIONS: THE WRITING ON THE WALL

Imagine that you are an exhibition critic for the Philadelphia Inquirer with an educated but non-specialist audience. You have been asked to review the new Liberty Bell Pavilion and President’s House Memorial in four to five double-spaced pages (using Times New Roman, 12-point font and one-inch margins. Editors are VERY picky about such details!). Your task is to provide some context, and outline what visitors might expect if they came to the site. To achieve this you need both to describe AND critique these exhibitions and their rationale. This is not a research paper; you do not need any research beyond what has already been assigned in class and what you experience during our class field trip, but you can (and should) incorporate materials from exhibition labels, websites, assigned readings, and class discussions.

Start by considering the exhibitions’ arrangement as representing someone’s (in this case, many peoples’) conscious creation. Questions to help you get started.

1. What is the history of this site? This introductory section should incorporate information from the readings (as this background is not self-evident in the exhibitions themselves). You need, in other words, to provide a brief analysis of how these spaces came appear as they do.

2. What seems to be the premise (reason) for the exhibit arrangement? What aspects seem to matter most? This is where you need to move from what the exhibition planners intended (again, that’s in your reading) to what you think actually appears on the ground. Do they accomplish their goals? If so, how (give specific examples of panels, images, or themes that reflect what planners intended)? If not, why not (again, specific examples are needed to illustrate if you think the exhibition comes up short)?

4. There are few actual artifacts in these exhibitions (beyond the bell and the house foundation). What else is used to convey the exhibitions themes? Consider why certain panels are grouped together. Does the arrangement make sense to you (does it create a narrative)? Notice things like placement, spacing, and lighting. What difference do these make? Are some ideas privileged over others by their position?
5. Is there one installation that you find particularly interesting? If so, feel free to discuss it in some detail, always bearing in mind how it relates to the exhibition as a whole.

6. Finally, and most importantly, consider these two spaces in tandem. Do they create one story? Two sides of the same story? Or do they feel disjointed? Do visitors seem to interact with both spaces (take some time to stand and observe their patterns)? Why or why not?

As with the last assignment, please be careful in quoting and paraphrasing statements from the readings. There is a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism in this course (which I define as the use of five or more consecutive words without proper citation). You are expected to footnote all direct quotations as well as any time you draw on ideas or information from outside your own personal experience.

**Proofread all papers before submitting them.** Papers are submitted by email to the professor’s email address (michelle.mcdonald@stockton.edu); submissions can be sent in at any time the week before the assignment due date, but can be emailed no later than 1:00 pm on that day (thereafter they will automatically be marked as late). Late papers are penalized one full letter grade each day after the due date. Papers submitted five (5) days late or more will automatically receive a zero. I do not give incomplete grades (I) except in extraordinary circumstances. This is not because I’m mean….it’s because I want you to stay on track! Work never goes away with an extension, it only piles up. I will confirm receipt when your paper arrives. Grading will be based on (1) effective use of English including spelling, grammar, organization, and clarity of expression, and (2) content, including your choice of topics and use of supporting detail.

Good luck!