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Once again, there were so many good submissions for this issue, it was hard to choose. Here are a few that I wanted to share.

Phyllis Rabineau sent the following about two very different exhibitions that shared a common interpretive thread—comic books. *First, at Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry, I was startled as I wandered into a less-traveled nook and came across two huge 19th century wooden stagecoaches and a Conestoga wagon, surrounded by enormous graphics in the form of a comic strip. The strip presented a story of travel across the American west with children as the central characters. Comic-book scenery surrounds the vehicles, comic-book kids sit inside them, and comic thought bubbles float over their heads. It seemed like these behemoth artifacts were orphans of the museum's transportation collection, having found no obvious place in exhibit narratives that feature other space-hogging gargantua such the 1930s Pioneer Zephyr train or the United Airlines Boeing 727. Although the interpretation is fragmented I admired the ingenuity of the graphic treatment, and wondered how long these lonely objects have been tucked in their corner off the mainstream's beaten track.*

*I couldn't help recalling the comic-book theme a few weeks later at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Here, in my all-time favorite museum, when I need a break from the glories of high art I indulge in the guilty pleasure of a luscious costume exhibition. Not infrequently, the experience is both beautiful and quite edgy. This summer's offering, **Super Heroes: Fashion and Fantasy** pushed the museum's content into popular culture, a terrain seldom encountered in those near-sacred galleries. It's hard to say which components of this exhibition were most outrageous. It included about a dozen original costumes worn by the stars in recent comic-book based movies. (I'm not too proud to*

admit that I was thrilled to find myself about eight feet away from Christian Bale's ACTUAL latex Bat suit—a not-so-bad stand-in for the man himself). Each Hollywood costume was merely the starting point for exploring one or another post-modern deconstruction of how we create our identity and self-image in the context of contemporary social and political issues. Batman anchored the section titled "The Armored Body," and other sections included "The Patriotic Body" (Wonder Woman), "The Paradoxical Body" (Catwoman), "The Mutant Body" (X-Men), "The Aerodynamic Body" (The Flash), "The Virile Body" (The Hulk), and "The Graphic Body" (Superman, of course). Surrounding these iconic characters, the real stars of the show were over-the-top, mostly kinky, couture pieces by the likes of Giorgio Armani, Jean Paul Gaultier, John Galliano for Christian Dior, Dolce and Gabbana, Gianni Versace.... You get the idea. All the big names. Almost as big as the comic stars themselves.

I've no idea whether the Met and its curator set interpretive goals for this exhibition, but I've absolutely no doubt that it fulfilled all audience goals. The crowd that surged through this exhibition was probably the most diverse I've ever seen at this museum—men, women, teens, children, all ethnicities. All excited, all reading, gawking, pointing, and perhaps most important of all (and I'm not being sarcastic), buying in the well-placed Super Heroes Shop. I certainly did.

Eric Seigel sent the following about Elafur Eliasson's **Take Your Time** which was installed in the Museum of Modern Art and its Queens annex, PS1, this past spring. *First of all, it is kind of a testament to the broad appeal of Eliasson's work that it would comfortably occupy both of these sites. Somehow Eliasson's combination of formality and funky interactivity worked in both of these spaces. Starting from the funkier, the basement of PS1 (a converted schoolhouse that looks exactly like a converted schoolhouse) was the perfect*

setting for a wall of vapor in a black box room. The effect was cooling and very beautiful, and only avoided the kind of corporate lobby art effect by the kind of loose ends that were allowed to show, the nozzles for the mist, the slip-proof fabric on the floor. This is kind of a theme through his work. It is so lovely and kind of comforting that it verges on a kind of "smooth jazz" of art. But he always dodges that problem like a magician who shows everyone the workings of his tricks.

The highlight of the installation at PS1 was a huge room (the gym?) with a mirrored disk as a ceiling. The piece played off of the voyeuristic "mirrored ceiling" of Las Vegas wedding suites, but it was set at an angle to the space and that angle changed over time, with the effect of distorting the geometry of the room in a disorienting and fun way. Again, the machinery of the piece, visible above the mirrored disk, saved the work from a clever effect. As a science museum guy, I am very interested in how things are done in exhibitions, and there was one piece that completely mystified me. A large room, maybe 30' x 30' was scrimmed to make it a cylinder of white cloth. Standing inside this cylinder, the visitor watched the walls and ceiling change color so smoothly and in such a saturated way that there was the impenetrable illusion of a sunset happening outside the cylinder. There was no trace of lighting fixtures, LEDs or any other artifice. It was an amazing illusion.

At MOMA itself there were two wonderful highlights. A small room was set with mirrors and theatrical lighting fixtures on sturdy stands. The lighting fixtures were arranged with the mirrors to cause wonderful and simple effects. The lighting fixtures took on the feeling of animals showing off some cool tricks they had learned. And an amazing (and eminently copy-able) piece animated the lofty and problematic central atrium of MOMA, in which everything looks dwarfed and intimidated. Eliasson simply took a 40 or 50' length of flexible electrical cable and

put a household fan on the end of it. The fan oscillated the long cable swooping across the atrium in long, unpredictable arcs. Brilliant and the audience was mesmerized.

Now Eliasson's **Waterfalls** are installed along the East River, and to tell you the truth, I haven't even seen them. It was hoped that they would cause the kind of "splash" (sorry) that Christos' Gates had made two years ago in Central Park. But instead, they have become a few minutes of tourist gawk. It's a tough town.

Here are a few virtual museums to check out as well. Phyllis Rabineau sent the following: this imaginary "museum" was constructed by students at the City University of New York, and explores complex history content, race, gender, etc. PT Barnum's lost museum is the foundation. I got really sucked into it, but haven't had enough time to explore all the nooks and crannies. (<http://www.lostmuseum.cuny.edu/home.html>)

Gene Dillenberg directed me to **The Museum of Soviet Calculators** on the Web (<http://www.taswegian.com/MOSCOW/soviet.html>). This site has more information about old calculators than I've ever seen, and actually more than I care to know.

But my personal favorite (maybe I'm biased) was sent to me by my husband, a music fanatic—**The Museum of Bad Album Covers** (<http://www.zonicweb.net/badalbmcvrs/>). Here you can see some of the most terrible album covers ever printed, and you can even submit your vote for the one you think is the worst. And now my disclaimer about this site...not all of these album covers are appropriate to view at work or in the presence of kids. Enough said.

Over the next few months, get out there and check out some exhibitions. If you see any that are intriguing or noteworthy, drop me a line (beth@redmond-jones.com) with the details so we can share them with our other readers in the spring issue of the **Exhibitionist**. 