Documenting and Mediating The Museum: A Case Study of the Documentary Film, *Our Museum*

潘　夢斐*
Mengfei PAN

1. INTRODUCTION

The museum exists on multiple levels. In addition to policies, legislations, physical buildings, and academic discourse, the museum is also presented in various kinds of media products. This research focuses on the museum in the documentary film, *Our Museum* (2002) directed by Yasushi Kishimoto. It argues that this work plays a role in documenting the museum, and more importantly, mediating the often-contrasting museum images that various societal players tend to construct. It provides a platform to raise questions about the raison d'être of the museum by interweaving personal memories and visions with the registered histories of institutions and countries.

This research adopts an interdisciplinary approach to fill the gap between film studies and museum studies. Through textual analysis of *Our Museum* (2002) and a few other examples including *The New Rijksmuseum* (2008; sequel in 2014) and *National Gallery* (2014) and contextual studies of the filmmaking process, it finds that previous theories fail to grasp the precise museum image in these documentary films. By examining whether *Our Museum* coheres with previous studies on film-world museums, this paper argues that rather than deifying or demonizing museums, it achieves constructing the museum as a place in which varying personal thoughts are instilled. By adopting the form of film, a vehicle potentially capable of reaching many, and enriching the narrative by giving voice to selected groups of people, *Our Museum* creates a polyphonic space rather than inclining towards any of the imageries from academia, institutions, and popular media products. It serves as a tool to stage a negotiated museum image on screen and invites further discussions.

* Ph.D. student, ITASIA Course, Prof. YOSHIMI Shunya Laboratory, Graduate School of Interdisciplinary Information Studies, The University of Tokyo

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2. PREVIOUS STUDIES IN FILM STUDIES AND MUSEUM STUDIES

Previous research offers insights into museum representations in films and the relationship between popular culture and museums. Studies that shed light on the former include Kimberly Louagie's and Suzanne Oberhardt's studies on American films between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s (Louagie 1996; Oberhardt 2000) and Steven Jacobs' research on Alfred Hitchcock's works (2006; 2009). Previous studies on the relationship between popular culture and museums include those by Kevin Moore (1997) and Mariko Murata (2013 & 2014).

1) Perspectives from film studies

Research by Louagie, Jacobs, and Oberhardt pays particular attention to the museum image in films.[1] In spite of their varying research objectives, the three scholars share in their main approach, textual analysis of the films. Louagie, a museum curator, looks for stereotypical images of museums in films and expects to see how museums can learn from films (1996). From an architectural history and film studies perspective, Jacobs attempts to discern how museum buildings and monuments appear in films (2006; 2009). Oberhardt examines how these films have the potential to offer insights for art educators (2000).

Through textual analysis, the three scholars deconstruct the museum image into architecture, artifacts, and people. A shared finding is that the museum in films often implies class distinctions, or provides the backdrop for strange people and tensions. This museum image in films reveals a stark contrast with the institutional discourse, uttered by museums themselves, that the museum is for every one. Examining thirty-three American films between 1985 and 1995, Louagie comes to the conclusion that museums are seen as "treasure houses filled with untouchable objects" " and "awesome gallery spaces full of well-educated museum patrons" (1996, 48). On the other hand, Jacobs concludes from an analysis of a total number of seventy-four films that in addition to artists and connoisseurs, museums in films often provide a kind of harbour for tourists, snobs, dandies, iconoclasts, thieves, secret lovers, spies and haunted or cursed characters (2009, 297). Arguably addressing the findings by Louagie and Jacobs, through detailed analysis of five Hollywood films, Oberhardt identifies a stereotypical binary that separates the fictional characters into "insiders" and "outsiders" of the museum (2000). The former are assumed to be those with social approval and acceptance, and the latter, graceless and evil (ibid.). These studies discern that the museum often serves as a bizarre place that distinguishes certain groups of people into the elite or the weird.

Despite that this finding is convincing from

the authors' meticulous analysis, two main problems remain. One is that they fail to provide a rationale for the selection of films. Oberhardt admits that her selection of the target films is random (2000, 55). Discussions over the particularity of the selected films across cultures or film genres remain underdeveloped. For example, whether the Hollywood films between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s, Hitchcock's works, documentary films, and films produced in different countries appropriate museums in different/similar ways is a question worth exploring.

A lack of contextual analysis can also be identified. None of the three scholars' research encompasses a study of the filmmaking process. They make attempts to connect film analysis with museum studies, i.e. the New Museology framework and Tony Bennett's criticism of museums' bourgeois exclusivity (Jacob 2009, 304; Bennett 1995, 25-33; Oberhardt 2000, 72-74). However this disparity in museum image is not sufficiently theorized. An inspection of the contexts including film production may lead to what shapes the difference in comprehension of museums between the academic, institutional discourses, and film-world representation. This paper aims to fill the gap by examining one documentary film and incorporating analysis of the filmmaking context.

2) A perspective from museum studies

Another perspective from museum studies provides insights into the scholarly interpretation of the encounter between museums and popular or media cultures. Museum Studies as a discipline has been changing in the past three or four decades and has become increasingly interdisciplinary (Pan 2015). This paper adopts a broad definition of "Museum Studies" and takes research with museums as the analysis target as Museum Studies. Kevin Moore (1997) and Mariko Murata (2013 & 2014) are among the scholars who study the contemporary intimacy between museums and popular culture since the 1980s. Although Moore and Murata refer to scholarship in cultural studies and media studies, their main subjects are museums and are assumed to be part of Museum Studies literature.

Moore, curator of the National Football Museum in Preston, U.K., supports museums' incorporation of popular culture as a suitable and necessary subject matter (1997). Employing cultural studies theories to re-evaluate popular culture, or "non-authentic and spurious" objects, and his experience in the U.K., Moore is convinced of the democratic potential of popular culture (Moore 1997; Brabazon 2006). He contends that popular culture's presence in museums provides a political battleground to instigate debates over social class and competing ideology (Moore 1997, 78). He also points out two ways to democratize museums: one to offer a more accessible interpretation of

high culture, and the other to "broaden the subject matter to include culture and history of all members of society" (1997, vii).

Following Moore's method and optimistic vision towards museums' incorporation of popular culture, Murata mainly focuses on the case of Japan. By analyzing the phenomenon of increasing institutionalization of popular cultures such as manga, films, music, and sports as museum content, Murata indicates that this trend reflects the expansion of museums to include those previously regarded as marginal (2014, 244-50). A few indigenous features of museums in Japan can account for the phenomenon of popularization of museum experience, or the tendency of museums to become more ready for consumption through media products (Murata 2013; Pan 2014). Three historical factors — the strong connection between early public museums and industry promotion agendas in the Meiji period, prevalent museum-like spaces in department stores, and the long-established practice of blockbuster-type exhibitions sponsored by media companies — delineate a distinct museum scene in this country. Rather than serving a strong democratization agenda as Moore suggests, museums in Japan from the beginning have their life in popular culture, and mass media has been a close partner of museums. Oberhardt's argument that the art museum's life in popular culture has previously been ignored and/or misconstrued may be true in academia but loses some of its validity in the cultural life of Japan (2000, 2).

3. MECHANICS OF MUSEUM IMAGE CONSTRUCTION

Prior theories in museum studies reveal that the intimacy between popular culture and museums has political democratic potential and indigenous Japanese reasons. Film studies however demonstrate a disparity in the museum image between one established in the film world, mysterious and exclusive, and that advocated by museum institutions, democratic and open to all. This part explores one remaining task left by Louagie, Jacobs, and Oberhardt, as discussed earlier: the under-theorized chasm between the popular, academic and institutional discourses, to pave ways for the later discussions on museums in documentary films.

This paper develops a new model based on Oberhardt's pedagogy paradigm. Oberhardt proposes a four-quadrant model to understand the museum image (Fig. 1). The four frames are Art History, New Museology, Popular Culture, and Pedagogy that re-negotiates the former three frames. This model is helpful in elucidating the divides in art historical discourse and popular culture that deify

museums, and the New Museology that demonizes museums. The vertical axis suggests a continuum from the traditional home of the museum, the Academy, to the territory of popular culture. The horizontal axis indicates a more "emotive" continuum, showing how people feel about museums, from deifying them to demonizing them. With more explanations over the "deify/demonize" dichotomy, Oberhardt proposes that when people deify the museum, "it becomes sacred; represents sensual romantic love; is elitist in an inclusive way because of its aspirational and inspirational role; and has a moral and authoritative voice" (2000, 5-6). When people demonize the museum, "it becomes profane; eroticizes and objectifies the body; is elitist in a way that is exclusive; and through its authoritarian profile as an agent of oppression" (ibid.).

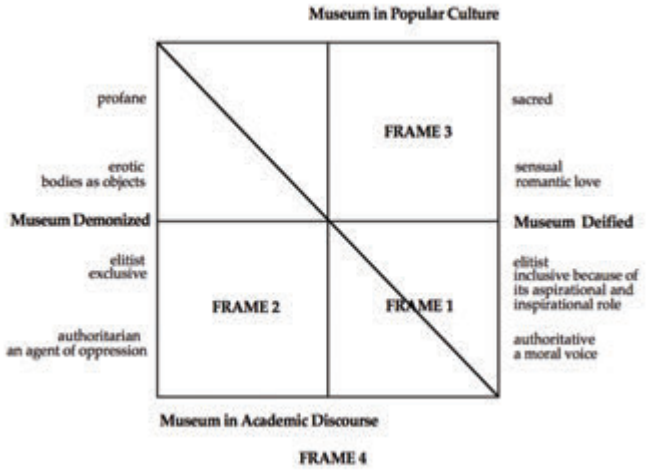

Fig. 1. Pedagogy frame penetrating the three frames (Oberhardt 2000, 7).
Frame 1: Art historical; Frame 2: New Museology; Frame 3: Popular culture;
Frame 4: Pedagogy, process of renegotiation between the three former frames.

Although Oberhardt's diagram offers insights into the disparities, it also suffers from three limitations. First, Oberhardt overlooks the museum institutions' voice that Louagie points out. She argues that the voice of the museum itself is framed in the ways other voices talk it into being (2000, 3). Still the institutional discourse, publicized in official papers and given by the directors and curators, reveals the self-image held by the museums, demonstrates the attitude of the major patron, usually the government, and pragmatically informs the museum's daily practice. It seems that rather than occupying one specific zone, the institutional is advocated to turn itself into the penetrative pedagogy frame.

Oberhardt's model also generalizes the academic discourse of Museum Studies, only referencing to New Museology. Rather than being unified, Museum Studies scholarship can be divided into two in terms of their perspective: the critical and the optimistic. To be more explicit, the strand of the literature she examines takes a critical perspective. The best examples are Pierre Bourdieu's acute critique of art gallery's elitism (Bourdieu and Darbel 1969; Bourdieu 1984) and Tony Bennett's theory articulating modern public museums' social function as disciplinary apparatus (1995). However an opposite and more positive opinion can also be identified inside academia. These optimistic works include Kevin Moore's and those who believe in museums' post-colonial and democratic potential, i.e. James Clifford's theory of "museums as contact zones" (Clifford 1997; Boast 2011).

A new model can be proposed to plot the varying forces that tend to develop a certain kind of museum image (Fig. 2). Rather than adopting the binary of deifying or demonizing, it draws demarcations between the sectors, popular media, artists, cultural studies and critical museum studies, and institutional discourse. It finds that the popular media projects its imagination towards museums. Examples include those films examined by Louagie, Oberhardt, and Jacobs and a few others such as the novel *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger (1951), folk song *Museum* by Donovan (1966), music animation *Metropolitan Museum of Art* by NHK (Japan's national public broadcasting organization) *Minna no uta* Program (Song of Every One) (1985) in which the museum is imagined as a place of mysteries, adventure, and romantic encounters (Pan 2013).

As Figure 2 shows, another three forces stretch the museum image towards different directions. One is the institutional discourse and optimistic museum studies that view the museum as a democratic place, accommodating all cultures and all people. Also optimistically, however from a different standing point, the discourse by the artist groups can be identified. They believe in the special identity of the museum space and see museums as an important place for displaying artworks and promoting creative collaborations. A third force is by cultural studies and critical museum studies scholarship that questions the museum. It pays attention to the politics of museum space and often criticizes museum elitisms, serving the interest of a particular social group.

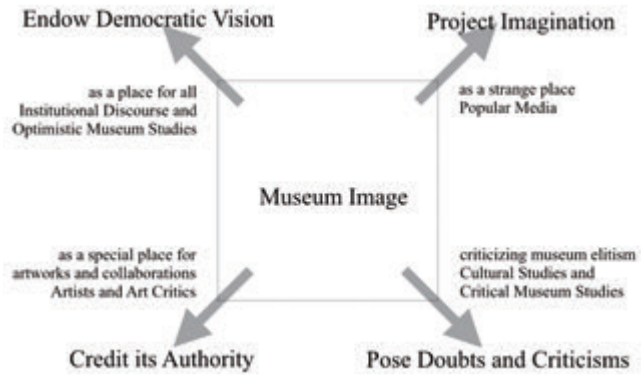

Fig. 2. Mechanics of museum image construction under four major forces.

This diagram aims to offer an entire picture of the post-New-Museology frame that Oberhardt suggests, to scrutinize not through "texts displayed by museums but rather through how the museum itself is represented and talked about in contemporary society" by various sectors (2000, 9). It reveals that the museum imagery diverges under four varying forces. The categorization does not aim to pose rigid boundaries and exceptions exist. For example, the Dadaists are skeptical artists who challenge the authoritarian status of the art museum. This brings us to the question of how the documentary film, *Our Museum*, can be placed in or challenge this model.

4. CASE STUDY OF *OUR MUSEUM*

1) Reasons for choosing *Our Museum*

Our Museum (2002) is a fifty-seven-minute documentary film produced by a Japanese director, Yasushi Kishimoto (1961-). The reason for selecting a documentary film in Japan is to investigate whether the diagram can still remain valid for a film genre disparate from the entertainment and avant-garde film (i.e. Hitchcock's and Hollywood films) and whether Japanese indigenous characteristics underlie the film productions and representations.

As Bill Nichols argues, the definition of "documentary film" can be established in contrast to fiction, experimental, and avant-garde films (2001, 20). He also suggests four angles, institution, practitioner, texts (films and videos), and audience, to examine whether a work can be defined as a documentary film (2001). *Our Museum* serves as a good example of a documentary film. From the perspective of the "practitioner" and "audience", it can be categorized as a documentary film. Its director,

Kishimoto, has established his career as an "art documenter", or more precisely, documentarian specializing in shooting art related subject matters.[2] This work has been screened at several documentary film festivals with audiences of documentaries (Fig. 3). During an interview with the author, Kishimoto also identifies this work as a documentary (2016).

Fig. 3 : Past public screening of *Our Museum*.

2003	The 21th International Festival of Films on Art in Montreal; remo (record, expression and medium organization) in Osaka;
2004	Friend of Museum Event at Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art; BankART 1929 Yokohama;
2005	Research Institute for Digital Media and Content, Keio University at Hamanako International Brain Centre; As part of exhibitions, *Museums for a New Millennium: Concepts Projects Buildings,* and *Kazuyo Sejima + Ryue Nishizawa / SANAA*, at 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa;
2006	Art Documentary Week at Kyoto Cinema; ARCUS STUDIO (Residency for Artists, Experiments for Local, Moriya, Ibaraki);
2015	At Kyoto Minami-Kaikan as part of PARASOPHIA, Kyoto International Festival of Contemporary Culture

This work is also important considering the status of the film director in Japan and its independent nature. Kishimoto is a leading figure in the field of art documentation by moving image in Japan. From both Kishimoto's own words and media reports, Kishimoto is the first among a limited number of professionals who dedicate themselves to documenting contemporary art by videos and films in Japan (Ohashi 1997; Kyoto Keizai Shimbun 1998). Originally a company employee, Kishimoto quit his job and started a gallery called Ufer in Kyoto in 1992 and self-trained himself as an art documentarian video-taping young artists' art production process in Kyoto. Tracing the media reports in newspapers between 1994 and 2004, we can find that he gradually gained recognition, shifting from a "gallerist" to "documentary director", with his works entering renowned documentary film festivals, e.g. The Biennale internationale du film sur l'art (BIFA) held by the Pompidou Centre.

Winning credits from both within Japan and overseas, Kishimoto is now among the most important filmmakers in the art scene in Japan. A second reason is that *Our Museum* is one early work that features museums and shows independence from the museum institutions. From a list of works with documentary character featuring museums (Fig. 4), *Our Museum* is one of the early works that anticipate a growing number of documentary projects since the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Fig. 4 : List of selected works with documentary character featuring museums.

1976	NHK Educational Program, *Nichiyo Bijutsukan* (Sunday Art Museum)
2002	*Our Museum* (directed by Yasushi Kishimoto);
2007	BBC Wales, TV documentary series, *The Museum* (featuring The British Museum);
2008-2009	Photography project titled as *Smotritelnitsy* (women who watch), or *Guardians* in English by Andy Freeberg at museums in Russia;
2010	*The New Rijksmuseum*, a Sequel in 2014 (directed by Oeke Hoogendijk);
2013	*The Vatican Museums* 3D (directed by Marco Pianigiani);
2014	*The Great Museum* (directed by Johannes Holzhausen, featuring Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna; *National Gallery* (directed by Frederick Wiseman, featuring The National Gallery, London); *Cathedrals of Culture*, an omnibus documentary (Pompidou Centre episode directed by Karim Ainouz);
2015	*Francofonia: Le Louvre Under German Occupation* (directed by Alexander Sokurov);
2016	*Masters in Forbidden City* (three-episode TV documentary on China Central Television; later developed into a 86-minute film version)(directed by Han Xiao and Jun Ye, featuring the Palace Museum in China).

Its independence from the museums is also noteworthy. Commissioned works by museums are expected to reveal coherence with or greater influence from the institutional discourse, leading to relatively easy positioning of the case in the proposed diagram. For example, an NHK program, *Tokyo National Museum: Best Three Selected from Twelve Sections by Curators* (2009), later released as a DVD boxed set, introduces the history and important collections of The Tokyo National Museum, the oldest museum in Japan. This museum also releases a ten-minute video on its official website, "140 years of Tokyo National Museum".[3] Both works reveal the institution's aspiration to enhance its publicity. As Kishimoto accounts, even this kind of commissioned work by museums is still rare in Japan while large museums in Europe and the U.S. maintain specific departments specializing in documenting their rotating exhibitions and budgets to collaborate with famous documentary film directors (2016). In Japan, most are planned and produced by NHK, e.g. *Nichiyo Bijutsukan* (Sunday Art Museum), a program on air since 1976, introducing art of almost all genres. According to Akira Miyata, a senior researcher at NHK, rather than a documentary, *Nichiyo Bijutsukan* is recognized inside NHK more as an educational program (*kyoyo bangumi*). *Our Museum*, an independent documentary film featuring museums, serves as a good example to test the diagram and to discern Japanese characteristics.

3) Case Study of *Our Museum* (2002)

The discussions in this part interweave both contextual and textual studies including the

conception, process of filmmaking, and assumed audience, mainly collected from an interview with Kishimoto, and elements in the text including the story, featured museums, "characters", artworks, and narration and sound. After contextual and textual studies, it analyzes how this work can be understood along with the previously proposed diagram.

It is first important to notice that *Our Museum* has a strong autobiographical character in terms of conception and presence of the director in the film. In contrast with *The New Rijksmuseum* (2008; sequel in 2014) which is commissioned by the Museum and carries a journalistic value in documenting and reporting the institution's renovation projects, *Our Museum* was conceived out of Kishimoto's personal enthusiasm and entirely self-funded (Harris 2013; Kishimoto 2002 & 2016). It seems that many film directors, including Hitchcock, Frederick Wiseman, and Woody Allen, share a personal fascination with art and museums. As Kishimoto accounts, he came to this idea when participating in the 1994 Biennale internationale du film sur l'art which gave him an opportunity to visit the museums in Paris. These trips reminded him of Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art (abbreviated as KMMA afterwards) in his hometown and that his visits to KMMA during childhood may have greatly cultivated his passion for art and decision to shift his career to become a film documentarian of art. The production of film starts from a personal interrogation, "what is an art museum" for him and shot between 1995 and 2001 (2002).

In addition to weaving personal memory into the film, Kishimoto also takes part in the film as the narrator and appears visually. Kishimoto plays as the narrator himself, setting a tone of autobiography and practically to save cost (2016). His voice-of-god narration instills both his personal memory and historical facts into the scenes. In one of the beginning scenes, the narration recollects his first encounter with KMMA, saying the large doors and waxed wooden floors left the strongest impression on him. A boy strides in front of KMMA with the visuals rendered in monochrome, imitating old videos. In the closing scene, a man appears with camera appliances on his shoulders and steps up towards the entrance of the Museum. Echoing that man's sight, the camera scene moves upward, highlights the façade of the building, and closes the film.[4] It is later confirmed during the interview that the boy at the beginning is played by Kishimoto's son and the man at the end is Kishimoto himself. The beginning and ending resonate with each other and lend the film an atmosphere of personal memories and emotions.

In terms of the story, *Our Museum* is mainly historical and goes back and forth between the two cities, Kyoto and Paris. It is a unique work among Kishimoto's oeuvre that usually features contemporary Japanese artists, including Yasumasa Morimura, Hiroshi Sugimoto, and

Imo Taba, and their process of art creation (Kishimoto 2016). *Our Museum* tells how the museums form themselves through historical events such as wars, architectural renovation projects, and various activities. It is interesting to notice that Kishimoto is inspired to reproduce the history, or document the museums through research, interviews, and camera-work. As Kishimoto recollects, because the theme is primarily historical, he found it difficult to reproduce the old scenes (ibid.). Unlike those featuring the ongoing activities of the artists that he could simply chase with his camera, this work did not have a fixed time-line to follow and had to rely on research of historical materials. These old photographs, drawings, and documents are introduced in the film to pace the story.

The story covers six museums in total with two in Kyoto and four in Paris. They are KMMA, Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art, Museé d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (abbreviated as MAMVP afterwards), Palais de Tokyo, Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, and Pompidou Centre. Among the six, KMMA and KAMVP obtain most attention. As Kishimoto explains, he aims to compare the case in Japan with that in Paris; KMMA and MAMVP, both established in the 1930s and sharing war experiences, serve as appropriate cases for comparison.

In addition to his own recollections and the institutional histories revealed mainly by the documents, Kishimoto incorporates voices from anonymous visitors, museum professionals, artists, art critics, and architects. At the very beginning of the film, there is a thirty-second shot with twenty-five interviewees taken in front of KMMA and the Pompidou Centre. The question itself is not articulated but very likely "what is an art museum for you". The age and ethnicity of the interviewees seem to be wide ranging and the languages they use are Japanese, English and French. Their replies include "culture", "silence", "testimony", "enrichment", "necessity", "discovery", "energy for tomorrow", and "sanctuary". All their answers turn out to be positive and seem to strengthen an image that they are the ideal "public" who sympathize with museums.

In contrast with the twenty-five people with fleeting and anonymous presence, nine figures were selected and given due introduction. Kishimoto adopts talking-head interviews with the interviewees' names and occupations displayed on the screen for a few seconds when they first appear. This mode of presentation seems to give their opinions a strong sense of credibility and authority. These "characters" are Suzanne Page (Director, MAMVP), Nicolas Bourriaud and Jérôme Sans (Directors, Palais de Tokyo), Jean-Francois Bodin (Architect, who worked for the renovations projects of MAMVP and Pompidou Centre), Christine Van Assche (Chief curator, Nouveaux Médias, Pompidou Center), Akiko Miki (Chief curator,

Palais de Tokyo), Yoshihiro Nakatani (Curator, KMMA), Aomi Okabe (Art critic), Yasumasa Morimura (Artist) and Miwa Yanagi (Artist). In the film, they share their past experience working with the museums and visions for the future. The interviews are in a unilateral manner with the questions not articulated but implied. Kishimoto explained that Okabe, Morimura, and Yanagi, were old acquaintances of his from previous documentary filmmaking and he had happened to obtain the opportunity to interview them about their experiences and opinions towards the museums (2016). It seems that Kishimoto regards the voice of these people as a crucial part of *Our Museum*.

While the people working with/at the museums gain strong attention, art works and visitors are downplayed. While the nine figures are given with introductions, the film visually highlights two paintings as exhibits of the Museum: *Piano* by Daizaburo Nakamura (1926) and *Asa* (Morning) by Satoru Katsuta (1933). However they appear anonymously without any explanation such as titles and artists. Museum attenders are not much included, either. They show up as visitors in the exhibition scenes and audience of a lecture about the history of KMMA given by the curator, Nakatani. Except the thirty-second edition of twenty-five one-word interviews, the general public is not given much facial featuring and is almost absent. In contrast, *The New Rijksmuseum* highlights the painting, *Portrait of a Girl Dressed in Blue* (1641) by Johannes Cornelisz Verspronck almost as a character in the film. The scenes of the public debates over the architectural renovation cover a wider range of people and seems to deliberately offer a facial close-up to someone who looks like a homeless person, or representative of those usually considered "outsiders" of museums (Oberhardt 2000, 106-07 & 136-37). In *Our Museum*, the museum space and the people who have actively participated in the production of the space, i.e. curators, artists, architects, and artist critics, are the stars.

Our Museum refrains from use of music in contrast with the substantial employment of the background music in *The New Rijksmuseum* and *National Gallery* that assists in playing out a dynamic atmosphere. Despite the film's strong autobiographical character, it seems to endeavor to achieve neutrality. As Kishimoto states in a newspaper report, he considers that music adds suggestive meanings. The stories about the unrealized concepts, war experiences, struggles of the museum directors and curators, and depiction of the potential of the museum, are narrated in a static and one-way manner. It seems that this film endeavors to claim and represent the truth, as one core characteristic of documentaries (Aufderheide 2007, 5; Bruzzi 2000, 39).

A final point is that the reception of the film

remains largely in scenes related to documentary films and art. It has been screened during documentary and art festivals or exhibitions and released as a DVD boxed set. Without assuming a specific audience, Kishimoto expects the histories re-examined and the diverse voices collected through this film would help artists use the museum space more creatively and experts involved in the architectural renovation projects respect the museums' past (2016). Recently with ongoing discussions over KMMA's architectural renovation and re-naming, Kishimoto hopes this work can assist in public comprehension of museums not as something staying unchanged but constantly evolving (ibid.). From the newspapers, the reception seems to be positive, evaluating *Our Museum* as a pioneer work independently produced, exploring museums in Japan (Fujimoto 2003; Mikami 2004).

To summarize, *Our Museum* tries to "document" museums in Kyoto and Paris via incorporations of the director's personal memory, historical documents, and voices from people who work in the fields of museum administration and art production and criticism. The image of the "museum" in this documentary film intertwines the personal and the institutional and connects histories with visions towards the future. It constructs the museum as a place where museum professionals and architects encounter difficulties and insert efforts in building a place for democracy and harmony, art critics evaluate the space, and artists find inspirations.

4) Placing *Our Museum* in the "mechanics of museum image construction" diagram

Rather than adopting a singular voice, *Our Museum* achieves a synthesis of opinions across sectors and national borders. Although the diversity and agency of the public is relatively weak, *Our Museum* encompasses all discourses in the previously proposed model rather than fitting as one of the four forces (Fig. 5). The two on the right are more personal with Kishimoto's question, "what is an art museum" as the conception of the film, revealing a skeptical point of view, and recollections of his childhood memory showing a degree of imagination towards KMMA with unusual architectural features. The varying voices collected through interviews include "Art History", represented by Okabe and the contemporary Japanese artists who express their belief that the museum is a special place, and the "Institutional Discourse" given by Page and other museum staff. Near the end of the film, Page depicts a "living museum" portrayal that asks vital questions related to our lives such as who we are and why we exist. This kind of public relationship although going down to ontological questions reveals the cultural institutions' democratic visions to stay related with people's life.

By positioning the film in the diagram, we

can see that *Our Museum* offers a platform for various discourses to encounter each other. As Murata notices, although a large quantity of information about museums is circulated in the society, there is actually little opportunity for people to think about museums in their daily life (2014, 8). While *The New Rijksmuseum* is appraised as a "sociological work of art administration", disclosing Dutch cultural politics, *Our Museum* adopts less sociological observation but presents a shared concern among the Japanese curators, artists, and art critics over the history and space and Kishimoto's meta-interpretation of the museum (Harris 2013). Beyond the representations in the film, it is actually the product itself, made possible with the museum professionals' cooperation, circulated in the festivals, film market, and screening in the museum setting, i.e. Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art and 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, that illuminates the public relationship of the museum. By selecting an angle shifted away from the conventional focus on museum collection to the space and people, this film offers an attempt to open up the museum discussion often confined within the museum, interrogates what is a museum, and leaves without a definitive answer but setting an optimistic vision. This film proffers interpretations of the museum as a place loaded with varying contemplations rather than merely a place for art appreciation or a work by an architect.

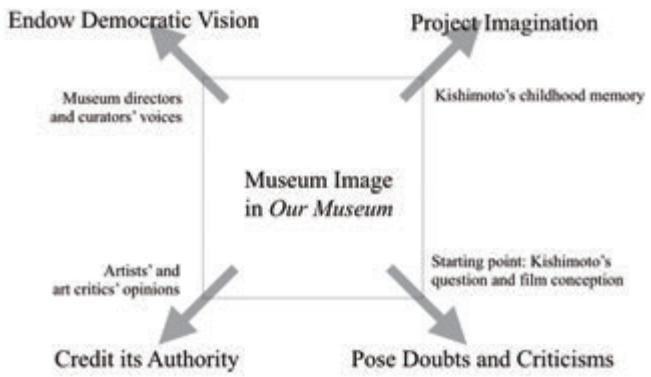

Fig. 5. To locate *Our Museum* in the diagram.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper examines *Our Museum* and challenges the previous studies on film-world museums. It argues that this documentary film manifests the possibility of integrating the personal, the institutional discourse and voices from professionals in the art field. It presents an audiovisual image of the museum as a rendezvous for varying discourses. By adopting the form of film, a vehicle potentially capable of reaching many, and enriching the narrative by giving voice to selected groups of people, *Our Museum* creates a polyphonic space where no singular discourse from academia, institutions, and popular media products dominates. It serves as a tool to stage a museum image rendered on screen and invites further discussions. One of the remaining tasks of this research is to develop thorough analysis of a broader range of cases across cultures and media forms.

Note:

1 Louagie examines thirty-three works (see Louagie 1996, 49-50). Jacobs' target in his 2006 article includes six films of Alfred Hitchcock, *Blackmail* (1929), *Saboteur* (1942), *Strangers on a Train* (1951), *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), *Vertigo* (1958), and *North by Northwest* (1959). Jacobs' 2009 article examines seventy-four films ranging from *The Kiss* (1929), *Bands a part* (1964), to recent Hollywood films (see Jacobs 2009, 313-15). Oberhardt's thesis (2000) focuses on five Hollywood films: *She-Devil* (1989), *Batman* (1989), *L.A. Story* (1991), *Born Yesterday* (1993) and *Absolute Power* (1997).

2 Kishimoto himself uses "art documenter", a term carrying more currency in Japanese language rather than English.

3 Tokyo National Museum website, "トーハク動画ナビ: 東京国立博物館140年の歩み", http://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_db/index.php?controller=list&t=movie_navi&id=4, accessed October 15 2016.

4 In the film, there is no literary explanation about the boy and the man. The author confirmed with Kishimoto during the interview that the boy was his son, Ken Kishimoto, whose name appears in the cast list, and the man who appears in the final scene is Kishimoto himself.

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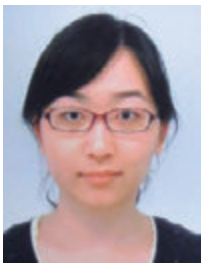

潘　夢斐（ぱん・めんふぇい）

［生年月］1988 年 1 月
［出身大学または最終学歴］シドニー大学 Master of Museum Studies; 東京大学学際情報学府アジア情報社会修士
［専攻領域］ミュージアム・スタディーズ
［主たる著書・論文］（3 本まで、タイトル・発行誌名あるいは発行機関名）
「Whose is the Museum? A Case Study of The Tokyo Imperial Household Museum Competition in 1931」, Proceedings of 11th International Symposium on Architectural Interchanges in Asia, pp. 920-25, 2016 年 9 月 .
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「Redesigning the Physical Boundary: The Emergence of the Glass Age of Museum Architecture from the 1990s」,『東京大学大学院情報学環紀要』, 89, pp. 99-118, 2015 年 10 月 .
［所属］東京大学大学院 学際情報学府 アジア情報社会博士課程
［所属学会］全日本博物館学会 , 日本都市計画学会

Documenting and Mediating The Museum: A Case Study of the Documentary Film, *Our Museum*

Mengfei PAN*

The museum exists on multiple levels. In addition to policies, legislations, physical buildings, and academic discourse, the museum is also presented in various kinds of media products. This research focuses on the museum in the documentary film, *Our Museum* (2002) directed by Yasushi Kishimoto. It argues that this work plays a role in documenting the museum, and more importantly, mediating the often-contrasting museum images that various societal players tend to construct. It provides a platform to raise questions about the raison d'être of the museum by interweaving personal memories and visions with the registered histories of institutions and countries.

This research adopts an interdisciplinary approach to fill the gap between film studies and museum studies. Through textual analysis of *Our Museum* (2002) and a few other examples including *The New Rijksmuseum* (2008; sequel in 2014) and *National Gallery* (2014) and contextual studies of the filmmaking process, it finds that previous theories fail to grasp the precise museum image in these documentary films. By examining whether *Our Museum* coheres with previous studies on film-world museums, this paper argues that rather than deifying or demonizing museums, it achieves constructing the museum as a place in which varying personal thoughts are instilled. By adopting the form of film, a vehicle potentially capable of reaching many, and enriching the narrative by giving voice to selected groups of people, *Our Museum* creates a polyphonic space rather than inclining towards any of the imageries from academia, institutions, and popular media products. It serves as a tool to stage a negotiated museum image on screen and invites further discussions.

Ph.D. student, ITASIA Course, Prof. YOSHIMI Shunya Laboratory, Graduate School of Interdisciplinary Information Studies, The University of Tokyo

Key Words：museum in media, museum in documentary films, museums in Japan, museum studies