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HUEN 3100
19 DEC 2000

Cultural Event Number One

Event ONE: Denver Museum of Natural History

Location: Denver (~Colorado and Colfax)

Why did you choose this event: Several reasons. First, I have not been there since I was a little kid in grade school (about 20 years ago) and the idea of going back to compare childhood memories of it with an adult perspective on it was appealing. Second, since I have unfortunately made my life so tightly scheduled with meetings, classes, and general stuff (too bad 'social' doesn't fit in there anywhere) that I needed something that I could do in about an hour. Third, I enjoyed the 6th and 7th floors of the Denver Art museum so much that I decided I would probably really enjoy another museum very much.

What aspect of this event did you enjoy the most? Why? I very much enjoyed the contrast in how I remembered it compared to how I saw it this time. For instance, in many of the animal exhibits, there are many other little animals and bugs doing various activities. I remember seeing these "side shows" as a child, but they were just "neeto". Now, looking at the immense amount of detail that was carefully put into each exhibit amazes me. The realism that the museum people gave the animals is simply unreal. In addition to physical realism, each animal, each insect, and each plant is *doing* something that looks real. They have very real expressions, postures and positions. The exhibits have no semblance of a cold scientific display. Instead, it looks to the observer that he or she has actually stepped into that animal's habitat and made time stand still. Even the painted backdrops, while they have the look of being paintings, fit in extremely well with the rest of the scenery. So well, in fact, that in many scenes it literally looks like the window is all that blocks you from an actual expansive animal habitat. I was thoroughly impressed.

Write a brief summary of this event. Well, I rode there on a gorgeous December Sunday afternoon. I walked in the front door, purchased a ticket at student rate, and walked around. Most of the first floor was closed off, unfortunately. But, large portions of the second and third floors were open. I took my time wandering through all of the animal exhibits. This included sections for birds, Africa, Brazil, Colorado, way up north,

and bugs. The animal section was my main interest. I also wandered through the Life section, but didn't learn much that was new. The Egyptian section held no interest for me, nor did the Canadian Indian exhibit. I also looked at Dinosaurs, of course.

What do you think was the main point of the performance? In other words, what did the performance communicate?

I think that the animals were all trying to say very little to me at all. In fact, I'm not convinced that they even knew I was standing there looking at them. Perhaps, but they showed no signs. However, I do think that the creators of the exhibit were trying very hard to communicate a completely realistic scene in any one of a given animal's natural habitats. I do believe that the main point of the design of each exhibit was to eliminate any and all type of human presence that could contaminate the moment. I don't mean that they purposely did not leave any beer cans in the exhibits, but that they were very careful to not show any support structures on the leaping antelope, or the birds on limbs about to take flight, or the little bear cubs playing on logs. They all looked natural and real. No props, no structure, no fake stuff, no anything except exactly what is in their real home. That was an obvious goal of the designers.