dra donc que si la critique d'art peut à certains égards enrichir l'esthétique, elle constitue aussi une menace pour elle.

Un consensus émerge d'ailleurs de cet ouvrage à propos de la difficulté de l'esthétique. Difficulté du système d'abord, puisque toutes les tentatives en ce sens échouent. Mais comment envisager quelque système que ce soit alors que l'objet même de l'esthétique s'esquive et se renouvelle sans cesse? Ceci tient certainement en partie à la triple origine de l'esthétique, issue d'autant d'horizons conceptuels que sont la philosophie de la connaissance, la réflexion sur le beau et la théorie de l'art. Du projet esthétique, tous les auteurs pensent qu'il ne doit pas bifurquer vers une théorie de l'art, car il déborderait ce cadre restrictif, mais qu'il ne doit pas non plus pêcher par excès d'abstraction. Dans la seule référence à des recherches esthétiques plus actuelles, Saint Girons critique ainsi le projet de l'esthétique analytique, qui réduirait l'esthétique à « une science purement formelle, coupée de sa tradition » (116).

Ancré par son titre dans un siècle précis, ce livre nous parle pourtant de l'esthétique au présent et nous invite à une réflexion plus contemporaine. Ainsi la naissance évoquée par le titre ne serait pas LA naissance de l'esthétique, événement unique et circonstancié, mais bien une naissance parmi d'autres à venir. Trottein maintient en effet que l'esthétique serait toujours à naître aujourd'hui. Sans nous donner de direction précise, ce livre nous amène donc à nous questionner sur le sens à donner, à notre époque, au geste esthétique et sur la forme que pourraient prendre de nouveaux affranchissements.

NICOLAS GAUDREAU
Université Concordia

Jeffrey Abt, *A Museum on the Verge: A Socioeconomic History of the Detroit Institute of Arts 1882–2000.* Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 2001, 336 pp. 24 black-and-white illus., $26.95 US.

Museums and Money

A Museum on the Verge is both a cautionary tale and the first scholarly investigation of a museum's financial history. Abt takes museum financing out of the realm of business studies and year-end reports and places it within the realm of art history. At the same time, his introduction is one of the clearest theoretical discussions of the problems museums face with regards to money. The book's depth allows a series of questions for future research to emerge, questions that ask which financial characteristics of art museums are shared by other arts institutions and organizations and how other art museums are faring. It also offers a blueprint for solving the budgetary shortfalls of North American museums. Most important, Abt makes us aware of the real costs of running an art museum.

Abt's *A Museum on the Verge* examines and analyses every significant financial change at the Detroit Institute of Arts as a means of comprehending the underlying reasons for the current funding situation of the institution. Change the details slightly, and *A Museum on the Verge* could be the history of other North American art museums, especially museums in Canada, which rely heavily on government money without building endowment funds to provide large amounts of cash during a crisis. What is striking about this composite, chronological history of the DIA's monetary predicaments is how frequent they are, how contemporary the arguments to both government and the private sector for more money sound, and how reluctant anyone at any time is to commit to a more permanent solution to the recurring financial dilemma of insufficient operating funds.

The Detroit Institute of Arts was founded in 1885 as a private, non-profit organization. Its building, collection and staff were paid for by money donated by private individuals. In 1897, twelve years later, the entire operating budget of what was then known as the Detroit Museum of Art was provided by the City of Detroit because no monies had been raised for this purpose by donors. To justify the continuation of operating support and rationalize provision of money by the City for an addition, in 1904, the museum deeded its building and land to the City. In 1919–20, to satisfy a constitutional requirement for continuing financial support, the City took ownership of the museum's collection, as well.

So far, so good. The City of Detroit, then the fourth largest in the United States, had an art museum of international standing owned and operated by the City and a growing collection thanks to allocations in the municipal grant for purchases and donations of cash and art from the Founders Society. In 1932, as a result of the Depression, the City drastically reduced the museum's budget, and to avoid closure, the Founders Society raised money to retain as much museum staff as possible and keep the museum open. From that time on, private funds were donated regularly for collection expansion and museum educational programmes. While the interventions of the private sector spared the museum, the ensuing organizational complications of staff in the museum having different bosses and the City's expectation of continued operating support from the private sector signalled future problems.

After World War II, the need for more space to accommodate the museum's growing collection became a priority. Yet, as Abt points out, "... the cumulative effect of the acquisitions growth rate, and the projected rate of building growth needed to accommodate it, had already outpaced the growth of both the FS [Founders Society] and the city's capacity to pay operating costs" (p. 151). Despite no additional operating funds for guards, maintenance staff or curators, two new wings were added, the first opening in 1966 and the second in 1971. The period corresponds to the beginning of museumomania, the time when existing museums everywhere expanded or built new structures and many entirely new museums were founded. In most places, the legacy of large capital projects with insufficient operating funds took a few years to become apparent. Shortened opening times, closed galleries, reductions in staff are just some of the repercussions experienced at enlarged museums such as the Musée du Louvre, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the DIA.

The situation at the Detroit Institute of Arts was worse. The museum was dependent on municipal funds for operating, but a decline in the local automobile industry economy and changing demographics affected the municipal tax base and cultural funding priorities. By 1960, the City of Detroit, once predominantly white, was 33% African American with the actual number of African-Americans triple what it was twenty years before. Growing racial tension underscored racial differences in museum visitor comfort level, museum hiring practices and the use of tax money to finance an institution perceived to be a white "country club". When Detroit elected its first African-American mayor, Coleman A. Young, in 1973, the City's identity, in Abt's words, evolved. Notwithstanding the City's financial constraints, budgets of institutions such as the Museum of African-American History, founded in 1965, did not receive the drastic cuts levied on the DIA.

After the Detroit Institute of Arts was forced to close temporarily in 1975, it was rescued by the State of Michigan. Representatives of the museum convinced the legislature that the Institute served the State as well as the City. An annual allocation of approximately $16.5 million from the State was given to the City to run the DIA. State allocations were stopped abruptly in the 1991–92 fiscal budget proposal, though, because of a change to a fiscally conservative Governor at a time of growing recession. The DIA was caught unprepared. Sixty percent of its budget came from the State, compared to other art museums such as the Art Institute of Chicago where less than 10% was provided by government.

The Founders Society took over running the entire museum, and a century later, the relationship with the City was reversed. In 1897, the museum owned the building and collection, and the City provided operating costs: in 1998, the operating costs were paid privately, but the City owned the buildings and collection. The possible policy conflicts in either situation are numerous. Current attempts to solve the financial crisis include building an endowment and instituting a regional cultural tax of which the DIA would be one of many beneficiaries.

Each of the financial changes is highlighted and annotated in the full-page table charting the history of the Detroit Institute of Arts' financial structure which begins each chapter. Besides serving as a useful *précis* of what is to come, the table allows readers to keep the entire, and very complicated, history of the shifts in ownership and funding of the institution clear. Graphic symbols for the building, its collection and money are placed in columns for the institution, the City of Detroit and the State of Michigan; so it is very easy to grasp the changes and complications visually. Abt is to be commended on developing the readable table and for the many graphs and tables in the appendices. These allow easy reference for items such as operating expenses compared with total City or State appropriations, operating expenses compared with income sources, attendance compared with operating expenses and operating expenditures per visitor. The inclusion of so much graphic material quickly dispenses with or adds to a number of possible arguments that could be made for saving money or finding alternative sources.

What the chapter-lead table and supplemental material cannot do is capture the explanations for the changes that have occurred and the intense, ongoing efforts to ensure the institution's viability despite the blind spot regarding operating costs. This Abt does in great detail in the body of the book. As he points out, *A Museum on the Verge* is not a "positivist biography of an institution". Instead, the book is a presentation and analysis of sources of money for the museum and attempts to augment funding. The history of the buildings and additions, the contributions of museum directors, display techniques, and patronage information are all filtered through a financial lens. We learn about salaries, municipal tax structure, legislative restrictions, membership and exhibition revenues. A wealth of footnotes, happily placed below each page of text to allow for easy reference and coherence, cite government and museum documents, provide mini-biographies, and supply additional details.

Abt's inclusion of lengthy – sometimes a full-page or more – quotes from speeches and articles by members of the Board, museum directors, City and State officials allows readers to glimpse passionate concern for the DIA and genuine dedication to keeping it running. What stands out is the extraordinary and ongoing generosity of museum patrons. At the same time, Abt reminds us that, historically, private money prefers to fund tangibles such as buildings and collections. Even if money is raised regularly to pay for certain programmes or positions and to provide operating costs in a crisis, there seems to be great reluctance to commit funds for general operating costs on an ongoing basis. Despite tax benefits to donors and the promise of permanent recognition by naming curatorial posts, lecture series, activities or services, raising money for intangibles remains difficult, despite persistent indications that operating budgets for museums and other cultural institutions will be cut first by governments when the tax base shrinks.

A Museum on the Verge confirms what is common knowledge. Abt's long-term study allows readers to see the same financial dilemma appear and reappear, to hear their own arguments for increased arts funding, and to marvel at how easy it is to avoid creating alternative approaches to museum financing. What Abt is not able to explain fully is why, despite comparisons by its Director to the disparity in the size of endowment funds at other American museums as early as 1948, the DIA could not resolve the problem. By 1998, the DIA's endowment was $40 million: the Cleveland Museum of Art's endowment was $330 million. Although Abt introduces sociologist Paul DiMaggio's thesis of submuseums with their own agendas within the larger institution as the reason for the lack of a "coherent core of undivided purpose that economists call a 'utility function' " in the introduction (p. 26), by the end of the book, this argument gets lost. It also seems an inadequate explanation for a century of operating budget crises at this one institution. Abt does not mention at all the possibility of deaccessioning, tricky as the concept is, as a means of raising money for an endowment or as leverage in a fund-raising campaign. Given the DIA's current cash predicament and recent art market prices, the sale of a few major works, the DIA's capital, would provide a nice nest egg. Then again, producing sufficient or dependable income from that nest egg might be very difficult in today's investment climate.

The implications of Abt's analysis are chilling for Canadian art museums. The majority are government funded for operating purposes. Like their counterparts in the United States, thanks to private money, most have increased their physical plant, collections and exhibition programmes in the past twenty years, but operating cost budgets have not kept pace. In Canada, we are just beginning to understand the need for extensive private patronage exclusively for operating costs. For example, it is only within the last five years that the Foundation of the National Gallery of Canada has begun to raise money for an endowment and to solicit funds for projects unrelated to capital bequests or special events. We can only wish our art museums fortitude, good fortune and wise investment strategies in this endeavour.

Reesa Greenberg
Montréal, Québec

Philip Sohm, *Style in the Art Theory of Early Modern Italy*. Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2001, 327 pp., 21 black-and-white illus., $85 US.

Philip Sohm's *Style in the Art Theory of Early Modern Italy* is an important new book that helps to illuminate the origins of the descriptive vocabulary of artistic style in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Art historians are inclined to take the idea of style for granted: we rely on the notion of artistic style to classify and attribute works of art to individual artists and to periods and regions. But, as Sohm points out in his witty introduction, the word "style" itself is a slippery one, "a term of convenience with no stable meaning beyond the one that a writer wants to give it for some strategic purpose" (p. 1). The inadequacies of language to describe works of art, and the style thereof, has caused frustration and unease in recent years, to the extent that at least one well-known art historian has envisioned a history of art freed of the terminology of style altogether.[1] For Sohm, the very semantic mutability of style is what makes it so compellingly rich: a site of "receptive ground onto which writers [can] project their personal views" (p. 3). His aim is to show, with the aid of twentieth-century theories of language, how sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers developed definitions of style as a means of establishing their own allegiances (personal, social or regional); how the writers' agendas imposed meaning on style; and how their definitions revolved around unstable and fluid semantic boundaries.

The book is divided into two parts. In Part I, "Style and Language", Sohm sets out the linguistic framework and boundaries of his investigation of the vocabulary of style. He begins in his first chapter with a discussion of debates over style in the seventeenth century, when critics argued extensively about what constituted the correct or supra-style, and polemicized the numerous deviations from the true path as signs of moral and social corruption. He aims to show ways in which style was made to embody philosophical, personal or political values, through the use of highly charged terms related to gender and national or personal character. As he argues, one of the benefits of the endless debates and style mania of the Seicento was that critics became increasingly sophisticated in their description of style. Giorgio Vasari, writing in the mid-sixteenth century, used over half of the 200 stylistic adjectives Sohm has compiled in his Appendix, but after that few new ones were added until the seventeenth century, when the adjectives used nearly doubled.

In his second chapter, Sohm begins to engage more closely with the problem of how language captures, or attempts to capture, artistic style. Because language refers in the first instance to language itself, and only secondly to its subject, he argues that it is necessary to examine the literary preconditions,