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Counter to Intelligence: The Glamorization of Espionage in the International Spy Museum

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**Counter to Intelligence:
The Glamorization of Espionage in the International Spy Museum**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in American Studies from
The College of William and Mary

by

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Accepted for High Honors
(Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors)

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*"Mom, is that real?"
"No, honey. It's James Bond."
- Overheard while in line at the International Spy Museum*

INTRODUCTION

A six-year-old boy stands in line in front of me, hanging on to his mother's legs and staring at the explosion taking place on the television screen above my head. A Jaguar XKR is displayed beneath the screen, guarded by red rope and accompanied by a label explaining that "Gustav Graves' henchman Zao seeks revenge at the wheel of this modified sports car, using its rear mounted Gatling gun, heat-seeking missile battery and hydraulic rams against James Bond."¹ Zao's costume from Eon Production's 2002 film *Die Another Day* accompanies the car in the lobby of Washington D.C.'s International Spy Museum. The line behind me is comprised of tourists and families buzzing with excitement, filling the air with children's giggles and anticipation.

It is strange that children would populate a museum pledging itself to "illuminat[ing] the work of famous spies and pivotal espionage,"² considering that the history of espionage is frequently violent, manipulative, and gruesome. One hundred and eleven CIA officers have been killed in the line of duty, frequently through brutal and painful methods. Douglas MacKiernan was shot, killed, and beheaded after trekking 1,200 miles through the bitter cold and thin air of the "Himalayas by horse, camel, and on foot"³ in an attempt to seek refuge. William F. Buckley's body was found in a plastic bag on the side of the road after he was tortured and interrogated in captivity for 15 months. James Lewis

¹ "Searchable Master Script," *International Spy Museum*, last modified August 11, 2013, 2, http://www.spymuseum.org/files/resources/master-script_8_13_13.pdf.

² "About the Museum," *International Spy Museum*, 2015, <http://spymuseum.org/about/>.

³ Ted Gup, *Book of Honor: Covert Lives and Classified Deaths at the CIA*, (New York: Double Day, 2000), 33.

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was taken as prisoner, kept in solitary confinement, starved, interrogated, and tortured to the breaking point before escaping, only to be killed by a suicide bomber seven years later.

The horrific list goes on and on.⁴

Furthermore, the ethics of the CIA's actions and methods are frequently incongruent with what is commonly considered moral. The intelligence agency has had a hand in the regime change of at least 18 countries, including Iran,⁵ Guatemala,⁶ Cuba,⁷ Chile,⁸ Argentina,⁹ and Nicaragua,¹⁰ amongst others. Its tactics have involved the distribution of propaganda, the provision of weapons to rebel groups, and the development of plans for kidnapping government authorities in order to destabilize democratically elected governments. These actions were carried out in spite of internal qualms from members of the agency.¹¹ The number of deaths that have been caused by the CIA, and groups like it, are immeasurable; on the other hand, the number of deaths prevented by the organization is also impossible to determine.

American clandestine organizations have even used unethical tactics against their own citizens. MK-Ultra, also known as the "CIA mind control project," was a series of over

⁴ Ibid., 2, 269-70, 281, 306

⁵ Torey McMurdo, "The United States, Britain, and the Hidden Justification of Operation TPAJAX," *Studies in Intelligence* 56, no. 2 (June, 2012): 15.

⁶ David Barrett, "Congress, the CIA, and Guatemala 1954," *Central Intelligence Agency*, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol44no5/html/v44i5a03p.htm>.

⁷ Michael Warner, "CIA's Internal Probe of the Bay of Pigs Affair," *Central Intelligence Agency*, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol42no5/html/v42i5a08p.htm>.

⁸ "CIA Activities in Chile," *Central Intelligence Agency*, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/our-first-line-of-defense-presidential-reflections-on-us-intelligence/reagan.html>.

⁹ Duncan Campbell. "Kissinger approved Argentinian 'dirty war' *The Guardian*, December 5, 2003, sec. World News.

¹⁰ "Ronald Reagan, 1981-1989," *Central Intelligence Agency*, September 18, 2000, <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/our-first-line-of-defense-presidential-reflections-on-us-intelligence/reagan.html>.

¹¹ "CIA Activities in Chile," *Central Intelligence Agency*.

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150 individually funded research projects intended “to investigate whether and how it was possible to modify an individual’s behavior by covert means.”¹² During these experiments the agency engaged in highly unethical practices, including administering LSD to uninformed and unsuspecting civilians.¹³ The intention of the project was to explore the effects the drug had in an interrogation environment and the potential that it held in regards to mind control.¹⁴ The project began in response to reports that the Soviets and the Chinese had acquired mind control technologies, and the CIA felt that, as a defensive move, they also must acquire this technology.¹⁵ Although clandestine work is “dirty work” by definition,¹⁶ MK-Ultra breached what is morally acceptable. Methods of experimentation went beyond administering oral and intravenous drugs to include stress induction, hypnosis, and electrotherapy.¹⁷ The environments which participants were exposed to, knowingly and unknowingly,¹⁸ were intended to incapacitate them both physically and mentally by causing physical injury, memory loss, and personality changes.¹⁹

These experiments had dire consequences for the unsuspecting participants. The CIA’s actions resulted in irreversible effects for Frank Oslen, a civilian subject who fell out of a hotel window to his death after he was given LSD for the study.²⁰ As an undergraduate student at Harvard University, one subject was exposed to “vehement, sweeping, and

¹² Richard Helms, interview by David Frost, Washington, 22-23 May 1978, 9.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol44no4/pdf/v44i4a07p.pdf>.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁴ *Project MKULTRA, the CIA's Program of Research in Behavioral Modification*, S. Res. 400, 94th Cong., 2d sess. August 3, 1977. 56.

¹⁵ Richard Helms, interview by David Frost, 21.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁷ *Project MKULTRA*, 6.

¹⁸ Richard Helms, interview by David Frost, 21.

¹⁹ *Project MKULTRA*, 6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

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personally abusive”²¹ treatment in order to assess the effects of stress. This student’s name was Ted Kaczynski, and he became a serial killer in adulthood. The origins of his violence are undetermined, yet, at the beginning of his collegiate career he was assessed as stable by those who knew him and by graduation he had begun to develop the ideologies that informed his later illegal actions as the “Unabomber.” Therefore, though there is no conclusive evidence, some speculate that MKUltra played a hand in the creation of a killer.²²

Despite these atrocities inflicted upon spies themselves and upon the American people, espionage has been catalyzed by widespread interest in its intrinsic obscurity, intrigue, and notoriety, becoming a frequent subject in popular culture as a topic for movies, books, and television shows. Spies are usually portrayed as glamorous, sexy, and smooth men and women who live for danger while flirting with flawlessly attractive people, or effortlessly engaging in impossibly perilous stunts.²³ However, the concept of glamorous spies is intrinsically contradictory. “Glamour” is defined by Merriam-Webster as “a very exciting and attractive quality,”²⁴ with “attractive” defined by the same source as “having a pleasing appearance.”²⁵ Therefore, the very definition of “glamorization” implies a voyeuristic quality. To be glamorous is to be in the view of others, which directly reverses the objectives of a spy, defined as either a noun meaning “someone who secretly watches the movement or actions of other people” or as a verb meaning “to see or

²¹ Alston Chase. “Harvard and the Making of the Unabomber.” *The Atlantic* (June 1, 2000).

²² Ibid.

²³ Michael Kackman, *Citizen Spy: Television, Espionage, and Cold War Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

²⁴ Merriam-Webster, “Glamour – Definition,” Merriam-Webster Inc, 2015, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/glamour>.

²⁵ Merriam-Webster, “Attractive – Definition,” Merriam-Webster Inc, 2015, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/attractive>.

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notice.”²⁶ A spy derives power from the act of watching others without being watched themselves. Thus, glamourizing espionage renders the spy an object of observation and spectacle, a perspective that fictively subverts the power that comes from a spy’s secrecy by giving it to the audience, who derives enjoyment from it. Therefore, the roles of the viewer and the one being viewed are exchanged, reallocating the power of spies to the spectators. This exchange is the root of the popularity of spy glamour.

In popular culture, the glamour of espionage is most frequently associated with the *James Bond* series, which institutionalized many of the defining hallmarks of the genre. The series began in 1953 with books written by the former British spy Ian Fleming, but has since grown into one of the top grossing film franchises of all time.²⁷ Fleming’s Bond established many glamorous aspects of espionage, such as tuxedos, high-tech gadgets, skillful physical maneuvers, and beautiful, scantily clad women, as tropes in the spy genre. Despite the dangerous and chaotic situations Bond encounters, he always remains calm and collected with something up his sleeve that will save the day. Once established, these traits became contagious beyond the level of fictional motif, quickly becoming the media stereotype of those working in covert operations.²⁸

However, not all accounts of espionage in popular culture follow the trend of glamorization. Humor is the second most frequent lens through which espionage is portrayed in commercial media. Examples of this include the 1960’s television show and 2008 movie remake *Get Smart*, the 2003 movie *Johnny English* and its 2011 sequel *Johnny*

²⁶ Oxford Dictionaries, “Spy: Definition of Spy,” Oxford University Press, 2015.

http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/spy

²⁷ Tim Dirks, “All-Time Top Film Franchises,” *American Movie Classics Company LLC*, 2015,

<http://www.filmsite.org/series-boxoffice.html>.

²⁸ James Chapman, *Licence to Thrill: A Cultural History of the James Bond Films*, rev. ed. (London: B. Tauris, 2008).

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English Reborn, and the popular three-part movie series *Austin Powers*.²⁹ This genre warps, mimics, and mocks the tone, stereotypes, and formula common in the more serious spy films, typically poking fun at the implausibility of daring feats and seductive situations. However, the comedic spy genre still executes the task of disempowering the field of espionage. By portraying blundering, careless agents, the threat posed by covert operations dissolves into slapstick humor and comedic confusion. The power of the clandestine field is not demonstrated and the characters in these situations do not cause one to fear the abilities of spies or the invasion of privacy.

The International Spy Museum provides a useful case study for understanding the popularization and glamorization of espionage, for it dramatically exploits the public's imagined subversion of the power of covert intelligence operations as a form of spectacular entertainment. The museum is one of the most talked about attractions in the D.C. area, hosting over 6 million visitors in its first 10 years.³⁰ Tourists frequently choose it over the free Smithsonian museums despite the expensive twenty-one dollar entrance fee.³¹ It opened to largely glowing reviews and is recommended to visitors of Washington D.C. as a must-see destination in tourist guides distributed by *National Geographic*,³² *Time Magazine*,³³ *Eyewitness*,³⁴ and *Frommer's*,³⁵ as well as other companies. There has been a

²⁹ *Get Smart*, directed by Gary Nelson et al. (1965-1970); *Get Smart*, directed by Peter Segal (2008; Burbank, CA); *Johnny English*, directed by Peter Howitt (2003; Universal City, CA); *Johnny English Reborn*, directed by Oliver Parker (2012; Universal City, CA); *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery*, directed by Jay Roach (1997; Santa Clarita, CA)

³⁰ "10 Years of SPY!," *International Spy Museum*, July 16, 2012, <http://spymuseum.org/press/press-archive/detail/10-years-of-spy/>.

³¹ "Tickets," *International Spy Museum*, 2015, <http://spymuseum.org/tickets/>.

³² John Thompson & Richard Nowitz, *National Geographic Traveler: Washington D.C., Part 3* National Geographic Book, 2008.

³³ Amanda Ripley. "Washington: 10 Things to do." *Time Magazine*.

³⁴ *DK Eyewitness Travel Guide: Washington, Part 3*, edited by Claire Folkard. 2nd ed. London: DK Publishing, 2013.

³⁵ Elise Ford, *Frommer's Washington D.C. 2004*, edited by NetLibrary, Inc. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Pub., 2004.)

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consistent buzz surrounding the institution since its opening, although perhaps it has been receiving this attention for the wrong reasons. The *Time* magazine review of the exhibit states that “this museum works because spies are cool, and so are KGB lipstick pistols and invisible-ink letters.”³⁶ The museum plays up the sexy side of spying, literally in the case of the lipstick pistol, called the “kiss of death,” [fig. 1]³⁷ but it does so at the expense of the factual information that exists about espionage. Yet, the laudatory review still tells tourists to “be sure to check out the exhibit.”³⁸

However, there are several leading media outlets that give the attraction mixed reviews. *Washington Post* Staff Writer Michael O’Sullivan claims that the institution “intelligently addresses both the very real dangers and the enduring allure...of spycraft,”³⁹ but he also



Figure 1 - "Kiss of Death," a pistol disguised as a tube of lipstick that is displayed in the "School for Spies" Exhibit.

admits that the museum does not adequately address the ethics of espionage. He muses that the exhibits present “a single, valid notion of right and wrong” by discussing “only one side of the story,” and that this bias contradicts the concept of an “international” museum.⁴⁰ *New York Times*’ Edward Rothstein describes the institution as “edutainment,” praising its

³⁶ Amanda Ripley. "Washington: 10 Things to do."

³⁷ Courtesy of the International Spy Museum: <http://www.spymuseum.org/exhibition-experiences/about-the-collection/collection-highlights/lipstick-pistol/>.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Michael O’Sullivan, "Spy Museum Sheds its Cover," *Washington Post*, sec. Editorial Review, July 19, 2002.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

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“vitality” and “compelling history” of espionage through the Cold War.⁴¹ However, Rothstein claims that the chronological trajectory of the exhibits stops too soon, ignoring modern day threats, such as 9/11 and “Islamic terrorism,” and technological, political, and strategic advances in the clandestine field.⁴² Yet, he eventually concludes that such information would compromise national security, and therefore is impossible to safely distribute.

Because of the lack of dedication to historical truth, scholarly advancement, and rigorous standards of interpretation, as well as its relative newness, the International Spy Museum has inspired very little scholarly research or writing. The only scholarly literature that focuses specifically on the museum so far has been in the form of brief reviews by Robert Hanyok,⁴³ John Baesler,⁴⁴ Tod Hoffman,⁴⁵ Ronald Radosh,⁴⁶ and Stephan Marrin.⁴⁷ In the words of Marrin and Hoffman, the museum “demonstrates the overlap between myth and reality”⁴⁸ in the clandestine field and “explicitly acknowledges the intersection of fact and fiction in the popular perception of spies and spying.”⁴⁹ These scholars have similar views regarding the establishment’s entertainment value, praising its exhibits for being

⁴¹ Edward Rothstein, “Good Guys, Bad Guys and Spies, All Wrapped in ‘Edutainment,’” *New York Times*, sec. Art & Design, July 5, 2008.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Robert Hanyok, “International Spy Museum,” *Public Historian* 30, no. 4, (Fall 2008): 159-161.

⁴⁴ John Philip Baesler, “International Spy Museum,” *Journal of American History* 98, no. 1, (June, 2011): 138-143.

⁴⁵ Tod Hoffman, “Spies on Display,” *Queen’s Quarterly* 110, no. 2, (Summer 2003): 266-273.

⁴⁶ Ronald Radosh, “Scoping Out the International Spy Museum,” *Academic Questions* 23, no. 3, (September, 2010): 287-297.

⁴⁷ Stephen Marrin, “Why Teach About Intelligence,” *Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 22, no. 1, (Spring/Summer 2013), 63.

⁴⁸ Stephen Marrin, “Why Teach About Intelligence,” 63.

⁴⁹ Tod Hoffman, “Spies on Display,” 266-273.

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“engaging,”⁵⁰ “fascinating,”⁵¹ “creative,”⁵² and simply “fun,”⁵³ yet they all also have reservations regarding information that is, or is not, presented in the exhibits.

Hanyok, a retired intelligence analyst for the United States Department of Defense, points out that “some of the displays carry misleading statements and factual errors in their captions”⁵⁴ and “other exhibits devoted to military carrier pigeons and balloon observers simply are not related.”⁵⁵ He states that several of the exhibits, such as those aforementioned as well as information on aerial intelligence and an interactive display on the Nazi Engima code, “push the definition of espionage” and due to this, the museum’s “focus is rather unclear.”⁵⁶ Although these displays diverge slightly from the espionage focus declared by the institution, when put in perspective with other irrelevant material and necessary changes to the presentation and perspective of the museum, this grievance seems trivial. These inclusions are a small part of the overarching theme of distraction and misinformation. Despite these poor examples, Hanyok ultimately addresses this theme by concluding that the museum “merely scratches the surface of the craft and associated gadgets. People looking for an assessment of the role of spies in history, or just more information, will be disappointed.”⁵⁷

Baesler, a professor at Saginaw Valley State University, has a similar take on the institution, but he finds additional problems regarding the ethics of the displays. He notes

⁵⁰ John Philipp Baesler, “International Spy Museum,” 143.

⁵¹ Ronald Radosh, “Scoping Out the International Spy Museum,” 288.

⁵² Tod Hoffman, “Spies on Display,” 266-273.

⁵³ Robert Hanyok, “International Spy Museum,” 159, 161.

⁵⁴ Robert Hanyok, “International Spy Museum,” 161.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 161.

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that “concern for those on the receiving end of espionage—the spied-upon—is missing.”⁵⁸ He expands upon this by criticizing the museum for “focus[ing] on the operational aspects of espionage, with the cultural context of such activities reduced to an exotic backdrop,”⁵⁹ cleverly noting that “the context of espionage activity can easily appear as interchangeable as a Bond girl.”⁶⁰ He goes on to contemplate the ideological purpose of the venue, stating that the museum ought to be “evaluated not only for [its] instructional (and entertainment) value but for the governmental purposes [it] might serve.”⁶¹ Baesler suggests that this purpose is the development of a “security consciousness - the acceptance of a constant threat and the need for incessant monitoring by individual citizens, government agencies, and private entities.”⁶² Baesler is correct in addressing the concept of acceptance in his critique of the International Spy Museum’s agenda, but this acceptance overrides the supposed consciousness he proposes. It is not a consciousness, but an unconsciousness that the museum encourages. The exhibit generates an acceptance and excitement regarding secrecy and deception, pushing the greater purpose of security aside in favor of sensationalism and spectacle. Thus, though the concept of surveillance is underlying all of the museum’s displays, it is constantly overridden to the point that the viewer ignores it.

Hoffman also considers the motives behind the museum, but the author and ex-intelligence officer approaches the issue from an alternative perspective by exploring why visitors are driven to come to the establishment instead of why the establishment is driven to attract visitors. He muses that it is “perhaps for reassurance” and that one finds comfort

⁵⁸ John Philipp Baesler, “International Spy Museum,” 142.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 143.

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in being told that “in these troubled times there are among us unseen protectors.”⁶³ In light of the museum’s focus on role-play, which I address in Chapter Three, the museumgoers’ reassurance also comes from the institution-instilled belief that they are able to protect themselves against attackers and enemy espionage agents. Additionally, the moral lens of the museum reassures visitors that they, and those who protect them, have motives and actions that are ethically superior to others. Hoffman also notes that the institution “does play up some common misconceptions” and points out visitors’ willingness to believe these stereotypes due to “how inextricably entwined...real and imaginary spies [are] in our consciousness.”⁶⁴ Additionally, he provides slightly more in-depth background information than the other reviews, including an interview with Peter Earnest, the executive director of the museum.

Hoffman’s interview with Earnest reveals an interesting splintering between the theory of the museum director’s aims and the execution of them, as well as contradictions within his own beliefs. It seems that his intentions are educational and earnest (fittingly) in nature. He claims that “the general public perception is limited” and “the more the public has an understanding of what intelligence services do and their value, the better it is for the country.”⁶⁵ It is with the International Spy Museum that he intends to widen that perception and foster that understanding. However, he also admits that “Much of what we do is tell stories. And in that context we try to show the myth and the reality” continuing to claim that “Popular culture of intelligence was formed [during the Cold War] because we

⁶³ Tod Hoffman, “Spies on Display.”

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

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knew a lot was going on, but not what it was. So you had films and novels.”⁶⁶ Although this further highlights the public’s ignorance regarding matters of intelligence, the first statement implies a continuation of the fiction within the institution. However, there is not much context given for the executive director’s quotes included in the review, making it difficult to assess their meaning accurately and fully.

Radosh’s review proves to be the most positive out of the four. The author and professor at Hudson Institute eagerly praises the importance of the material presented in the establishment and its focus on American history. I have qualms about both of these aspects of the museum, both which I address in Chapter Two. However, despite his enthusiasm, Radosh still provides several key critiques, primarily regarding the museum’s Cold War content as outdated, morally misleading, and, at times, incorrect. Interestingly, the International Spy Museum’s Executive Director Peter Earnest responded to the article, highlighting Radosh’s misquoting of some museum labels and omission of other pertinent labels.⁶⁷ Therefore, I take Radosh’s piece with a grain of salt.

Regardless of scholars’ reservations concerning the material and focus of the museum, it proudly boasts being the only institution of its kind dedicated to espionage in the United States, as well as the only one worldwide providing an international perspective on spying.⁶⁸ The institution’s pedagogical mission is stated on their website, as follows:

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ronald Radosh, “Scoping Out the International Spy Museum,” 288, 291, 293-294.

⁶⁸ “About the Museum,” *International Spy Museum*, 2015, <http://spymuseum.org/about/>.

The mission of the International Spy Museum is to educate the public about espionage in an engaging way and to provide a context that fosters understanding of its important role in and impact on current and historic events. The Museum focuses on human intelligence and reveals the role spies have played in world events throughout history. It is committed to the apolitical presentation of the history of espionage in order to provide visitors with nonbiased, accurate information.⁶⁹

However, as I contend in this thesis, the idealistic portrayal of the glamorous and daring life of spies frequently seen elsewhere in popular culture strongly informs the museum's portrayal of espionage, creating a discord between pedagogical and recreational aims, and ultimately reducing the education to a form of entertainment with troubling political and ideological implications. I argue that the museum inhibits learning by reinforcing widespread myths about espionage instead of advancing critical thought and historical knowledge regarding the profession, thus contradicting the institution's educational mission and reinforcing an essentially imperialist political point of view that favors the U.S. as a global superpower, along with its closest allies (i.e. Great Britain). The museum's constant competition between fact and fiction manifests in the other juxtapositions of objects versus interaction, and moral complexity versus moral simplicity. The facts of espionage depict ethical complications regarding America's actions and intentions, information that would be best portrayed through the use of labels and objects, however, these resources lack adequate content, depth, and critical perspective. In

⁶⁹ "History and Mission," *International Spy Museum*, 2015, <http://spymuseum.org/history-mission/>.

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contrast, the fiction of espionage is prominently displayed and reinforced through the exhibit-visitor interaction in the museum and the moral binary constructed by the institution's narrative. As I will explain, the International Spy Museum glamorizes espionage in three main ways: (1) institutional aesthetics, (2) exhibit content, and (3) interactive visitor experience.

Through the aesthetics of exhibition design, interpretation of thematic content, and the first-person performance of various activities, the International Spy Museum teaches visitors to perceive and process information regarding espionage and the experience of clandestine agents through a warped lens. Museumgoers enter an exciting world of daring feats, expensive cars, and James Bond. While in this fabricated realm they learn codes, eavesdrop on other museumgoers, and test their ability to hang on for dear life. In the real world, the probability of being a victim of covert operations is much higher than the probability of taking an active part in espionage, but visitors ultimately leave the museum thinking, "I could be a spy," as opposed to "I could be spied on."

Chapter 1

From Washington, With Love: Museum background, location, and aesthetic

Espionage has had an especially profound impact on the shaping of today's governments as a proven, effective method to collect confidential information. Both government and non-government affiliated agencies use clandestine tactics to gather intelligence regarding political leaders, military personnel, ideological groups, and civilians. The effectiveness of these covert operations hinges on the target being unaware of the act, therefore information regarding these activities is frequently unavailable to the general public.⁷⁰ Consequently, the mystery and significance of the subject has sparked the interest of many. Thus, it is fitting for a museum to be established memorializing such acts and informing the public of their significance. This chapter provides a brief background of the International Spy Museum and maps the visitor's controlled experience through the institution, highlighting corporate structure, the branding and marketing, and the aesthetic fanfare of the museum.

The International Spy Museum opened in the Penn Quarter of Northeast Washington D.C. in 2002⁷¹ as "the first of numerous urban revitalization initiatives around the city."⁷² It is a privately owned establishment advised by a Board of Directors comprised of retired CIA, FBI, KGB, and MI5 officers⁷³ and funded by The Malrite Company, a Cleveland-based corporation dedicated to the development of "museums and educational

⁷⁰ John Patrick Quirk, *The Central Intelligence Agency: A Photographic History*, (Guilford, Conn.: Foreign Intelligence Press, 1986.)

⁷¹ "History and Mission," *International Spy Museum*.

⁷² John Philipp Baesler, "International Spy Museum," 138.

⁷³ "Board of Directors," *International Spy Museum*, 2015, <http://spymuseum.org/about/leadership/board-of-directors/>.

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projects” in America.⁷⁴ The Malrite Company is Milton Maltz’s successor to Malrite Communications, an entertainment corporation founded in 1956 that owned radio stations and television stations.⁷⁵ Maltz was also a founding member of the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, both in Ohio. Rumors have recently circulated that the institution is transitioning to non-profit status, but failed plans to relocate to the Carnegie Library Building have complicated this endeavor. The institution’s plans to relocate developed due to overcrowding of both visitors and exhibits in the museum. The change in the commercial nature of the organization “would allow the museum to create an endowment and rely on charitable contributions to supplement its revenue, diversifying the mix of ticket sales, gift-shop revenue, and event rental fees that currently sustain it.”⁷⁶ It is impossible to know what will change in regard to the institution’s presentation and visitor interaction if the establishment were to change the nature of its financial foundation, thus the analysis offered in this thesis refers to the museum as it is functioning today.

The museum displays espionage artifacts and gadgets, information regarding the history of spying, agents’ accounts of working in the intelligence field, and portrayals of espionage in popular culture. The information regarding popular culture specifically focuses on James Bond, including an entire floor dedicated to an exhibit commemorating the many villains that Bond has fought in the Eon Production’s film series,⁷⁷ but other

⁷⁴ “FAQs,” *International Spy Museum*, 2015, <http://spymuseum.org/about/faqs/>.

⁷⁵ Julia Flynn Siler, “Malrite Executives Offer Buyout at \$10.25 a Share,” *New York Times*, August 16, 1988, sec. The Media Business.

⁷⁶ Aaron Gregg, “International Spy Museum is at a Crossroads as it Looks for a New Place to Call Home.” *Washington Post*, November 2, 2014.

⁷⁷ *Spy Guide*. International Spy Museum. Washington D.C.: House on F Street, LLC, 2014. Exhibition Brochure.

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fictional characters are also included in the exhibit.⁷⁸ Since its opening, the institution has been given a total of at least 62 awards from 31 different events in categories such as architecture, city development, graphic design, entertainment, public relations, business success, and marketing.⁷⁹ Many of the institution's early awards were received from the *Bulldog Reporter*,⁸⁰ a journal that was sponsored and distributed by Infocom Group at the time the awards were distributed and aims

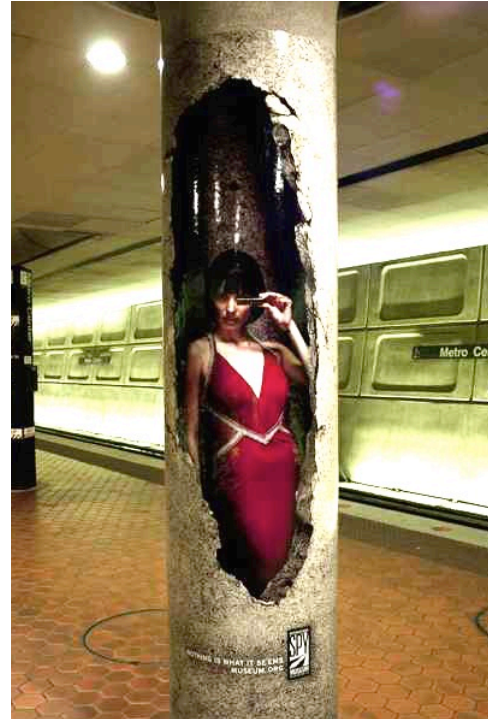


Figure 2 - Museum advertisement placed in the Washington D.C. metro.

to distribute media intelligence to marketing professionals.⁸¹ The institution has also won multiple ADDY awards, distributed by the American Advertising Federation, a nonprofit organization that uses grassroots work to “protect and promote the wellbeing of advertising” by providing marketing intelligence, honoring outstanding advertising, and promoting diversity and community.⁸²

The International Spy Museum asserts its presence throughout the tourist district of Washington D.C. through aggressive and widespread advertising campaigns. Its marketing strategy centers on the seduction of glitz and glamour, as well as the lure of mystery.

⁷⁸ “Searchable Master Script,” 109, last modified August 11, 2013, http://www.spymuseum.org/files/resources/master-script_8_13_13.pdf.

⁷⁹ “Awards,” *International Spy Museum*, 2015, <http://spymuseum.org/awards/>.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Jack O’Dwyer. “Bulldog Reporter Closes After 35 Years” *O’Dwyer’s: Inside News of Public Relations & Marketing Communications*, October 2, 2014.

⁸² American Advertising Federation Official Webpage, “About,” American Advertising Federation, 2015. <http://aaf.org>

Several advertisements portray spies in the suggestive, smooth way that they are frequently represented in films such as the *James Bond* series. One advertising campaign included a series of images of agents “hiding” in the local metro stations including men in tuxedos, and women in red slinky gowns and black cat suits. [fig. 2]⁸³ Other posters in the same location involve a coded word that the viewer must text to a certain number to decipher the encrypted message. Another advertisement allows the viewer to interact with a projection on the wall of the underground. The projection includes three people of seemingly different age, gender, and ethnicity. When one passes in front of the projection the disguises melt away, revealing that the same person is pictured in each display.⁸⁴



Figure 3 - Museum logos

These advertisements draw potential customers in and, before they have even walked by the exhibit itself, fictively place them in the role of secret agents.

The International Spy Museum has two logos, one depicting the shadow of a trench-coated figure illuminated by a triangle of light, and the other illustrating the same silhouetted figure poised for action. [fig. 3]⁸⁵ Both images also include the

institution’s name, with the word “SPY” in all capital letters, dominating the picture. The first silhouetted image harkens back to the aesthetic of film noir, specifically the film *The*

⁸³ <http://www.coloribus.com/adsarchive/prints/international-spy-museum-red-dress-14776455/>.

⁸⁴ “Spy museum metro interactive ad,” YouTube video, 0:14, from a Washington D.C. metro station, posted by “QRArts” on July 18, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rayqqKBZ_U0

⁸⁵ Courtesy of the International Spy Museum: <http://www.spymuseumstore.org/giftcards.html>.

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Third Man. [fig. 4]⁸⁶ The second logo is reminiscent of the classic James Bond film trailers that use Bond's pistol bearing body at the end of a gun barrel as a significant part of the franchise's branding. [fig. 5]⁸⁷ Additionally, these logos, along with the branding for the entire museum, use a black, white, and red color scheme, which is frequently associated with old Hollywood's black and white films and red carpets. Furthermore, the black and white theme mimics the moral simplicity the narrative of the museum presents, in which American actions are lauded as beneficial, necessary, and even heroic, while the organizations that they act against are either villified or given little attention. Within the



Figure 4 - Movie poster for *The Third Man*, a film noir piece that the International Spy Museum's logo mimics.

institution's ideology there are no shades of grey.

Events in which American intelligence agencies acted unsuccessfully or unethically are either minimized or omitted, as in the case of the American supported coups mentioned in the Introduction. Thus, the logos simultaneously strengthen the glamorous portrayal of espionage and reflect the simplistic moral angle the museum presents.

Despite the gimmicky nature of the

establishment's marketing, the museum generates a

perceived legitimacy, partially due to its location. The building itself is located in the center of downtown Washington D.C., one mile from the White House, three blocks from the

⁸⁶ Courtesy of Relato Pictures: <http://www.covershut.com/DVD-Covers/18180-The-Third-Man-1949-Front.html>

⁸⁷ . Courtesy of Eon Productions: http://vignette1.wikia.nocookie.net/jamesbond/images/f/fc/You_Only_Live_Twice_-_Gun_Barrel.jpg/revision/latest?cb=20130119011905.

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Figure 5 - *James Bond* vector logo, featured at the end of the movie trailer for *You Only Live Twice*

National Mall, and one block from the FBI and the Crime Museum, just across the street from the National Portrait Gallery. The proximity to major national landmarks, such as the National Mall, gives the impression that this museum represents the power, knowledge, and opinions of the nation. The proximity to prominent intelligence officers that work for the FBI or within the White House implies access to inside knowledge unavailable elsewhere. Finally, the proximity to the National Portrait Gallery and other Smithsonian Institution museums leads many tourists to assume that the institution is in some way associated with the prestige of the “world’s largest museum and research complex.”⁸⁸ These local factors combine to strengthen the museum’s authority. However, the more clout the museum has, the more responsibility it arguably has to present accurate and factual information, but the International Spy Museum falls short of this responsibility by selling fiction, rather than fact.

The museum takes full advantage of its location to create a sense of aura, glamour, and power. Just inside the entrance visitors watch a short film introducing them to the concept of espionage and the activities that it includes. During this video the visitors are reminded that they are in “Washington D.C., where there are more spies than any other city

⁸⁸ “About Us,” *Smithsonian Institution*, 2015, www.si.edu/about.

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in the world.”⁸⁹ This immediately instills in museumgoers a sense of excitement and adventure as they realize that they have been surrounded by this phenomenon for their entire visit to the city, and implies that they too could join the ranks of clandestine agents who are apparently roaming the streets. Visitors are primed to play out this fantasy, taking on the role of a spy throughout the museum as they engage in interactive exhibits.



Figure 6 - Museum main entrance

From the onset of the visitors' experience the "museum is about atmosphere."⁹⁰ The museum's exterior looks like an old-time movie theater. [fig. 6]⁹¹ Its name is

displayed on a marquee and a neon sign hangs vertically from the building, also announcing the museum's presence. [fig. 7]⁹² Appropriately, inside the establishment there is an exhibit dedicated to the portrayal of spies in the media that includes a fake miniature building intended to mimic a vintage cinema, causing the prototype of the theater to look remarkably like the outside of the museum itself. This outer display foreshadows the museum's reliance on old Hollywood aesthetic and thought in order to create an atmosphere of excitement, pizzazz, and nostalgia. The cinematic presentation not only implies that the information offered inside the museum has the action and thrill of a

⁸⁹ *International Spy Museum*, The Malrite Company, 2015.

⁹⁰ Robert Hanyok, "International Spy Museum," 159.

⁹¹ Courtesy of *Time Magazine*:

http://content.time.com/time/travel/cityguide/article/0,31489,1852610_1852670_1852627,00.html.

⁹² Courtesy of the International Spy Museum: <http://www.spymuseum.org/about/>

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blockbuster hit, but it also harkens back to former times. It creates a longing for an idealized history, preparing the guests to experience a similar feeling of desire. Pretending to be a spy fills visitors with nostalgia for a life, career, and adventure that they have never experienced and will likely never be able to experience, just as classic film architecture causes one to long for the imagined sophistication and moral simplicity of past eras.

Once inside the museum, the schedule created by the interior layout sets up a very controlled experience. There are six main sections of the Spy Museum that must be accessed in a certain order. The attraction begins with “Covers and Legends,”⁹³ the most interactive section. [fig. 8]⁹⁴ In this section visitors’ photos are taken on a



Figure 7 - Museum exterior

green screen and placed on a spy-themed background, similar to photo-booth attractions at amusement parks. Guests are then encouraged to take on an alias throughout the experience and complete several tests in order to assess their espionage abilities. A selection of covers, or alternate identities, is provided. Interestingly, this is not the only institution in Washington D.C. to engage their audience by assigning alternate identities.

⁹³ *Spy Guide*. International Spy Museum.

⁹⁴ Courtesy of the International Spy Museum: <http://www.spymuseum.org/about/history-mission/>.

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The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum assigns visitors identities of concentration camp victims and follows the historical account of these stories from the victims' birth until the end of the Holocaust.⁹⁵ However, unlike the identities at the Holocaust Museum, the covers at the International Spy Museum are entirely fabricated, so follow-up information is not provided regarding the activities and fate of the assumed identity. The fictional descriptions only include the name, age, ethnicity, occupation, and goals of the individual that one is impersonating. The identities are purposefully fictitious, in order to mimic the lie that espionage agents must live in order to protect themselves. In this section the museumgoers are told that they "may be asked to 'live their cover'" during any point of their experience, therefore they must be prepared to go undercover "just like an actor on stage."⁹⁶



Figure 8 - "Covers and Legends" exhibit

The next stop is "School for Spies,"⁹⁷ an area that displays small trinkets used in espionage and offers brief intellectual tests, such as identifying suspicious activity, in order to train the visitors for spy work. There is also a vault of information regarding clandestine techniques, such as "dead drops," the exchange of information or documents between two agents without raising suspicion,

⁹⁵ "Identification Cards," *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, 2015, www.ushmm.org/remember/id-cards.

⁹⁶ "Searchable Master Script," 3.

⁹⁷ *Spy Guide*. International Spy Museum.

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and quick-change disguises, like changing your posture, gait, or facial expression. Visitors are encouraged to study and practice these techniques, as well as other skills, in order to see if they “measure up” to spy standards.⁹⁸

Following “School for Spies” is “The Secret History of History,”⁹⁹ an exhibit that provides a brief history of spying throughout a chain of several small rooms decorated in the styles of the eras they discuss. This section discusses Sun Tzu’s *Art of War*, the philosophy and origins of ninjas, biblical spies including Moses and the prophet Daniel, French “spymasters” Cardinal Richelieu and Giacomo Casanova, espionage within the English Royal Court during the rule of Queen Elizabeth I, and the construction and execution of the Ancient Greeks’

Trojan Horse strategy. [fig. 9]¹⁰⁰ It also dedicates several rooms to events significant in American history, such as the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and the Cold War.



Figure 9 - The Trojan horse exhibit in "The Secret History of History" exhibit

Subsequently, there is a

display titled “Spies Among Us”¹⁰¹ that catalogues the stories of real spies, including an exhibit on celebrities who were also spies. Much of the section concentrates on spying by

⁹⁸ “Searchable Master Script,” 14.

⁹⁹ *Spy Guide*. International Spy Museum.

¹⁰⁰ Courtesy of the International Spy Museum: <http://www.spymuseum.org/exhibition-experiences/in-the-exhibition/the-secret-history-of-history/>.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

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and against the British and Americans during World War II. [fig. 10]¹⁰² One portion of this area is dedicated to cryptography and deciphering the Nazi's Enigma code, another discusses the attack on Pearl Harbor and advance warnings that the nation received about the occurrence from spies, and yet another focuses on propaganda during wartime. The exhibit ends with a discussion of the atomic bomb, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, and Soviet spies stealing scientific information from the United States.

The penultimate portion of the museum is titled "Exquisitely Evil"¹⁰³ and is dedicated to James Bond and the villains that plague him. This is an interesting choice for a museum that, only four years ago, boasted "that only 5 percent of its exhibits deal with



Figure 10 - The "Spies Among Us" exhibit

popular culture."¹⁰⁴ Villains are briefly introduced with a biography, followed by their plot to take over the world, or cause some sort of evil mayhem. Included in the display are artifacts from the *James Bond* movies, such as costumes, props, and video clips. As with the rest of the museum, the interior design of the rooms also constitutes part of the presentation. The "Exquisitely Evil" portion of the institution includes reconstructions of Bond villain dwellings and headquarters, including a volcanic lair, complete with simulated sharks that charge at visitors if they tap on the screen.

¹⁰² Courtesy of the International Spy Museum: <http://www.spymuseum.org/exhibition-experiences/in-the-exhibition/spies-among-us/>.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ John Philipp Baesler, "International Spy Museum," 139.

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“21st Century Exhibit”¹⁰⁵ is the museum’s last display, located in a small room directly outside of the gift shop. [fig. 11]¹⁰⁶ This display is one of the wordier portions of the institution. It discusses current events in espionage; specifically focusing on the threats that exist in cyberspace and the way the United States has and can deal with those potential problems. It involves film clips of the president issuing a warning regarding threats such as the ones discussed, and explores the hypothetical consequences of a terror strike to the power grid.



Figure 11 - The "21st Century Exhibit"

Each area not only contains unique subject matter, but also has a distinctive style of decoration and presentation that is displayed in the makeup of the walls, the seating, and even the ceiling. One area looks like a city street,

another resembles a movie theater, and yet another imitates an underground safe house. The actual artifacts are merely accessories to the greater visual experience of being in such a room. The objects compete for attention with lighted ceilings, war rooms, and recreations of frivolous living rooms. Nothing in the institution is purely practical. For example, as visitors ride up the elevator that initially brings them to the exhibits,

¹⁰⁵ *Spy Guide*. International Spy Museum.

¹⁰⁶ Courtesy of the International Spy Museum: <http://www.spymuseum.org/exhibition-experiences/in-the-exhibition/the-21st-century/>.

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multicolored lights flash across the walls and a booming voice granting a mission, “should you choose to accept it,”¹⁰⁷ comes over the speaker. Ultimately, the interior décor is even showier than the outer neon signs, revealing that the branding of the museum matches its own ostentatious and shallow content, and is intended solely to popularize the attraction.

This for-profit museum exploits its location to augment its legitimacy, causing an implicit association between the attraction and the prestige, power, and pedagogy surrounding it. However, the exterior of the museum is adorned with neon signs and a luminescent marquee, alluding to the commercial intentions of the institution. The decorations within the museum create multiple little worlds, comparable to movie sets, in which the visitors immerse themselves. This immersion compliments the participatory nature of the museum, creating a physical fiction in which to dispense the mental fiction of the glamorization of espionage, which is contained in the displays and discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

¹⁰⁷ *International Spy Museum*, The Malrite Company, 2015.

Chapter Two: Content

Doctor Know: Competition between fact and fiction in the museum content

The aesthetic of the museum's design and architecture is immediately attractive to the visitor, igniting interest and providing entertainment by the spectacle it creates. However, the content perceived and presented as factual comes not from the elaborate constructions, but from the items and labels provided in the museum. The wonderland of flashing lights and imagined war rooms is built to encompass informational content, however the content is insufficient and panders to the aforementioned stereotypes. This aspect of the museum will be examined and critiqued in the following chapter.

Once the artifacts are weeded out of the museum's visual fray of interior decoration, it becomes clear that the majority of objects are spy props, miniature cameras, microphones, and weapons that were once used in the field. As Baesler notes, "the exhibit does not find a way to convey that these gadgets are more than toys."¹⁰⁸ The content of the museum provides an incredibly shallow look at the extended history of spying, the internal structure and positions in espionage organizations, or personal experiences of actual spies.

Despite the focus on fictional spies in the *James Bond* series, there is some information regarding real espionage agents in the museum. However, there is only one brief label provided per person, and the exhibits that focus on individuals are few and far between. The typical label for such an object is three to four sentences, providing a generic overview of said spy. For example, one three-sentence label names Ursula Kuczynski as "one of the most accomplished female spies in history," but the only information given

¹⁰⁸ John Philipp Baesler, "International Spy Museum," 139.

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about her achievements is that she “provided Russia with information about U.S. efforts to build an atomic bomb.” There is no information provided regarding her time in England, Switzerland, and China, her work in propaganda, or her similarly clandestine family.¹⁰⁹ Explanations for other agents are similarly vague, which exemplifies the International Spy Museum’s tendency to oversimplify and sugarcoat the history of espionage. Even facts that are both interesting and educational are ignored in favor of clichés that have been imposed by the media.

The agents displayed in the museum are reduced to two-dimensional men and women of mystery. The exhibits prefer to use the lure of the unknown as an excuse to eliminate opportunities to display truth and knowledge rather than acknowledge the real stories, obstacles, and fears, of spies. For example, many suffered lasting physical and psychological trauma as a direct result of their job, but no such complexity is implied in the exhibits’ content.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, many jobs associated with espionage that are not in the clandestine field are completely overlooked. Doctors, computer scientists, engineers, lawyers, librarians, and teachers all play important roles in the intelligence organizations, yet are never mentioned in the museum.¹¹¹

There are several cases in which the Spy Museum explicitly chooses to include “spy-lore” rather than displaying factual exhibits. In these instances, the displays dispense frequently told stories that are related to celebrities’ brushes with espionage, but that ultimately have been disproven. One of the most obvious instances of this is seen in the

¹⁰⁹ Bernard A. Cook, *Women and War: A Historical Encyclopedia from Antiquity to the Present*, (Santa Barbara, Calif: ABC-CLIO, 2006).

¹¹⁰ Ted Gup, *Book of Honor: Covert Lives and Classified Deaths at the CIA*.

¹¹¹ “Careers and Internships,” *Central Intelligence Agency*, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/careers/opportunities/cia-jobs>.

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exhibit on William Shakespeare, which displays several images of Shakespeare's work in order to explore the theory that the great English playwright did not author his own pieces. The information discusses the hypothesis that Francis Bacon, a writer and a spy for Queen Elizabeth, "authored Shakespeare's plays and embedded coded messages in the text."¹¹² After a brief overview of the evidence for this theory the label claims that cryptologist couple William and Elizebeth Friedman "thoroughly debunked any evidence that Francis Bacon wrote Shakespeare's plays."¹¹³ The authorship of Shakespeare's plays and poems has been disputed for centuries¹¹⁴ and recent scholars still generate debate assessing not only who wrote his plays but also how many authors were involved in their creation. However, as correctly stated in the International Spy Museum, in 1957 the Friedmans examined claims regarding the authorship and cryptography of the literature, concluding, "as far as the suppliers of cryptographic evidence are concerned, we neither respect their methods nor accept their conclusions,"¹¹⁵ thus proving the inaccuracy of the cryptographic theory. In light of this information, the Shakespeare exhibit is largely irrelevant. On the other hand, Francis Bacon, who was in fact involved with cryptography and espionage work,¹¹⁶ is not mentioned in any other qualitative way throughout the museum, though a portrait of him is displayed in the "A Secret History of History" portion of the exhibit along with the quote "Oh, let me live and all the secrets of our camp I'll show."¹¹⁷ Therefore, the information presented in the museum avoids relaying the story of Bacon, an important

¹¹² "Searchable Master Script," 77.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ William and Elizebeth Friedman, *The Shakespearean Ciphers Examined: An Analysis of Cryptographic Systems Used as Evidence that Some Author Other Than Shakespeare Wrote the Plays Commonly Attributed to Him*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1957). xvi.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 280.

¹¹⁶ Michael C. Clody, "Deciphering the Language of Nature: Cryptography, Secrecy, and Alterity in Francis Bacon," *Configurations* 19, no. 1, (Winter 2011): 117-142.

¹¹⁷ "Searchable Master Script," 76.

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espionage agent, in favor of relaying the story of Shakespeare's cryptography, which is clearly proclaimed as false both in scholarly literature and in the label of the exhibit itself. The display is blatantly included to namedrop and add a little extra fame to the exhibit.

This is not the only time that the museum goes out of its way to include a famous, yet largely irrelevant, person in one of its exhibits. A portion of the museum includes the story of Julia Child, a famous chef who worked for the OSS during World War II, before pursuing her culinary passions.¹¹⁸ Again, despite the hype that surrounds the story, Child herself stated that she "was not a spy, only a lowly file clerk."¹¹⁹ This quote is included in a short passage on a label under the heading "An Appetite for Adventure,"¹²⁰ a title which contradicts the quote itself. Although Child did work domestically for the American Secret Intelligence's Office of Strategic Services (OSS) under Director William Donovan, beginning as a Junior Research Assistant and rising to an Administrative Assistant, her duties were primarily office tasks such as "securing office furnishings, hiring clerical help, and initiating procedures related to financing, office security, and supplies."¹²¹ Many important and confidential documents passed through her hands, however she was only responsible for "organiz[ing] the system for numbering and cross referencing them,"¹²² a task that was incredibly important, but which she found horribly dull. She eventually underwent training including lectures, movies, ship evacuations, and gas mask procedures in order to prepare to be stationed in India. However, though her placement's purpose was to aid with the clerical side of "guerilla warfare against the Japanese,"¹²³ as a civilian Child spent

¹¹⁸ Jennet Conant, *A Covert Affair: Julia Child and Paul Child in the OSS*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011).

¹¹⁹ "Searchable Master Script," 144.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Noel Fitch, *Appetite for Life: The Biography of Julia Child*, (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 85.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 99.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 93.

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afternoons enjoying the 80 degree weather while playing tennis and golf or socializing with sophisticates and officers.¹²⁴ Child's husband, Paul,¹²⁵ was creating war rooms for the OSS at this time¹²⁶ and Julia Child's friend, ex-journalist Betty MacDonald was assigned to Morale Operations, where she distributed black propaganda behind enemy lines to dishearten the opposition.¹²⁷ However, neither of these more important yet less famous OSS agents is mentioned in the museum.

Despite obvious problems of error, overstatement, and sensationalism present in these stories of famous "spies," the institution chooses to include them in the exhibits. This decision is a blatant attempt to relate espionage with worldwide fame or celebrity culture, thereby juxtaposing two concepts that are in fact paradoxical. Spies must avoid attention in order to effectively deceive the target and retrieve the desired information. Therefore, it would be nearly impossible for someone in the public eye to be successful in clandestine endeavors. However, in order to play up the glamorous stereotype of spying to the fullest extent, these two contradictory job descriptions are presented hand-in-hand at the International Spy Museum.

The perpetuation of the James Bond-style myth of espionage as a smooth, glitzy career, even goes so far as to include a short film titled, "My James Bond Moment: Times When Real Spies Felt That They Were In The Movies."¹²⁸ This title claims similarities between spy work and the glamorous fictionalization of it in pop culture, while simultaneously recognizing their differences. The introductory portion of the video

¹²⁴ Ibid., 83, 89, 93-95, 99, 124.

¹²⁵ Jennet Conant, *A Covert Affair*, 1.

¹²⁶ Julia Child, *My Life in France*, edited by Alex Prud'homme, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 12.

¹²⁷ Noel Fitch, *Appetite for Life*, 95.

¹²⁸ "Searchable Master Script," 213.

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describes “day-to-day operations of real-world intelligence officers” as “mostly mundane,” but claims “every field operative can recall that one time where they felt like they were in a movie.”¹²⁹ The footage then goes on to show intelligence officers recounting times that they came up with quick lies while faced with the enemy, parachuted out of airplanes, bugged offices at high-class parties, and escaped detection under intricate disguises. This portion of the museum is interestingly paradoxical. It is explicitly stated in the introduction of the video that the life of spies is not as thrilling as it is usually portrayed, and can even be boring at times. Intelligence officer Valerie Plame begins her segment of the movie denouncing the myths of James Bond, saying “none of my Bond moments ever happened with me wearing a sequined dress, or in a casino.”¹³⁰ Despite these arguments, the stories told during the film are filled with risk and glamour, emphasized by ominous background music and staged photographs recreating the officers’ stories. These factors combine in such a way that the visitor “might find themselves...tricked by the exhibits on display”¹³¹ because this video, in addition to the overall atmosphere of the museum, contradicts the notion that spying could ever be “mundane” and seemingly solidifies the allure of espionage with real agents’ testimonies.

Although the museum is saturated with fiction, some of the most interesting aspects of the institution are the several items that originated in stories about spies and were then brought to life by actual engineers, scientists, and agents, for use in the intelligence field. For example, the museum asserts that the CIA created facial recognition technology

¹²⁹ *International Spy Museum*, The Malrite Company, 2015.

¹³⁰ *International Spy Museum*, The Malrite Company, 2015.

¹³¹ Michelle Henning, *Museums, Media and Cultural Theory*, (New York: Open University Press, 2006), 86.

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“after seeing Max Zorin use facial-recognition technology...in *A View To Kill*.”¹³² This association, which is temporally reversed in regards to the usual course of inspiration, furthers the efforts to blur the line between real and make-believe. The creativeness drawn from imagined circumstances and used to yield real life results strengthens the illusion that the fictional circumstances are, in fact, truthful.

“Time to die, Mr. Bond,” reads the wall leading towards “Exquisitely Evil: 50 Years of Bond Villains,” the penultimate exhibit of the museum. This quote fills the museumgoers with excitement because, despite high probability of Mr. Bond’s seemingly imminent demise in almost every situation he is in, the audience knows that it will not come to fruition. James Bond is immortal. Despite the 352 murders that Bond commits over the course of his 22 films and the 1299 murders that occur overall,¹³³ he always escapes by some combination of cunning, physicality, and intellectual prowess. This fantasy completely erases the realities of spying, where many agents are killed in the line of duty. It raises Bond to an almost godlike status, and this view of him has expanded beyond the physical implications of not dying, to the metaphysical legacy and following he has left in popular culture. Bond’s character rotates through actors and plotlines, emerging with a new installment of the Bond series for each generation. Therefore, not only is the character himself eternal, but the idea that he presents and the stories Fleming tells are constantly reinstated and reimagined for each generation. The mural in the International Spy Museum reminds the museumgoer of Bond’s immortality and is a direct contradiction to the reality of the many men and women who have been killed in the line of clandestine

¹³² “Searchable Master Script,” 190, last modified August 11, 2013, http://www.spymuseum.org/files/resources/master-script_8_13_13.pdf.

¹³³ Simon Rogers, “James Bond Bodycount: How Many People Died in each Film?.” *The Guardian*, October 5, 2012, sec. Datablog.

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duty. It leads the viewer to compare these real life espionage agents to the fictional immortality of Bond, and thus attribute an invincible and untouchable status to them.

Ian Fleming purposely engineered this common man's attraction to, and desire for, James Bond's life. The author had a specific purpose in the nomenclature of his protagonist related to the ability of the audience to identify with him. The name "James Bond" was chosen by Fleming because it was "extremely dull,"¹³⁴ taken from the author of an ornithology book titled *Birds of the West Indies*.¹³⁵ He claimed that he wanted to create "an uninteresting man to whom things happen."¹³⁶ In essence, he was setting up the Western public, specifically males, to identify with James Bond and exercise escapism through his situations. The International Spy Museum continues and generalizes this perspective, going one step further to provide a space for one to escape from the world around them.

Many of these issues of fact versus fiction, intentional warping of the truth, the relation of the visitor to exhibit material, and the myth of impenetrability, coalesce in the ultimate area of the museum. The final exhibit is titled "21st Century: Weapons of Mass Disruption" and focuses on what would happen if we encountered "cyber-attacks against North America's electrical grids."¹³⁷ The information included in this portion of the attraction imagines the consequences of an attack on the electrical system of the United States, including floods of sewage, struggles for fresh food and water, elimination of avenues for communication, and economic disaster. Despite the technology-centered decor of this room and the suggestion that we will learn something about digital attacks, the scenarios discussed in the exhibit are physical and primarily hypothetical in nature.

¹³⁴ Joshua Rothman. "Lunch with Ian Fleming." *The New Yorker* (November 9, 2012).

¹³⁵ James Bond, *Birds of the West Indies*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1936).

¹³⁶ Joshua Rothman. "Lunch with Ian Fleming."

¹³⁷ "Searchable Master Script," 218.

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Additionally, this exhibit incorporates film artifacts from *Skyfall*, the most recent Bond film, because the villain in the film is a cyberterrorist.¹³⁸ The incorporation of cinema in the display distracts from the seriousness of the issue. The exhibit focuses specifically on the consequences of a power shut down, but does not address the threat of informational theft or manipulation, a recent tactic frequently used in espionage.

The results of an electrical blackout are undesirable and potentially devastating, but there is a glaringly obvious hole in the final exhibit's content. The topic of cyber-attacks is not substantially addressed. In many respects such attacks are some of the most dangerous threats to our security in the modern age, both as a country and as individuals. Cyber-attacks and terrorism are constantly present in current events, posing a very real threat to the stability of our society. Despite the significance of this most modern form of espionage to the everyday lives of the museumgoers, the institution practically eliminates this topic from their repertoire. There are only two mentions of non-fiction cyber-attacks in the museum, and the citizens of the United States are not the targets in either of them. One instance recounts the "Stuxnet cyberworm" that the "good guys," referring to the "the West,"¹³⁹ used against Iran. The other is the 2007 cyber-attacks by Russia on Estonia which are briefly mentioned in the Exquisitely Evil section of the museum. However, the Russia incident is juxtaposed with the actions of Bond villain Boris in *GoldenEye*, who can hack his way into any computer in the world, thus throwing it into an informal, and less threatening, light.

Recently, cyber warfare has been used against the United States by a group called the "Guardians of Peace" in the backlash to the production of Sony Pictures' *The Interview*, a

¹³⁸ *Spy Guide*. International Spy Museum.

¹³⁹ "Searchable Master Script," 222.

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comedy about an assassination plot targeting Kim Jong-un, the Supreme Leader of North Korea. The country itself has denied involvement in the attack, but the United States government has asserted that they were behind it.¹⁴⁰ During this attack the Sony computers were hacked into and rendered unusable, the confidentiality of details regarding emails and personal information about those in the entertainment business were compromised, and unreleased films and scripts were distributed. Coincidentally, one of the items the hackers leaked was the script for *Spectre*, the next *James Bond* film. These actions convinced Sony to limit release of *The Interview* and embarrassed many of Sony's high profile employees.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, it showed how easy it would be to access personal information of any American citizen. However, despite this threat, the tactics and the country most likely involved in the incident are not addressed in the museum. North Korea is discussed in detail during the Exquisitely Evil exhibit because it plays a prominent role in the 2002 Bond film *Die Another Day*, but the country is not mentioned even once in a non-fictional manner throughout the entire museum. This trivializes North Korea's threat to America by reducing the country to the status of a fictional villain, ultimately short-sighting the visitor to the danger that the nation poses.

Possibly even more problematic and relevant to the American people is the use of hacking and cyber espionage by the United States government against their own citizens, specifically as revealed in the case of Edward Snowden and the National Security Agency (NSA) scandal. This incident occurred when the American press confirmed a leak that the U.S. government was essentially spying on its own citizens through mass surveillance and

¹⁴⁰ Michael Schmidt, "F.B.I. Says Little Doubt North Korea Hit Sony." *New York Times*, January 7, 2015, sec. Business Day.

¹⁴¹ Mark Seal, "An Exclusive Look at Sony's Hacking Saga." *Vanity Fair* (March, 2015).

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metadata, or data about data. It was revealed that the NSA was collecting and tracking phone records and Internet browsing and search histories. Snowden claims that the NSA has access to emails, passwords, phone records, and credit cards of the American people. This goes directly against the ideology presented by the Spy Museum, and therefore is omitted completely from the repertoire of the institution.¹⁴²

The Snowden incident critically re-frames the glamorous image of espionage that is presented in the International Spy Museum. The museum points to patriotism as a driving force behind the actions of most spies, stating in the opening video that espionage agents can be motivated by money, ego, or blackmail, but most engage in the field due to their overwhelming sense of patriotism and duty to their country.¹⁴³ This simplistic ideological assertion encourages the audience to identify with spies immediately, while also encouraging them to place their trust in American security and clandestine organizations, such as the CIA, FBI, and NSA. The belief in and devotion to America and the ethics of its aims provides a motivation for visitors' role-play and drives their journey through the museum. The NSA scandal calls this uncritical sense of patriotism into question by revealing the country's use of espionage to target their citizens in the name of protecting them. Although the government supposedly carried out the spying exposed by Snowden in order to maintain national security, it involved approaching American citizens as possible threats. The International Spy Museum omits information about this situation in order to continue the illusion of the public's power over clandestine agents.

¹⁴² Luke Harding, *The Snowden Files: The Inside Story of the World's Most Wanted Man*, (New York: Vintage, 2014).

¹⁴³ *International Spy Museum*, The Malrite Company, 2015.

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This focus on American nationalism is carried on throughout the entire institution, inhibiting the creation of an international perspective. Ultimately, though the name of the museum is the International Spy Museum, the institution itself does very little to offer a worldly perspective on spying and the nature of spying. Great Britain, Russia, and the United States of America are the three countries that dominate the narrative of the Spy Museum. This is fitting, considering that those are the only three countries represented on the Board of Directors. The leadership for the Spy Museum is primarily American, consisting of only one British director, and one Russian director. The events addressed in the exhibits also focus around not only the activities of these three countries' espionage organizations, but solely on activity that has taken place within the Western world. There is a strong emphasis on World War II and the Cold War. Africa, South America, and Australia are completely eliminated from the narrative, and despite spying's origins in China and India, the continent of Asia is only discussed in a limited capacity, save for the exhibits on Russia.

This portrayal perfectly mimics the classic depiction of a spy in popular culture today. Seventy-six percent of characters in American media are white, and very few non-white characters are main characters.¹⁴⁴ The museum's focus on the United States, Great Britain, and Russia reinforces the media's myth that only white people in primarily white countries can be spies. The museum is aware of this limitation in their collection and recently hosted an event titled "The Role of African Americans in Intelligence Operations" that examined blacks' involvement in events such as the Revolutionary War, the

¹⁴⁴ Stacy L. Smith et al. "Race/Ethnicity in 500 Popular Films: Is the Key to Diversifying Cinematic Content Held in the Hand of the Black Director." *Np: Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism* (2013).

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Underground Railroad, and the Civil War, as well as in more modern situations.¹⁴⁵ This is clearly a step in the right direction. However, in order to truly do the subject justice this material ought to be placed in and expanded upon in the permanent exhibit. Furthermore, all groups should be represented in the institution for the world does not only exist in black and white.

An examination of the informational material of International Spy Museum makes it clear that the attraction's ultimate goal is revenue, not didacticism. As seen by the sparse content, the International Spy Museum is a misnomer. A significant portion of the museum's content is devoted to displaying fiction, and though the exhibit displays historical artifacts, pertinent and thorough labels do not support them. Neither these objects nor the information accompanying them is the central focus of the museum. Therefore, the museum is more similar to amusement parks or popular commercial museums, such as Barnum's Museum or Ripley's Believe It Or Not!, which exist primarily to gain fame, reputation, and revenue, than it is to more serious, philanthropic museums, such as the Smithsonian Museums, which exist primarily to give factual information to the public. The institution would not be labeled as a museum if it had not self-identified as one in the first place. Furthermore, as previously discussed, the title is at fault in the use of the word "international" because it only discusses events pertaining to Western culture and politics. Perhaps a more apt title would be "The Western Spy Attraction," "The Western Spy Experience," or "The Western Spy-tacular," due to the spectacle created by the "museum."

¹⁴⁵ "The Role of African Americans in Intelligence Operations," *International Spy Museum*, 2015, <http://www.spymuseum.org/calendar/detail/the-role-of-african-americans-in-intelligence-operations/2015-02-25/>.

Chapter Three

On The Museum's Secret Service: Interaction and role of the visitor in the museum

Although the International Spy Museum's aesthetic and content strongly influence the message the institution presents, what has the greatest impact on visitors and sets this exhibit apart from traditional museums is its heavy reliance on exhibit-visitor interaction. The attraction is engineered so the museumgoer cannot gain the full experience without physically participating in a portion of the displays. This chapter considers the role of the museumgoer in the institution and how the interaction between the two, through physical tasks, the museum's soundscape, supplemental activities, and first-person performance, gives greater meaning to the museum and its ideology as a whole.



Figure 12 - A child pretends to detonate a bomb in "Exquisitely Evil: 50 Years of James Bond Villains."

The museum not only reinforces myths regarding espionage through the material provided at the exhibits, but also further develops the fantasy by treating visitors like agents in said mythical spy world. In

addition to providing a misleading selection of information, the institution constructs situations in which visitors actually feel and experience the supposed truth of the myths. The museum is a hands-on experience with interactive elements as part of each display, shifting the museumgoers' attention away from labels and objects to physical activities and

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mental puzzles. This form of entertainment operates so effectively that “the visitor’s body replaces the museum artifact as the thing that is examined.”¹⁴⁶ The visitor to the museum is not simply an audience member, but instead is a living, breathing part of the exhibit, taking on feats of intelligence, strength, and agility while walking, hanging, and crawling through the museum. [fig. 12]¹⁴⁷ All such tests are optional, of course, but they are also one of the primary attractions of the museum.

Even when the exhibits are not specifically interactive, the museum experience is still playful and informal, a dynamic that diminishes the seriousness of the issues discussed. At all points of the experience there is background music or video dialogue playing, which robs the attraction of the usual sacredness of the silence of museums and frees children from hushed voices, allowing visitors to feel comfortable with the hands-on nature of the majority of the displays. The constant sound establishes a norm of noise and erases the anxiety many would have of breaking the societal formality of quietness, fostering an atmosphere that is more similar to a playground or an arcade than a research facility. Ultimately, this heightens visitors’ excitement because others’ reactions can be heard, inciting constant wonder as to what coming attractions have caused exclamation. The sonic responses cause an anticipation that makes visitors more likely to skip over the less flashy and more informative displays. Additionally, others’ reactions discourage the need for personal reflection on the exhibits by creating a noisy distraction. One’s own ideas and conclusions drawn from the displays are frequently tainted by the overheard opinions of other visitors, further diminishing opportunities for contemplation and critical thought.

¹⁴⁶ Michelle Henning, *Museums, Media and Cultural Theory*, 83

¹⁴⁷ Courtesy of the International Spy Museum: <http://www.spymuseum.org/exhibition-experiences/exquisitely-evil/murderous-monopolists/>.

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To enhance the visitors' feeling that they are part of a movie, there is background music playing at every point during the experience, feeding the imagination and fabricating an alternate environment. This detail subtly manipulates time in the museum, specifically in "The Secret History of History" portion. Each room has an appropriate track paired with it, fife and drum corps for the Revolutionary War room, suspenseful diminished chords in the Red Scare room, etc., which creates a breach of reality for the guest. Not only do they then feel that they are the star of their own important world-saving mission, but they also are given the impression that such thrilling fantasy is a part of the life of a normal spy. Even the back elevator, which looks free of bells and whistles upon first inspection, starts playing the *Mission Impossible* theme song once the doors shut and it starts moving. The atmosphere this artistic choice creates suspends time and alters space and place, causing one to easily forget that they are in the middle of Washington D.C.'s Penn Quarter.

The interaction transcends the museum and encourages the visitor to continue the experience once they leave the establishment. There are a couple of exhibits that teach the viewer how to execute a task of espionage, but the resources to compete said tasks are not available in the museum. The museumgoer must continue the experience beyond the physical walls of the institution in order to have complete understanding. One such exhibit is a small sign placed next to an assortment of hidden cameras that describes a step-by-step process by which to make your own microdot, a small image that can be hidden in postcards, letters, and newspapers. Information such as this litters the museum and further convinces visitors that they could easily assume the role of a spy.

Additionally, visitors are encouraged to utilize several stations throughout the museum that allow one to share material that they have created with their family and

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friends. Visitors can “Villify” themselves with the “VillifyMe” app as part of the Exquisitely Evil exhibit. The app allows one to take a picture of themselves and then place it on the body of a James Bond villain. Once various aspects of the avatar are customized the user may create an “evil lair” in which their avatar dwells. These lairs can be personalized by adding items such as a swimming pool filled with sharks, a giant golden globe, or an army of minions. Once the structure is fully constructed it, along with the “villified” avatar, may be emailed to yourself, your family, or your friends.

This app is the glamorization of espionage at the most basic level. The avatars are unable to do anything besides walk around their lairs and, though the lairs are rated in categories such as security and style, none of the items placed in the lairs have an executable function. This game completely strips espionage of all action and solely presents the aesthetic side of the field. In this game the lure of appearance initially attracts the player, serves as the only focus of the activity, and is the only end result. Furthermore, the entire purpose of creating this world is to share it with others who will also view it, thus establishing the cartoon images of visitors as the reference point that many have for the museum. These images may be the only lasting object that one may take from the museum, so they become what people remember from the institution. Such a practice only advances the initial manipulation of reality that the museum establishes.

As if the interaction within the museum is not enough, guests are also offered expensive “interactive spy experiences” in which they are fully immersed in artificial simulations of espionage. The two activities offered cost an extra fifteen dollars and can be purchased separately at the entrance to the museum. However, different combinations of general admission and the two experiences can also be bought at different prices. The

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experiences offered are “Operation Spy,” an assignment in which “decrypting secret audio conversations, penetrating and escaping from a high-security compound, [and] interrogating a suspect agent are all part of [the] mission” and “Spy in the City,” a GPS guided tour discovering “history, mystery, and landmarks” around Washington D.C. while “uncover[ing] the world of ruthless spies.”¹⁴⁸ These items bring in more revenue for the museum and also further convince the customers that they are equipped to handle whatever they may encounter from the clandestine field.

For a fee, the institution also offers lectures and events held in a separate venue. The lecturers include authors, consultants, prominent leaders in security agencies, and former spies. In February 2015 the museum held a series of seminars titled “50 Shades of Espionage: Hot Spies, Cool Cases.” The program focused on “sexpionage,” “Romeo spies,” “honey pots,” and “spies who used the bedroom as their base of operations.”¹⁴⁹ The sessions told stories of five different spies, Christine Keeler, Dmitri Bystrolyotov, Betty Thorpe Pack, and Karl and Hana Koecher, and their use of seduction in the name of clandestine endeavors.¹⁵⁰ However, besides the general focus on sexuality, the program had no similarities or relation to the popular book and movie *50 Shades of Grey*. One can only assume that the use of this title is intended to increase the “sexiness” of the lecture series and, again, relate it to the glamour of film, fame, and success. Additionally, the name was taken from a book that is highly controversial due to the sexual power dynamic between the main characters and the controlling way that the female character is

¹⁴⁸ “Spy in the City,” *International Spy Museum*, 2015, <http://www.spymuseum.org/exhibition-experiences/interactive-spy-experiences/spy-in-the-city/>.

¹⁴⁹ “Spy Seminar Series: Hot Spies/Cool Cases: 50 Shades of Espionage,” *International Spy Museum*, 2015, <http://www.spymuseum.org/calendar/detail/spy-seminar-series/2015-02-04/>.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

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treated.¹⁵¹ This is not dissimilar to the sexual and depraved portrayal of women in the Bond series. The typical formula for a “Bond girl” is a “girl” who is a “troubling enigma”¹⁵² having sexual relations with Bond, and ultimately “submit[ing] to the regime of the phallus in the ordering of her desires.”¹⁵³ [fig. 13]¹⁵⁴ Through this interaction “Bond functions as an agent of the patriarchal order.”¹⁵⁵ Thus, the lecture series’ title also reinforces the misogyny ingrained in most portrayals of female spies in popular culture. The museum’s choice to represent itself through this inherently misogynist reference further complicates the morality of the museum, by continuing its disregard and objectification of marginalized

groups of people, and also exemplifies its emulation of popular culture and the glamour of spies.

At its best, according to Michele Henning, interactivity is used in museums to “turn ‘unfocused visitor-consumers’ into ‘interested, engaged and



Figure 13 - Movie poster for the first *James Bond* film, *Dr. No*, depicting the misogynistic portrayal of women as interchangeable and sexually available for Bond.

¹⁵¹ Anna Carline, *Shades of Grey - Domestic and Sexual Violence Against Women: Law Reform and Society*, (New York: Routledge, 2014).

¹⁵² Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott, *Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero*, (New York: Methuen, 1987), 115.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹⁵⁴ Courtesy of Eon Productions: <http://www.wellesleycinema.co.uk/features/a-short-guide-to-filmic-firsts-c110862.html>.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 116.

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informed technological citizens.”¹⁵⁶ However, the Spy Museum’s audience engagement is not executed in a way that achieves this ideal. A key part of espionage is the fear and uncertainty that is inherent when traveling behind enemy lines. Because the Spy Museum is a controlled environment, where the biggest fear relates to having to wait in line too long, activities such as crawling through the air ducts or deactivating a “bomb” hardly give the guests an accurate portrayal of the stresses accompanying covert operations.

Furthermore, the less stomach-turning, adrenaline-pumping side of spying that involves research, analysis, and monotony is never experienced. The disconnect between fantasy and reality is forgivable to a point, due to entertainment purposes and an attempt to hold the visitors’ attention, yet there should be an acknowledgment and explanation of the omission. Such a disclaimer is not provided.

Museum visitors pretend to be secret agents who are trained physically and mentally in the art of deception, yet the irony is that the museum practices this same art. Unlike the interactive science exhibits discussed by Henning, the Spy Museum’s material is of a historical nature. Therefore, the experiential elements of the institution serve a different purpose and have an altered relationship with the presented material. Scientific principles are easy to accurately demonstrate because they inherently produce the same results. The current events that become history, on the other hand, are unique because their outcomes cannot be predicted. One can never be sure what to expect, especially in such a fast-paced career as spying. This causes the reenactments of various aspects of clandestine missions to be unrealistic and unhelpful when trying to educate a group of people. This technique strengthens the façade that spy work is a series of fun adventures

¹⁵⁶ Michelle Henning, *Museums, Media and Cultural Theory*, 147.

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that are accomplished smoothly and give you the “cool” factor. Omission is a lie and the less glamorous aspects of espionage are omitted from the Spy Museum’s repertoire, therefore the museum is lying to its guests as it teaches them about lying.

Thus, though the museum is almost entirely focused on relating the visitor to the experience of a secret agent, it is simultaneously misleading them about the reality of being a victim of espionage. This theme is echoed throughout the tunnel covered walls of the museum as spying is presented as a form of escapism at the cost of addressing pertinent concerns that are apparent when presented with the actuality of the average American’s relationship to espionage. The visitors’ mental experiences through the spy museum are just as controlled as their physical ones. The carefully structured blueprint of the building guides viewers through the museum, allowing them to go in only one direction, along one path. The mental journey mimics this control as visitors wind through patriotism, nostalgia, sexuality, and glamour, and end up feeling simultaneously secure in their ability to execute acts of espionage and safe from being the victim of it.

Conclusion

There is nothing wrong with creating a space where visitors, including families and children, can “play spy” for entertainment. However, it is inaccurate to present this establishment as an educational facility. By categorizing the institution as a “museum,” the founders attempt to present information and experience within the institution as fact. My research has shown that this is not always, or even often, the case. Furthermore, museums have a heavy hand in the creation of national memory. The stories that are told become the stories that are retold, even if they are inaccurate. The reality can get lost completely under layers of fantasy. This is a societal pattern that is clearly demonstrated at the International Spy Museum. The lasting impact of the only museum “in the world to provide a global perspective on” spying is a warped collective memory that interferes with historical lessons and holds us back as a society and a culture.

The Malrite Company has expertly engineered the creation of the International Spy Museum in order to simultaneously give it legitimacy and appeal. The location of the exhibit strengthens its platform by associating it with the academic rigor of the Smithsonian Institution, the power of the United States federal government, and the patriotism of the nation’s capitol. The building alone is a spectacle, due to its classically cinematic exterior architecture and its elaborate and versatile interior design. The for-profit company combines these factors to create an eye-catching establishment that immerses the visitor in a glamorous spy journey from the very start of their experience with the attraction.

The aforementioned aesthetic attracts visitors to the museum and the interaction discussed in Chapter 3 keeps them going through it, leaving the already sparse content,

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addressed in Chapter 2, with no portion of the visitor's attention. The objects in the museum are presented more like toys than lethal weapons, and the spies that used them receive little attention. A large portion of the content focuses on famous and fictional spies, at the expense of thought provoking topics and substantive information. The visitor is robbed of the educational experience the institution's mission promises and instead is spoon-fed a sexy and mythical portrayal of espionage agents.

The attention museumgoers typically give to the said educational experience is instead allocated to the bodily experience derived from their interaction with the museum. Visitor's senses are overwhelmed with sonic, visual, and tactile information as they participate in the fantasy covert operations constructed by the displays. This distracts from the limited pedagogical material and forces the visitor to live the supposed truth behind the information the institution presents. Conclusively, visitors to the International Spy Museum are empowered by their completed "spy training" and the belief fostered by the museum that clandestine operations are glamorous. This role-play completes the role reversal previously discussed, by convincing the museumgoers that they themselves are capable of becoming an intelligence officer.

From the beginning of the museum, when visitors are asked to choose a name and back-story associated with the character they assume for the rest of the tour, fiction and play-acting are an enormous part of the Spy Museum's intended experience. What the institution's visitors may not realize is that the fiction transcends their own role-play and infiltrates the entire museum presentation. Therefore, although the International Spy Museum is undeniably fun, and commercially successful because of this, the institution's focus on interactivity detracts from the more important educational goals of the museum,

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reinforcing and further distributing misinformation and stereotypes about espionage agents. This misinformation and stereotyping causes people to believe that they themselves could become spies, while it ignores the possibility that they may be the victims of espionage. Ultimately the warping of facts at the International Spy Museum inhibits the visitor's ability to learn from the past and build a better future.

*"I could be a spy."
- Overheard while leaving the International Spy Museum*

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