

The Gaze Across the Aisle: Architecture, Merchandising, and Social Roles at Marshall Field and Company, 1892 to 1914

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Abstract

Marshall Field and Company was a cultural and commercial anchor in Chicago's downtown area known as 'The Loop.' By 1914, it had expanded into the largest department store in the world at that time. This article illustrates Field's as a cultural and retail institution of artistry and popular education through a trope I term "the drama of shopping." Using merchandising strategies adapted from the aesthetic movement, Field's produced the drama of shopping with social and cultural implications about class, gender, and race in three ways: First, the architecture of the store served as a carefully designed theatrical space for seeing and being seen in the drama of shopping. The departmentalization and arrangement of merchandise by degree of expense and luxury differentiated and sorted Field's clientele according to their social status and what they could afford to buy. Elite shoppers who purchased luxuries did so under the gaze of other shoppers, who watched from across the aisle. Second, Field's merchandising and marketing followed trends of the new profession of domestic science. It served as the script for the drama of shopping, through which customers negotiated the cultural hierarchy of artistry and new technology. Third, merchandising resembled the subculture of the aesthetic movement, but without its controversial gender roles, while it privileged predominant Anglo-American culture and rendered other social groups, including people of color, invisible. Today, the social and cultural traditions of American department-store retail that began in the gilded age remain present as new forms of retail marketing. In turn the gendered cultural fences that divide retail patrons remain in the present day, though with different names and locations.

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Neil Harris (1990) observed that in the two decades before World War I the knowledge most Americans had about art and style came from three places where artifacts were displayed: museums, worlds' fairs, and department stores. In Chicago, commercial magnets and city officials in the Chicago Commercial Club (CCC) built commercial and cultural institutions like banks, museums, libraries, theaters, and concert halls, located in the urban center, known as "The Loop." The museums, department stores, and even the street were places where mostly elite and middle-class individuals came to browse and learn by looking at displays of artifacts, as well as at each other, creating the drama of seeing and being seen. The department store Marshall Field and Company (Field's) was unique in that it marketed to all classes, creating a complicated drama of wishing, envy, and desire among mostly women shoppers from the upper, middle, and working classes. Shoppers seeking self-improvement watched other shoppers purchase luxuries that, perhaps, they could not afford. Thus, the drama of shopping in The Loop is characterized as a vast "promenade of huge glass windows in which mannequins stood as mistresses of taste to teach people how to embody their secret longings for status in things of great price" (Duncan, 1965, p. 116). Such "secret longings" were part of every shopper's experience, for desire and envy were present, whether shoppers purchased what they saw or not.

In keeping with the Journal's theme of De(fence), it is important to point out patterns of social exclusion, which varied depending on the institution. The social climate of museums and schools differed from that of department stores: working-class individuals were not expected to associate themselves with the fine arts and were unwelcome in museums and galleries. Since they were places where the wealthy cultivated their tastes and since they were dominated by the wealth of benefactors from these same groups, art museums and galleries were usually socially exclusive. Even in Chicago's public high schools, art education for the working classes was segregated by social fences. In a system supported by the CCC, of which Marshall Field was a member, school administrators tracked high school students into vocational strains of art education called manual training, while they tracked privileged high school students to professional and college prep programs where they studied the fine arts (Anonymous, 1910; Anonymous, 1914; Wrigley, 1982). Though art educators like Henry Turner Bailey (1914) promoted fine arts as a source of social uplift for all students, Chicago's school administrators followed technocratic strains of Social Darwinism and scientific management, claiming that most working class students could become good technicians, but did not have the potential for academic study or gaining social refinement from the fine arts and fenced them into vocational programs (Spring, 2005; Wrigley, 1982).

In the spheres of the department store and the rest of popular culture, however, things were different. Working class individuals, especially those from Europe, knew the value of the fine arts from their lives in Europe. Though the fine arts would have been mostly out of their reach in Europe, in coming to the United States, they held new aspirations of self-improvement; and they sought out the art forms they wanted in popular culture. Working-class individuals tended to frequent dime museums operated by such impresarios as P. T. Barnum and Sylvester Poli, where the division between fine arts (high art) and plebian visual, musical, and dramatic forms was unclear and theaters programmed entertainment for mixed-class audiences, from working-class on up. Entertainment included anything from freak shows and wax sculpture exhibits to lantern slide shows of art at the Vatican, which

played on working-class religious and political sentiments (Oberdeck, 1999; Weil, 2002; Weir, 2007). Social and economic fences in these establishments were set according to the locations of expensive and cheap seats. Marshall Field also put out a variety of merchandise, from the most expensive luxuries to the most common items, which were sorted into departments according to the degree of expense and luxury they represented, separated by aisles that served as invisible fences. Their customers were informed middle- and working-class individuals, who read newspapers and advice manuals (e.g., Bunce, 1884; Reed, 1878) to familiarize themselves with American culture and to educate themselves in everything from the English language to artistic sensibilities on decorating, deportment, and etiquette. These texts were usually saturated with the term ‘artistic’ (as in making an artistic parlor) all of which they could see at Field’s (Blanchard, 1995 Harris, 1990; Richardson, 1911; Twyman, 1954). Thus, the same savvy consumers who knew where to find the classical and folk entertainment they saw in vaudeville (and which section they could afford in the theatre) also knew that Field’s was a place to see elite culture and the latest technology. Shopping at Field’s was as much learning from window shopping, as it was buying merchandise, as shoppers learned from their *gaze across the aisle*.

Field’s was a cultural and educational institution of artistry and popular education through the drama of shopping. Using merchandising strategies adapted from the aesthetic movement, Field’s produced the drama of shopping with social and cultural implications about class, gender, and race in three ways: First, the architecture of the store served as a carefully designed and segregated theatrical space for seeing and being seen in the drama of shopping. The departmentalization and arrangement of merchandise by degree of expense and luxury differentiated and sorted Field’s clientele according to their social status and what they could afford to buy. Elite shoppers who purchased luxuries did so under the gaze of other shoppers, who watched from across the aisle. Second, Field’s merchandising and marketing followed trends of the new profession of domestic science. It served as the script for the drama of shopping, through which customers negotiated the cultural hierarchy of artistry and new technology. Third, merchandising resembled the subculture of the aesthetic movement, but without its controversial gender roles, while it privileged predominant Anglo-American culture and rendered other social groups, including people of color, invisible. Today, the social and cultural traditions of American department store retail that began in the gilded age remain present as new forms of retail marketing. In turn the gendered cultural fences that divide retail patrons remain in the present day, though with different names and locations.

Modes of Popular Education and the Subculture of the Aesthetic Movement

To understand the educational approach of department stores is also to understand the social consequences and contradictions within them. This section reviews research on popular education and the aesthetic movement in the United States, thereby placing the department store in an educational context with schooling and museums. The trope of “the drama of shopping” pulls together the entities of a department store as a mode of education. Shoppers acted out rituals of shopping and examples of what they could learn from the material culture of retail merchandising (e.g., Clausen, 1985; Grier, 1988; Harris, 1990).

Historians of the broader field of education have defined education as the transmission of “culture across generations” (Baylin, 1960, p. 74). In the early 20th century, education in the United States extended beyond schooling, across a configuration of museums, libraries, the mass media, and popular culture (Cremin, 1988). We know that drawing, book arts, and

various crafts were taught in the elementary grades in Chicago Public Schools, but as mentioned earlier, in Chicago's public high schools before World War I, students were tracked to either vocational or professional or college-prep programs, fencing out many from learning cultural knowledge that, they believed, would lead to social advancement.

Behind all the palatial architecture of Field's store was a social scientific framework that pervaded education and most human services in the entire city, a system of scientific management that sorted individuals from disparate ethnic and racial groups into social classes. Class divisions, however, were troubling, because the differentiation broke along gender, ethnic, and racial lines, and created systems of social closure by monopoly and exclusion (Murphy, 1988). Considerations of gender, ethnicity, and race expose the creation of social inequality.

First, predominant gender roles among elite and middle-class White Chicagoans placed women at home or, following the example of leading community women, in charity work, while predominant roles for men came from scientific professionalism in business and commerce. Many working class individuals would aspire to these roles as forms of self-improvement, and this article will show that department-store customers who did not fit these predominant gender roles were marginalized or fenced out.

Second, European immigrants at the turn of the century were mostly working class, who struggled to advance socially without a working knowledge of the predominant Anglo-American culture. For these individuals, Field's provided these opportunities as forms of popular domestic education, enabling working class immigrants to negotiate the invisible social fences that segregated the space of the store.

Third, race turns up particularly troubling issues, however, simply because African Americans were marginalized or even rendered invisible at Field's and few, if any African Americans were likely to shop or be employed there. Before 1900, 90% of African Americans lived in the Southern United States. Because of worsening social and political conditions for Southern Blacks and word of economic opportunities and jobs in the North, a movement to Northern cities called the Great Migration expanded African American populations in Northern cities. In addition, employers needed to hire African Americans, as World War I and immigration restrictions disrupted their supply of European immigrant laborers. Though the North offered better conditions and pay than the South, Blacks still faced a groundswell of racist resistance as their presence increased. Very few African Americans ever worked in retail. In fact, only .03% of Black males and .02% of Black females in the entire nation had sales jobs, compared to 4.2 White males and 4.1 females (United States Census, 1975). Laws in the South prohibited Blacks from trying on clothes in a department store, let alone allowing them to sell clothing to white customers. Amid these conditions, the democratic gospel of shopping-for-all at Field's fenced out people of color.

Promoting department store shopping as popular education in artistry might seem odd to 21st century ears; but from the late 19th century into the early 20th century, merchants like Marshall Field packaged the latest household wares and artistry as a culture of conveniences and daring fashion to heighten shoppers' desires. The educational aim for the department store shopper was to negotiate her personal tastes toward self-improvement and social advancement. Shoppers purchased new appliances, gadgets, and furniture; attended an art exhibit, a concert, or read a fashionable magazine in the store's elegant library. These activities were meant to associate the retail business with a sensibility of

cultural sophistication to attract patrons (Richardson, 1911; Twyman, 1954). There were also contradictions, however: the so-called artistry that merchants promoted was made to resemble the subculture of the aesthetic movement, while it was actually the direct opposite, reduced to the amusement in the drama of shopping.

Until the 1890s the subculture of the aesthetic movement was as much about freeing individuals from the fenced in spaces of puritanical Anglo-American cultural and social conventions, as it was meant to elevate beauty in everyday life. Blanchard (1995) summarized aestheticism as originating in England, in the 1850s and 1860s as a reaction to urbanization and industrialization. The aesthetic movement was influenced by John Ruskin, William Morris, and Henry Cole. In 1876, when exhibits of handicrafts from the movement were shown at Philadelphia's Centennial Exposition, aestheticism caught on in the United States as the 'aesthetic movement,' or the "new American art craze" (p. 22). Blanchard also observed that many women of the aesthetic movement were as enamored of science as they were of art. Uncorseted, they wore what were called 'aesthetic dresses' as an art form adorning their bodies. Their participation in physical fitness was a transgression across the gendered fence into the male sphere of physical fitness, higher education, and the professions. Feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman, for example, tutored girls in drawing, painting, and gymnastics (Gilman, 1935). It is also important to note that the aesthetic movement included men who sought an escape from the scientific professional male role that predominated American culture after the Civil War. Men practiced their own artistry, ranging from decorating parlors to dressing sometimes in flowing velvet and silk robes, at times with implications of homoeroticism and transvestism. George Chauncey (1994) observed that the heterosexual-homosexual binary that exists today was already present among the middle and upper classes in the gilded age, but it did not define working class thinking. For example, "*bisexual* referred to individuals who combined the physical and/or psychic attributes of both men and women. A bisexual was not attracted to both males and females; a bisexual was both male and female" (p. 49). Most puritanical minds would have associated these social roles and the aesthetic fashions that went with them with being radical and immoral.

By the 1890s, things changed and social and gendered fences shifted. The strictly defined social roles of science and professionalism (discussed previously) predominated business and commerce, and aesthetic sensibilities were marginalized. Also at this time, department store merchants co-opted the aesthetic subculture as a sanitized ethos and extinguished women's and men's controversial gender roles. They marketed aesthetic dress as high fashion and provided men with plush, parlor-like library and club spaces. The cultural agency for the men and women of the subculture was buried under the structure of merchandising as cultural refinement and artistry for women. The homoeroticism of aesthetic dress that some aesthetic men and women practiced was replaced in traditional minds by the clinical designation of "the homosexual" and "the abnormal." The remnants of the aesthetic subculture "became marginal and suspect by the turn of the [20th] century" (Blanchard, 1995, p. 50). Aesthetes were eventually fenced out as isolated Bohemian cult groups in high schools and universities. What was left was beauty as entertainment and aesthetic education as puritanical and moral uplift promoted as education in the department store.

Department Store Architecture and the Drama of Shopping

In 1892, the drama of shopping was part of grand efforts of the city of Chicago to transform its urban center, known as 'The Loop,' and the Lake Michigan shore into the fairgrounds for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. In the Loop, an earlier development of State Street as an elite shopping district was underway, with the largest store, Marshall Field and Company, under construction and set to open for the World's Fair. The discussion of Field's as a space designed for education begins with the department store architecture itself, which was the physical embodiment of the conceptual 'fence' into which aesthetic culture was contained as a shopping experience. The palatial architecture with classical ornamentation, wood paneling, and casework masked the building designed to support the specialized administrative and technical tasks that supported the production of drama on the sales floor. The mezzanines, wide aisles, mirrors, and several atria provided the elegant space for strolling and shopping. The centerpiece was a central atrium, which featured a mosaic glass dome by Louis Comfort Tiffany. The store was designed as a theatrical playground for the self-presentation of shoppers who customarily dressed in their best attire as if they were spending their day in a palace. Late 19th-century buildings such as department stores were organized to accommodate large volumes of business and traffic flow. Social fences were invisible as the store building design directed patrons to the merchandise they could afford while tempting them to roam the vast space of the floor and see more expensive things from afar.

In order to keep shoppers in the store longer, architects designed the buildings to 'teach' shoppers how to navigate the store's invisible social fences: First, uniform and effective wide aisles and displays brought customers together with services and artifacts. Second, wall directories had to be easy to find and served as an index arranged by floor. Even the floor walkers, guides, clerks, and custodial personnel were fundamental extensions of the communication systems of typewriters, pneumatic tubes, and telephones. Third, mechanisms 'taught' users how to find the departments they wanted by way of automated dynamic information displays like position indicator boards that tracked elevators as they moved from floor to floor. Marshall Field's predecessor, Potter Palmer, saw many of these innovations on his buying trips to Paris, France and he incorporated those strategies in his own store (Harris, 1990; Twyman, 1954).

Stores in Paris

The department store building type evolved from earlier mercantile organizations and expositions in 17th- and 18th-century Paris. By the 1820s and 1830s, what were once centralized open markets had been reorganized as arcades that housed many shops under one roof; and many producers joined forces to increase production in mills and factories (Clausen, 1985). The department store was a specialized building, made to promote convenience, novelty, and bigness that drew upon a psychological ploy of desire. Meredith L. Clausen (1985), a historian of department store architecture, notes that the first building in Paris to be designed and built as a department store was for Aristide Boucicaut's Bon Marché. Boucicaut's building was a departure from earlier ones that were made by remodeling or combining smaller stores. It was the first significant example of architecture designed to be a department store from the ground up. Shopping was a continuation of the European social ritual called 'the promenade.' Shopping had become a social custom where patrons could stop at a department store to observe, relax, use a 'comfort station,' or dine in the store. The store was designed as a theater for the artistic self. The merchant and the

architect thought like dramaturges, designing a store building “as a stage set in an elegant theater for the public” (Clausen, p. 24). Bon Marché's double revolution staircase was like the one at the recently opened Paris Opera. It drew patrons to the upper floors and to the iron footbridges that spanned the sales floor. These vantage points elevated shoppers above the crowd in the drama of seeing and being seen.

Origins of Marshall Field and Company

From what Potter Palmer observed in Paris, he knew that for Chicago to boast of a world class downtown, an elite retail establishment was needed to attract women in great numbers to the area. Such a new store would have to be located away from the current retail area on Lake Street, not regarded as a proper area for a woman of means. Knowing that women shoppers would linger on well-lit and clean streets, Palmer chose a location at State and Washington Streets for the new, marble-faced Palmer's Emporium. This choice anchored State Street as the new downtown shopping area. Despite the dirty conditions at the old location on Lake Street, Palmer's dry goods store, P. Palmer & Company, was known for the largest variety of merchandise in the city, with many items imported from Europe. Service was very important because traditionally a woman would not be acknowledged in public places and receive service unless she was with a man. At Palmer's store, however, women could enter on their own and expect good service whether they bought anything or simply browsed (Miller, 1996; Twyman, 1954).

In Chicago's climate of fast-paced growth and commercial development, Palmer's Emporium successively changed management and ownership. Palmer's Emporium was soon taken over by Marshall Field and Levi Leiter, only to be consumed in the Great Chicago Fire in 1871. While recovering from the fire, Field and Leiter conducted business from several temporary locations. They re-opened the store in a leased building at the Washington and State Street location in 1873. After an expansion, this store was also destroyed by fire. In 1879, the store was rebuilt and this time, Field and Leiter bought the building that became the first section of the present store. In 1881, Leiter retired from the partnership, and the store was renamed Marshall Field and Company. In 1887, Field expanded his business into wholesale, in a notable building designed by Henry Hobson Richardson. In 1892, the wealth Field had gained from his wholesale venture enabled him to expand his retail business into a new building by Daniel H. Burnham, at the corner of Wabash and Washington Streets. Meanwhile, the store from 1879 was expanded as a nine-story annex to accommodate the crowds from the World's Columbian Exhibition, which opened the following year. In 1901, Field's expanded into a new 12-story building, along with a third one added in 1906. A fourth building, added in 1914, extended the area of the store across the entire block, between Washington and Randolph, and State and Wabash Streets. Thus, what began as P. Palmer and Company on Lake Street grew into the largest department store in the world (Miller, 1996; Twyman, 1954).

Merchandising as Aesthetic Education in the Drama of Shopping

If the architecture of the department store was the segregated theatrical space for the drama of shopping, the next consideration for this drama was its 'script' of merchandising and sales strategies drawn from domestic science (or home economics). Merchandising was treated as if it were dramaturgy to categorize and discuss the various kinds of art forms (merchandise), their interconnectedness, and their styles. Just as the dramaturge researched the historical and cultural aspects of theatrical production, so did

merchandisers at Field's promote visual, musical, and literary forms as part of the shoppers' experiences, sorted according to degree of luxury. When Field's began to market to shoppers of all classes, including men, to expand patronage (Twyman, 1954), he took the dramaturgy from domestic science, a new profession and one of the few populated mostly by women. Thus, Field's became a place where women could see the latest technologies for the home as science-made-for-them in appliances and gadgets.

Domestic science also pervaded public and private life, beyond retail institutions. It constituted everything from knowledge of food service in school cafeterias to pre-prepared food for the home (Spring, 2005). During the 1870s and 1880s, it also became an increasingly important subject matter for journalists writing advice columns for women readers. One of these journalists was an instructor at the Boston Cooking School, Mary Johnson Bailey Lincoln, who co-founded the *The New England Kitchen Magazine* in 1894. The magazine was later retitled *American Kitchen Magazine*, of which Lincoln was the culinary editor and the syndicated columnist of "Day to Day." Her cookbook, *Mrs. Lincoln's Boston Cook Book: What to Do and Not Do in Cooking* (1884), was the forerunner of the *Fannie Farmer's The Boston Cooking School Cookbook* (1896). On balance, as popular as domestic science was, it was also criticized for assuming that scientific experts knew more about cooking and housework than women who followed their own traditions passed down over generations (Spring, 2005). Yet, being aware of new scientific trends in popular culture became more important for some women at a time when they began to challenge the gendered fences of the male-centered scientific professional realm (Witz, 1992). It makes perfect sense, then, that Field's would appeal to women as a place to browse and purchase the latest homemaking technologies, as well as clothing and decorative fashions.

In another magazine, *Women's Home Companion*, appeared an article by Anna Steese Richardson titled "The Modern Woman's Paradise: Some of the Education and Artistic Advantages that are Offered by the Great Department-Store of To-day" (1911). Richardson's work as editor and syndicated columnist helped shape social and cultural issues for the benefit of women. Her article positioned Field's as an artistic and educational agency for all women, no matter how small their purchase. Richardson noted that the department store represented "certain luxuries which [the shopper had] always craved, and which she may enjoy for a few hours without money and without price" (p. 22). Upon entering the store, shoppers were greeted, and they left their coat and purse at the coat check room. A guide was assigned to the shopper to help her navigate what must have felt like an enormous space. No money was exchanged during the shopping excursion; the guide recorded purchases on a transfer card, and the balance was paid when shopping was done. Once a shopper had found the items on her list, and delivery of purchases was arranged for, she could spend leisure time as if to "give herself up unrestrainedly to the joys of the great store itself," no matter how much or how little she had purchased (p. 22).

Richardson's article portrays Field's as a store that welcomed women from all classes, as they wanted it to appear to shoppers, but the history of department stores has also shown that sales floors were subdivided into departments that catered to particular clientele with social differentiation in mind. Guides and other sales staff would usher shoppers around the store to find what they wanted, but like good real estate agents, they also kept shoppers within their own income zones. Just as in theaters, where more expensive seats went for higher prices and kept those with less spending power away from the wealthy audience members, at Field's customers were matched with the merchandise they could buy, though

they could negotiate invisible social fences and observe more luxurious displays and goods in their *gaze across the aisle*.

Field's stocked seemingly every kind of merchandise and provided every cultural activity in a space where the desire for new technologies and artistry could be easily transposed to educational purposes. Browsing to find new merchandise was as important an activity for shoppers as purchasing it. They would see a range of merchandise from the most affordable to the most expensive, based on the simple idea that a shopper will not know she wants an item until she has seen it. An important sales strategy, for example, was the demonstration of appliances. Richardson (1911) describes the experience of a shopper who cooked at home on a coal stove and who would never consider a modern gas range, because it had only one burner, which would limit her cooking. She came across a cooking demonstration, however, in which the presenter used three triangular pans that fit together in a circle over the single burner. Seeing a solution to her doubts, the shopper purchased the gas stove, a piece of new technology for her home. Owning a gas stove in 1911, much like purchasing a microwave oven in the late 20th century, would likely have been a show of wisdom and an educated decision.

Richardson (1911) also discusses a merchandising strategy in which merchants displayed items as they might appear in a room at home. By arranging furniture, carpet, and decorative artifacts this way, merchants departed from the convention of sorting furniture into rows by type. Richardson describes another woman's shopping trip to show how she negotiated her personal taste. A woman travels to Field's with her mother, who complains that her parlor furniture is overly formal. At Field's, they find the new craftsman-style furniture set up in a new configuration called a 'living room.' It is likely the women saw the setting advertised as a 'living room,' a term that gradually replaced "parlor" by 1910 (Grier, 1988). Richardson's example continues to describe the mother as having doubts about craftsman furniture, judging by a catalog illustration; but changing her mind when she sees the room display, and buying the furniture. In this case Richardson explains, the merchandising strategy worked: the shopper knew what she wanted when she saw it and was convinced it would be a self-improvement, just as the owner of a new gas stove saw the wisdom of using the new gas stove technology.

Some locations of the store were designed to introduce shoppers to new experiences. Richardson (1911) describes these as opportunities for women with less means to experience artistic and cultural education. In the fully-stocked library at Field's, customers could read most popular books and magazines. An attendant would bring reading materials to them, while they waited in comfortable easy chairs. For well-heeled shoppers, a library made the store familiar, educational, and fun, and for the working- or middle-class shopper, these activities might have introduced them to reading materials or even an upholstered chair they had not used before or could not afford. The store's writing rooms and lounges had luxurious mahogany desks where a patron could sit and write notes to friends on fine stationery and mail them. Lunch was available for a reasonable price in a plush wood-paneled dining room with mirrors and chandeliers, with music in the background that one would expect at a fine hotel. After lunch, a shopper could attend a free concert in the piano department or an art exhibition in the gallery. Given the opportunity to negotiate the store's social fences and range of merchandise, browsing at Field's was most likely a working-class shopper's only exposure to a concert or art exhibit in the downtown area. Shopping as education was a chance for patrons to think about their taste, negotiate their place in the cultural hierarchy, and perhaps, purchase something to improve their lives.

At times, both men and women had to negotiate fences. Richardson's (1911) writing was pitched specifically to women, and not men who might also want to equip a kitchen or decorate a parlor; but advice books about decorating and dress were available to men. One manual written for male followers of the aesthetic movement cautions male readers not to become overly concerned with professional and public duties and to take time to tend to the beauty of their home (Reed, 1878). Though men probably did not shop department stores to the extent that women did, they were present in department stores. Earlier in the century, as a way to introduce Parisian men to the store, Bon Marché provided a billiard lounge for them to use while their companions shopped. Much later in 1914, Field's six-floor men's store opened, along with separate lounges for men and women, which became important social destinations in the Loop. The lounges were modeled after the tradition of gender-specific rooms and seating used for entertaining guests in most middle- and upper-class homes. After dinner, men would retire to a smoking room with easy chairs, while women would use another sitting room with chairs that kept their posture upright (Grier, 1988). Men would enjoy lounges in public but would not likely decorate a room in their home themselves, for such decoration carried the stigma of a feminized man (Blanchard, 1995). Indeed, these public spaces supported the conduct of predominant gender roles associated with the male-dominated scientific professional sphere.

The Drama of Shopping – Then and Now

Field's was a cultural and retail institution that promoted the drama of shopping as artistry and education with its many layers of social roles. Though Marshall Field's is no longer in business, trends in retail that started during the gilded age at Field's and other leading stores have evolved into new forms of those traditions, though names, places and signifiers have changed. The architecture of retail, the drama of retail, and the relation of the drama of shopping to social and cultural issues and to art education have become contemporary phenomena.

Architecture

Since 1911, Daniel Burnham's architecture was a theatrical space for the drama of shopping. Elements of the department-store building type are expanded today and redistributed across larger shopping malls and the virtual architecture of the worldwide web in contemporary retail spaces. Even though recently many of the influential department stores, such as Wanamaker's, Dayton Hudson, Lord and Taylor, and even Marshall Field's have merged or gone out of business, the concept of the department store is still present as a 'universe' of seemingly every kind of merchandise available. Stores like Wal-Mart exemplify the abundant one-store-for-all. On the worldwide web, Amazon.com has the same pervasive scope. Wal-Mart's new stores carry a reputation of monopolizing retail and extinguishing small businesses (Sobel & Dean, 2008), just as Field's was controversial for taking the lion's share of retail trade in the Loop (Twyman, 1954). But not all department stores have died. Dayton Hudson in Minneapolis successfully re-emerged as Target in 2000, which still carries a whimsical cache of novelty and artistry, but at a lower price than one would have paid at Field's (Anonymous, 2000). Shopping malls such as the Mall of America include theaters and even hotels, located a convenient distance from the Minneapolis International Airport (Gerlach & Janke, 2001), much as Field's was conveniently near Chicago's hotels and rail terminal (Richardson, 1911).

Drama

The drama of shopping that played out in department store venues out in the public spheres of retail, the media, and the street continues to be the backdrops for seeing and being seen today. Stores still advertise new technologies in kitchen appliances. In 1910, a woman purchased a gas range, whereas today, digitally controlled professional ranges, refrigerators, and other appliances are some of the most expensive purchases a home owner can make, to convey a message that the owner not only values cuisine but wants to be an expert. In 1910, new household products and ready-made food became ways of efficient living to survive the fast pace of urban life, just as they are now. Retail spaces continue to be gendered, though marketing now to women *and* men, selling anything from clothing to shoes and digital devices. Teller and Thompson (2012) have shown that both female and male shoppers today value a mix of retail tenants and elaborate shopping atmosphere more than they value other aspects of shopping. Just as a 'universe' of merchandise and atmosphere was essential to the gilded-age department store, the same qualities of bigness, variety, and spectacle draw customers to retail spaces today.

Social and Cultural Issues

In the gilded age, Field's merchandising resembled the subculture of the aesthetic movement which I discussed in relation to mainly gender roles with considerations of ethnicity and race. Today almost 100 years later, the fences still stand, but are negotiated differently. A cultural tension remains between artistry as cultural refinement in retail and subcultural gender roles, though names, places, and signifiers have changed. In appropriating the aesthetic subculture in the early 20th century, Field's created stereotypes of the aesthetic movement by filtering out associations with the controversial gender roles, the social roots of the aesthetic movement.

Some of these gilded-age social undercurrents have also carried into the present day. As discussed above, the subculture of aesthetic women and men countered the social constraints of predominant trends in urbanism and mass industry. The department store sanitized this subculture as beauty, entertainment, and aesthetic education and sold it as puritanical and moral uplift. In the 1970s, this amelioration of gender roles also set relationships between artistic subcultures and retail, as a new *de facto* guild system emerged in New York's Greenwich Village and the Garment District, which became centers of a late 20th-century fashion aestheticism. Gloria Vanderbilt and Calvin Klein produced designs for blue jeans that were soon mass produced in Asia and exported around the world (Cremin, 1988). The subcultural artists became prominent as their identities evolved into names on a designer label; but this time, the gender roles associated with designer artistry were no longer underground; they were were '(de)fenced' prominently along with the outburst of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) life, which surfaced in New York's Greenwich Village and regions beyond. In time, the sexuality and gender roles of designers, retailers, and entertainers, among other figures, gradually surfaced in the ethos of advertising and marketing in LGBT communities in Chicago, New York, and other major cities, which eventually mainstreamed across generations of American culture (Chauncey, 1994; Duby, 1991).

Conclusion: Art Education

Histories of department stores provide perspective for art education, because of schooling's long association with retail. Early 20th-century manual training students in Chicago's public high schools supported retail indirectly by supplying a labor force either for manufacturing or for working in stores (Wrigley, 1982). High school graduates took jobs in factories making everything from shirtwaists to trousers, while other privileged graduates from professional or commercial high school programs could look for clerical and sales jobs (Miller, 1996). Similarly, today's art students move into jobs where they affect the trends of design and merchandising with digital imagery and other computer-assisted design. These students would benefit from studying the social and cultural contours of merchandising and retail to become aware of the popular educational impact they have.

Because of this relation and many others between art education and retail, researchers and practitioners in art education explore visual culture (e.g., Freedman, 2003; Sturken and Cartwright, 2009). They prepare students for understanding how identities are composed, which also applies to perceptions of seeing and being seen, even in the drama of retail merchandising. As advice manuals, for example, were important sources of artistry and social conduct in the gilded age, today's decorating magazines remain important reading. Lackey (2005) shows how these publications reveal complicated patterns of gender and serve as sites for art education that is socially and culturally relevant, for students are also consumers. As shoppers did in the early 20th century, today's store patrons continually negotiate the fences of their identities and tastes within the material culture of merchandising and at the same time, they reflect on what their tastes imply about their roles as women or men. Indeed, serious and open-minded attention to the fanciful drama of retail marketing would reveal relationships between retail marketing and shoppers' perceptions that could expand the critical role of art education in research and practice.

Across the cultural landscape, learning is ever-present in the notion of department store shopping as popular education in artistry. Through the 20th century, the educational aim of the department store shoppers has been to negotiate their personal tastes toward self-improvement and social advancement. Merchants like Marshall Field understood this desire, and Field's promoted the latest household wares and artistry as a culture of conveniences and daring fashion. Coupling merchandise with displays of the fine arts would raise the status of merchandise to luxury-as-art and heighten shoppers' desire. In time, Chicago's vocational public high schools would house grass-roots extracurricular activities in the arts and recreation before World War I; but for the working classes, the trolley ride to the distant Loop to visit art museums, galleries, and concert halls remained unlikely (Gutowski, 1978; Rhor, 2004).

When all is said, shopping is a much more complicated social ritual than simply looking and buying. Shoppers knowing what they wanted when they saw it constituted a densely layered negotiation of social and gendered fences of identity. Field's was where individuals came to browse and learn by looking not only at displays of artifacts, but at each other as well. Department store customers 100 years ago and now participate in the drama, desire, and envy of shopping, wishfully *gazing across the aisle*.

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