

The background image shows the interior of the Detroit Institute of Arts, featuring a grand hall with classical architecture. Large, colorful murals are visible on the walls, depicting various scenes and figures. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the architectural details and the art.

# The Art of Reconciliation:

The Influence of the Black Community on the  
Detroit Institute of Arts

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HISTORY

# OVERALL THESIS:

This Independent Study suggests the new demographic delineation of white DIA stakeholders from poor migrant residents—whose culture as African Americans was not reflected in the city's museum—would create epic and ongoing challenges for the museum.

- The museum's very mission would be challenged, requiring new investments in an old Eurocentric collection and the following:
  - invigorated efforts at community outreach,
  - diversity in stakeholdership
  - innovation in leadership

# Chapter 2: Detroit riots of 1967 and how it impacts the DIA

- This chapter argues that the Detroit riots of 1967 demanded a new cultural consciousness from the DIA and resulted in the implementation of new educational outreach efforts, increased investment in African and African-American acquisitions.
  - shifts in the mission did not seem to impact the demographics of museum leadership and accessibility at all levels
  - White Flight continued to effect both the DIA and Detroit economically and



# CHAPTER 3

## LEADERSHIP, ACCESSIBILITY, THEORIES & ART

- Western museums have historically promoted Eurocentric ideas above non-Western ones, they have tended to cater to the habits and expectations of elite culture, proving inaccessible to others.

- Using Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus, this chapter argues that the DIA's stakeholders responded to the Detroit community's needs in the following areas:
  - Expanding the collection in the area of African art
  - Creating outreach efforts to Black communities after the Civil Rights Movement and Detroit riots of the 1960s interrupted the elite habitus that had dominated the DIA

# Chapter 4: Racism in the Museum and Future of Cultural Institutions

*I argue that low visitorship from the African-American community is the result of racial and class divisions in Detroit*

- Demographics of DIA staff and the challenges of leadership have provided mixed results for Black staff, community leaders, and visitors
- Modes of display in the museum encourage varied patterns of reception based on aspects of class and race.

# Modes of Improvement

The following are areas where museums such as the DIA can improve in order to become more accessible to their community:

## Representation

- Museums increasing representation among their staff, delegating people of color to higher ranks and in positions of leadership.

## Exhibition Design

- The DIA and other museums working with the community/cultural groups that will be represented for an accurate representation

## Authority

- The newer generations who have grown up in the digital age have developed innovative ways to create content that could promote museum engagement.

# CONCLUSION

- Much of how the DIA facilitates their interaction within the Detroit community has been dictated by racial relations.
- The DIA functions as a cohesive force, bridging the gap between the Black community and their voice, and the unique cultural hub the DIA has become.
- My research leaves room for future studies on how museum's positionality is tightly bound to their community and how it can begin to promote more progressive, modern tools to be an equitable place for cultural consumptions and learning.



*Fini.*

DETROIT VS. EVERYBODY