of the loading screen for Guitar Hero II who stenciled and posted his André the Giant logo in urban public spaces in the 1980s. Fairey’s Obey stickers and stencils were designed to get people to think about the messages of images on the street. Yet their meaning was often ambiguous, what Fairey calls an “experiment in phenomenology.” His artwork is now copyrighted under the label “Obey Giant” and an offshoot clothing line for sale in mall skate stores alongside Vans, Diesel, and Stussy. Bourdieu’s system does not help us to understand the particular patterns of minority, immigrant, or countercultural values and distinction—for example the patterns of taste and distinction among those who immigrated to France from Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa in the years following the demise of French colonialism. Our point is not only that cultural values and tastes may trickle up or may develop differently among members of a politically and culturally minoritized diaspora but also that cultural values and tastes are increasingly subject to movement in a variety of directions, as markets diversify in kind laterally, as well as to globalization. In today’s culture, images and objects circulate within and across social strata, cultural categories, and geographical distances with speed and ease, such that youth cultures in Central Asia and North America may look very much alike in their clothing choices despite these groups being separated by geographic distances and political differences. The globalization of manga (Japanese comics) is an example of this phenomenon in which taste and distinction are forged in ways that do not strictly follow Bourdieu’s observed patterns of class and cultural influence.

Collecting, Display, and Institutional Critique

As we noted in chapter 1, there are many ways in which the value of a work of art is determined in the art market. One of the key economic and cultural factors in the valuing of art is collecting by art institutions such as museums and by private collectors. Not only does this activity create a market for art, but it also creates a financial context in which work is expected to appreciate in value over time. The collecting of art for economic and cultural capital has a long history. This seventeenth-century painting by David Teniers of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm’s collection was one of the first visual catalogings of an art collection. In this image, Teniers imagined the archduke standing among his many paintings as a means to both illustrate the collection and affirm the importance of the archduke’s role as collector. The large scale of the painting, in which the figures seem diminutive, affirms the size of the collection. This painting thus functions as an actual catalogue of the archduke’s collection, as an affirmation of his taste and role as a connoisseur, and as evidence of the value of his large collection. Ownership is a key factor in establishing value in art. Much of the value of art collections is established through the details of the provenance of artworks, such as the history of who has owned them and when they changed ownership—information that has little to do with the artist or the work’s creation.
Collecting always involves the elements of hierarchy and value judgments. The cultural theorist James Clifford has written about how the practices of collecting and exhibiting art and artifacts contributed to the ways viewers make meaning. In a well-known essay on practices of collecting, "On Collecting Art and Culture," Clifford considers the fate of African tribal art, artifacts, and cultural practices when these items and practices are relocated to Western museums, archives, art markets, and discursive systems. He adapts the "semiotic square" (designed by A. J. Greimas) for the purpose of mapping the movement of art and cultural artifacts from one cultural context to another in relationship to changes in their classification and value. Clifford's map of the "art-culture system" allows us to see how the movement of objects through the collecting practices of museums, scholars, and connoisseurs effects transitions in the meaning and value of works from, for example, not-art (such as religious artifacts) to art or from authentic to inauthentic. Clifford describes the collecting process as a machine in which common works of everyday culture are given value as a commodity in the rarified fine art market, trading on the mystified aura of the work as "true" tribal religious artifact.
Although the context in which contemporary art is collected includes dealers, galleries, and art auction houses as the primary arbiters of taste and value, there is also a parallel set of collecting practices in cultural artifacts, the "culture" section of Clifford's chart. These collections are, as his chart indicates, primarily based on notions of cultural authenticity. In the early 1990s, the anthropologists Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Taylor followed Gabai Baaré, a West African merchant who trades in wood carvings produced by members of his village and surrounding communities. In their documentary, In and Out of Africa (1992), Barbash and Taylor reveal the complex role played by "insider" figures such as Baaré in the entry of "local" cultural art and artifact to the lucrative global art market. They reveal that Baaré and the artists who produce the reproductions of religious artifacts that he peddles to art galleries in New York's Soho and to tourist emporia alike are neither naive nor beholden to the Western value system. They actively engage in the irony of a process in which they recognize that their mythification by Western consumers can bring profit. Their products have, since the era of colonialism, included iconic "Colon" figures, hand-carved parodies of the colonial authorities and the very connoisseurs who covet their "authentic" reproductions of religious iconography produced exclusively for the tourist and art trade market.

Practices of collecting are intricately tied up in practices of exhibition and the valuing of work that comes from display contexts. Thus works of art and cultural...
artifacts are awarded value when they are purchased by museums and put on display within the institutions that represent art and culture, such as museums and galleries. In these institutional contexts, viewers can engage in a broad array of viewing practices, some in concert with institutional missions such as art pedagogy (by listening to commentaries on audio players offered for rent at the start of an exhibition, for instance) and some in defiance of them (as when we move quickly through an exhibition, skipping over many works within it, or make ironic or critical interpretations of the work on the basis of our taste, politics, or the cultural knowledge we bring to the show that is elided from the safe facts offered in the canned exhibition narrative).

Photographer Thomas Struth took a series of photographs of people viewing art in museums in order to capture the complexity of these kinds of art-viewing practices. These photographs, which are normally displayed within a museum or gallery, give a sense of the varied responses that ordinary people have to art. Struth took these photographs in some of the most famous museums around the world, capturing images of people gazing at, scrutinizing, and walking past famous works of art. In this image, visitors at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia, display a full range of responses to looking at art—turning away, listening to audio commentary without looking at the work, looking at it intently. Struth created these images with a large-format camera and displays them in the form of very large prints, effectively replicating the experience of the viewers they portray when they are exhibited in large museum spaces. These museum photographs give us a sense of the range of responses and expressions of taste that can be found in museums. They
also convey, in part through their large size, the sense of presence of the large works of art on exhibition in these spaces. Struth has remarked on how art is fetishized by being exhibited in museums as great masterworks. He suggests that in this process they become dead objects, but that through viewers' interactions with these works they can regain some of their vitality. At the same time, Struth's images point to the central role that museums play in designating which images and objects are of value in any given society by determining what it is that gets displayed and by creating the conditions (majestic, pristine, grandiose, or gritty) under which works of art are displayed. Our taste is influenced not only by what we are taught to seek out and appreciate but also by how those artworks and objects are publicly exhibited.

In the 1990s, the discipline of museum studies (or museology) became a location of vibrant intellectual critique among visual culture scholars and artists interested in challenging the role of the museum in shaping taste. The systems of value imposed by museums, they held, were a means of protecting, maintaining, and hiding ruling class interests in the art market. Some of these artists began to do work later described as a form of institutional critique. This concept draws on writings by Michel Foucault about the function of institutions, such as asylums and prisons, in the production of particular forms of knowledge and states of being. One of the tenets of institutional critique is that institutions historically have provided structures through which power could be enacted without force or explicit directives, but rather through more passive techniques such as education, the cultivation of taste, and the cultivation of daily routines. With this focus on the institution as a structure through which power is enacted in a banal way, social critics of art and artists concerned with dynamics of power in the art market turned to the museum as a site where viewers could be interpellated with messages that reflexively drew attention to the politics of the museum itself. Viewing practices, they realized, could be disrupted as a means of undercutting the smooth trickle of standards of taste from the institution down to the viewing public.

Institutional critique can be traced back to the Dadaist interventions of Marcel Duchamp, the French artist who challenged taste and aesthetics. In the 1910s, Duchamp took a jab at the veneration of art objects with his "readymades," gallery and museum displays composed of mundane everyday objects such as a bicycle wheel. In 1917 Duchamp contributed a urinal, titled Fountain and signed with the pseudonym R. Mutt, to a highly publicized painting exhibition he helped to organize. The exhibition's organizers were offended by the piece and its clear message about art's value, taste, and the practices of display; they threw it out of the show. Duchamp subsequently became the cause célèbre of Dada, a movement that reflexively poked fun at the conventions of high art and museum display conventions. Dada helped to inspire many movements in art that aimed to critique the art market and its valuing of art for collecting, including political art, guerrilla art, performance art and happenings, and other ephemeral kinds of art that could not be commodified in the form of valued objects.

Many of Duchamp's ideas about disrupting the art system were taken up starting in the 1960s by artists who attempted to examine museums as financial institutions
and arbiters of taste. In the late 1960s, the German artist Hans Haacke, working primarily in the United States, made a number of works that famously revived the strategy of leading the viewer to question the museum's role in shaping taste. Haacke's conceptual works included an exposé of the business connections of the trustees of the Guggenheim Museum, the intended site of this work's exhibition in 1971. Although this solo exhibition was canceled by the museum's director, many other of his works of institutional critique were displayed in museums around the world. In the 1990s, artists engaged in institutional critique interrupted viewing practices through strategies that included taking on the role of the curator and reordering or disrupting the logic of display as a means of making obvious, and thereby disrupting, the formerly invisible politics and policies of the institution. To prepare for the installation Mining the Museum (1992–1993), the American artist Fred Wilson spent a year in residence at the staid Maryland Historical Society getting to know their collections, their exhibition practices, and the community they served. He then "mined" the museum's collection, resurrecting pieces held in storage and organizing them in a series of juxtapositions with more conventional exhibition objects. With minimal labeling, these displays relied on juxtaposition to make their point about the politics of display, concealment, and assignation of meaning and value in which this museum had engaged. Slave shackles were resurrected from storage and placed alongside a silver tea service that had previously been on display. Wilson gave lectures and tours of his exhibition. By shifting his role from the traditional one of artist as producer to that of artist as curator and docent, Wilson was able to make an intervention in the hidden politics of a museum that had

FIG. 2.9
Slave shackles displayed next to fine silver in Mining the Museum: An Installation by Fred Wilson, 1992–93, The Maryland Historical Society and The Contemporary, Baltimore
remained entrenched in traditional, “neutral” exhibition practices that included the showing of works of material value (the silver tea service) and the hiding of works that made visible the shameful and ugly aspects of Southern culture and politics.

In another work of institutional critique, *Guarded View* (1991), Wilson displays life-size headless statues of museum guards, forcing viewers to ponder directly those very institutional subjects who are rendered invisible by the dynamics of the gaze at work in the museum. Whereas many of the guards in U.S. art museums are black and Latino, most of the patrons are white. This installation foregrounded the issue of race in relation to labor and marketing practices of museums. These works of figurative sculpture disrupted conventions of viewing by forcing museumgoers to notice the human presence of living guards, the very figures we are likely to ignore when we focus intently on the artworks the museum has displayed for our appreciation and scrutiny. By displaying the “invisible” figure of the guard, Wilson brings to our attention the selectivity of our gaze, which readily excludes notice of these underpaid, low-level employees who have always been fully present in the visual field of the museum gallery.

Cultures of collecting and display have also been radically transformed by the emergence of online collecting and exhibition. Thus many people create online galleries for their own images on photographic websites, artists are increasingly exhibiting and selling their work online, and collecting takes place through such websites as eBay. The critique of institutional power in relation to display has thus been paralleled by the changes taking place in cultural production and technological access. In
this sense, the roles of the expert, the author, and the amateur are constantly being disrupted and reconfigured in ways that form a direct lineage back to Duchamp and readymade culture.

Reading Images as Ideological Subjects

As we often accept the idea of good taste unquestioningly, taste can be seen as a logical extension of a culture's ideology. Societies function by naturalizing ideologies, making the complex production of meaning take place so smoothly that it is experienced as a "natural" system of value or belief. As a consequence, it is easier for us to recognize the production of meanings in other times and cultures as ideological than it is to see our own meanings as ideological. Most of the time, our dominant ideologies just look to us like common sense:

Much of the way that ideology is conceived today originates with its formulation in the theories of Karl Marx. Marxism is a theory that analyzes both the role of economics in the progress of history and the ways that capitalism works in terms of class relations. According to Marx, who wrote in the nineteenth century during the rise of industrialism and capitalism in the Western world, those who own the means of production are also in control of the ideas and viewpoints produced and circulated in a society's media venues. Thus, in Marx's terms, the dominant social classes that own or control the newspaper, television, film, and communication industries are able to control the content generated by these media forms. Marx's ideas, and the ideas that they inspired in subsequent theorists, can help us understand how we interpret images as ideological subjects. Marx thought of ideology as a kind of false consciousness that was spread by dominant powers among the masses, who are coerced by those in power to mindlessly buy into the belief systems that allow industrial capitalism to thrive. Marx's idea of false consciousness, which has since been rejected as too simplistic by most contemporary theorists, emphasized the ways that people who are oppressed by a particular economic system, such as capitalism, are encouraged to believe in it anyway. Many now view his concept of ideology as overly totalizing and too focused on a top-down notion of ideology.

There have been at least two significant alterations to the traditional Marxist definition of ideology that have shaped subsequent theories about media culture and looking practices. One change came in the 1960s from Louis Althusser, whom we discussed earlier in relation to the concept of interpellation. He insisted that ideology cannot be dismissed as a simple distortion of the realities of capitalism. Rather, he argued, "ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence." Althusser moved the term ideology away from its association with false consciousness. His intervention at the level of thinking of this "imaginary" relationship is crucial to changing concepts of ideology, as it brings in psychological (and psychoanalytic) concepts in understanding what motivates subjects to embrace particular values. For Althusser, ideology does not simply reflect the conditions of the world, whether falsely or not. Rather, it is the case that