In late 2007, Greene Naftali gallery in Chelsea showed Paul Sharits’ 1970 short, *Epileptic Seizure Comparison* for the first time in a New York gallery. The piece (which comes with instructions on what to do in case that it causes a seizure in an audience member) is an intense set of flickering images showing several subjects going through epileptic fits. Standing outside the gallery, amidst the shivering smokers, underpaid artists, and donor elites, the sentiments uttered were nearly universal: Sharits made something real; this is the first art in a long time that has made me feel. *Epileptic Seizure Comparison* is completely unique.

Sentiments of unique real feelings (or perhaps just authenticity) are the postmarks of a multimedia modernity; they vouch for the validity and necessity of an object’s circulation in a culture which is said to have lost touch with the capacity to experience. With a work like Sharits’ (and indeed even before in essays by Baudelaire or Benjamin), the Romantic desire to re-enliven that of the aesthetic.) Not only the collection but also its importance of not only the collection but also its form, the story goes like this: pharmaceutical millionaire Albert Barnes collected a massive formalism possible in aesthetic experience. The value of this historicity for Groys still exists and which, in its own time, was far more radical than one for high culture or taste. If not, let the museum be moved. I have no more sympathy for the elite Main Line families now trying to save the Barnes than the city elites trying to funnel in money for tourism. The film presents a false dichotomy where everyone, at least in my eyes, is wrong.

In framing this piece with regard to the Sharits, it is another element of the Barnes that I want to bring out and which seems to me worth saving. Whatever we might say in favor of his work, Sharits’ piece is readily accessible. Although seeing it large in the gallery space is certainly different, one can get a strong, perhaps even more intimate sense by watching the video on UbuWeb. Experience the Barnes collection, however, is difficult. It can take a few weeks to get tickets; by public transit it is practically an adventure; the spacing and juxtapositions of the aesthetic layout are rich and demanding. There is, in my opinion, nothing wrong and indeed much good about this. A bare formalist desire for accessibility is no more radical than one for high culture or taste. If unique, real feelings are desired, and if, for some of us, the violence of Sharits’ aesthetic experience is not always sublime, the Barnes may offer one of the few alternative experiences of art. Moving it to the Parkway, even if the spatial layout is kept, will unalterably change the experience of the place – the difficulty of the journey, the lack of a café or retail shop (which the new site boasts it will have) add something to the space that the art alone does not.

Let me frame this one final way. Boris Groys has recently argued that the value of the museum is its historicity in an age of pure presence and futurity. The value of this historicity for Groys is the relation to the past it enables, as well as the valuation of novelty and difference it makes possible. But what is missing in Groys’ argument is an understanding of the differential experience that the modern museum provides. The Barnes is absolutely unique as a living repository of way of engaging with artworks. One may agree or disagree with that method, but what we lose with the Barnes is an arrangement of desires between art, pedagogy and deep democracy which hardly still exists and which, in its own time, was far from hegemonic. Mind you this is not my belief in aesthetic experience or artistic engagement, and there are elements of it about which I am deeply skeptical – either in how people speak about Sharits or the Barnes collection. But art deserves to be looked at and thought about in different ways than what the museum, gallery or internet allows. The fact of a place which still seeks to elicit such an experience seems worth saving.

- Avi Alpert