



MICHAEL A. FOLTY/PHOTO-ARTIST

The Wexner Center's *Part Object Part Sculpture* exhibit features Josiah McElheny's "An End to Modernity."

Arts

Will free admission change the Wexner Center?

There was a surprise when the Wexner Center for the Arts reopened its galleries in October for the first time since 2002. As advertised, the three-year renovation addressed the building's problems protecting artwork from potentially damaging light. The unexpected change, though, regarded pricing. Admission is now free. The folks who run the Wexner figured the previous \$3 fee didn't represent a major revenue stream and may have discouraged attendance.

The idea, says communications manager

Karen Simonian, is that the pricing change will turn the Wex's galleries and café into hangouts and also attract more people. That's what happened at the San Jose Museum of Art, which eliminated admission fees in 2001 and saw attendance rise.

The Wexner is hoping for other upsides experienced in San Jose: more money spent at the café and gift shop, a greater diversity of patrons and an easier time convincing potential funders the museum is serving the whole community.

—Alice Hohl