

BESTOW

A cell of agents find themselves in an art gallery of unusual design called the Coxeter Museum. A cursory search reveals it was named after a wealthy donor. After walking past the foyer, a bland room with a reception desk and little else, they enter the gallery. The building is a lead in their current investigation. They are either pursuing a suspect who they saw enter the gallery or believe that information vital to their current mission lies within. Perhaps the Museum is the target of the investigation itself.

From the outside, it appears as a two-story building of Neo-Classical design. If floorplans are found before the characters enter the building, they learn there is a basement and all three floors have nearly identical layouts. A successful Unnatural skill check (if the player asks to make the check – do not prompt the players) or an Unnatural of 30% or more identifies subtle arrangements in the pattern of the building's structure that correspond to elements of a Gate spell. This costs 0/1 SAN to learn.

In the Gallery: The gallery is a long open room with a single bench in the center. Paintings line the walls. A spiral staircase leads up to the next floor in the northwest corner of the gallery. In the southeast corner, another spiral staircase leads down. Four archways, one for each cardinal direction, reveal identical galleries, including the direction they came from. The archways are unusually dark, revealing little detail beyond them except the general outline of a similar gallery. A character must pass through the threshold in order to see what is in there. Shining a flashlight through an archway does not help. Realizing this is unnatural costs 0/1 SAN.

A single text message is on an agent's phone. They do not remember receiving this text, even though it is dated an hour ago. It reads "BESTOW".

What is Happening: The Museum is a modified Gate that links to a distant location. Unlike other gates, travel is not instantaneous. Instead, a traveler must navigate a hypercube of inter-linked parallel universes in the correct order to find the true exit. When a character realizes they are trapped inside the hypercube, they lose 1/1d6 SAN.

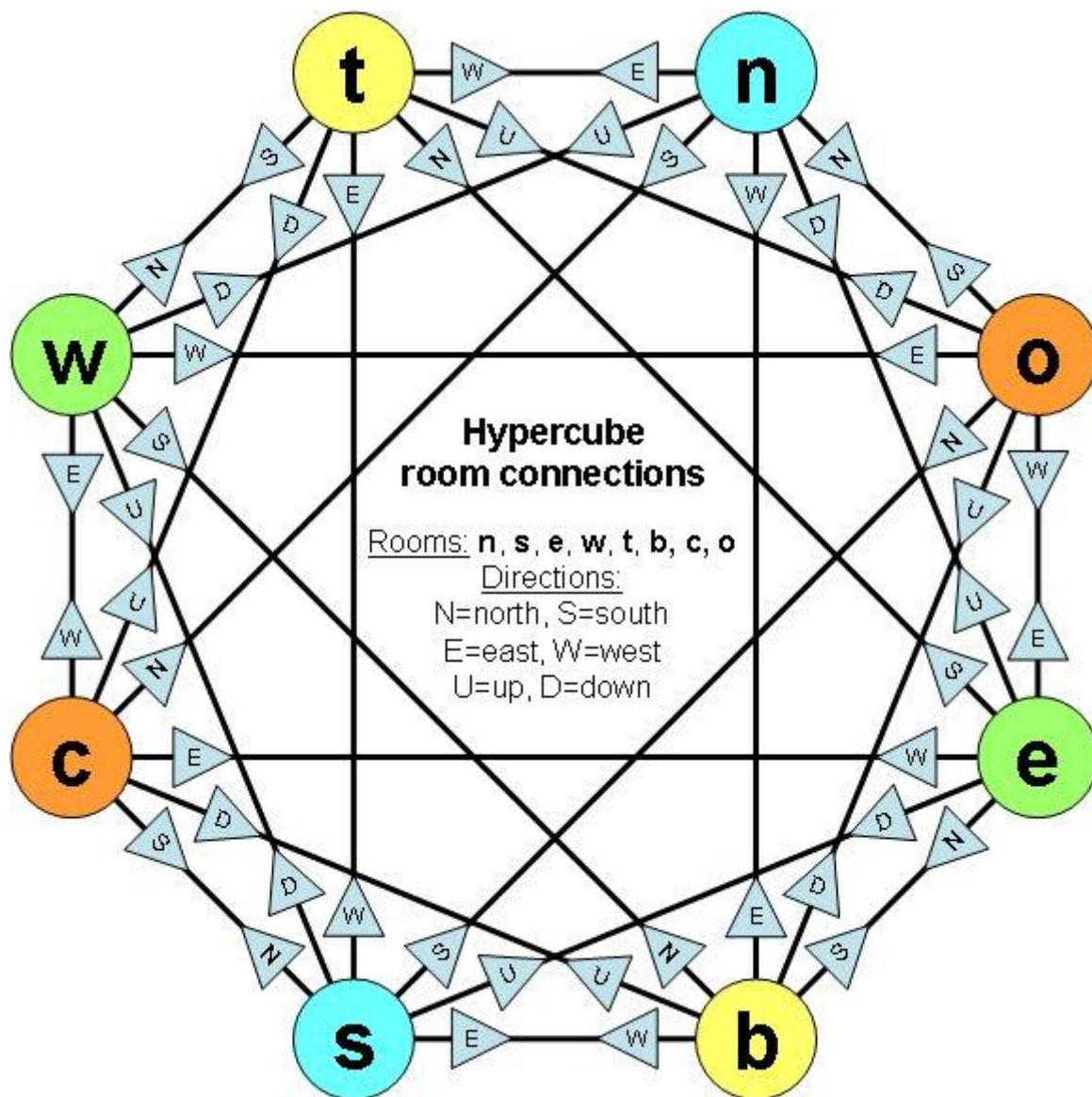
The current owner of the building knows how to activate the hypercube and shut it down. When the hypercube is shut off, the gallery is a normal building. However, the hypercube is open, any character who leaves the reception room and enters the gallery proper passes through the threshold of the Gate on layer T.

The Universes – every universe has an exit in every cardinal direction (North, East, South, West) and up and down. Check the map next page to see what a particular direction will lead to.

T: The 'normal' universe. This is the baseline universe, closest to our own reality.

The Artwork: Large landscape paintings of a fantastical city in the midst of a riot. Buildings are on fire, masses of robed people flee or fight in the streets. A character with Art or History above 30% identifies them as 19th century, reminiscent of the Hudson River School. However, the city cannot be identified. The architecture is an eclectic mixture of Neo-Classical, Medieval, and oddly enough, Meso-American (Mayan, Aztec etc.) All of the paintings are labeled "Landscape #1" "Landscape #2" and so forth. The artist is unknown. There are 2 paintings on each wall of the gallery, for a total of 8. There is nothing on the back of the paintings.

The Bench: It is a plain wooden bench with leather cushioning. Someone has written the letter T on the bottom of the bench with India ink. Finding this clue requires a careful search of the room.



A map of the hypercube

N: Cold universe. Identical to universe T, except for the following traits:

The Cold: The universe is freezing, with a temperature hovering around 15 degrees Fahrenheit in the center of the room. The temperature is warmer near the entrances, so the change is not immediately detectable. Characters in thin clothing may have to may CON x 5 checks to avoid hypothermia damage. The bizarre nature of the cold costs 0/1 SAN.

The Firepit: The bench was broken up and used as kindling for a fire in the center of the room. A search of the charred remains finds small animal bones – Forensics or Biology identifies them as rat. The letter N was carved into the floor below the fire.

O: Rats in the Walls universe. The gallery is overrun with weeds. The walls are ruined, showing many cracks leading into darkness. The paintings are gnawed away, leaving nearly broken frames. An alertness check detects the presence of rats scurrying away from the characters. They are harmless unless a character decides to sleep there for some reason.

The Bone Shrine: A circular shrine of rat bone has been formed in the center of the room, an O.

E: Portrait universe. Every painting in this universe has been replaced with detailed portraits of the agents and their bonds, but in unfamiliar locations and clothing. They appear to be in the same fantastical city, as it burns to the ground. The figures in the portraits appear calm, even content despite the chaos around them. 1/1d4 SAN loss.

The Bench: Identical to the baseline universe, except that it has a large E in it.

B: Corpse universe. A skeletal corpse is propped against a corner. It appears to be an adult male in a tattered suit, with a hole in his head, a rusted pistol and a faint bloodstain on the facing wall. Forensics confirms a likely suicide and that it has been untouched for several years. 0/1d4 SAN loss.

The Bench: Someone destroyed the bench in this universe in a fit of anger. Identifying the letter would take approximately 40 hours of labor to painstakingly reconstruct the bench from the wreckage. A Forensics or Crafts check is required.

S: Fountain universe: Identical to baseline, except a large circular stone fountain (2 feet deep by 8 feet in diameter) replaces the bench. The water is cloudy. To find the letter, the characters must either empty the pool (let them use their imaginations) or search it by feeling the bottom center. A Search check detects a carved letter S. However, this also awakens an eel sleeping in the fountain. It has 6 HP and has a 35% bite attack that does 1d4 damage. It costs 0/1 SAN if a Biology check is made – it is an alien species.

C: Curtained windows universe: Every painting is covered by a curtain. The bench is in the same position with the letter C painted on its bottom. An Alertness check reveals that one of the curtains is blowing slightly, indicating wind from behind it. If the character opens the curtain (or any curtain), they see there are no paintings – only windows showing the city depicted in the paintings of the baseline universe. It is no place on earth. Amazingly, the riot seems to be happening below, just as the paintings depicted. It costs 1/1d8 SAN to realize the characters are not on earth.

W: Whispering Statue: The room is identical to the baseline except that instead of a bench, a statue of a robed figure (similar to the figures in the paintings) posed so that it looks like it is trying to whisper to someone near it. A character who positions themselves next to the statue can hear a voice whisper to them. It will speak in the voice of one of their bonds and speak of unnatural cosmic secrets. Listening to the statue for more than a minute costs 1/1d4 SAN, grants +1% in Unnatural and lowers the chosen bond by 1 point, as the character cannot fully disassociate their loved one from the statue. They also learn the letter of this universe, W.

Escape: In order to leave the hypercube, the agents must travel in a specific path, as determined by the text message. They must start on universe B, then travel to E, S, T, O, and W in that exact order. Otherwise, the characters will wander the hypercube forever. If the players get stuck, perhaps the Whispering Statue can provide more direct clues at the cost of SAN points.

Once the agents are on the far end of the Gate, they can return to the reception area of the Coxeter Museum by following a reverse pattern: W O T S E B. This should be solvable through experimentation.

Resolution: Once the agents learn of the hypercube Gate and then report back, they will be told to not take further action. Three days later, the Coxeter Museum is destroyed through a 'natural gas leak'. It is never rebuilt. Further inquiries by the agents are ignored.