MARTOR

MARTOR
editură

The Museum of the
Romanian Peasant
Anthropology Journal

Revue d'Anthropologie
du Musée du Paysan
Roumain

MARTOR

— 23 / 2018 —

Curating Change
in the Museum

The Antidote Museum
25 Years On

Managing editor: Anamaria Iuga
Associate editors: Gruia Bădescu, Simina Bădică, Damiana Oțoiu

Editorial Board

International Board
Dominique Belkis (Université de Saint-Etienne & Centre Max Weber)
Margaret H. Beissinger (Princeton University)
Sanda Golopenția (Brown University, Providence, USA)
Daniela Koleva (St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia)
Marianne Mesnil (Université Libre de Bruxelles)
Daniela Moisa (University of Sudbury, Ontario, Canada)
Seth Murray (North Carolina State University, USA)
Michael Stewart (University College London)

Romanian Board
Șerban Anghelescu (National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, Bucharest)
Vintilă Mihăilescu (National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest)
Ioana Popescu (National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, Bucharest)
Zoltán Rostás (University of Bucharest)
Smaranda Vultur (Western University, Timișoara)
Ana Maria Zahariade (University of Architecture and Urbanism "Ion Mincu", Bucharest)

Address: MUZEUL NAȚIONAL AL ȚĂRANULUI ROMÂN, Editura MARTOR
Șos. Kiseleff no. 3, sector 1, Bucharest, 011341, Romania
Tel. +4021 317 96 61
Website: www.martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro
MARTOR is indexed by CEEOL, EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Anthropological Index Online (AIO),
and MLA International Bibliography.

English proofreading: Ioana Miruna Voiculescu
Graphic Design: Viviana Iacob, Ioana Popescu
Intermediary photographs: Ethnological Archive, National Museum of the Romanian Peasant
Cover photo: F12-16, Marius Caraman, *Exhibition "Chairs" [Scaune],* 1991, Museum of the Romanian Peasant
DTP: Oana Rădoi
Drawings on the side: Ioana Bătrânu, and children's drawings–Creativity Workshops
Printed at: Expression Graphic Studio SRL, Bucharest

This issue has been edited in collaboration with New Europe College,
and Le Centre Régional Francophone de Recherches Avancées en Sciences Sociales:

PROIECT CO-FINANȚAT DE:

Proiect editorial co-finanțat de Administrația Fondului Cultural Național.
This issue of Martor has been published with the financial support of the
National Cultural Fund Administration (AFCN Romania).

Proiectul nu reprezintă în mod necesar poziția Administrației Fondului Cultural Național. AFCN nu este responsabil de conținutul proiectului sau de modul în care rezultatele proiectului pot fi folosite. Acestea sunt în întregime responsabilitatea beneficiarului finanțării.
This project does not necessarily represent the position of the National Cultural Fund Administration. AFCN is not responsible for the content of the project or the ways its results may be used. These are entirely the responsibility of the beneficiary.

Contents • Sommaire

CURATING CHANGE IN THE MUSEUM

Entrance Hall. Curatorial Statement 7

(EN) Gruia BĂDESCU, Simina BĂDICĂ, Damiana OȚOIU
Curating Change in the Museum: Introduction to the Volume 9

First Hall. Transitional Museology: Museums React to Social and Political Change 15

(EN) Joel PALHEGYI
Revolutionary Curating, Curating the Revolution: Socialist Museology in Yugoslav Croatia 17

(EN) Charline KOPF
Dakar's Museum of Black Civilisations:
Towards a New Imaginary of a Post-ethnographic Museum 37

(EN) Njabulo CHIPANGURA
Working with Contested Ethnographic Collections to Change "Old Museum" Perspectives:
Mutare Museum, Eastern Zimbabwe, 2015-2017 59

Study Corner. The Antidote Museum 25 Years On 71

(EN) Irina NICOLAU
The Museums of the World and I.
My Museum Experience in an Eastern European Country 73

(FR) Florian FOUCHÉ, Marianne MESNIL
Le musée antidote mis en pratique: regards croisés d'un artiste et d'une ethnologue
sur le Musée du Paysan Roumain 94

Second hall. The Antifragile Museum: Embracing Change 119

(EN) Cheryl KLIMASZEWSKI
Towards a Typology of an Emergent Museum Form 121

(EN) Selma HARRINGTON, Branka DIMITRIJEVIĆ, Ashraf SALAMA
Cracks and Light: Observing the Resilience of the History Museum
of Bosnia and Herzegovina 143

(EN) Flaminia BARTOLINI
From Iconoclasm to Museum: Mussolini's Villa in Rome as a Dictatorial Heritage Site 163

(EN) Martijn van GILS
Material Remembrance in Contentious Spaces: Framing Multi-Scalar Memories and National
Culpability in the Museo della Fondazione della Shoah 177

Third Hall. Museums Reviews and Interviews 199

EN Jasmina AL-QAISI
Objects + Things = Stuff. A Visitor's Guide to Berlin's Museum der Dinge 201

EN Irina HASNAȘ HUBBARD, Iulia IORDAN
Elephants, Cuckoos, Horses, and Me. A Different Exhibition About Toys 209

Exit Through the Bookshop 223

FR Janet Marstine, *Critical Practice: Artists, Museums, Ethics,*
New York: Routledge, 2017, 212 pp.
(recensé par Martin HULLEBROECK) 225

EN Fiona Candlin, *Micromuseology. An Analysis of Small Independent Museums,*
London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016, 224 pp.
(reviewed by Anca-Maria PĂNOIU) 233

EN **Visual Archaeologies**
by Viviana IACOB 237

MARTOR

Title: *Curating Change in the Museum: Introduction to the Volume*

Authors: Gruia Bădescu, Simina Bădică, Damiana Oțoiu

How to cite this article: Bădescu, Gruia *et al*. 2018. "Curating Change in the Museum: Introduction to the Volume." *Martor* 23: 9-13.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Ţăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/martor-23-2018/

Martor (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Journal) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. ***Martor Journal*** is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Interdisciplinary and international in scope, it provides a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for academic and non-academic readership. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

Martor (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue ***Martor*** est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

Martor is indexed by:

CEEOL, EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Anthropological Index Online (AIO), MLA International Bibliography.

Entrance Hall. Curatorial Statement

Curating Change in the Museum: Introduction to the Volume

Gruia Bădescu
Ph.D, Research Associate, University of Oxford; Research Fellow, University of Konstanz
gruia.badescu@ouce.ox.ac.uk; gruia.badescu@gmail.com

Simina Bădică
PhD, Curator, House of European History, Brussels
simina.badica@europarl.europa.eu

Damiana Oțoiu
PhD, Senior Lecturer, Political Science Department, University of Bucharest
damiana.otoiu@fspub.unibuc.ro

Museums, these quintessentially modern institutions, are built to last. Together with archives, they preserve the memory, embodied in objects, of a given community. The terminology used in museums clearly shows this drive towards permanence. Nothing more telling than the term "permanent exhibition" whose life-span in contemporary museums is shortening as we write, but continues to be used widely despite its obvious internal contradiction.

"So, when do you plan to change your permanent exhibition?" is the question commonly asked of museum curators, even when their "permanent exhibition" has just been opened to the public. This special issue of MARTOR journal seeks to offer different answers to this question, from diverse corners of the planet, from former Yugoslavia to Senegal, from Bucharest to Rome, diving not only into the "when" but equally into the "why" and "how" museums change.

Because they do change. Museums are places of conservation but they do not necessarily have to be conservative places. On the contrary, museums are sometimes at the vanguard of cultural innovation, changing the world rather than keeping up with the way the world changes. This thematic issue brings together texts and case-studies of museums challenging the status-quo, opening up instead of closing in, daring instead of being cautious, all the while keeping up the standards of preserving and exhibiting the precious collections in their care.

Change in museums can occur *in relation with* or *in spite of* changes in the context in which they function. First, there are socio-political changes in countries where museums are located—wars, revolutions, or transitions. Then, there are cultural transformations, changes in perceptions, which bring about iconoclastic moves and paradigm shifts. Yet, while some museums embrace the challenge of change present in their environment, others perdure in continuity, remaining bastions of the old, sometimes out of mere inertia, other times out of a stubbornness that is political to the bone. How do museums make sense of the changes around them? Second, there is the change in museum practices, including new ways of making and unmaking the museum, of relating to forms of representation, to communities. But how do we map this connection between change within museums and ruptures (or more subtle transformations) in their contexts? Change, therefore, with its multifaceted trajectories, conditions, and intersections, is the key focus of this volume.

The editorial team of the volume is a mixture of academics and practitioners, interested in observing, analysing and curating change in museums. Their first collaboration was part of the research project "Museums and Controversial Collections. Politics and Policies of Heritage-Making in Post-Colonial and Post-socialist Contexts."[1] It is in this framework, and in partnership with the Franco-British project "The Criminalization of Dictatorial Pasts in Europe and Latin America in Global Perspective,"[2] as well as the Francophone Regional Centre for Advanced Research in Social Sciences, University of Bucharest (CEREFREA) and Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie, Bureau Europe Centrale et

---

[1] Funded by the Romanian National Authority for Scientific Research and Innovation, CNCS–UEFISCDI, project number PN-II-RU-TE-2014-4-2368, and hosted by New Europe College, Institute for Advanced Study, Bucharest (2015 - 2017).

[2] The project, jointly funded by the AHRC (Care for the Future)–Labex Pasts in the Present was hosted by the University of Exeter and Institut des Sciences Sociales du Politique, Paris (ANR-11-LABX-0026-01, 2015-2018).

Orientale, that the editors of this volume convened in Bucharest the workshop "Reluctant heritage: Revisiting museums and memory sites in Central and Eastern Europe in a transnational perspective" (CEREFREA, 4-5 November 2016).

Owing to the diverse backgrounds of the editorial team, we have extended the curatorial thinking to the structure of the volume and thus present it to the reader as a curatorial project with three exhibition halls, study corners and, of course, the statement that you are currently reading. The voices of the authors are equally diverse: you will read not only what researchers think of museums, but will also hear curatorial thoughts (Nicolau; Chipangura; Hasnaș and Iordan), artists engaging with museums (Mesnil, Fouché) and even a conversation between visitors (Al-Qaisi).

The First Hall you enter, *Transitional museology*, exhibits and analyses museums reacting to social and political change. The term "transitional museology"[3] is a declination of the already established field that is transitional justice, defined as "the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society's attempt to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses" (UN Approach to Transitional Justice 2010: 2). Sometimes musealisation is included among the practices of transitional justice[4]; yet, among museum curators and historians there is rarely an understanding of the fact that museum building and curatorial practices in transition periods might have distinct features, might face more difficult issues than museology in "normal" times.

We thus define transitional museology, as a specific type of museology born in times of transition from conflict and/or state repression in order to honour the victims and come to terms with a specific traumatic history. We argue that transitional museology not only chooses themes that had been previously silenced or uncomfortable, but in doing so it changes the way museums are seen and see themselves, from mere members of the choir of dominant discourse, to leading voices in their community.

As any pioneer work, the struggles of museums when faced with untrodden paths are not always success stories but rather trial-and-error narratives. We believe the value of these experiences to reside precisely in their exploratory nature.

The first contribution examines how museums transform as the society in which they are embedded is in full process of radical change. Joel Palhegyi's analysis of history museums in Croatia in the first decades of socialism highlights ways in which museum professionals think through their work in an all-encompassing programme of social change occurring in idiosyncratic socialist Yugoslavia. While discussing the specificities of Croatia, the trends described relate to the broader transformations of socialist East European museography after 1945. Palhegyi discusses the emergence of "museums of revolution" which narrate the story of change with a direct didactic goal, but also of "native place museums" which circumscribe history to the clear progression to socialism. In investigating the ways museum professionals refocus their display away from "bourgeois" practice, he highlights the departures, ruptures, but also dynamic transformations of the repoliticized museum.

Beyond revolutions, among the ruptures and transitions we discuss, very important at the global scale are postcolonial transformations. As such, one of the most important challenges of contemporary museologies is the process of dealing with "postcolonial" politics (and epistemics) of change. Museums in former colonies and former colonizing countries, including ethnographic museums, are undergoing major changes. Drafting national and regional standards for the management of human remains collections[5]; renaming or closing ethnographic galleries; creating artistic and meta-museal projects aiming to reconstruct the violence of certain museum practices; imagining different "political, epistemic and artistic processes of return" (Bodenstein, Oțoiu, Troelenberg, forthcoming) and "repatriation" of artefacts or human remains; co-curating the museum and its archives and other forms of consultation and collaboration between museum professionals and what is usually called "descendant" or "source communities"; reconstructing the (often problematic) history of collection practices, and doing research into provenance—are all ways of managing, documenting, avoiding or challenging the colonial past in the museum institution. The museum is thus a political place *par excellence*, at the intersection between national policies (e.g., indigenous politics, recognizing rights for different communities and groups) and larger debates concerning the "decolonizing mission of the museum."

---

[3] The concept of transitional museology has been presented by Simina Bădică at "The Society for Romanian Studies International Conference" (June 2015, Bucharest) and the "Kenneth Hudson International Seminar. Totalitarian regimes heritage and European narratives. Experiences and ideas on the role of museums" (November 2015, Bucharest).

[4] "Reparations can include [...] building museums and memorials, and establishing days of commemoration" (UN Approach to Transitional Justice 2010: 8).

[5] See, for instance, the project initiated by the Commonwealth Association of Museums, in collaboration with Iziko Museums of South Africa, the Museums Association of Namibia, and the National Museum of Botswana https://www.humanremainsinsouthernafrica.org/.

It is precisely these debates that constitute the starting point of Charline Kopf's text on "Dakar's Museum of Black Civilisations: Towards a New Imaginary of a Post-ethnographic Museum." How does the director of the future Museum of Black Civilisations, which will open its doors at the end of this year, see a curatorial project that he considers to be "post-ethnographic?" How could this "post-ethnographic" approach make it possible to "provincialize" the colonial narrative (Chakrabarty 2000) and go beyond the debates on the restitution of African collections in so-called Western museums? Kopf reconstructs, in a very nuanced and convincing way, the paradoxes and ambiguities of the curatorial project which aims to be decolonial, while at times maintaining "binary, essentialised identities." The contribution also includes an examination of the architectural project funded via China's foreign aid programme and designed by the Beijing Institute of Architecture.

If Kopf is looking at the creation of a new museum, for Chipangura, curator at Mutare Museum in Zimbabwe, the central question is how to transform a colonial museum, bearing the political and epistemic imprint of "colonial relations" (de l'Estoile 2008). In trying to reconstruct "the biography of objects" (Kopytoff 1986) and include contextual elements in the museum presentation, Chipangura tells us about the museum team's efforts to overcome the colonial "exhibitionary complex" (Bennett 1995).

The text is also a glimpse into what might seem as another imperative of the contemporary "postcolonial museology"—that is, what Chipangura calls "shared authority in museum knowledge production," and the involvement of (and the collaborative partnership) with "source and descendant communities" (for a critical discussion of the concepts, see, for instance, Boast 2011; Golding and Modest 2013; von Oswald and Rodatus 2018).

The Study Corner exhibits the seminal experience of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant in transitional museology. The Museum of the Romanian Peasant is especially suited to host such a debate in the pages of its journal of museology and visual anthropology as it has been itself a site of controversy and bold innovation. Recognized as such and awarded the European Museum of the Year Award in 1996, the museum has just finished major reconstruction works and will reopen its doors with a contemporary version of the award-winning permanent exhibition imagined and produced by artist Horia Bernea during the 1990s.

The two texts presented in the study corner are explorations of the seminal concept of "the Antidote Museum, recommended during periods of cultural, social and political convalescence," developed in the early 1990s, by ethnologist, writer and museum curator Irina Nicolau. The text that introduces it, together with the "Decalogue of the Antidote Museum" is for the first time translated and published in English in this volume. Ethnologist Marianne Mesnil, friend and collaborator of Irina Nicolau, and artist Florian Fouché use the same dialogic form of Nicolau's article to discuss the fertile afterlife of the Antidote Museum.

The Second Hall seeks to explore the possibilities of the Antifragile Museum, according to the elaborate definition of antifragility provided by Nassim Nicholas Taleb (2013). The antifragile, the "things that gain from disorder" might seem to be in natural opposition to the museum, which requires and produces order. The antifragile is not the robust, the solid, or the unchangeable as a response to adversity. Antifragility is the quality of those who benefit from adversity, who grow from challenges, who accept the unpredictable as a necessary and beneficial part of life.

We thus invite reflection on the antifragility of some of the museums discussed in this section. Cheryl Klimaszewski's subjects of interest, the "emergent museums," the private, sometimes highly personal museums, created by enthusiastic individuals would perhaps fit most easily into the antifragile category. Klimaszewski discusses "this new form in relation to the museum as a process of knowledge-making, one that is amplifying types of participation and inclusivity still not foregrounded within new museology." Sometimes described as "wild" or "unofficial," these private institutions might provide the fertile ground for innovation in twenty-first century museology. Orhan Pamuk's Museum of Innocence in Istanbul was named European Museum of the Year in 2014 as recognition of an important shift in contemporary museology, a shift in which the "wild" and "emergent" might become the new "normal."

Resilience in time of change is the focus of Selma Harrington, Branka Dimitrijević, and Ashraf Salama's piece. They highlight the issue of public history museums in what they describe as small, "peripheral" countries, which have been marked by major systemic transformations in the twentieth century, yet displayed resilience. Combining architectural analysis and public history, they focus on both the materiality and the historicity of museums and their collections. The contribution includes a tour de force in a global repertoire of architectural history of museums, showcasing the role of modernist architecture in hosting museum exhibits. Illustrating the resilience of modernist spaces, the authors discuss the versatility of Sarajevo's Museum of Revolution, which started as a space dedicated to the fight for radical change—echoing Palhegyi's article—but was challenged by another significant rupture—war, the breakup of Yugoslavia, and its conversion into a museum of history of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Sarajevo case opens up fascinating questions about the relocation of collections in the aftermath of socio-political rupture, recovering from direct destruction and symbolic violence, about techniques of survival when going against the current, and, more, about the specificity in reconstituting a "public" museum of history when political preferences gravitated towards the "national."

Flaminia Bartolini's contribution discusses the challenges to display objects and narratives in spaces that have historical associations with a country's difficult past. By examining the conversion into a museum of Villa Torlonia, Mussolini's residence in Rome, Bartolini questions how "difficult heritage"—conceptual frame introduced by anthropologist Sharon Macdonald (2009) in her discussion of Nazi architecture in Germany—can be reused as museum space, and how it can play a role in the renegotiation of a problematic past. Placing it in a context of change in memory cultures—the political revisionism of the Italian New Right and the local Left's decision to open "monuments of fascism" to the public, she examines the potential to transform the site into a museum, but also the challenges of exhibiting in the space given the impact on visitors, indicative of the incomplete engagement with the difficult past.

In contrast, the *Museo della Fondazione della Shoah* in Rome represents a conscious attempt to intervene in the divided memory of Fascism and the obfuscation of Italy's difficult past, as Martin Van Gils shows in his analysis of the museum as a material and symbolic entity. In his analysis of two of the Museo's past exhibitions, Van Gils examines its discursive framing of Italy's role in the Holocaust, incorporating a multi-scalar analysis and drawing on the concept of "cosmopolitan memory." He examines the establishment of the museum as part of a transnational process of making museums concerned with the Shoah, and reflects on the frictions existing with the local and the national in enacting the museum concept. He analyses the interplay of scales in museum representations, discussing the challenges and opportunities a local institution faces in a dialogical relationship with transnational memorial discourses, in the context of travelling collections. Focusing on a museum process which engages with the adversity of local memory cultures, which grows from challenges, therefore echoing the antifragile museum, the article showcases the dialogue between museums and local, national and global discourses of remembrance.

The Third Hall gives voice to the characters directly involved in the museum processes: the curators and the visitors. Jasmina Al-Qaisi's dialogic visit to the Museum of Things in Berlin *(Werkbundarchiv – Museum der Dinge)* is unpacking "an unusual educational institution that, using almost exclusively analogue methods, reaches remarkable levels of interactivity." Going twenty-five years back in time, Al-Qaisi's piece connects with another dialogue on museums and their usefulness, between Irina Nicolau and Dominique Belkis (English translation provided in the Study Corner). Irina Hasnaș Hubbard and Iulia Iordan share their experience and dilemmas as curators of an exhibition for children in a country where museums are not particularly welcoming for children. The shaping of the curatorial concept is retraced in their article, highlighting the obstacles and creative solutions found in trying to interact with children while also educating them about the fragility of museum artefacts, even (more) if these artefacts are old toys.

The volume includes a *visual essay* curated by Viviana Iacob (curator, Ethnological Archive, Museum of the Romanian Peasant). The image selection (*Visual Archaeologies*) captures the multiple ways in which changes are recorded in the documentary visual archives of heritage institutions, with the Museum of the Romanian Peasant as a case-study. The ethnographic archive of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant is a multimedia repository replete with artefacts that document this institution's avatars for more than a century. In this sense, the archive does not only record the work carried out by the Museum of National Art, the Folk Art Museum, The History Museum of the Communist Party, or the Museum of the Romanian Peasant, that is, the "what," but also the "how," the technologies that made possible this work of documentation.

Some of the archive material is repetitive or syncopated (the same image in different media, the print without its original) and some counts as ideological recoveries (images that were collected with the purpose of being withheld from public consumption). Moreover, there are temporal discontinuities (images that are not dated or identified) creating a critical mass that resists archiving. The images selected for this essay reflect this archive's potency, rawness and ability to capture change in how we look at things, how we document them, and how we exhibit them.

As this volume seeks to show, change is a constant concern for museum professionals. Sometimes, reflections on the necessity and conditions of change become a priority and give birth to influential and relevant texts that outlive their creators and the situations in response to which they were created. Such a concept is the Antidote Museum (see *infra* 89), an offspring of the Romanian postcommunist transition, yet an inspiration for museum curators who believe change is on their daily to-do list.

The Antidote Museum (A. M.)
A user's manual

The A. M. is recommended during periods of cultural, social and political convalescence (times of transition).

The A. M. doesn't allow for one-size-fits-all solutions. It owes its success to its diversity and adaptability.

We don't go to the A. M. as we would go to church, to school, to court, to the hospital or the cemetery, but as we would go to the museum.

The A. M. is the museum of 'Look at this!' (…)

The A. M. unveils and hides at the same time.

(…)

After remission, the A. M. must be taken occasionally in order to prevent the B. M. syndrome (Blasé Museum).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bennett, Tony. 1995. *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. London: Routledge.

Boast, Robin. 2011. "Neocolonial Collaboration: Museum as Contact Zone Revisited." *Museum Anthropology*. 34 (1): 56–70.

Bodenstein, Felicity, Damiana Oțoiu, and Eva Maria Troelenberg (eds.). Forthcoming. *Contested Holdings: Public and Private Collections in Political, Epistemic and Artistic Processes of Return*. New York: Berghahn Books.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

de l'Estoile, Benoît. 2008. "The Past as it lives now: An Anthropology of Colonial Legacies." *Social Anthropology*. 16 (3): 267-279.

Golding, Viv, and Wayne Modest. 2013. *Museums and Communities: Curators, Collections and Collaboration.* London: Bloomsbury.

Kopytoff, Igor. 1986. "The cultural biographies of objects: commoditization as process." In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. by A. Appadurai, 64-91. Cambridge: University Press.

Macdonald, Sharon. 2009. *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond.* New York: Routledge.

Taleb, Nassim Nicholas. 2013. *Antifragile. Things that Gain from Disorder*. London: Penguin Books

von Oswald, Margareta, and Verena Rodatus. 2018. "Decolonizing Research, cosmo-optimistic collaboration? Making Object Biographies." *Museum Worlds* (Special issue on *Engaging Anthropological Legacies*). 6: 211-223

United Nations Approach to Transitional Justice, March 2010 [available online at: https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/TJ_Guidance_Note_March_2010FINAL.pdf].

MARTOR

Title: *Revolutionary Curating, Curating the Revolution: Socialist Museology in Yugoslav Croatia*

Author: Joel Palhegyi

How to cite this article: Palhegyi, Joel. 2018. "Revolutionary Curating, Curating the Revolution: Socialist Museology in Yugoslav Croatia." *Martor* 23: 17-34.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/martor-23-2018/

Martor (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Journal) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. ***Martor Journal*** is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Interdisciplinary and international in scope, it provides a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for academic and non-academic readership. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

Martor (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue ***Martor*** est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

Martor is indexed by:

CEEOL, EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Anthropological Index Online (AIO), MLA International Bibliography.

First Hall. Transitional Museology: Museums React to Social and Political Change

Revolutionary Curating, Curating the Revolution: Socialist Museology in Yugoslav Croatia

Joel Palhegyi
PhD Candidate, Department of History, University of California San Diego
jpalhegyi@ucsd.edu

ABSTRACT

The communist period for Yugoslav Croatia brought about dramatic changes in museum practice and theory between the early 1950s and late 1970s. Driven by questions concerning how to properly develop socialist museums, Croatian museum professionals sought to transform the bourgeois history museum into a truly popular institution that would make Croatia's cultural legacy accessible to the masses and allow visitors to understand their place in the socialist Yugoslav imaginary. To this end, museum professionals developed two new museum models, the Revolutionary Museum and the Native Place Museum. Revolutionary Museums were charged with memorializing the founding myths of socialist Yugoslavia, chief among them the anti-fascist, communist revolution during World War Two, and the postwar building of socialism. Native Place Museums similarly reinforced the Yugoslav state by exhibiting local history and culture within the larger trajectory of socialist Yugoslavism. Furthermore, these two models were front and center for new museological experimentation intended to create a distinctly socialist museum space that would engage the everyday working-class visitor. Analyzing contemporary museological journals and museum planning documents, I argue that these museum models were successful in implementing much of the new museological theory, but in doing so moved away from one of the fundamental principles of museum practice: the exhibition and explanation of authentic material culture to the museum visitor.

KEYWORDS

Croatia; Yugoslavia; communism; socialism; museums; museology.

Beginning in the 1950s and peaking by the late 1970s, questions concerning how to properly develop socialist museums dominated the professional museological literature in the Socialist Republic of Croatia. Museum professionals theorized how to transform the bourgeois history museum into a truly popular institution that would make Croatia's cultural legacy accessible to the masses and allow visitors to understand their place in the socialist imaginary. To this end, museum professionals developed two new museum models—the Revolutionary Museum and the Native Place Museum—and a new standard of exhibition practices meant to create a genuinely socialist museum space.[1] Revolutionary Museums were charged with memorializing the founding myths of socialist Yugoslavia, chief among them the anti-fascist, communist revolution during the Second World War and the postwar building of socialism. Native Place Museums similarly reinforced the legitimacy of the socialist state by exhibiting and narrating the local history and culture of a region within the larger trajectory of socialist Yugoslavism. Furthermore, these two models were the clearest examples of how new theoretical ideas in Croatian museology concerning the "socialization" of museums, such as object-based displays

[1] I translate these museums as "Revolutionary Museum" and "Native Place Museum" based on translations by Croatian curator Dubravka Peić Čaldarović and museologist Darko Babić. Native Place Museum is a loose translation of *Zavičajni muzej* for which a direct English translation does not exist. Other common translations are "Homeland Museum" or simply "Local History Museum."

and contemporary history, were actualized in the museum space.

Croatia during this time must be understood in its broader Yugoslav context. The Socialist Republic of Croatia was a constituent state in the Yugoslav federal system that over the course of its history increasingly decentralized authority to the republics. While federal policy mattered a great deal in the realm of economics and politics, policies concerning culture, education, and science were predominately crafted at the republic level, so much so that there never existed a federal ministry for these fields (Budak 2004). This was particularly pronounced after the Constitution of 1974 that further decentralized the governance of Yugoslavia to the republic level but, even in the early decades of the socialist period, Croatian museum professionals were provided a great deal of freedom to develop museological principles at the republic level. Therefore, while Croatia was not isolated from its fellow Yugoslav republics when it came to museum practice, many of the ideas discussed in this article can be considered, at least nominally, "Croatian." There was undoubtedly a "Yugoslav spirit" present in Croatian museology as Croatian museologists were often in conversation with their fellow Yugoslav practitioners and theorists, and many of the mythological tropes developed in Croatian museums affirmed the founding myths of the socialist Yugoslav state (Palhegyi 2017). Nonetheless, Croatia often led the way in Yugoslavia in terms of its commitment to museology as an academic discipline and profession, as evidenced by the University of Zagreb establishing the first postgraduate program for museology in Yugoslavia (program in 1966; courses taught as early as 1946), the founding of the Museum Documentation Center in Zagreb (1955), and the establishment of the first museological journal in Yugoslavia, *Muzeologija* (1953). As such, Croatia was a powerful center for developing museological theory and practice, not just in Yugoslavia but throughout Eastern European museology (Lorente 2012).

In this article I therefore examine the development and implementation of socialist museological theory in Croatia from the 1950s through the late 1970s. In particular, I investigate how Revolutionary Museums and Native Place Museums were designed in tandem with Croatian museological theory that attempted to develop practices appropriate for Yugoslavia's "third way" brand of socialism. Based on an analysis of contemporary museological journals and museum planning documents, I argue that these museum models were successful in implementing much of the new museological theory, but in doing so moved away from one of the fundamental principles of museum practice: the exhibition and explanation of material culture to the museum visitor.

The 1950s: Modernization and Democratization of Museum Spaces

At the end of World War Two, Croatian museums were in disarray. During the war years, the majority of museums were neglected while the immediate postwar years were defined by chronic shortages of funding and trained staff, and a lack of public enthusiasm. By the early 1950s, however, conditions began to improve, and the first wave of modernization and professionalization began. Given Yugoslavia's "in-between-ness" during the Cold War (Kulić *et al*. 2012) and the communist party's conceptualization of a "third way" for Yugoslavia that "maneuvered between two global powers" and stressed "Yugoslavia's distinction from both the East and the West" (Zimmermann 2016: 473), this did not mean simply replicating models from fellow socialist countries. Rather, the early development of museum theory and practice in Croatia was firmly rooted in both Western European/American and Soviet/Eastern European museology. Croatian museologists, for instance, looked to the “first museum revolution” in Western Europe “when a similarity between practical problems that almost all museums share was recognized” (Babić 2009: 238), and when museums first began to reorient themselves towards the general public, as opposed to their traditional scientific and research goals (Bauer 1975). At the same time, Croatian museologists turned to Soviet museology for examples of how to incorporate Marxist historical materialism as the main mode of processing and presenting material culture. To this end, they modeled the Soviet practice of inserting heavily “didactic text into the traditionally austere interior space of the museum” in order to frame material objects as individual parts of a complex organic whole that was comprehensible to the everyday person (Jolles 2005: 434). The modernization developments in the 1950s were therefore hybrid in nature as museum professionals attempted to harness the early democratization elements of Western museology and combine it with the text-heavy didacticism of Soviet museums in order to create a modern socialist museum space reflective of Yugoslavia’s non-aligned position.

In general, there were several pragmatic issues that needed to be addressed to modernize Croatian museums in line with well-established museums in Western Europe and the United States, and to a lesser extent, with socialist models in the USSR and the Eastern Bloc. For the most part, these concerns were rather mundane—new systems to categorize and organize museum materials, collection and preservation efforts, hiring and training staff, and so forth—and therefore will not be discussed in detail here. Closely related to this, however, were concerns about the popularity and social outlook of museums. To this end, museum professionals developed various socially rooted ideas about reshaping museums into truly popular cultural institutions that would educate the masses of their socialist heritage and elevate their general cultural competency.

These concerns were valid. At the time, museums were failing to attract a working-class audience and maintained their traditional association with the cultured elite. A 1953 estimate, for example, cites permanent Zagreb residents as accounting for only 15% of the total attendance in Zagreb’s museums (Bauer 1953a: 71). In fact, the majority of visitors (upwards of 60%) came from primary school children on school trips that were often chaotic, uninformative, and disorganized (Vojnović 1953: 26.) The main reason for this, according to the professional literature, was that the culture surrounding museum practice was still rooted in pre-revolutionary elitism that had effectively alienated the everyday person. For instance, many of these museums were founded during the Habsburg period when museum practice was dominated by the politics and policies of an “isolated circle of officials” who sought to maintain museums as elite cultural institutions outside the reach of those who were not highly educated (Gorenc 1953: 12). Likewise, during the interwar Kingdom of Yugoslavia, museums were so closely tied to universities and their corresponding fields of study that their activities were guided almost entirely by research. When these museums did exhibit objects, they often did so without accompanying text so that only the most educated of citizens would have the requisite knowledge to gain anything meaningful from the displays. Thus, it was not the subject of exhibitions or the items on display that disinterested the everyday person, but rather the failure of museum professionals to create effective advertising and exhibition techniques that would appeal to the “wider public” instead of the traditional “cultured minority” (Bauer 1953a: 72).

Considering this, museum professionals were deeply concerned with democratizing the museum institution to develop a “socialist environment of a new type” that would produce national unity and instill socialist values (Vojnović 1953: 19). Unlike previous models used by authoritarian regimes such as the Nazi era degenerate art exhibitions or the early Stalinist era "talking museums" that used denunciatory discourses in order to define the ideal self (Jaskot 2012; Jolles 2005), this new environment would enable individuals to come to their own positive definition of the proper socialist citizen by virtue of learning about their own "cultural inheritance" and "natural values" (Bauer 1953a: 71). Practically speaking, this meant orienting museums towards the general public and creating institutional transparency.

One example of this was a new advertising approach developed by Antun Bauer, one of the most influential figures in Yugoslav museology, and co-founder of the postgraduate program for museology at the University of Zagreb. According to Bauer, it was no longer enough to just inform the public of the museums' main collections and working hours. Instead, advertisements needed to appeal to working class sensibilities and excite the viewer if they were to overcome the previous decades' alienation of the wider public. For instance, even the "most beautiful statue [in] the best lighting" would appear "lifeless" if the advertisement only showed it in its resting place in the museum. Instead, Bauer continues, the advertisement should include a photo of the statue being moved by truck in order to show not only its grandeur and scale but also the impressive human labor involved in transporting the object (Bauer 1953a: 74). In doing so, the advertisement would convey more than just the value of the object on its own cultural terms; by showing the human labor needed to move the object, the advertisement would tap into the symbolic value of working class labor. In turn, this imagery would effectively position museum going within the everyday, working class experience, and break down the traditional cultural boundaries that surrounded museums.

Once the visitor was inside the museum, their experience also needed to reflect the popular nature of modern museums. According to Bauer once again, the best way to accomplish this was to make the visitors feel that they were "co-owners and beneficiaries of the cultural valuables and goods" on display (Bauer 1953b: 140). This experience of ownership would instill proper national and socialist values naturally by virtue of the visitors becoming familiar with their own cultural history that reflected the long historical drive towards socialist Yugoslavism. In order to accomplish this, museums needed to be more transparent in their workings and allow the average citizen a glimpse into their practices. For this, Bauer looked to a model already established in Paris by museums such as the *Musée de l'Homme* and the *Musée des Monuments Français:* the so-called "periodical exhibition." These exhibitions were akin to an entry hallway where the visitor could get a glimpse into the most recent workings of the museum, be that newly purchased items or texts that explained the decision-making process for various museum activities (Bauer 1953a: 101). This was intended to provide the public with a "concrete picture of museum work," effectively demystifying the professional work of museums as reserved for the educated elite and therefore outside the realm of the general public. The implication of this—made explicit in later writings—was that in becoming more transparent and focusing more on the visitor, Croatian museums were, in fact, becoming more modern. Thus, by providing this glimpse into museum work to the everyday visitor, these exhibitions would prove "that the museum in its internal life immediately keeps up with the times, that it isn't 'stuck in the past,' but rather is a domain in which the public can encounter the current issues" in museum practice (Bauer 1953a: 104).

Finally, Bauer also conceptualized a number of spatial practices rooted in egalitarian logic that focused on the visitor experience. Recognizing that most museums were housed in inherited buildings that were not originally designed as museums, Bauer developed some foundational principles to ensure that the value and meaning of the collections would be conveyed to the visitor instead of being lost in translation. In general, this meant redesigning the layout of museums to serve not only the staff but also the city residents who had generally been left out of consideration in these designs (Bauer 1953b: 135). As it stood, most museums lacked any sort of lobby space for visitors to meet and discuss their impressions which limited the ability of visitors to engage in critical conversation with their fellow citizens (Bauer 1953b: 141). Therefore, the average museum experience was chaotic, overwhelming, and lacking clear direction, leaving the visitor either confused or dissatisfied. Similarly, modern museums needed to provide entry halls in which the visitor could take a moment to collect their thoughts and "exhale" after coming in from the busy streets, instead of immediately "falling into a museum collection" upon entering. This entry hall would then lead into the different exhibitions and serve as a "transitory space" between exhibitions and other rooms geared towards the public such as the library, a reading room, or lecture spaces. Developing this space, according to Bauer, was necessary for creating truly publicly oriented institutions since "museum life does not unfold only in the exhibition halls," but rather in the entirety of the visitor experience (Bauer 1953b: 168).

In addition to these spatial practices, new ideas about the educational role of museums were being developed at the time. This educational role was not limited to simply educating the masses about their cultural inheritance; it was also geared towards altering the individual's core culture and values to produce "conscious citizens of a single social whole." In this sense, museums needed to function as "social institutions equally useful for the community as churches or libraries," as opposed to institutions that simply housed cultural valuables and rarities limited to the enjoyment of the educated class (Vojnović 1953: 19-20). This in turn required reorganizing museum education to establish closer ties to both primary and adult public education, assert a more direct role for museums in the cultural politics of society, and develop a modern professional network of museum theory and practice.

As previously mentioned, while museums statistically had great numbers with primary education that accounted for 50-60% of their total attendance, the actual visits were often chaotic and uninformative as the teachers lacked knowledge about the objects and topics on display, while the pupils, in numbers far too large for the small museum space, more or less ran amok. One solution suggested by the director of the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb, Zdenko Vojnović, was to embrace non-traditional methods, such as thematic lectures, public readings of literature on the exhibition topic, live performances, and public access to collections. Unlike the traditional method of displaying objects on their own terms with little to no accompanying text—a practice that "for a long time lacked as an attraction, as an interesting didactic and educational structure"—these workshops would transform the passive and disinteresting learning experience into something active and multi-faceted (Vojnović 1953: 26-29). Similar principles applied to the modern, working class citizen who was disinterested in exhibitions that required "too much studying" and desired "attractive helping resources" to accompany exhibitions. None of this would work, however, without developing specialized museum workers who were trained in both the scientific elements of museum work as well as education. These so-called "pedagogues" would function as intermediaries between the museum professionals and their research and processing roles and the general public that consumed this knowledge (Vojnović 1953: 27).

Lastly, Vojnović insisted that museums take on a more direct socio-political role and engage directly with themes of cultural and political significance that would not only garner interest but also serve to reinforce proper socialist Yugoslav values. As centers of public education, museums were key intermediaries between the state and the population that could help shape public discourse and perception about contemporary events. Given the political moment of the early 1950s, Vojnović unsurprisingly emphasized themes "that affirm the resistance of our peoples through the centuries" and the South Slavs' historical march towards socialism. At the same time, however, Vojnović made clear that museum exhibitions must avoid becoming unscientific instruments for propaganda, and that museum workers must resist any attempt to "vulgarize" the past for the sake of reinforcing the politics and values of the present. For instance, he criticized an art exhibition that, instead of basing its work on historical and art-historical practice, exhibited feudal-era portraits with accompanying texts that depicted the figures as nothing more than oppressive and "bloodthirsty" social elites (Vojnović 1953: 32).

• • • • • • • • •

The 1960s and 1970s: Object-Based Displays and Contemporary History

The next major development phase in Croatian museology came in the early 1960s and lasted through the late-1970s during which time museum professionals increasingly embraced Marxist historical materialism and theorized its implementation into museum spaces. Two developments in particular embodied this transition: the principles of object-based displays and contemporary history. These museological principles were conceptualized as remedies to the traditional, bourgeois museological practices that had historically marginalized the everyday person: by shifting the focus away from the rarity and grandeur of objects towards the stories that objects can tell, and by broadening the thematic focus of museum exhibitions towards the present day, these principles were touted as modern practices that would revolutionize museums as truly modern institutions oriented towards the public. One crucial consequence of these principles was that museum practices—both theoretical and applied—shifted dramatically towards the use of replicas, reprints, and audio-visual aesthetics while minimizing the role of original objects.

The concept of object-based displays was first introduced at the inaugural lecture for the postgraduate program for museology at the University of Zagreb by Antun Bauer in 1967. Having defined museology as an "independent discipline [that] treats the conceptualization, organization, and functions, as well as the social role and positions" of museums in society, Bauer drew upon an earlier principle developed by the Soviet museologist Theodor Schmidt that stipulated a distinction between subject- and object-based display methods. Subject-based display methods treat any given material object as carrying its own inherent value based upon its rarity, grandeur, particularity, or artistic merit. This approach makes no attempt to connect the object to any broader theme or subject matter, and therefore functions simply as a celebration of the object, rather than an explanation of the object, its context, or its historical meaning. Not surprisingly, Bauer saw this approach as a bourgeois hangover by "conservative museologists" who understood themselves as "treasurers" of rarities rather than agents of socio-cultural education (Bauer 1967: 10). Instead, Bauer argued, material culture needed to be exhibited in an object-based display method where physical materials are understood as documents of the past and treated as a means by which the visitor is guided towards an understanding of a certain theme or phenomenon. As such, the actual authentic object carries little inherent meaning and generally needs to be accompanied by other materials, be that photographs or explanatory texts, that collectively function as a "complete whole" that conveys a single meaning. For instance, a piece of stone left alone offers little explanatory power but when exhibited with photographs of its various uses, or with physical examples of stone tools made from it, can provide a direct visual link to its place within the broader scope of human history (Bauer 1967: 11-12).

This idea of object-based displays was continually discussed in the professional literature well into the 1970s, which suggests that this theoretical model was indeed making its way into the actual museum space. In a 1975 report on curating the workers' movement, Branka Milošević directly cited Bauer and Težak's 1967 inaugural lectures as she elaborated their ideas and suggested how to practically implement them. For example, in confirming the point that it wasn't enough to simply exhibit objects on their own terms, Milošević went as far as to warn her fellow curators about the "charm and danger" of original objects, and "the distant past" they represent. The danger Milošević references, it seems, was the tendency to revert to traditional subject-based exhibitions that fail to grasp the totality of human history and instead focus on the isolated significance of individual items. Thus, she concluded that all objects, recent or ancient, must be employed as "artifact[s] of the future" that illuminate the course of history to the present moment of Yugoslav socialism (Milošević 1975: 81).

At the practical level, this meant dealing with fundamentally different types of objects—often more mundane in nature—that brought forth a whole new set of issues about how to keep visitors engaged and entertained. Unlike traditional exhibitions where items of great rarity or beauty could keep the visitor entertained simply by their grandiose nature, museums dealing with contemporary history needed to make objects such as party documents and political pamphlets appealing to the everyday citizen. According to Milošević, the tendency to use quantity over quality and display an array of these items without any aesthetic criteria amounted to a "disease" of modern museums that ultimately undermined their socio-educational goals. In order to address this, Milošević instructed curators to rely heavily on accompanying texts and legends that tied the items to the "thematic whole" of the exhibition (Milošević 1975: 75). The logic of Milošević's solution to this problem is particularly important as it highlights the theoretical grounding of socialist museology at the time. As the shift towards Marxist historical materialism dictated a teleological explanation of all human history, museums ironically became less concerned with material authenticity, since what was actually important was the ways in which items—original or not—demonstrated the ascendency of socialism in the contemporary moment. Simply put, these new museological principles shifted the focus of historical museums away from the objects themselves and towards the stories they told.

Following a similar rationale, Croatian museologists began to emphasize contemporary history as a means to further the social goals of modern museums and museology. Contemporary history as a museological principle entailed two separate but closely related functions. Temporally speaking, contemporary history meant collecting, processing, and exhibiting the most recent history, namely the 19th and 20th century workers' movement, the events during and after World War Two, and the postwar experience of building a socialist state. Thematically speaking, contemporary history meant analyzing all material culture through a Marxist framework such that the present socialist state represented the culmination humanity's long historical drive towards socialism. Museum professionals therefore understood the function of contemporary history in museum work in primarily three ways: first, as a way to narrate the current socialist Yugoslav state and the contemporary "building of socialism" (*socijalistička izgradnja*) as the final stage in the trajectory of human history; second, as a means to eternalize the *Partizan* resistance and socialist revolution for a new generation of Yugoslav youth, and to exhibit the progressive nature and legitimacy of the socialist Yugoslav project; and third, as a way to further connect with the general public by exhibiting events and phenomena that pertain to their daily lives, such as the development of modern urban life and changes in the rural landscape.

Part of this logic stemmed from a debate over "historical distance" that was a bi-product of the larger shift towards historical materialism. Those in favor of historical distance believed the study of history to be first and foremost the study of the past, and that it was therefore not required to connect the past to the present moment. Accordingly, historians needed proper distance of at least thirty to fifty years before they could properly analyze the past without bias (Hasaganić 1975: 20). Those on the other side of the debate, such as Slobodan Pešić, argued that these concerns were rooted in remnant bourgeois logic that was still pervasive throughout Yugoslavia. This "bourgeois historiography," according to Pešić, was deliberately developed by the pre-revolutionary elites to silence the history of the workers' movement and other socialist developments. Expanding the content of contemporary history in museums was thus understood as a way to cleanse museum practice of these latent conservative and nationalist elements by presenting the progressive reality of the present day (Pešić 1975: 7).

By the mid-1970s, it appears that, at least in the realm of museology, the debate had been settled and the conservative "crystallized attitudes of historiography" had been silenced (Milošević 1975: 13). To a degree, this was a political affair. As Pešić admits, the study of contemporary history in socialist societies was rooted in certain political objectives of the state. Nonetheless, what the study of contemporary history had provided since its initial political inception was a way for museums to better fulfill their cultural-educational roles by meeting the social demands of the public and their interests in contemporary events and phenomena. Due to rapid industrialization, urban growth, and fundamental changes in the social realities and agricultural production of the rural countryside, the average Croatian citizen was greatly interested in these dramatic changes to everyday life. To ignore this interest simply because of a conservative notion of "historical distance" would be to ignore the socio-educational needs of those to whom museums rightfully belonged (Pešić 1975).

In practical terms, this meant rethinking traditional academic methodology to better represent the historical realities of the everyday man. Most obviously, this meant moving beyond the traditional approach of studying the material remains and political history of the elites. Unfortunately, this was easier said than done. According to one professional at the Croatian Historical Museum in Zagreb, even by the mid-1970s there was still a general ignorance about the material conditions and everyday lives of the Croatian peasant during the middle ages. Instead, the museum focused mostly on the socio-political lives of the aristocracy and the growing bourgeoisie from the 18th century on; any items collected from earlier ages were done so merely by chance (Dobronić 1975: 128).

Nonetheless, from the mid-1970s onward, there was a push within the museological community to work more closely with archaeological and ethnographic professionals in order to fill this gap, such as the Program for Researching the Material Culture of Feudalism. This program, created by the Croatian Historical Museum in Zagreb, sought to combine contemporary methodologies in social history with archaeological digs and later publish both academic and popular accounts. Similar efforts were taking place in the ethnographic work of museums. In a report on the development of ethnographic collections in Slavonia, Zdenka Lechner argued that museums were uniquely positioned to treat ethnographic objects as "thematic wholes" that illuminate some aspect of human history, as opposed to other cultural institutions that study folk lore and national culture in isolation of broader phenomena. A certain folk dress from group of villages, for example, was surely valuable on its own ethnographic terms but nowhere near as informative as when museums historicized the dress amongst an array of others to highlight the broader social, cultural, and "surely economic conditions" that led to their creation (Lechner 1975: 85).

In sum, the two most notable museological developments during the 1960s and 1970s were the implementation of object-based display methods and the use of contemporary history as both a chronological and thematic framework. Both of these trends were rooted in the logic of Marxist historical materialism that stipulated all of human history was guided by material-economic factors. For object-based displays, this took the form of emphasizing meaning over authenticity such that original objects came second to accompanying materials such as legends, replicas, artistic renditions, and so forth. While this meaning was inherently ideological and based upon the assumption of historical materialism as a demonstrable science, it shouldn't be assumed that it was purely the result of state-led propaganda. Rather, this practice was fit within a larger trend in international museology—particularly so in Western Europe after the crisis of 1968—to create more comprehensible and accessible museum spaces for the everyday visitor (Van Mensch 1992). The same can be said of contemporary history. Insofar as contemporary history as a thematic category had similar issues of objectivity, it also encouraged museum professionals to focus on new topics of Croatian history, such as the everyday life and experiences of the Croatian peasant. And while most of the collections and exhibitions concerning the People's Liberation Struggle during World War Two are now rarely used, they are nevertheless impressive in their depth and may well provide the material basis for a critical reassessment of the socialist Yugoslav period in the future.

• • • • • • • •

New Models: Revolutionary and Native Place Museums

Two different museum models developed in Yugoslavia between the late 1950s and early 1970s, the Revolutionary Museum and the Native Place Museum, clearly reflected the new museological principles being developed at the time. While both these models were pan-Yugoslav phenomena, the University of Zagreb and its associated professional journal, *Muzeologija*, were crucial to their development, both within and outside of Croatia.[2] While most museums in Croatia integrated, to varying degrees, the modern museological ideas discussed previously, nowhere was it clearer than in these two museum types. The foundational logic of these museums was rooted in the social and educational goals of modern museology that stressed social engagement with the community, the importance of contemporary history, and object-based display methods. These museums were also explicitly geared towards engaging with populations that were historically underrepresented as museum visitors, namely the urban working class and those in the rural countryside. As such, they were envisioned

[2] It should be noted that Revolutionary Museums, more so than any other type of museum, were given "unconditional financial support" and political backing by various state institutions. This is not surprising considering their public educational role, as defined in 1945, to develop and bring attention to the "cult of national victims and sufferers, casualties and heroes of the peoples-liberation war" (Čaldarović 2008: 106).

as a cure to the ills of bourgeois museum practice in decades past and "appeared far more interesting and more important than a 'conservative' national one" in the early decades of socialist Yugoslavia (Čaldarović 2008: 106).

Revolutionary Museums were concerned first and foremost with collecting, processing, and exhibiting the material remains of the communist resistance, commonly referred to as the People's Liberation Struggle (NOB), during World War Two. Unlike most Eastern European states where communism was mostly an external development imposed by the USSR in the immediate postwar years, socialist Yugoslavia was formed by an indigenous resistance led by the communist *Partizan* forces. As Đorđe Tomić notes, this meant that the legacy of the NOB was particularly important as "one of the main pillars of legitimization of the new state" (Tomić 2014, 276). Thus, the early conceptualization of Revolutionary Museums concerned solely the *Partizan* resistance and socialist revolution with a heavy emphasis on military and political history. By the early 1960s, however, the Revolutionary Museums expanded their focus to cover other aspects of contemporary history such as the building of socialism, women's participation in the war effort and in modern society, and topics related to everyday life under socialism. The first Revolutionary Museum in Croatia opened in 1953 under the title "The Museum of the Peoples Liberation Struggle" in Zagreb and was later renamed "The Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia" in 1960 as it expanded its topical focus. Following the Zagreb model, a network of Revolutionary Museums developed thereafter in Croatia between the 1960s and early 1980s with museums opening in in places like Split, Rijeka, Makarska, Pula, and Slavonski Brod.

In parallel with Revolutionary Museums, museum professionals developed the so-called Native Place Museum *(Zavičajni Muzej)*. As a "complex type" museum meant to embody modern museology, Native Place Museums were much broader in scope than Revolutionary Museums, dealing with anything from archeology and ethnography to local and natural history. Often located in smaller rural municipalities, Native Place Museums were designed to serve first and foremost the local community, and, to a lesser extent, tourists. As such, their exhibition activities had a strong local flavor that, at times, only loosely related to the larger socialist Yugoslav paradigm. At the same time, however, Native Place Museums were envisioned as embodying the principles of Marxist historical materialism by taking everything that was local—history, geography, ethnography, and so forth—and positioning it within the historical progression towards socialist Yugoslavism.[3] There was no universal structure for these museums to follow in terms of what collections they developed or what subject departments they emphasized. Instead, their collections would develop in accordance to the historical legacy of the region, although each museum was required to have a separate department for contemporary history (Horvat 1975).

Thematically speaking, both museum types developed in conjunction with the growing predominance of historical materialism and contemporary history. Revolutionary Museums were not only contemporary in the sense that they covered the most recent past, but also because they engaged with contemporary history as a historical framework. As Babić and Durbešić explained in a 1975 report, the educational-pedagogical goal of these museums was "to document and show that our contemporary development is a necessary and logical extension of the People's Liberation Struggle, that is to say, an organic connection of the past to the present." As such, they could not function "at the level of scientific neutrality that avoids conflict and confrontation but rather must have an adequate interpretation of class and ideology, as well as Marxist, Leninist, and class approaches to the problems of history and the socialist present" (Babić and Durbešić 1975: 52).

---

[3] It is difficult to make any substantial claims about *all* Native Place Museums due to their heavily decentralized nature. Many smaller regional museums were administered at an entirely local (and often amateur) basis, and as such incorporated socialist Yugoslavism into their exhibitions sparingly. Others, however, were directly linked to republic-level cultural institutions and heavily reinforced socialist Yugoslavism in their exhibitions, such as the Museum of the Peasant Uprisings in Gornja Stubica.

The Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia, for instance, exhibited topics that ranged from military activities to various aspects of the new socialist Yugoslav state like the growth of industry and urban centers, and even gender equality. One of its earliest exhibitions, "From Partisan Units to the Yugoslav Army" in 1957, exemplified how the museum narrated the Croatian experience during World War Two as truly Yugoslav in nature. Focusing on how the early Croatian paramilitaries merged with the Yugoslav *Partizan* army, the exhibition argued these paramilitaries embodied "the contribution of the people of Croatia in the general struggle of the peoples of Yugoslavia in national revolution" (Ščukanec 1957: 3). Likewise, the 1970 exhibition, "A Quarter Century of Our Development," lauded the current socialist state as the culmination of the workers' movement while emphasizing the rapid economic development of Croatia after World War Two and the great strides made in social justice (Dešković and Ivanuša 1970). Finally, the 1985 exhibition, "The Women of Croatia in the Revolution," presented the role of women in both the revolution and modern society in order to demonstrate just how revolutionary the contemporary state was. The exhibition began by demonstrating women's role during World War Two as combatants and nurses before praising the place of women in modern Croatian society that gave them "the same opportunities as men" as "scientists and highly educated experts." The exhibition concluded that while women need to be credited with having achieved this success themselves, it was a feat only made possible by the revolutionary nature of the Yugoslav state and "its vanguard—the Communist Party of Yugoslavia" (Purtić n.d.: 51).

For Native Place Museums, the thematic approach to contemporary history meant addressing the entirety of the locale's history as simultaneously local and national, Croatian and Yugoslav, and most importantly, as evidence of the historical drive towards socialism. One of the clearest examples of integrating the more distant past and local legacies into a Marxist historical framework is the Museum of Peasant Uprisings in Gornja Stubica, just north of the Zagreb county. Opened in 1973 on the 400-year anniversary of the 1573 Peasant Uprising, the Museum of Peasant Uprisings was developed as a Native Place Museum with departments for traditional history, ethnography, archeology, art, and contemporary history. The 1573 peasant rebellion on which the museum focused has been the subject of various historical and ideological interpretations, and the particular Marxist-Yugoslav interpretation presented in this museum bares particular significance.

The event itself is rather straightforward: on January 29th, 1573, peasants in the Croatian Zagorje region revolted against their feudal lord, Franjo Tahy, and spread the rebellion as far as north as Varaždin and southern Slovenia. After a number of noblemen were killed and their manors captured, the Ban of Croatia, Juraj Draškovic, sent an imperial army against the peasant army and swiftly defeated them. A large portion of the 10,000-strong peasant army was killed, the leaders of the revolt, including the now legendary Matija Gubec, were publicly executed, and the imperial army was given free rein to plunder the countryside as a punishment and warning to future rebellions (Pavlaković 2004).

As Pavlaković points out, the legacy of 1573 has long been subjected to various ideological interpretations that have attempted to assign ideological motive to the peasants, and in particular, the leadership of Matija Gubec (Pavlakavić 2004). During the 19th century, for instance, the 1573 uprising and Matija Gubec were the subjects of romantic-nationalist historiography and touted as examples of the undying spirit of Croatian, Slovenian, and/or Yugoslav nationalism. Likewise, in the interwar period, the events were subjected to conservative-populist, far-right, and far-left interpretations. The Croatian Peasant Party, for instance, focused on Gubec as the ideal Croatian peasant who fought feudalist exploitation while also maintaining a conservative and non-revolutionary socio-political program that sought to restore the "old rights" and "social order, which existed during the old Croatian kingdom" (Pavlakavić 2004: 731). The fascist Ustaše party, meanwhile, used 1573 and Gubec as examples of the undying Croatian national spirit and the centuries-long struggle for national independence. Finally, the communist interpretation—first developed in the 1930s but employed far more dramatically during World War Two as a means of inspiring peasants to rise up in socialist revolution—was deeply rooted in both Marxist historical materialism and populist peasant folklore. For example, in the tradition of Engel's *The Peasant War in Germany* (1850), early socialist historians rejected previous interpretations that looked at religious or political reasons and instead understood the revolt as the inevitable result of class conflict over changes in the socio-economic landscape of Central Europe. At the same time, the communist interpretation tapped into popular myths and legends about peasant rebels against foreign oppressors and aristocratic exploitation to inspire the largely peasant population of Croatia in World War Two to rise up against Italian and German occupiers (Pavlakavić 2004: 737).

The Museum of Peasant Uprisings, under the guidance of Professor Josip Adamček, adopted and expanded upon this interpretation to fulfill the new museological principle of contemporary history. It is worth noting here that of all Croatian historians working on the medieval and premodern eras during the socialist period, Josip Adamček was the most ardently Marxist, "whose ideological background can be recognized not only in the economic determination of his explanations, but also in the terminology he used (e.g. 'exploitation')" (Budak 2004: 130). The entirety of the permanent exhibition was therefore informed by a Marxist historical interpretation of class struggle that also drew a parallel between the peasant uprisings of the 16th century and the contemporary socialist state. Five of the seven exhibition rooms, for instance, were dedicated to the historical circumstances that led to the rebellion, the events of the rebellion, and its gruesome suppression. The narrative told in these rooms heavily emphasized the socio-economic conditions of the peasantry *vis-à-vis* their feudal lords and connected this individual event to the broader phenomenon of peasant rebellions and class struggle in Central Europe in the 16th century (Adamček 1971). As Adamček explained in his guide to the museum, the immediate cause of the rebellion was the "restoration of a feudal monopoly in the commerce of agricultural products" that resulted from feudal lords suppressing proto-capitalism amongst the peasantry (Adamček 1973). The harsh treatment of Franjo Tahy—considered today by many historians to be an extreme case and the immediate cause of the rebellion (Pavlaković 2004; Budak 2007)—was explained more so as typical than exceptional and framed within the larger "brutality and cruelty of the Croatian feudal lords" (Adamček 1971: 4). Further explaining that this was a product of the broader class struggle between the serfs and nobility, Adamček concluded that the peasant leadership sought to abolish the entire feudal system once "part of the rebels realized that their goals could not be achieved in a struggle against an individual feudal lord, and that it was necessary to take the struggle against the entire feudal class and to oust them from power" (Adamček 1973: 8). In doing so, Adamček retroactively infused the rebellion with a revolutionary, class-based ideology, that in reality was likely limited in scope and—in terms of its scale and intensity—immediately caused by Tahy's treatment of the peasantry (Budak 2007: 149). Likewise, Adamček interpreted the dual Slovenian and Croatian nature of the rebellion as a precursor to socialist Yugoslavia since these two peoples were united by a "common class interest" and revolutionary ideology (Adamček 1973: 9).

Beyond the historical events of the 16th century, the museum exhibited contemporary historical events related to the peasant rebellion. For instance, the final two rooms of the permanent exhibition were dedicated to the historical legacy of 1573 in popular culture, art, and politics. Room six in particular was dedicated to presenting how the revolutionary spirit of the time inspired modern socialist heroes, such as "our revolutionaries [who] renewed the tradition of the peasant uprising in the Great October Revolution," the Spanish Civil War, and most importantly, the People's Liberation Struggle (Adamček 1973: 16). By narrating the events of 1573 through the lenses of class struggle and socio-economic exploitation, and then connecting the revolutionary spirit of the peasant actors to contemporary revolutionary events, the Museum of the Peasant Uprisings effectively demonstrated the museological idea of contemporary history. This emphasis on the contemporary—both in terms of narrating the past according to Marxist teleology, and in terms of narrating contemporary events thematically related to the peasant uprising—was not just pervasive but an actual structural foundation for many Native Place Museums, much the same as in Revolutionary Museums.

In addition to the emphasis on contemporary history, Revolutionary Museums and Native Place Museums both implemented the most current ideas about the value of original objects in exhibitions versus the use of replicas, accompanying text, and audio-visual techniques. As discussed in the previous section, this logic was rooted in object-based displays methods that emphasized "thematic wholes" and ideologically driven conclusions about the course of human history, while also minimizing "bourgeois" museum practices that were more concerned with rarity and grandeur than historical analysis and everyday life. Accordingly, the permanent and temporary exhibitions in all the Croatian Revolutionary Museums relied extremely upon written text, photographs, and replicas, while displaying only a select few original objects. Of the original objects displayed, most tented to be text-based, such as original copies of party documents, flyers, or letters.

In a 1978 exhibition in Rijeka on the role of women in the wartime resistance, for instance, only two out of ninety objects on display were original, non-documentation related objects: a red star dedicated to a certain Ivana Blašković, and a hankerchief given as a gift to a female soldier. The rest consisted of either photographs or reprints of the wartime events, battle maps, newspapers, fliers, party documents, and so forth (Giron 1978). Likewise, the permanent exhibition of the Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia in Zagreb—designed in 1962 with only minor alterations until its closure in 1990—was dominated by replicas, maps, photos, documents, and thematic displays, while only a handful of original military artifacts were presented on the exhibition floor (see fig. 1-3). The 1970 exhibition, *A Quarter Century of Our Growth and Development*, on the other hand contained a fair number of original objects (although still nowhere near the majority), such as badges, paper records of regional funding for reconstruction and industrialization, brochures and political pamphlets, and awards like "outstanding worker" cards (*udarnička karta*) (Ivanuša 1969). The choice of these items, however, is telling about the museological logic that determined which original objects to include: as heavily text-driven, paper documents, these objects had virtually the same function as accompanying texts and legends since there was nothing ambiguous about their meaning and therefore could hardly be misinterpreted.

For Native Place Museums, original objects were more common but almost universally accompanied by helping materials such as explanatory texts, photographs, replicas, and artist renditions of the distant past that supplemented the display of authentic objects. In part, this was due to the fact that many of the objects were mundane in nature that lacked much individual meaning, but that when organized as a collective whole, could embody the history and culture of the region. This meant organizing all collections and exhibitions on a thematic basis so that the objects themselves would function to illuminate some broader historical phenomenon, such as the development of proto-industry through village-level textile production or the early roots of the worker's movement.

Once again looking at the Museum of Peasant Uprisings, the planning document for the permanent exhibition in 1973 suggests that among the many concerns of museum professionals, physical authenticity was a relatively low priority. As Adamček explains in the document, there was not a great deal of physical evidence or contemporary accounts from the events of 1573. Accordingly, he and his colleagues needed to rely on later depictions and "modern artistic interventions" in the form of maps, illustrations, graphics, and so forth in order to present a clear picture of the conditions of the peasantry in the 16th century. Therefore, the majority of the exhibition "would consist of free standing and hanging panels, drawings based on original engravings, glass cases, photocopies of documents and enhanced photography, original ethnographic examples […] of tools and weapons, written text translations, and fixed legends" (Adamček 1971: 33). Perhaps the most egregious example of this was the fifth room of the exhibition designed to capture the essence of the "feudal terror" that followed the defeat of the uprising. The room was painted completely black and only sparse lit, while copies of "old graphics of peasant torture" were projected via overhead projector on the wall. Multiple dimly lit panels described contemporary torture and interrogation techniques in detail and were accompanied by a modern painting of Matija Gubec being tortured by a red-hot iron crown titled, "The Coronation of Gubec." Even more striking, an audio reenactment of the rebel leaders' interrogation was played on loop to demonstrate "the actual course of the interrogation," even though Adamček admits that they had to reconstruct most of these questions based on a few sparse descriptions of the interrogations (Adamček 1973: 10). It seems clear, therefore, that Adamček was less concerned with direct empiricism backed by authentic material objects than he was with constructing a narrative of class struggle in line with the Yugoslav brand of Marxist historical materialism.

• • • • • • • • •

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated how key developments in Croatian museology—Revolutionary and Native Place Museum models, contemporary history, and object-based displays—were rooted in the Yugoslav notion of a "third way" of socialist practice. First and foremost, early Croatian museologists such as Antun Bauer sought to transform museums into truly public institutions that would serve the cultural-educational needs of a new socialist society. To this end, they theorized practices to democratize museum spaces by increasing their accessibility and presenting their collections in easily comprehensible ways. In the process of creating more comprehensible exhibitions, Croatian museologists increasingly promoted Marxist historical materialism as the main

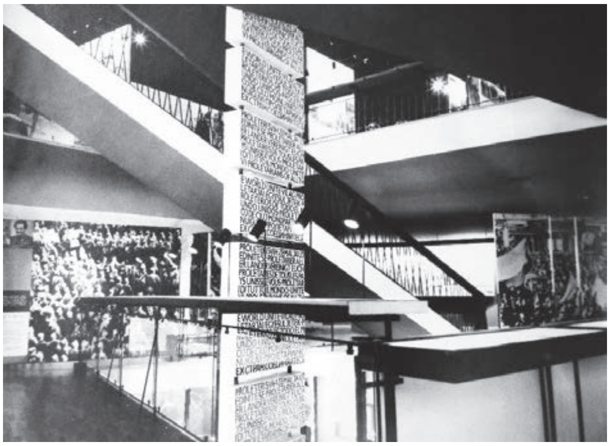


Fig. 1: Permanent exhibition of The Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia, circa 1962. The pillar in the middle contained the phrase "workers of the world unite" in various languages. The image is property of Croatian History Museum.

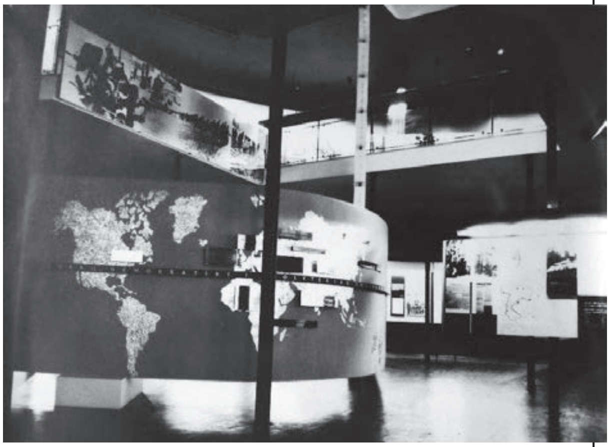


Fig. 2: Permanent exhibition of The Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia, circa 1962. A display of international "democratic and proletariat solidarity." The image is property of Croatian History Museum.

methodology for processing and presenting material culture. Precisely because this methodology allowed for even the most mundane objects to fit within a much larger historical trajectory—a trajectory that reinforced the socialist state, no less—it was particularly suited for presenting the historical lessons the Yugoslav state sought to promote. While these museological developments were certainly rooted in the ideological goals of the socialist state, they should not be considered solely a political endeavor. Rather, these developments reflect the ways in which political goals and cultural-educational endeavors often intersect, and how the political interest of a state can provide the structural support for cultural-educational institutions without fully dictating their form or practice, particularly so in the decentralized Yugoslav federal system.

In their attempts to make museums more accessible to the masses, however, Croatian museologists ultimately devalued the material objects themselves. Ironically, the more that Croatian museologists embraced Marxist historical materialism—a historical methodology that placed enormous explanatory value on the authentic material conditions of everyday life—the more they relied on inauthentic didactic objects like texts, graphics, and replicas to craft exhibitions akin to "a book on the wall."[4] Rather than letting the objects speak for themselves in exhibitions—a remnant of bourgeois practice—Croatian museologists saw the museum space as an educational mediator between the often-inaccessible historical truths of mundane objects and the everyday museum visitor. The Museum of the Peasant Uprisings in particular reflected this practice: having little physical remains of the events of 1573 at their disposal, Josip Adamček and his fellow curators crafted a permant exhibition that subjugated authentic material remains to the primacy of inauthentic didactic materials and the story they were designed to tell. Similar practices dominated Revolutionary Museums, as seen in the Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia whose permanent exhibition consisted primarily of two-dimensional graphics and panels. While many graphics contained copies of original paper documents, they were so heavily framed by broader stock phrases like "workers of the world unite" and "democratic and proletariat solidarity" that the original meaning and context of the objects were secondary to the larger story of socialist revolution (fig. 1-2). Likewise, the few original objects on display, such as arms used by the *Partizan* forces, were dominated by their surrounding panels and graphics,

[4] I borrow this phrase from the current director of the museum, Vlatka Filipčić Maligec, who criticized the heavy use of text in the original exhibition as "a book on the wall" (Maligec 2013: 86).

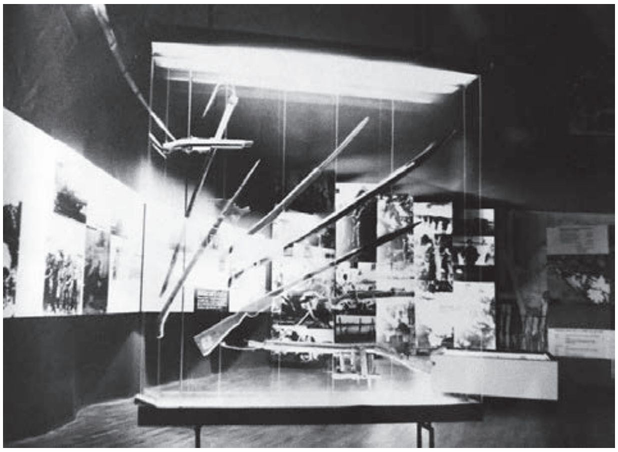


Fig. 3: Permanent exhibition of The Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia, circa 1962. Some of the few original wartime artifacts on display. The image is property of Croatian History Museum.

effectively suffocating the relevance of their authenticity (fig. 3).

This article has solely explored historical museums in Croatia. In other traditional museum types such as archeology and ethnography, original objects were indeed more prominent, and the degree to which these museums employed Marxist historical materialism, object-based displays, and contemporary history is a subject for further research. Certainly, in the historical museums investigated here, however, the importance of authentic material culture greatly decreased in favor of text- and image-based exhibition practices that sought to eliminate interpretive ambiguity and elevate Party-line historical interpretations. Perhaps for this reason more than any other, the legacy of Revolutionary Museums has been essentially erased, as every Revolutionary Museum in Croatia has either closed its doors or transitioned into a local-city museum. Likewise, collections related to the socialist period in Native Place Museums throughout Croatia have been used only sparingly, and often with a clear inversion of the legacy of socialism.

Nevertheless, these museums and museological principles tell us a great deal about how cultural-educational institutions functioned under Yugoslav style socialism. On the one hand, museums as public educational sites were rarely locations where official state culture was challenged or subverted, as evidenced by the heavy-handed didactic exhibition practices developed during this time. On the other hand, museology as an academic discipline functioned quite freely from state ministries and was thoroughly engaged with practices from both East and West. As such, the legacy of Croatian socialist museology matters to this day not only as evidence of real, lived socialist practice, but also as a unique contribution to the field of modern museology that successfully traversed the ideological borders of the Cold War.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adamček, Josip. 1971. *Stalna Postava Izložbe Seljačkih Buna 1573* [Permanent Exhibition Setup of the Peasant Uprisings of 1573]. Dvorac Oršić Samci—G. Stubica. Investicioni Program, Troškovnik Plan i Tlocrtno Rješenje. Museum Documentation Center Library (*Knjiž*nica MDC-a). Zagreb: Croatia. 7687, unpublished source.

Adamček, Josip. 1973. "Vodić kroz Muzej Seljačkih Buna" [Guide through the Museum of the Peasant Uprisings]. Gornja Stubica: Museum of the Peasant Uprisings. Museum Documentation Center Library (*Knjižnica MDC-a*). Zagreb: Croatia. L-3923.

Babić, Darko. 2009. "Experiences and (Hidden) Values of Ecomuseums." *Etnološka Istraživanja*. 14 (December): 237-252.

Babić, Katarina, and Viktorija Durbešić. 1975. "Znanstveni Zadaci u Muzejima Revolucije, Odjelima Narodnooslobodilačke Borbe i Socijalističke Revolucije u Kompleksnim Muzejima" [The Scientific Tasks in Museums of the Revolution and Departments for the People's Liberation Struggle and Socialist Revolution in Complex Museums]. *Muzeologija: Zbornik za Muzejsku Problematiku*. 17: 51-72 [available online at: https://hrcak.srce.hr/101339].

Bauer, Antun. 1953a. "Muzejska Propaganda i Povremene Muzejske Izložbe" [Museum Advertisements and Contemporary Museum Exhibitions]. *Muzeologija: Zbornik za Muzejsku Problematiku*. 2: 69-125 [available online at: https://hrcak.srce.hr/105393].

Bauer, Antun. 1953b. "Neki Problemi Muzejske Arhitekture" [Some Problems Concerning Museum Architecture]. *Muzeologija: Zbornik za Muzejsku Problematiku*. 3: 133-173 [available online at: https://hrcak.srce.hr/105392].

Bauer, Antun. 1967. "Muzeologija: Nastupno Predavanje za Kolegij Muzeologije na Postidplomskom Studiju, Održano 13.XII.1966. Godina" [Museology: Inaugural Lecture for the College of Museology for Postgraduate Studies, Held December 13th, 1966]. *Muzeologija: Zbornik za Muzejsku Problematiku*. 6: 6-21 [available online at: https://hrcak.srce.hr/105371].

Budak, Neven. 2004. "Post-socialist Historiography in Croatia since 1990." In *(Re)Writing History—Historiography in Southeast Europe after Socialism*, ed. Ulf Brunnbauer, 128-164. Münster: LIT.

Budak, Neven. 2007. *Hrvatska i Slavonija u Ranome Novom Vijeku* [Croatia and Slavonia in the Early Modern Period]. Zagreb: Leykam International.

Čaldarović, Dubravka Peić. 2008. "History Museums in a Changing Political Environment." In *Museums and Universal Heritage: History in the Area of Conflict between Interpretation and Manipulation*, ed. Marie-Paule Jungblut, 100-116. Luxembourg: ICMAH.

Dešković, Ksenija and Dolores Ivanuša. 1970. *Četvrt Stoljeća Našeg Razvitka* [A Quarter Century of Our Development]. Zagreb: Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia. Croatian History Museum Archive. Zagreb: Croatia.

Dobronić, Ljerka. 1975. "Program Povijesnog Muzeja Hrvatske za Istraživanja Materijalne Kulture Feudalizma (ISMAF)" [Program of the History Museum of Croatia for Research on the Material Culture of Feudalism (ISMAF)]. *Muzeologija: Zbornik za Muzejsku Problematiku*. 18: 128-131 [available online at: https://hrcak.srce.hr/99246].

Giron, Antun. 1978. *Tematski Plan Izložba "Žena u NOB Riječju i Djelom"* [Thematic Plan for the Exhibition "Women in the People's Liberation Struggle in Word and Deed"]. City Museum of Rijeka Library. Rijeka: Croatia. I/38, unpublished source.

Gorenc, Marcel. 1953. "Kulturno-historijski Muzeji i Umjetničke Galerije u Hrvatskoj" [Cultural-Historical Museums and Art Galleries in Croatia]. *Muzeologija: Zbornik za Muzejsku Problematiku*. 1: 7-18 [available online at: https://hrcak.srce.hr/105395].

Hasaganić, Ebid. 1975. "Istroijski Muzeji i Savremeni Svet" [Historical Museums and the Contemporary World]. *Muzeologija: Zbornik za Muzejsku Problematiku*. 17: 14-23 [available online at: https://hrcak.srce.hr/101334].

Horvat, Vlado. 1975. "Osnivanje i Razvoj Muzeja u Slavoniji" [Foundation and Development of Museums in Slavonia]. *Muzeologija: Zbornik za Muzejsku Problematiku*. 19: 31-41 [available online at: https://hrcak.srce.hr/98758].

Ivanuša, Doloras. 1969. *Tematski Plan Izložba "Četvrt Stoljeća Našeg Razvitka"* [Thematic Plan for the Exhibition, "A Quarter Century of Our Development"]. Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia Library. Zagreb: Croatia, unpublished source.

Jaskot, Paul B. 2012. *The Nazi Perpetrator: Postwar German Art and the Politics of the Right*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Jolles, Adam. 2005. "Stalin's Talking Museums." *The Oxford Art Journal*. 28 (3): 429-455.

Knežvić, Đurđa. 1989. "Budići Postav Muzeja Revolucije Naroda Hrvatska ili Muzeja Suvremene Povijesti u Hrvatskoj" [Future Exhibition of the Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia or the Museum of Contemporary History in Croatia]. *Informatica Museologica*. 20 (1-2): 46-47 [available online at: https://hrcak.srce.hr/145031].

Kulić, Vladimir, Maroje Mrduljaš, and Wolfgang Thaler. 2012. *Modernism In-Between: The Mediatory Architectures of Socialist Yugoslavia*. Berlin: Jovis Verlag GmbH.

Lechner, Zdenka. 1975. "Etnografija i Slavonski Muzeji" [Ethnography and Slovenian Museums]. *Muzeologija: Zbornik za Muzejsku Problematiku*. 19: 83-88 [available online at: https://hrcak.srce.hr/98761].

Ljerka, Kanižaj. 1989. "Analiza Stanja Muzejskih Zbirki, Muzejskih i Stalnih Izložbi, Sadržajno Vezanih uz Radnički Pokret, NOB i Poslijeratnu Socijalističku Izgradnju na Teritoriju SR Hrvatske" [Analysis of the Condition of Museum Collections, Museum and Permanent Exhibitions, and Content Related to the Workers' Movement, the People's Liberation Struggle, and the Postwar Building of Socialism in the Territory of the Socialist Republic of Croatia]. *Muzeologija: Zbornik za Muzejsku Problematiku*. 26: 5-17 [available online at: https://hrcak.srce.hr/94997].

Lorente, Jesus-Pedro. 2012. "The Development of Museum Studies in Universities: From Technical Training to Critical Museology." *Museum Management and Curatorship*. 27 (3): 237-252.

Maligec, Vlatka Filipčić. 2013. "40 Godina Muzeja Seljačkih Buna (1973-2013)" [40 Years of the Museum of the Peasant Uprisings (1973-2013)]. *Informatica Museologica*. 44 (1-4): 81-88 [available online at: https://hrcak.srce.hr/174243].

Milošević, Branka. 1975. "Prezentacija Muzeja Radničkog Pokreta sa Osvrtom na Prezentaciju Socijalističke Izgradnje" [Presentation of Museums of the Workers' Movement with Consideration for the Presentation of the Building of Socialism]. *Muzeologija: Zbornik za Muzejsku Problematiku*. 17: 73-88 [available online at: https://hrcak.srce.hr/101341].

Palhegyi, Joel. 2017. "National Museums, National Myths: Constructing Socialist Yugoslavism for Croatia and Croats." *Nationalities Papers*. 45 (6): 1048-1065.

Pavlaković, Vjeran. 2004. "Matija Gubec Goes to Spain: Symbols and Ideology in Croatia. 1936-1939." *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*. 17 (4): 727-755.

Pešić, Slobodan. 1975. "Sadašnjost kao Muzeološka Tema za Budućnost" [The Present as a Museological Theme for the Future]. *Muzeologija: Zbornik za Muzejsku Problematiku*. 17: 1-13 [available online at: https://hrcak.srce.hr/101333].

Purtić, Andro. N.d. Žene *Hrvatske u Revoluciji*. [The Women of Croatia in the Revolution]. Zagreb: Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia. Croatian History Museum Archive. Zagreb: Croatia.

Ščukanec Dragutin. 1957. *Od Partizahnskih Odreda do Jugoslavenske Armije*. [From *Partizan* Unit to Yugoslav Army]. Zagreb: Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia.

Tomić, Đorđe. 2014. "From 'Yugoslavism' to (Post-)Yugoslav Nationalisms: Understanding Yugoslav 'Identities'." In *European National Identities: Elements, Transitions, Conflicts*, eds. Rolan Vogt, Wayne Cristaudo, and Andreas Leutzch, 271-292. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Van Mensch, Peter. 1992. "Towards a Methodology of Museology." PhD diss., University of Zagreb.

Vojnović, Zdenko. 1953. "Naučno Prosvjetni Zadaci Muzeja" [The Scientific-Educational Tasks of Museums]. *Muzeologija: Zbornik za Muzejsku Problematiku*. 1: 19-34 [available online at: https://hrcak.srce.hr/105396].

Zimmerman, Tanja. 2016. "The Visualization of the Third Way of Tito's Yugoslavia." In *Art beyond Borders: Artistic Exchange in Communist Europe (1945-1989)*, eds. Jérôme Bazin, Pascal Dubourg Glatigny, and Piotr Piotrowski, 473-484. Budapest; New York: Central European University Press.

MARTOR

Title: *Dakar's Museum of Black Civilisations: Towards a New Imaginary of a Post-ethnographic Museum*

Author: Charline Kopf

How to cite this article: Kopf, Charline. 2018. "Dakar's Museum of Black Civilisations: Towards a New Imaginary of a Post-ethnographic Museum." *Martor* 23: 37-55.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Ţăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

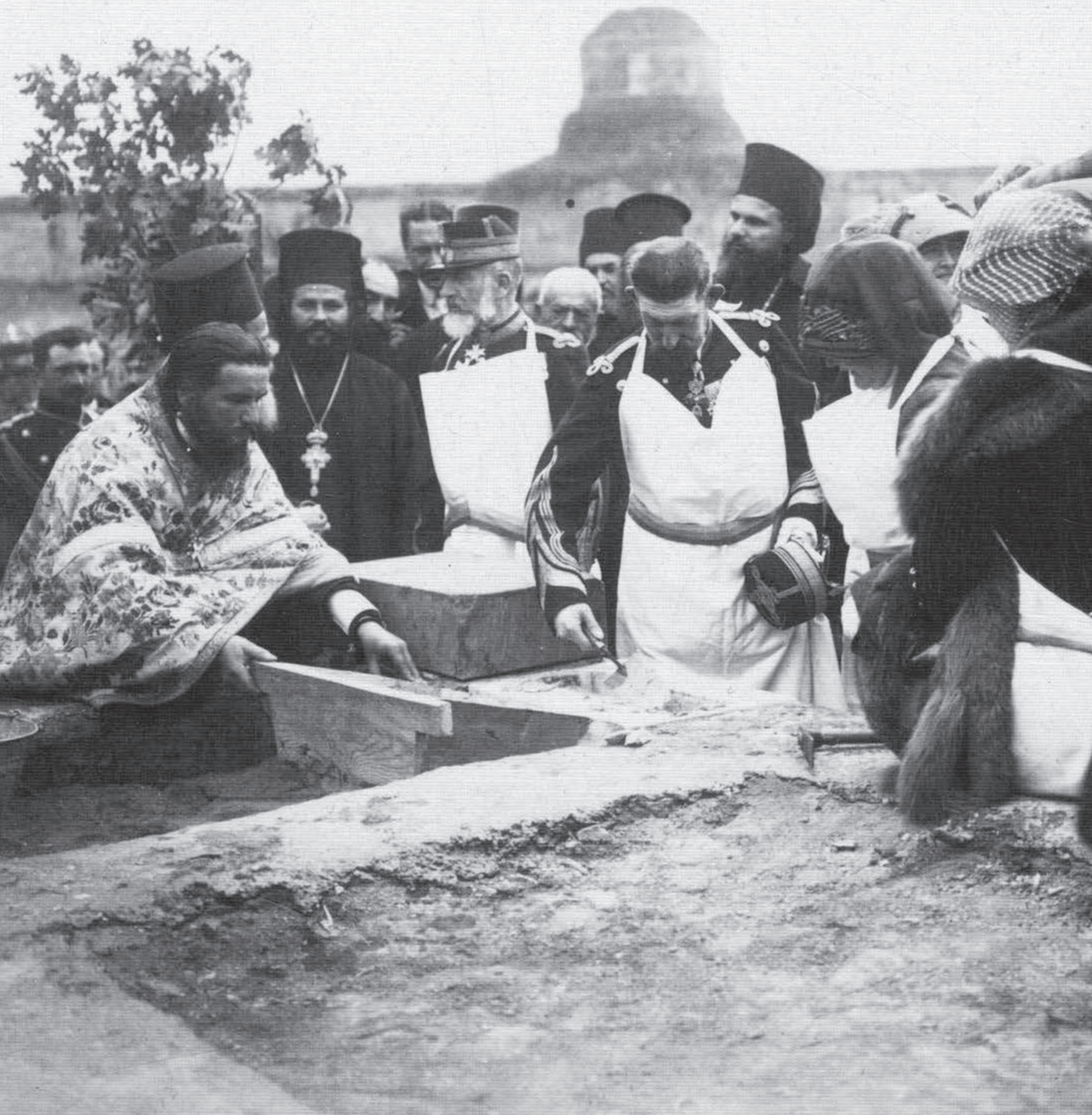
URL: http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/martor-23-2018/

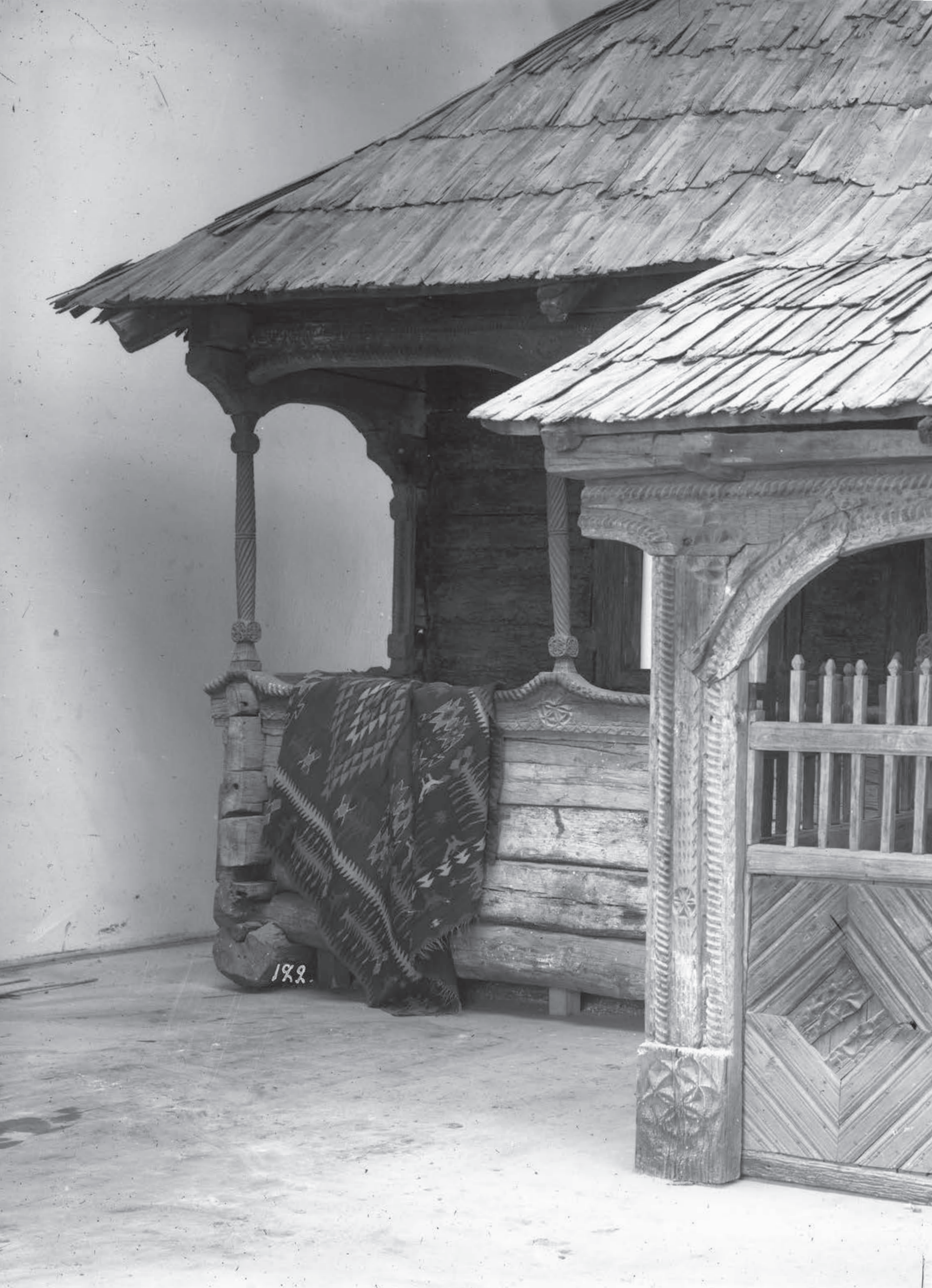
Martor (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Journal) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. ***Martor Journal*** is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Interdisciplinary and international in scope, it provides a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for academic and non-academic readership. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

Martor (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue ***Martor*** est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

Martor is indexed by:

CEEOL, EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Anthropological Index Online (AIO), MLA International Bibliography.




182.

Dakar's Museum of Black Civilisations: Towards a New Imaginary of a Post-ethnographic Museum

Charline Kopf
PhD candidate in Social Anthropology, University of Oslo
charline.kopf@hotmail.de

ABSTRACT

How are postcolonial identities curated in non-Western art institutions? How do the latter engage with the question of the restitution of colonial looted artefacts during this turning point where Western museums seem increasingly willing to address claims of repatriation? Focusing on the unfolding debates on restitution and heritage around the new Museum of Black Civilisations (MCN) in Senegal, the article investigates how curatorial approaches aimed at challenging Eurocentrism address questions of identity, authenticity and discourses on the Other. It finds that, contrary to decolonial museum exhibitions in the West, the MCN avoids engaging in claims of restitution as this would reproduce Europe's key role in defining "authentic" and "traditional" African art. At the same time, this paper shows that the underlying logic aimed to subvert exoticising representations and reconfigure Self-Other relations can uphold an internal dichotomy of cultures that risks lapsing into the same essentialism that is criticised. This is furthermore complicated by the tension between an imaginary of pan-African Black Civilisations and the criticism directed towards the management of artefacts in postcolonial states where nation-building is an ongoing process.

In teasing out the challenges of formulating a reconfigured postcolonial future without drawing on culturalist discourses and reinforcing a dichotomy between modernity and tradition, this article adds a radically different perspective to the literature on heritage and museums in relation to colonialism and is also of relevance to those looking at curatorial practices, identity politics and international relations.

KEYWORDS

Post-ethnography, decolonising museums, intangible heritage, curatorial practices, identity politics.

Introduction

How are decolonial exhibitions and postcolonial identities articulated and staged in museums located in non-Western countries? How do the latter approach the restitution of colonial looted artefacts during a turning point where Western museums seem increasingly willing to address previous claims of repatriation?[1] Indeed, adding to Nederveen Pieterse's "epochal shifts" (1997: 124), 2017 is already being remembered as the year that changed postcolonial relations in the museum landscape. As the French president Emmanuel Macron claimed in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in November 2017:

> African heritage can no longer be only held in private collections and European museums. It must be showcased in Paris, but also in Dakar, Lagos, Cotonou … This will be one of my priorities. In the next five years, I want all the conditions to be met for a return of African heritage to Africa.[2]

It is in that context that the new Museum of Black Civilisations (*Musée des Civilisations Noires*, also MCN) in Dakar—

---

[1] This article adopts Kowalski's definition of return and restitution which refers to "situations where cultural property lost during colonial domination is recovered" (2005: 96).

[2] Emmanuel Macron qtd in Philippe Dagen, "Arts: Restituer son patrimoine à l'Afrique," *Le Monde Afrique,* 7 December 2017 [available online at: http://www.lemonde.fr/culture/article/2017/12/07/restitution-du-patrimoine-africain-un-sujet-qui-fache_5225921_3246.html; accessed 14 December 2017].

built with the purpose of displaying the cultural contribution of Black Civilisations to the universal heritage of humanity—has to grapple with this article's opening questions. While it will officially open its doors in December 2018, the building, constructed and funded as part of China's foreign aid programme, has been empty for a long time due to the absence of a permanent collection.[3] Indeed, most African art and artefacts are not located on the continent, but in museums of former colonial powers. Yet, although the director of the new Museum welcomed President Macron's statement,[4] the restitution of looted objects is not the main focus of the MCN. Instead, its director argues for a "post-ethnographic" approach which seeks to decentre the importance of material objects and re-evaluate intangible African heritage. As the Minister of Culture and the Museum's director both declared, the MCN will not be an anthropological, ethnographic or "chromatic" museum relating to perceptions of ethnicity and race, and its exhibitions will not frame Africa as stuck in the past.[5]

While much has been written on postcolonialism in relation to orientalising aesthetics (for example, Hackforth-Jones and Roberts 2005) and to discussions on the restitution of looted objects (Okwunodu Ogbechie 2010),[6] there is little literature focusing on how these critical discourses are integrated in the curatorial practices of non-Western institutions. How do the MCN's theoretical preoccupations play out in its exhibitions? And how, in turn, does the Museum position itself within the larger political, historical and contemporary context?

Based on interviews and fieldwork conducted in 2017, this paper analyses the Museum's aim to formulate a reconfigured postcolonial future without reinscribing it in a dichotomous explanation that opposes modernity and tradition, as well as culturalist discourses. The first section of the paper examines the Museum's curatorial project and the director's rethinking of a postcolonial world order via the notion of post-ethnography in relation to the building currently being empty. The article finds that the aim of the MCN is not only to counter ahistorical depictions of Africa but also to "provincialise" the colonial narrative (Chakrabarty 2008).

The second section analyses how the post-ethnographic concept informs the director's position on the restitution of looted objects, and how this concept is mapped onto the architecture of the Museum.[7] By focusing on the preservation of intangible and non-colonial heritage, the director attempts to overcome modernist separations of spheres and mind-body dualities, and hence goes beyond the kind of heritage preservation that focuses predominantly on the colonial to the detriment of, for example, oral history. This also means that, contrary to decolonial museum exhibitions in the West, the Senegalese actors involved in the conception of the MCN avoid engaging in claims of restitution, as the emphasis on objects looted during the colonial period reproduces Europe's key role in defining what "authentic" and "traditional" African art is. Nonetheless, my analysis reveals that, despite the aim to subvert exoticising representations and reconfigure Self-Other relations away from assimilating tendencies—practices that both old and new exhibitions and museums share (see also Pieterse 1997)—the logic underlying the spatial and architectural divides within the building can perpetuate cultural dichotomies and hierarchies.

The last section of the article addresses the critique that in provincialising the colonial narrative there is a risk of hindering research into the histories of the objects collected throughout the former territories of French West Africa now held in storage by other museums in Dakar. Indeed, the Senegalese museum administrators do not engage with the historical circulation of objects throughout the former colonial federation, which some of my interlocutors interpret as a deliberate act. For them, this would risk opening a discussion on the intra-African restitution of looted objects and reveal the tension between the MCN's aim to define a post-ethnographic imaginary of pan-African Black Civilisations and the management of objects in West African postcolonial states where nation-building is still an ongoing process. By examining how postcolonial preoccupations and identity making specifically unfold in this new art institution, the article also speaks to those interested in curatorial practices and studies in that it reveals the discursive power of art exhibitions within larger historical and contemporary political contexts (Cahan 2016; Greenberg *et al.* 1996; Krauss 1996; Sylvester 2009; Wallace 2015).

---

[3] "Le musée des civilisations noires ouvert le 6 décembre prochain," *Agence de Presse Sénégalaise*, 26 mars 2018 [available online at : http://www.aps.sn/actualites/culture/article/abdou-latif-coulibaly-annonce-l-ouverture-du-musee-des-civilisations-noires-au-public-le-6-decembre-prochain; accessed 28 March 2018].

[4] "Patrimoine africain : la restitution des œuvres d'art est-elle un vœu pieu ?," *Deutsche Welle*, 9 March 2018 [available online at : http://www.dw.com/fr/patrimoine-africain-la-restitution-des-oeuvres-dart-est-elle-un-voeu-pieu/av-42876640; accessed 10 May 2018].

[5] Bénjamin Roger, "Sénégal: le Musée des civilisations noires de Dakar, un écrin en quête de contenu," *Jeune Afrique*, 19 December 2016 [available online at: http://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/379401/culture/senegal-musee-civilisations-noires-de-dakar-ecrin-quete-de-contenu/; accessed 2 December 2017].

[6] For a general overview of the history of colonial looting, see Merryman (2006), Jasanoff (2005), Swenson and Mandler (2013), and for the link between colonialism and material culture, see Thomas (1991), Barringer and Flynn (1998), Gosden and Knowles (2001), and Shelton (2001).

[7] On the relation between the museum and the architecture of the building, see Krauss (1996).

• • • • • • • • •

Time: "We are [living] in the time of the world"

That the ethnographic museum is in a crisis is not news. In 1997, Pieterse already claimed that ethnographic museums had to respond to an increasingly globalised world and its attendant tendencies of postcoloniality and multiculturalism. In his words, "[e]thnographic museums can no longer afford to be colonial museums, display windows of empire, indirect testimonies of national grandeur ... Postcoloniality unsettles ethnographic museums as it does ethnography and anthropology itself" (1997: 124).

The criticisms concern not only ethnographic but also art museums, which increasingly present ethnographic objects as purely aesthetic products (Clifford 1991: 225) or, if staging exhibitions on Black art, end up defining and analysing artists only in terms of race and pigmentation (Cahan 2016), amounting to what artist Frank Bowling called "a form of cultural myopia, malignant in its approach to Black art; for Black art, like any art, is art" (1969-1970: 20). At the same time, Bowling insisted that the claims made by young black artists arguing that they were not "painting black" were in a sense an "escape from reality" (1969: 16). According to him, the very existence of Black art on a universal level had to be grounded "within the framework of the historical context" and the "black experience" (1969: 18).[8]

While several museums in the West and Global North have tried to attend to these tensions and tackle the issues that Pieterse defined as the two main tendencies of national and modern museums in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, namely either the exoticising or the assimilating of representations of the "Other" (1997:124-125), many attempts have been considered a failure as illustrated by recent analyses of Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, the museum of African, Asian and Oceanic cultures in Paris (Dias 2008; de l'Estoile 2008). Yet, lacking from these analyses are attempts at self-representation in museums located on the "Other" side of the hemispheres, which would turn the Western gaze upside down. In what follows, I aim to fill this gap by exploring what the endeavour of the new Museum of Black Civilisations, mainly through the figure of the director, but also through other interventions, can tell us about the tensions in defining and (self-) representing Black art and civilisations.

The director of the new Museum, also professor at the Cheikh Anta Diop University, is considered to be one of the main figures in charge of the Museum and of shaping its vision. A trained historian-archaeologist, Hamady Bocoum completed his secondary studies in Senegal and his higher education in Paris where he specialised in archaeology. Familiar with postcolonial theories, the director has extensively engaged with the politics of memory-making, as his articles on heritage-making evidence (see Bocoum and Toulier 2013). Professionally, he has held numerous positions in international and Senegalese cultural institutions. He was director of Cultural Heritage at the Ministry of Culture, member of the UNESCO World

[8] The question of Black art was also one of the guiding threads of the exhibition *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power* at the Tate Modern [available online at: https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/soul-nation-art-age-black-power; accessed 28 March 2018].

Photo 1: University Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar. Photo credit: Charline Kopf.

Heritage Committee, and former director of the *Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire* (IFAN).

In our first interview, knowing the topic beforehand, the director of the MCN opened with the following statement: "We are [living] in the time of the world [*On est dans le temps du monde*]."[9] Influenced by the French Annales school of historical writing during his years in Paris, he drew on Braudelian language and its focus on long-term historical structures to explain his conception of the Museum and Black Civilisations. It would be, in his words, a "dynamic museum which presents Black Civilisations in the time of the world, in the *longue durée*."[10] According to the official report introducing the MCN, the uniqueness of the Museum lies in its function as a "space of commemoration that will forever mark the … affirmation and recognition of the contribution of Black Civilisations to the universal heritage of humanity."[11] While, the MCN's programme includes topics such as decolonisation struggles, as well as questions relating to diaspora and hybridity, the Museum will focus mainly on the contributions of Black Civilisations to archaeology, science, popular arts, and traditions. The aim is to historicise "the black man" instead of essentialising him. Indeed, the Museum's director refused any ahistorical conceptions of Africa, such as articulated by former President Nicolas Sarkozy in his 2007 speech in Dakar, deemed offensive by many people (Ba Konaré 2009). Sarkozy claimed that "the tragedy of Africa is that the African man has not sufficiently become part of history…" arguing that in Africa, there was "place for neither human adventure nor the idea of progress."[12]

Therefore, the expression "to be [living] in the time of the world," which the director repeatedly used, emphasises the present and the coevality of Black Civilisations with "Western" forms of civilisation and modernity. In the curatorial discourse which he intends to create, the questions of temporality and modernity take centre stage. Simultaneously, the link to an ancient past is highlighted: By referring to Cheikh Anta Diop, the man after which the university was named and author of *Negro Nations and Culture* (1955), the director pointed to the fact that all humans are "African and black in a certain way."[13] Following his line of thought, part of the future exhibition would revolve around the fact that the oldest form of civilisation originated in Africa. Historicising and contextualising Black Civilisations in the MCN becomes essential to counter Sarkozy's claim that "the African man has not fully become part of history": In such a narrative of "human-African evolution and migration throughout the globe" where Africa is the birthplace of humanity, the African continent also becomes the precondition of every civilisation (Apter 2005: 81-82).

Despite the director's emphasis that the Museum was neither an anthropological nor an ethnographic museum, hence avoiding an "identitarian closure" [*fermeture identitaire*] by arguing in favour of the diversity of cultures, the title sparked controversy. Other gallery curators in Dakar deemed the title to be an "anachronism; politically and ideologically loaded."[14] Who belongs to the Black Civilisations, and who is excluded? Explaining the rationale behind the choice of name for the Museum, the director claimed that one had to trace it back to its founding moment in history, namely the First Festival of Negro Arts (FESMAN) in 1966 which was organised against the backdrop of African decolonisation.[15] The MCN's link to the FESMAN and to its founder Léopold Sédar Senghor, Senegal's first president, was also made clear at the preparatory conference held prior to the opening of the Museum, from 28 to 31 July 2016, in Dakar. There, the Senegalese historian Ibrahima Thioub and politician Iba Der Thiam declared that the MCN provided the "missing note to the unfinished symphony of the First Festival of Negro Arts," describing it as the culmination of all anti-imperial and anti-colonial movements such as *Négritude* (Bocoum and Ndiaye 2016: 12-20). Indeed, similarly to the MCN's aim, the purpose of the FESMAN, with participants from around forty countries from Africa, Europe and from the Atlantic diaspora (Murphy 2016), was to highlight the contribution of African art to universal art transforming Black art "into a political project and ontological affirmation" (Galitzine-Loumpet 2011: 620). Rather than a narrowly defining name, "Black Civilisations" has then to be understood as part of the larger political project of making African voices and history heard.

---

[9] Bocoum, Hamady, interview with author, Dakar, 14 September 2017.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] Report of the "International Conference of Prefiguration" of the Museum of Black Civilisations. The director of the MCN, Hamady Bocoum, sent me the report after our first meeting. I will hitherto refer to it as: Bocoum and Ndiaye (2016). All translations are my own.

[12] Speech by Nicolas Sarkozy in "Le discours de Dakar de Nicolas Sarkozy," *Le Monde*, 26 July 2007 [available online at: http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2007/11/09/le-discours-de-dakar_976786_3212.html; accessed 2 October 2017].

[13] Bocoum, Hamady, interview with author, Dakar, 14 September 2017.

Having started with the opening of the MCN and Senegal's history of cultural policies, my conversation with the director quickly turned highly theoretical, probing the limits of postcolonial theory with references to Chakravorty Spivak's theorisation of the subaltern (1988) and "post-ethnographic" museum approaches. As Bocoum put it, we were both sitting under "the palaver tree"—in Senegal, usually a baobab—where people come to discuss in a constructive and open manner.[16] At the same time, the image of a palaver tree also exemplifies the director's understanding of post-ethnography. According to his account, the term post-ethnography, which is still "under construction," is based on the understanding of ethnography as the one-sided study of the "Other." In a post-ethnographic turn, by contrast, the "Other"—the "subaltern," often described as a "Third World" subject, who has been traditionally studied by anthropologists—joins the debate, sometimes uninvited, and questions the "Self." While anthropologist Benoît de l'Estoile described the shift from the colonial to the postcolonial in ethnographic museums as a shift from being a museum of the "Others" to becoming a museum of the relationship between "Us" and the "Others" (2007), Bocoum goes even further. Spivak's subaltern, who has "no history and cannot speak" (1988: 287), becomes here the "Other" who lays claim to his right to speak. It is from the confrontation between the Self and the Other, Bocoum claims, that a third form of knowledge production arises, which can be called "post-ethnographic." Parallel to his theoretical explanation, my own encounter with the director works as an illustration of the concept that he laid out for me. I am not just a student but also a representative of the old "Self," an anthropologist studying the "Other," i.e. him and his Museum who become active participants in the process.

A specific example of a post-ethnographic reflection is encapsulated in Bocoum's questioning of the categorisation of "authentic" pieces of African art, whether contemporary or colonial: Who decides what counts as "traditional" African art? In challenging Western categories of meaning and assumptions about objective relations with forms of artistic and cultural production, the director deliberately used the concepts of art and artefacts, culture and civilisations interchangeably. As he claimed, the MCN would not limit itself to an understanding of "authentic" Black art as referring only to what had been "collected" during the colonial period and could now be found in European collections.[17] The vision of the Museum contests representations of the "African subject" frozen in time, focusing instead on the perpetual mutations

[14] Anonymous gallerist, interview with the author, Dakar, 8 September 2017.

[15] Bocoum, Hamady, interview with author, Dakar, 14 September 2017.

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] *Ibid.*

and historical changes of the "dynamic" world in which the human is situated. In his view, the term post-ethnographic then also implied a "post-presentist" notion, refusing to interpret the aesthetic categorisation of art from the perspective of the present. For the director, the focus on the objects collected during the colonial time would reiterate the centrality of Europe's role in African history, thus reproducing the Senegalese subject's "subaltern attitude." Instead, his curatorial vision aims to challenge prevalent forms of knowledge production resulting from the logics that govern "Western" categorisations of art which, in Susan E. Cahan's words, have been defined as "the creation of white European and European American artists," thus also providing a way to counter what she calls "the exclusion of black subjectivity from modernity" (2016: 171).

In claiming an equal place in the conversation, Bocoum hence refuses to adopt the position of a subaltern subject (Spivak 1988) and argues for a historical dynamism that would replace an ahistorical depiction. Particularly useful to understanding the different temporal and historical notions, as well as the tension between modernity and postcolonialism which arise from it, is Dipesh Chakrabarty's call to provincialise Europe (2000). In looking at non-Western forms of being and multiple political modernities, Chakrabarty attempts to dislodge the position of Europe "as a silent referent in historical knowledge" (2000: 28). Indeed, like Bocoum, he points to the ties that "bind together historicism as a mode of thought and the formation of political modernity" in the West, where "not yet civilised" Africans have been relegated to "an imaginary waiting room of history" (2000: 7-8). This helps us locate Bocoum's vision of a post-ethnographic Museum in imaginaries of alternative futures which seek to differentiate themselves from Western modes of being through "historical difference" (Dzenovksa and De Genova 2018). The project behind the MCN is then to inscribe a historicist understanding of African art and culture within the larger ideological and philosophical conditions of modernity—in the director's words, "the time of the world"—while simultaneously proceeding to a radical decentring of the ways in which African history has been narrated by the West, and thereby inaugurating the Museum's "own," arguably non-Western, time. In that sense, the post-ethnographic aim of dethroning Europe as a central referent in the history of Black Civilisations is similar to decolonial approaches which address Eurocentric othering and colonial epistemic injustices, i.e., what Argentinian semiotician Walter Mignolo defines as the "coloniality of power" (2011: 2).

How does such a vision then sit with claims for the restitution of objects looted during the colonial period? The next section will look more closely at how the vision of the MCN fits in this debate, and how it compares to different postcolonial approaches such as those elaborated by the curators Clémentine Deliss and Françoise Vergès.

• • • • • • • •

Space: Colonial history as pollution and emptiness as opportunity

The return of colonial artefacts is one of the major issues which Western museums have to grapple with in this century (Savoy 2015). As Bianca Gaudenzi and Astrid Swenson have recently argued, the debates on the restitution have materialised as a reaction to "challenges of reframing nations and the international order brought about by some of the central events of the second half of the twentieth century," such as the Second World War, the Cold War and decolonisation (2017: 516). Ethnographic museums have particularly been confronted with their responsibility to engage with the colonial circumstances under which their collections were assembled (Basu 2011). The mounting denunciations of the "historical concentration of the world's heritage" in Western museums have called for a re-assessment of the legitimacy of these former "temples of empire" (Tythacott and Arvanitis 2014: 1-2).

In that context, Felicity Bodenstein and Camilla Pagani claim that the twenty-first century has seen a great variety of museum strategies to critically address "colonial roots" (2014: 39). Scholars have increasingly engaged with the diversified ways in which museums decolonise their collections, such as the collaboration with source communities (Ames 1992; Dixon 2016; Peers and Brown 2003). Quoting Tony Bennett, Bodenstein and Pagani argue that the aim of these approaches is to form "new relations and perceptions of difference that break free from the hierarchically organized form of stigmatic othering" (Bennett 2006: 59). Examining the different strategies of the Museum of World Culture in Sweden and the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium, the authors define the concept of "decolonialising collections" as a discourse that aims to "singularise the ethnographic object and extract it from former systems of museum classification that de facto maintained the object in its 'colonised' status" (Bodenstein and Pagani 2014: 47-48). An example of such an approach are the post-ethnographic curatorial projects of Clémentine Deliss, former director of the German *Weltkulturen Museum* in Frankfurt. Her understanding of the term post-ethnographic implies a reworking of the colonial roots of objects in an ethnographic museum as exemplified by her residency programme *Weltkulturen* Laboratory,[18] where she invited artists, curators, lawyers, writers and designers to engage with the history of objects looted during the colonial period.[19]

This reflects a growing postcolonial awareness in the museum landscape in Europe, which acknowledges "the changing relationship between public museums and the sources from which their collections are drawn" and the changes in international power relations (La Follette 2017: 671). In that context, Delphine Calmettes, curator of the gallery *Le Manège* in Dakar, who participated in discussions concerning collaborative projects between the MCN and the *Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac* in Paris, saw the new museum as a major opportunity to change the unequal relationship between museums in Africa and those in Europe. For her, the new infrastructure of the MCN enabled the Senegalese to ultimately claim that they too were capable of keeping and storing objects like museums in the West: "The new Museum could finally open its doors to the restitution of looted objects. History just has to go through this."[20] Similar to Inês Fialho Brandão, who analyses the restitution debate between Portugal and its previous colonial territories, such as Angola and Mozambique, the gallery curator predicted that former colonies, which now had the financial means to develop cultural infrastructure "to affirm their national identity and legitimacy" (Fialho Brandão 2017: 575), would also come forward with demands for the transfer of objects found in the former empire's collections.

Yet, contrary to Calmettes's expectation, the MCN's vision proposes not to engage with the discussion on the restitution of objects; instead, as evident in Bocoum's discourse and plans for the new museum, it tries to formulate a different understanding of art not focused on looted material objects. Bocoum's understanding of post-ethnography differs from Deliss's in that he referred to the colonial past as a "closed sequence": "It is important to point to its continuing legacies, but it must not pollute our perspective on the production of contemporary art."[21] Indeed, the MCN director argued that he stood above the claim for restitution: "The times where we had to ask for something are over. They can keep their objects."[22] When I asked him how he saw the restitution of objects, he argued that, for him, this topic was not the most significant one. The MCN should look ahead without constantly "glancing back,

[18] "Weltkulturenlabor," *Weltkulturen Museum* [available online at: https://www.weltkulturenmuseum.de/en/labor; accessed 30 May 2018].

[19] "Postcolonial Museum Laboratory - Clémentine Deliss in conversation with Joanna Skolowska," *View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture* [available online at: http://pismowidok.org/index.php/one/article/view/228/407; accessed 20 May 2018].

[20] Calmettes, Delphine, interview with author, Dakar, 20 September 2017.

[21] Bocoum, Hamady, interview with author, Dakar, 14 September 2017.

[22] *Ibid.*

looking into the rear-view mirror."[23] Echoing the notions of temporal or chronological pollution put forth by Stephan Palmié and Charles Stewart (2016) and Byron Hamann (2008), the colonial past with its objects nowadays prized for being important art objects should not figure as the centrepiece of the exhibition, nor as the unifying theme of the Museum. Focusing too much on the question of restitution would hinder a comprehensive perspective on African artistic production in its entire dynamic and its futurity. Instead, the director wanted it to be both "pragmatic and forward-looking":

> Pragmatic because all that is called "Black" art according to the old view is essentially in exile today, in grand European museums. Why would we want to take the risk of being held hostage of these collections? Black art is not only the production of yesterday, but also the production of today and tomorrow.[24]

While Bocoum argued that the claim for the restitution of looted objects was not "his fight," but rather belonged to the "political sphere," the colonial past as a historical articulation of the relationship between the French and the Senegalese has a haunting effect (O'Riley 2007). It re-emerges in the present and comes to be envisaged as something that can constrain future action. The feeling of being "held hostage" and the objects' being "in exile" give particular agency to the assemblage of artefacts in that specific emotions are attached to them, thereby potentially affecting the future audience of the museum. This was highlighted by Bocoum when he described how, traditionally, museums in Africa had been perceived as incarnations of colonial exhibitions, turning them into places of nostalgia and recrimination whose emptiness radiated an aura of melancholy. Instead, his aim was to build a museum from which people would come out feeling optimistic. This points to the affective potentialities and embodied experience on which the imaginary of the exhibition is built and raises the question of how this might translate architecturally. If in his claims to modernity—"we are [living] in the time of the world"—the director puts himself above the necessity to ask for the restitution of colonial objects, how does he then navigate this emptiness which is portrayed as the painful legacy of the colonial past? And how does this emptiness interact with the aim of decentring the Western understanding of museum and African art?

Navigating "European" and "African" museum cultures

For one of our meetings, Bocoum suggested giving me a tour of the Museum's main spaces where future exhibitions will be hosted. Leading me through different rooms, he outlined the building's structure. According to him, the "European model" of a museum consisting of spaces where one must be silent did not fit the importance of oral traditions in African cultures.[25] Instead he proposed to combine a "European structure" with an "African model." This arrangement of "duality" translates architecturally, on the one hand, into "classical galleries," and, on the other hand, into "open spaces of cultural mediation" where performers can intermingle with the audience to "revisit the cultures of orality."[26] Leading me into the great hall, Bocoum said: "This is the more open African space where we can organise meetings between artists and the public to value our intangible heritage: a space of encounter."[27]

The museum infrastructure thus becomes a framework that helps decipher culturally and historically specific behavioural cues, prompted by the spaces through which one walks. Following the theoretical model of an "indigenous museology," which renders the idea of a museum more "meaningful to local communities" (Kreps 2015: 6), the new infrastructure includes an open space with removable curtains to separate it from,

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] *Ibid.*

[25] Bocoum, Hamady, personal communication, Dakar, 20 September 2017.

[26] While this is based on interviews, his argument can also be found in Herle *et al.* (2017).

[27] Bocoum, Hamady, personal communication, Dakar, 20 September 2017.

Photo 2: The gallery space, Museum of Black Civilisations.
Photo credit: Charline Kopf.

Photo 3: The open space, Museum of Black Civilisations.
Photo credit: Charline Kopf.

in Bocoum's words, the more "civilised European-style" galleries. This embodied experience that the director described, i.e., how people silently move through European museums, is moreover associated with an affective mood that he termed "austere." His vision, by contrast, transforms the Museum's "emptiness," due to the lack of a permanent collection of objects, into an "openness," best exemplified by the grand entrance hall and the agora space on the first floor providing room for the "African" oral tradition.[28] In a conversation on museums that I had later with the Senegalese artist Madeleine Devès Senghor, she highlighted that, in designing the spatial division inside the new Museum, the museum audience in Africa should be considered as well.[29] She developed the argument of different museology spaces and cultures further by emphasising that the very notion of a museum has "not yet been fully appropriated by African people." According to her, such closed spaces are rarely to be found in the history of African populations, as most forms of political and public engagement happened in the outdoor village squares, the hot climate being one of the reasons. Complementary to her line of thought, the director explained that in hosting performances by an elder who recounts traditional tales while seated in the MCN's open space, the MCN aimed to protect vernacular traditions which continue to take place in Senegalese villages[30] (see also Djigo 2015). Thus, whereas European museums are centred on objects, the MCN's focus would be on "the living."[31]

While such an *in situ* exhibition, as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1991) calls it, could indeed be problematic due to its exoticising tendencies and the fact that it follows "the tradition of colonial exhibitions with native villages rebuilt on the fairground" (Pieterse 1997: 126), it bears resemblance to political scientist and curator Françoise Vergès's idea of a museum without objects on the Reunion Island (2014). In what she defined as a "museum of the living present," a "Theatre of the Spoken Word" would be located in an exhibition space, thus "interrupting its linear trajectory and producing a space for debate … for speaking and laughing," along with "spaces for mediation, silence and dreaming" (2014: 69). African orality becomes here, to use the words of Nigerian art critic and curator Okwui Enwezor, "a vessel of memory and a vehicle for transmitting important codes and wisdoms" (2017: 135). The MCN thus challenges the way historical knowledge is documented in the West, as opposed to an African oral archive, and breaks with Western-focused conceptions of time and history which abide by a clear structure of linear chronology. At the same time, the act of positing this enactment of oral tradition as a form of art is

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] Senghor, Devès Madeleine, interview with author, Dakar, 12 September 2017.

[30] Bocoum, Hamady, personal communication, Dakar, 20 September 2017.

[31] *Ibid.*

a reflection on the "relationship between the author and the artwork, between a form and its function" (Enwezor 2017: 135), and thus questions the traditionally "object-based museum" (Modest 2012: 86). The MCN's spatial organisation is then integral to the attempt to overcome modernist separations of spheres and mind-body dualities: art is not a discrete entity that can be looked at, instead it becomes all-encompassing and embodied. In such a vision, material objects seem to lose importance.

The embodied approach of oral traditions takes on a further dimension when looking at the concept of heritage in the international context. According to the director of Cultural Heritage at the Ministry of Culture, Abdoul Aziz Guissé, the physical space in the MCN crafted for the valorisation of intangible heritage allows one to decentre the primacy of the materiality of heritage which is conveyed in international standards. For him, the understanding of heritage is "hard to pin down if we simply limit ourselves to international instruments like UNESCO conventions."[32] And further: "When we talk about classified sites, everyone immediately thinks of the UNESCO list of heritage sites. No distinction is made between national and international points of reference."

In Senegal, a broader conception of heritage is advocated, which, according to Guissé, is no longer restricted to the "almost stereotyped definition where heritage is limited to colonial buildings" and urban spaces.[33] It also encompasses the preservation of customs that have developed over time. Similar to Bocoum, Guissé argued that although colonisation represented an important sequence in their history that should not be forgotten, it should not figure as the exclusive focus of cultural restoration programmes. This is however the case with most UNESCO projects, such as the one at the Island of Gorée which is primarily committed to restoring colonial sites marked by the transatlantic slave trade (see also Bocoum and Toulier 2013). The various rehabilitation projects transforming the site into a highly mediatised tourist destination and symbol of postcolonial identity have been criticised for ignoring the locals and their daily use of the place (see also Quashie 2009). Indeed, for the inhabitants of the island, UNESCO's World Heritage status makes the renovation of the buildings particularly expensive as the buildings must be restored with original materials, such as tiles, wood frames and specific colours to retain their colonial architecture. In case of non-compliance, UNESCO could downgrade the island, thereby significantly affecting tourism here. As many of the locals cannot afford this method of renovation, they are forced to sell their houses to private owners, mostly European or bi-national (Quashi 2009: 68), leading to what Pieterse has called the "conversion of living spaces into 'historical' sites and museums…" (1997: 126).

In Guissé's words, it is then in Africa's interest to create another typology of heritage that moves away from the postcolonial focus. With that objective in mind, the Ministry of Culture is working towards an understanding of heritage as embodied practice, which is aimed at changing the geographical, urban bias of the current preservation efforts. While he argued that UNESCO already works towards a broader definition with its concept of "cultural landscapes" that looks at the interaction between humans and space,[34] its potential has not yet been fully explored. A new typology would allow African countries to rank higher on the World Heritage list, which has focused so far mainly on monuments alone (see also Lagae 2008).

So, questioning the interpretation of colonial sites as heritage, Guissé finds the focus on colonial architecture, as illustrated by the looted objects approach, to be neo-colonial. Forcing my interlocutors to focus, once again, on the colonial period, it neglects not only precolonial and intangible forms of heritage, but also the lived experience of those inhabiting the sites. In that sense, the postcolonial positionality, which wishes for a continuous reflection upon the violence of colonialism, reproduces the centrality of the trope of Europe, leading to what Dzenovska calls a "compartmentalization of colonial legacy in Europe" (2013: 407). Indeed, the focus on the violence of colonialism is experienced as a way of cleansing the Western present from its colonial sins (Böröcz 2006; Povinelli 2002), which in turn becomes an obstacle rather than an advantage for my Senegalese interlocutors.

---

[32] Guissé, Abdoul Aziz, interview with author, Dakar, 27 September 2017. For a study which looks at the management of cultural heritage from a local-global perspective in Zimbabwe and Australia, see Lee Long (2000).

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] "Cultural Landscapes," UNESCO Website, 2016 [available online at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/; accessed 5 May 2018].

Furthermore, inside the museum, the emphasis on oral traditions and intangible heritage transcending the focus on the colonial is not irrevocably devoted to the past, but complementary to an understanding of fast-paced modernity and a fluid culture in constant flux. The logistic organisation of the gallery spaces was described by the director in terms of its adaptability to developments in culture. The ceiling is particularly high offering the possibility to split the rooms vertically and horizontally into mezzanines and smaller spaces according to the content and performances of the different exhibitions. This flexibility reflects their commitment to adapting to a fast-changing culture and thus providing a different museum model dedicated to African cultures than the *Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac*. As opposed to the latter, the MCN should architecturally and metaphorically be able to take all shapes and not become, as Bocoum argued, a "prisoner of the discourse" upon which it was built.[35] Indeed, the *Musée du Quai Branly* has been criticised by anthropologists for re-enforcing the message it was supposed to break away from, namely that of exoticising the cultures which are presented in its display cases. Although the Parisian museum is supposed to be "a post-colonial tribute to 'cultural diversity'" and attempts to "palliate government policies and social exclusion" through enhancing the aesthetical value of such objects, it does not provide historical details on how the collections themselves came into being (Dias 2008: 300; see also Boursiquot 2014; Clifford 2007; de l'Estoile 2008). The resulting ahistorical display of objects ignores "the relations of power that they embody" (Dias 2008: 307) and maintains the cultural hierarchies intact.

The MCN attempts to counter this essentialisation, as Bocoum claimed, by turning its lack of ownership of art collections into an asset: "We are not prisoners of anything."[36] This is reflected in their aim to circumvent the model of permanent exhibitions. Here again the temporal logic and conception of modernity are the rationales underlying Bocoum's conception: "Wanting to fix Black Civilisations in an itinerary considered permanent is reductive. We will not organise permanent exhibitions; the longest exhibition will only last up to two years […] it is in the renewal, in the movement that we will try to be representative."[37] In refusing any static representations of culture and in recreating this through the MCN's architecture, time and space become mutually constitutive components of the post-ethnographic imaginary that the Museum tries to create. As Bocoum claimed: "Permanent exhibitions belong to the past."[38] Instead, the programme anticipates joint itinerant exhibitions with both the *Musée du Quai Branly* in Paris and the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren to address matters of global concern.[39] Those joint exhibitions will make use of dialogical strategies in an attempt to counter the concept of cultures as discrete entities, further reconfiguring Self-Other relationship. Indeed, while the inaugural exhibition will open with a sculpture by the Senegalese artist Ousmane Sow, it will end with a sequence called the Dialogue of Masks involving Viking, African, as well as Chinese masks.[40] The aim is to attend to cultural diversity and traits by putting them in dialogue with each other without exoticising them. The concepts underlying this dialogical and relational approach can be traced back not only to the notion of alterity (Levinas 1995) but above all, according to the director, to the three values promoted by Léopold Senghor: rootedness in one's own

---

[35] Bocoum, Hamady, personal communication, Dakar, 20 September 2017.

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] *Ibid.*

[39] "Le musée du Quai Branly et le musée des Civilisations noires signe une convention," *Ministère de la Culture du Sénégal,* 20 December 2016 [available online at: http://www.culture.gouv.sn/?q=le-musee-du-quai-branly-et-le-musee-des-civilisations-noires-signe-une-convention; accessed 30 May 2018].

[40] Bocoum, Hamady, personal communication, Dakar, 20 September 2017.

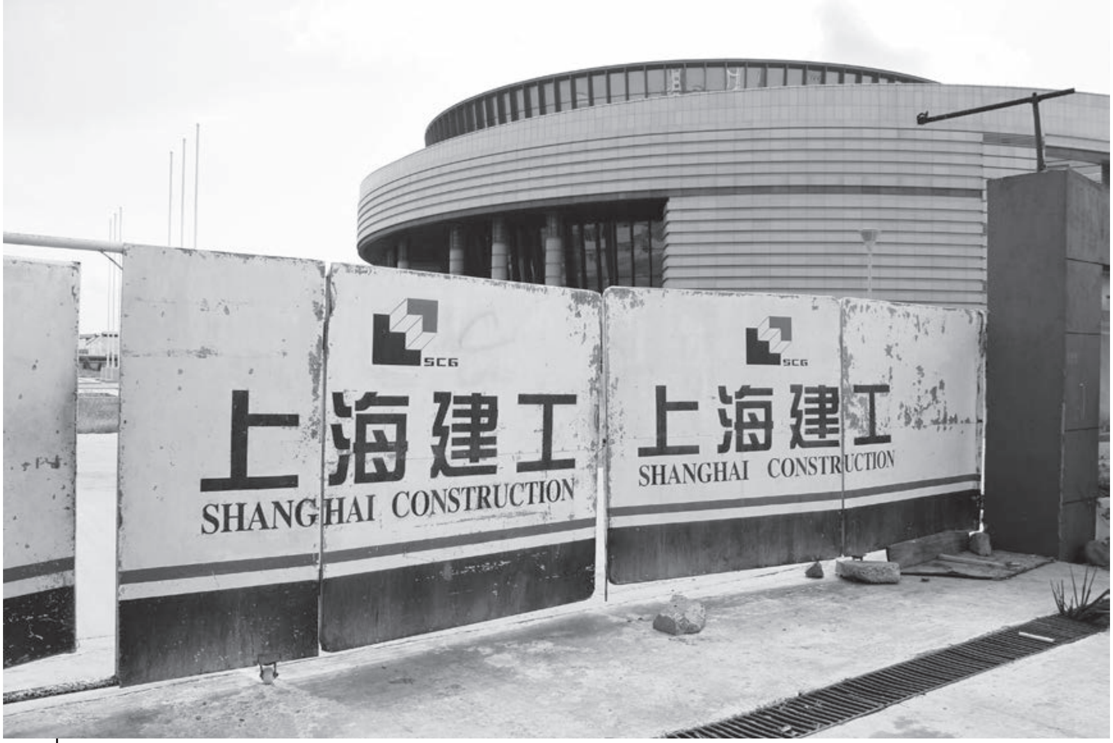

上海建工
SHANGHAI CONSTRUCTION
SCG

Photo 4: Construction Site of the MCN. Photo credit: Charline Kopf.

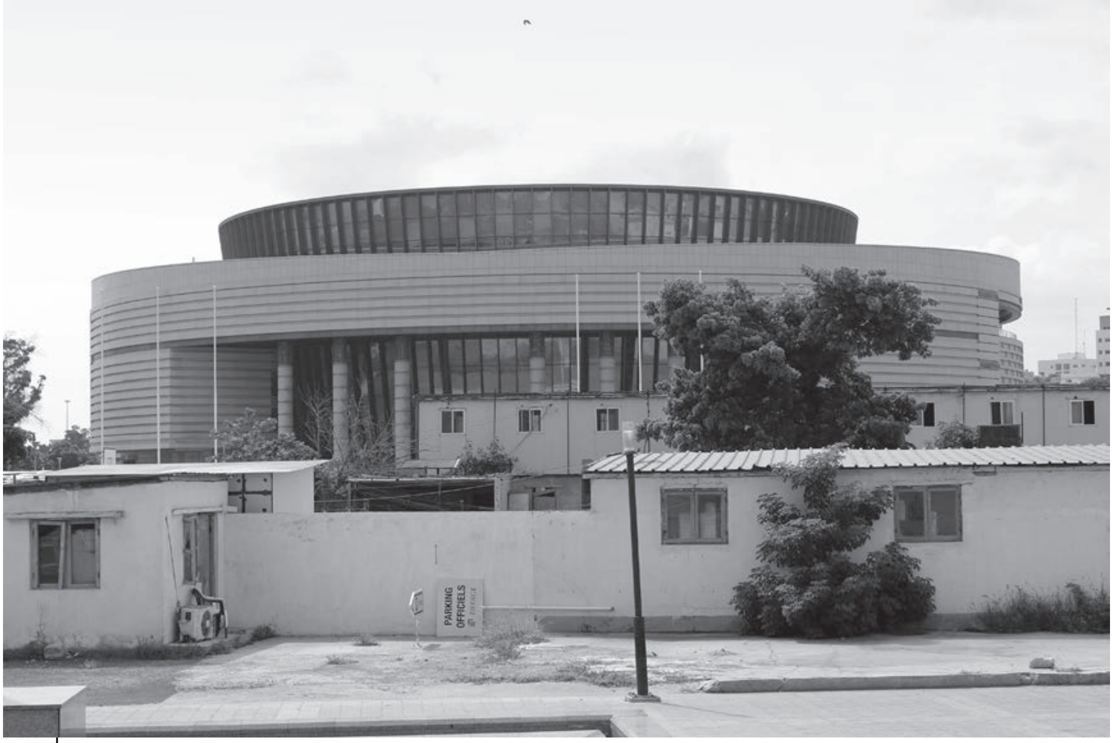

PARKING OFFICIELS

Photo 5: Museum of Black Civilisations, Dakar. Photo credit: Charline Kopf.

culture (*enracinement*), openness to others (*ouverture*) (Senghor 1964: 22-38), and the idea of a universal world civilisation (*civilisation universelle*) (Senghor 1977).[41]

Thus, my interlocutors' historical explanations, as well as comments concerning the cultural separateness of the Western-style and African-style museum spaces within the new construction, are significant for the way in which the political and cultural are read and built into public buildings in postcolonial Senegalese architecture. The conversations on space lay bare the tension which is inherent in the very concept of a Museum of Black Civilisations: Despite the aim to subvert exoticising representations and reconfigure Self-Other relations that old and new art exhibitions and museums have perpetuated (Pieterse 1997), the logic according to which the physical museum spaces are separated can uphold an internal dichotomy of cultures. The director is, for example, forced to mobilise the difference between "Western" and "African" models of cultures and by doing so, risks lapsing into the same essentialism he criticises. It also reveals the challenge that the director faces to distinguish between formulating a reconfigured postcolonial future without reinscribing such a trajectory in a dichotomous explanation between modernity and tradition, and culturalist discourses drawing on terms like "civilised." Underlying is the fact that the MCN has to grapple with the seemingly incommensurable aim to pay tribute to African systems of knowledge through a museum, an institution which is paradoxically considered to be a symbol of Western modernity, not to be found in African history and culture. In the words of Enwezor, the museum in its ethnographic form is "inextricably tied with discourses that have historically sought to undermine, or render mute, the possibility of any kind of African subjectivity in matters dealing with archival or musicological knowledge" (2017: 134).

Nevertheless, while for the MCN the Western museum remains a reference, its very design and conceptualisation is presented as a political gesture. Using open spaces becomes an attempt at translating more historically resonant embodiments of African state-society relations into architecture. Emptiness, portrayed as painful legacy of the colonial past, becomes in the context of the MCN, a unique opportunity to shape the inner space according to an African history and mode of storytelling. From a theoretical perspective, thinking about the future of the Museum, and the spatial and physical perception of the people inside it, the visitors and director become integral parts of a museum assemblage constituted "of objects, the bodies of staff and visitors, narratives, materials and more, that together shape the visitor experience" (Waterton and Dittmer 2014: 123). Space is here perceived as an active participant in this dialogue, by shaping the perception of the visitor, and becomes a way to enable the shift towards a post-ethnographic approach.

Constitutive of this post-ethnographic imaginary inside the Museum is the perception that Chinese investments and infrastructure now provide an alternative to existing Africa-Europe relations. Indeed, the fact that the MCN was funded as part of China's foreign aid programme, constructed by a Chinese, partly state-owned company and designed by the Beijing Institute of Architecture complements Bocoum's perception of a change not only in the ways of knowledge production and of representation but also in the economic power dynamics imbricated in the museum landscape. As Bocoum claimed: "Europe has imposed its thinking as the only one, but this is challenged by emerging forces today. We are militants of diversity and we are interested in promoting this diversity. With the Chinese, there are now more players in the field."[42] His colleague, art historian and critic Malick Ndiaye, who also participated in the preparatory conference held prior to the opening of the MCN, agreed with Bocoum, arguing that "a lot of things are changing in geopolitics."[43] Having studied in France and Dakar, he is a specialist in contemporary art, African heritage and postcolonial studies (2011), and is the current curator of the Museum of African Art Théodore Monod. For him, the MCN is the embodiment of this changing world order:

---

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] Bocoum, Hamady, personal communication, Dakar, 20 September 2017.

[43] Ndiaye, Malick, interview with author, Dakar, 5 September 2017.

> It is no longer a dialogue only between Europe and Africa, but a conversation between several entities. Many new perspectives have opened up. The fact that the Museum of Black Civilisations was built by China undoubtedly demonstrates that we can now choose between multiple possibilities.[44]

My Senegalese interlocutors then perceive the "Chinese" as enablers of a new museum cartography, which challenges the thus far conventional centre-periphery configuration of museums mostly located in the West (see also Vergès 2008).

• • • • • • • •

Cracks in the emptiness: Existing collections in dusty boxes

Yet, there are also limits to the post-ethnographic approach in the museum. The emptiness of the MCN, which, in the director's imaginary, stands for an opportunity to conceive of a more fluid world history and a place solely dedicated to temporary exhibitions, obscures the uncomfortable relationship with objects collected during colonial raids in former French West Africa, now held in storage by various Senegalese institutions. As some of my interlocutors claimed, this points to issues in the postcolonial management of art collections and the silencing of an intra-African restitution debate. A closer examination of the objects through the lens of the repatriation debate, reveals how in circumventing a focus on the colonial, the new post-ethnographic imaginary eschews criticism directed towards the postcolonial Senegalese state.

The employee of an international institute of culture located in Dakar looked perplexed as I told him that in my discussions with the head of the MCN and its administration, the debate surrounding the objects in the collections of the *Musée Théodore Monod*, also known as the IFAN *(Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire)* museum, was omitted from conversations.[45] While the existence of those objects was briefly mentioned by the director, no authorities involved in designing the future exhibitions expanded on which objects might be selected for the new Museum. According to the employee, the omission could be accounted by the lack of an inventory of the objects collected and stored by the IFAN—a former colonial research institute in charge of the study of the language, history and culture of the peoples living in French West Africa—and the difficulty of assigning them a national origin, as at the time of their collection, they were not located in the delimited territory of a nation-state.[46] He argued that the boxes contain many items from across, which had not been returned to the regions from where they came after decolonisation.

Indeed, looking at the history of the IFAN reveals that the objects in its collections, amassed during scientific missions in the inter-war period and after the Second World War, did not come only from French West Africa but also from neighbouring countries and French Equatorial Africa, i.e., Gabon, the Middle Congo, Chad and Ubangi-Shari (now the Central African Republic), as well as from foreign colonies through donations or exchanges (Adedze 1997: 97; de Suremain 2007: 158). Despite setting up various IFAN branches in other French colonial territories in Africa, the centralised management of the colonial research institute led to the storing of most artefacts in the capital of the federation, Dakar (Jézéquel 2011: 36-37). The problem was that even if an inventory of the collections were carried out, e.g., the one by Denise Paulme and the musicologist Schaeffner, the resulting catalogue would lack information and background, making it difficult to identify the objects' places of origin after decolonisation (de Suremain 2007: 164). According to my interlocutor, after independence, when the French colonial territory was divided into national polities, the transnational links to the other territories, where the items held in storage by the IFAN had come from, were for the most part erased.

---

[44] *Ibid.*

[45] Anonymous employee, interview with author, Dakar, 29 September 2017.

[46] *Ibid.*

Recent studies analysing looted art and restitution in the twentieth century substantiate these suspicions by demonstrating that research into the histories of those objects and their very existence encounters many obstacles, such as the "substantial gaps in the archival record linked to inaccessibility, wilful destruction, as well as the secrecy" surrounding them (Gaudenzi and Swenson 2017: 510; see also Coeuré 2017; Fialho Brandão 2017). The studies not only show how debates on restitution play an important role in renegotiating postcolonial relationships and in shaping new national imaginaries, but also defy "a narrative that moves seamlessly from the national to the international sphere" in terms of determining the role of different actors in the looting and restitution of objects (Gaudenzi and Swenson 2017: 513).[47] This fact adds a layer of complexity and ambiguity to the discussion on repatriation, pointing to the objects' entanglement in transnational flows of power located in the historical formation of the French West African Federation. As the employee of the international cultural institute asked: "What would Senegal's neighbouring countries say if they saw items belonging to them displayed in Dakar's new Museum of Black Civilisations? What if they wanted those objects back?"[48] Exhibiting the objects in the MCN without engaging in discussions about their origin with neighbouring countries would raise the controversial question of intra-African claims of restitution, a topic which until now has remained unchartered. This reveals the tension between the MCN's intention to define a post-ethnographic imaginary of pan-African Black Civilisations where borders do not play a role, on the one hand, and the management of objects in West African postcolonial states where nation-building is an ongoing process, on the other.

Therefore, the issues surrounding the IFAN's existing collections reveal the fractures in the discourse around the restitution of looted objects that the post-ethnographic take seems to obscure. It can be said then that the post-ethnographic provincialising of the colonial narrative comes with the danger of hindering research into the more intricate history of these objects in the West African context. According to some of my interlocutors, this has even led the Senegalese authorities to conceal ownership of these collections for fear that they would be seen as proof of the mismanagement of objects after decolonisation, thereby raising tensions between different countries and questioning the Senegalese conservation practices. Conversely, taking into account the different possible trajectories and movements of the art objects—through former colonial and contemporary transnational spaces over time—would allow for a more complex history, which is often obfuscated in the dominant discourse on the European repatriation of looted objects.

• • • • • • • • •

Conclusion

The discussions surrounding the Museum of Black Civilisations and the post-ethnographic imaginary have revealed different attitudes towards postcolonial museum approaches and the return of looted objects. In paying particular attention to the post-ethnographic position of the director of MCN and Senegal's director of Cultural Heritage, the article demonstrated how the MCN's aim is to distance itself not only from ahistorical representations of Black

[47] Brandão's article on Portugal reveals national-level opposition to research into the origin of looted objects for fear of having to attend to the circulation of objects between the territories of the former Portuguese empire (2017).

[48] Anonymous employee, interview with author, Dakar, 29 September 2017.

Photo 6: Musée Théodore Monod, Dakar. Photo credit: Charline Kopf.

Civilisations but also from an exclusive engagement with colonial legacies. While being one of the outcomes of a postcolonial moment, the MCN also tries to move beyond it, insofar as Europe's postcoloniality is still Eurocentric. My interlocutors' attempt to provincialise the position of those arguing for a constant engagement with colonial legacies and their aspiration towards an alternative, decolonial world order is further complemented by how they perceive the Chinese involvement in the construction of the MCN.

Hence, by showing how the postcolonial positionality reproduces the centrality of Europe, which stubbornly retains its influence as gravitational locus, and has exclusionary effects for the locals, as illustrated by the UNESCO heritage programmes on the island of Gorée, this paper makes theoretical and empirical contributions to the literature on heritage and postcolonial museum studies (Chambers et al. 2014; Peers and Brown 2003; Tythacott and Arvanitis 2014). While the post-ethnographic framework which the director proposes contests common-held assumptions about claims of restitution and thus offers an alternative to art displays in museums located in the "West," it does not reveal all the power structures, constructions of difference and colonial legacies inherent in the assemblage of artefacts. Indeed, notwithstanding the objective of fostering intercultural understanding by attending to cultural diversity without exoticising representations of cultures, the ensuing discourse, in some cases, maintains binary, essentialised identities. The interest in analysing the curatorial approach of the MCN goes then beyond the walls of the museum, becoming relevant for postcolonial discourses dealing with difference, otherness and diversity in general.

Moreover, the paper adds to the recent literature on the history of looted objects (Coeuré 2017; Gaudenzi and Swenson 2017) by demonstrating how non-engagement with their restitution hides intricacies surrounding existing collections. In highlighting this, the aim is not to undermine the director's position nor do to dismiss his vision of the future exhibition. Nonetheless, the de-emphasising of the significance of objects renders invisible the complex history of artefacts located on Senegalese land. This then calls for a renewed study of how local historical particularities inform approaches to the restitution of objects, which seem counter-intuitive to, and deviate from, the postcolonial theory that requires a constant engagement with colonial legacies.

Acknowledgments: I would like to thank Dr Dace Dzenovska and Dr Pablo de Orellana, as well as my anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions. Financial support for the fieldwork was provided by the Carr and Stahl Fund administered by St Antony's College and the Godfrey Lienhardt Memorial Fund for Research in Sub-Saharan Africa administered by the University of Oxford's Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology.

* * *

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adedze, A. 1997. *Collectors, Collections and Exhibitions: The History of Museums in Francophone West Africa*. PhD, UCLA.

Ames, M. 1992. *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums*. Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press.

Apter, A. 2005. *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ba Konaré, A., ed. 2009. *Petit précis de remise à niveau sur l'histoire africaine à l'usage du président Sarkozy.* Paris: La Découverte.

Barringer, T.J., and Flynn, T., eds. 1998. *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum.* London: Routledge.

Basu, P. 2011. "Object diasporas, resourcing communities: Sierra Leonean Collections in the Global Museumscape." *Museum Anthropology*. 34 (1): 28–42.

Basu, P. 2017. *The Inbetweenness of things. Materializing mediation and movement between worlds*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Bennett, T. 2006. "Exhibition, Difference and the Logic of Culture." In *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, eds. I. Karp, C.A. Kratz, L. Szwaja, and T. Ybarra-Frausto, 46-69. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Bocoum, H., and B. Toulier. 2013. "La fabrication du Patrimoine: l'exemple de Gorée (Sénégal)." *In Situ.* 20: 1-37.

Bocoum, H., and M. E. H. Ndiaye. 2017. *Terms of Reference: Report of the "International Conference of Prefiguration" of the Museum of Black Civilisations.* [Available online at: http://mcn.sn/rapport.pdf, accessed 6 September 2018].

Bodenstein, F., and C. Pagani. 2014. "Decolonising National Museums of Ethnography in Europe: Exposing and Reshaping Colonial Heritage (2000-2012)." In *The Postcolonial Museum: The Arts of Memory* and the *Pressures of History,* eds. Chambers I., De Angelis A., Ianniciello C., Orabona M. and Quadraro M., 39-49. London: Routledge.

Boursiquot, F. 2014. "Ethnographic Museums: From Colonial Exposition to Intercultural Dialogue." In *The Postcolonial Museum: The Arts of Memory* and the Pressures of History, eds. Chambers I., A. De Angelis, C. Ianniciello, M. Orabona, and M. Quadraro, 63-72. London: Routledge.

Bowling, F. 1969. “Discussion on Black Art I.” *Arts Magazine.* April, 44 (3).

Bowling, F. 1969-1979. “Black Art III.” *Arts Magazine.* December/January, 43 (6).

Böröcz, J. 2006. “Goodness is elsewhere: The rule of European difference.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History.* 48 (1): 110–137.

Cahan, S.E. 2016. *Mounting Frustration, The Art Museum in the Age of Black Power.* London: Duke University Press, 2016.

Chakrabarty, D. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Clifford, J. 1991. “Four Northwest Coast Museums: Travel Reflections.” In *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Displays*, eds. I. Karp, and S. Lavine, 107-145. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Press.

Clifford, J. 2007. “Quai Branly in Process.” *October.* 120: 3-23.

Coeuré, S. 2017. “Cultural Looting and Restitution at the Dawn of the Cold War.” *Journal of Contemporary History*. 52 (3): 588–606.

De L’Estoile, B. 2008. “The past as it lives now: An anthropology of colonial legacies.” *Social Anthropology*. 16 (3) : 267–279.

De L’Estoile, B. 2007. *Le goût des autres* : De l›exposition coloniale aux Arts premiers. Paris: Flammarion.

De Suremain, M.-A. 2007. “L’IFAN et la « mise en musée » des cultures africaines (1936-1961).” *Outre-mers.* 94 (356-357): 151-172.

Dias, N. 2008. “Double erasures: Rewriting the past at the Musée du quai Branly.” *Social Anthropology*. 16 (3): 300–311.

Diop, Cheikh A. 1955. *Negro Nations and Culture.* Présence Africaine: Paris.

Dixon, C. A. 2016. *The “othering” of Africa and its diasporas in Western museum practices.* PhD thesis, University of Sheffield.

Djigo, A. 2015. *Historie des politiques du patrimoine culturel au Sénégal (1816-2000).* Paris: Harmattan.

Dzenovska, D. 2013. “Historical Agency and the Coloniality of Power in Postsocialist Europe.” *Anthropological Theory.* 13 (4): 394–416.

Dzenovska, D., and N. De Genova. *2018*. “Desire for the political in the aftermath of the Cold War.” *Focaal: Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology.* 80 (1): 1-15.

Enwezor, O. 2017. “The Death of the African Archive and the Birth of the Museum.” In *Museum and Archive on the Move: Changing Cultural Institutions in the Digital Era,* eds. O. Grau, W. Coones, and V. Rühse, 132-147. Berlin, Boston: DeGruyter.

Fialho Brandão, I. 2017. “What’s in Lisbon? Portuguese Sources in Nazi-era Provenance Research.” *Journal of Contemporary History*. 52 (3): 566–587.

Gaudenzi, B., and A. Swenson. 2017. “Looted Art and Restitution in the Twentieth Century – Towards a Global Perspective.” *Journal of Contemporary History*. 52 (3): 491–518.

Galitzine-Loumpet, A. 2011. “An Unattainable Consensus? National Museums and Great Narratives in French-speaking Africa.” In *EuNaMus Report No 4. Great Narratives of the Past,* eds. D. Poulot, F. Bodenstein, and J.M.L. Guiral: 617-634.

Gosden, C., and C. Knowles. 2001. *Collecting Colonialism: Material Culture and Colonial Change*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.

Greenberg, R., B. Ferguson, and S. Nairne. 1996. *Thinking about Exhibitions.* London, New York: Routledge.

Hackforth-Jones, J., and M. Roberts, eds. 2005. *Edges of Empire: Orientalism and Visual Culture*. John Wiley & Sons.

Hamann, B. 2008. “Chronological pollution.” *Current Anthropology.* 49 (5): 803–36.

Jasanoff, M. 2005. *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750–1850.* London: Fourth Estate.

Jézéquel, J.H. 2011. “Les professionnels africains de la recherche dans l’État colonial tardif. Le personnel local de l’Institut Français d’Afrique Noire entre 1938 et 1960.” *Revue d’Histoire des Sciences Humaines*. 24: 35-60.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. 1991. “Objects of Ethnography.” In Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Displays, eds. I. Karp, and S. Lavine, 386-443. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Press.

Kowalski, W. 2005. “Cultural Property, National Treasures, Restitution.” In *UNESCO Museum International: Protection and Restitution*. LVII 4/288: 85-102.

Krauss, R. 1996. “Postmodernism’s Museum without Walls.” In *Thinking about Exhibitions*, eds. B. W. Ferguson, R. Greenberg, and S. Nairne, 341-348. London, New York: Routledge.

Kreps, C. 2015. “Appropriate museology and the ‘new museum ethics’.” *Nordisk Museologi.* (2): 4-16.

La Follette, L. 2017. “Looted Antiquities, Art Museums and Restitution in the United States since 1970.” *Journal of Contemporary History.* 52 (3): 669–687.

Lagae, J. 2008. “From ‘Patrimoine partagé’ to ‘whose heritage’?” *Afrika Focus. 21*: 11-30.

Levinas, E. 1995. *Altérité et transcendance*. Montpellier: Fata Morgana.

Merryman, J. H. 2006. *Imperialism, Art and Restitution*. California: Stanford University.

Mignolo, W. 2011. *The darker side of Western modernity*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Murphy, D. 2016. “Introduction: The Performance of Pan-Africanism.” In *The First World Festival of Negro Arts, Dakar 1966,* ed. D. Murphy, 1-42. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Modest, W. 2012. “We have always been modern: Museums, Collections, and Modernity in the Caribbean.” *Museum Anthropology*. 35 (1): 85-96.

Mitchell, T. 1988. *Colonising Egypt.* Berkeley, California: University of California Press.

Ndiaye, M. 2011. *Arts contemporains africains et enjeux du débat critique postcolonial : cartographies artistiques et discursives entre Paris et Dakar (1966-2006).* PhD Thesis, University of Rennes II.

Okwunodu Ogbechie, S. 2010. "Who Owns Africa's Cultural Patrimony?" *Critical Interventions*. 4 (2): 2-3.

O'Riley, M. 2007. "Postcolonial Haunting: Anxiety, Affect, and the Situated Encounter." *Postcolonial Text.* 3 (4): 1–15.

Palmié, S. and Stewart, C. 2016. "For an Anthropology of History." *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory.* 6 (1): 207–236.

Peers, L. and Brown, A., eds. 2003. *Museum and Source Communities: Routledge Reader*. London: Routledge.

Pieterse, N. J., 1997. "Multiculturalism and museums: discourse about the other in the age of globalization." *Theory, Culture & Society*. 14 (4): 123–146.

Povinelli, A. 2002. *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Quashie, H. 2009. "L' île de Gorée, patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO: les contradictions mémorielles d'un site classé et habité." *Africa: tourismo e patrimonio.* 65 (66): 61-68.

Savoy, B. 2015. "Plunder, Restitution, Emotion and the Weight of Archives: A Historical Approach." In *Echoes of Exile. Moscow Archives and the Arts in Paris 1933–1945,* ed. I. Rotermund-Reynard, 27-44. Boston: De Gruyter.

Senghor, L.S. 1964. *Liberté I. Négritude et Humanisme.* Paris: Seuil.

Senghor, L.S. 1977. *Liberté III. Négritude et Civilisation de l'Universel*. Paris: Seuil.

Shelton, A., ed. 2001. *Collectors: Expressions of Self and Other*. London: The Horniman Museum and Gardens.

Spivak, C. 1988. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture,* eds. C. Nelson, and L. Grossberg, 271-313. Macmillan Education: Basingstoke.

Sylvester, C. 2009. *Art/Museums: International Relations Where We Least Expect it.* New York: Routledge.

Swenson, A., and P. Mandler, eds. 2013. *From Plunder to Preservation: Britain and the Heritage of Empire, c. 1800–1940.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Thomas, N. 1991. *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture and Colonialism in the Pacific. Cambridge*, MA: Harvard University Press.

Tythacott, L., and Arvanitis, K., eds. 2014. *Museums and Restitution, New Practices, New Approaches*. Ashgate.

Vergès, F. 2008. "Displaying Postcoloniality. On the project for a Museum of the Living Present on the Island of Réunion: An interview between Charlotte Martinz-Turek and Françoise Vergès." *EIPCP - instituto europeo para políticas culturales progresivas.* [Available online at: http://eipcp.net/transversal/0708/martinzturekverges/en; accessed 2 March 2018].

Vergès, F. 2014. "A Museum Without Objects." In *The Postcolonial Museum: The Arts of Memory* and the Pressures of History, eds. I. Chambers, A. De Angelis, C. Ianniciello, M. Orabona, and M. Quadraro, 25–38. London: Routledge.

Wallace, C. 2015. "Exhibiting Authenticity: The Black Emergency Cultural Coalition's Protest of the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1968-1971." *Art Journal.* 74 (2): 5-23.

Waterton, E., and Dittmer, J. 2014. "The museum as assemblage: bringing forth affect at the Australian War Memorial." *Museum Management and Curatorship*. 29 (2): 122-139.

MARTOR

Title: *Working with Contested Ethnographic Collections to Change "Old Museum" Perspectives: Mutare Museum, Eastern Zimbabwe, 2015-2017*

Author: Njabulo Chipangura

How to cite this article: Chipangura, Njabulo. 2018. "Working with Contested Ethnographic Collections to Change 'Old Museum' Perspectives: Mutare Museum, Eastern Zimbabwe, 2015-2017." *Martor* 23: 59-69.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Ţăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

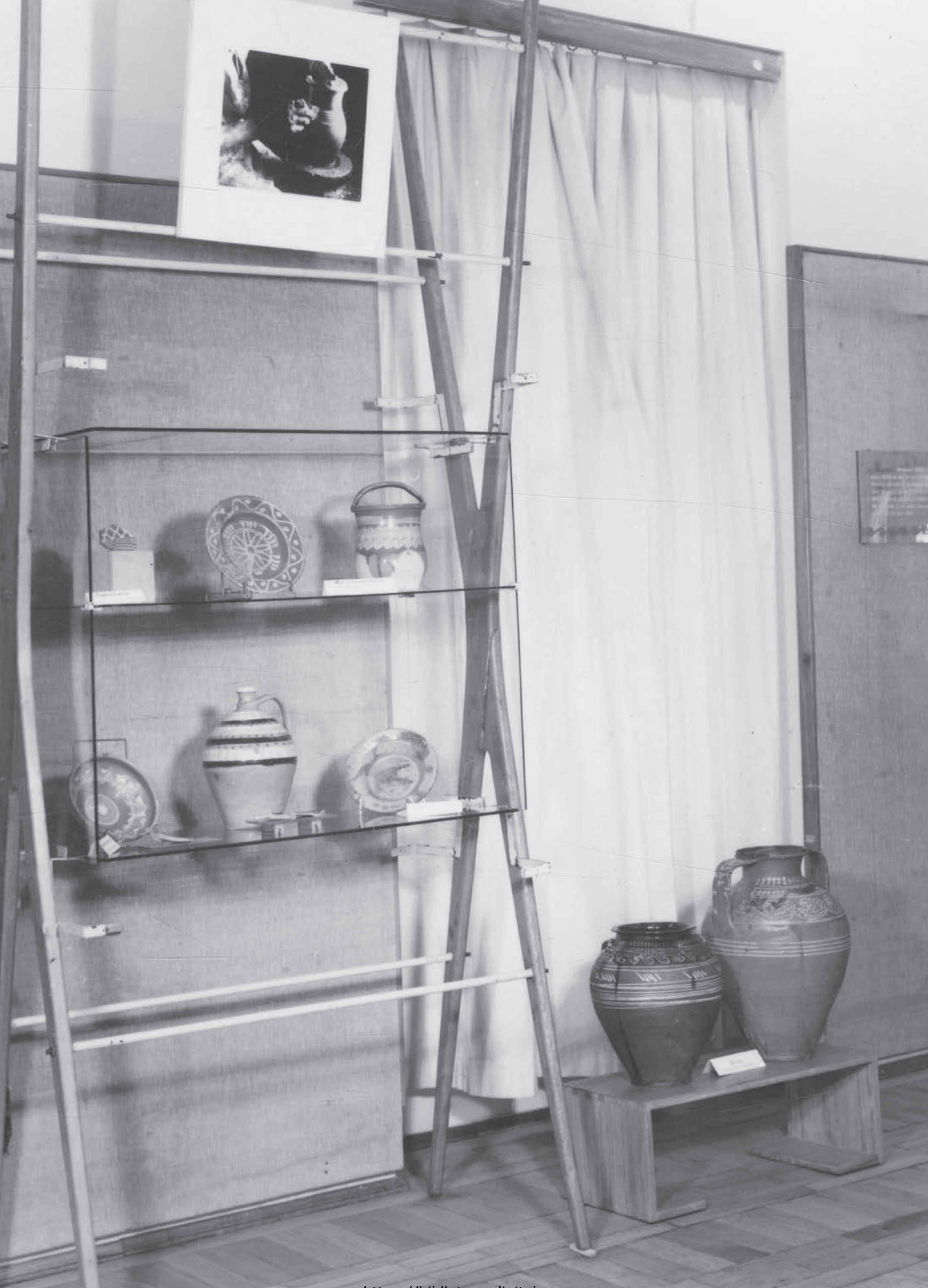
URL: http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/martor-23-2018/

Martor (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Journal) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. ***Martor Journal*** is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Interdisciplinary and international in scope, it provides a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for academic and non-academic readership. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

Martor (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue ***Martor*** est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

Martor is indexed by:

CEEOL, EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Anthropological Index Online (AIO), MLA International Bibliography.



Working with Contested Ethnographic Collections to Change "Old Museum" Perspectives: Mutare Museum, Eastern Zimbabwe, 2015-2017

Njabulo Chipangura
PhD Candidate, Department of Anthropology/ Wits City Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa; Curator at Mutare Museum, National Museum and Monuments of Zimbabwe
nchipangura3@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

In this article, I will examine the history of collecting ethnographic objects at Mutare Museum, moving between the colonial and postcolonial periods in order to show how these time scales structured the ways in which exhibitions are presented. I argue that by removing ethnographic objects from their cultural setting and inserting them into the visual system of the museum, their dynamic web of physical and social meanings was broken. Whilst I acknowledge that Mutare Museum's system of displaying its ethnographic collection was shaped by colonialism in a way that resulted in the marginalisation of certain communities, I will show how collections in one of the galleries—the Beit Gallery—were transformed to convey new postcolonial meanings. In part, the article also looks at how the concept of object biography and ethnomuseology assisted in redesigning and changing old exhibitions in the Beit Gallery. This case in point will be illustrated by gleaning through the multi-layered histories of collecting at this museum. Next, I will argue that the particular, 'old' manner in which ethnographic objects were displayed conforms to the traditional practice of presenting exclusively for visual observation. Objects would be displayed on the floor in an almost derogatory way—presented as if they were strange and exotic and devoid of any social and historical significance. Yet, this type of scenography did not do justice to the social biography of the collection, which could not be understood in terms of a single unchanging identity, but rather by tracing the succession of meanings attached to the objects as they move through space and time. As a result, communities living around this museum used to periodically contest narratives that were appended on ethnographic collections on display in the Beit Gallery. Therefore, in this article, I will show how we reorganised this exhibition through a collaborative partnership with the source communities where the objects had originated from. The discussion in this article is premised on the data derived from my involvement in redesigning displays in the Beit Gallery as a curator at Mutare Museum. Later on, I will also address public perceptions of the new installations and gauge whether the exhibition attained the desired effects.

KEYWORDS

Ethnography, contested, collections, Mutare Museum, Beit Gallery.

Introduction and historical background of Mutare Museum

The Mutare Museum is one of the five regional museums under the administration of the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) organisation. All five museums were established as result of colonial encounters; Zimbabwe was colonized by Britain in 1890 and gained its independence in 1980. Mutare Museum, situated in Eastern Zimbabwe, is the national collector of transport objects and antiquities. The Mutare Museum (formerly Umtali Museum) opened its doors to the public in 1964 with displays of antiquities, transportation, botany, and geology. Later, additional displays of ethnographic and archaeological objects were added. Up to the present day, these permanent exhibitions have remained essentially unchanged. The Mutare Museum has been frozen in time and biased towards colonialism as many aspects of an independent Zimbabwe have been ignored, hence the growing need to change the displays or even revamp some of the outdated exhibitions (Chipangura 2014). The locals have often criticised this museum for being alien, imported, elitist, urban-based and still serving colonial interests almost four decades after independence.

Looking back, the history of Mutare Museum is inextricably interwoven with that of the Umtali Society (Broadley 1966). The Umtali Society came into being as a committee of the Southern Rhodesia Hunters and Game Preservation Association in October 1953. This society was established for the purpose of inaugurating and fostering interest in the establishment of a museum in Umtali. The society gathered and displayed the first collections of historical and natural objects in January 1956, which persuaded the Municipality to provide a temporary home for the museum (Broadley 1966). It was only in November 1957 that the Umtali Municipality granted the association some space in an old hostel, allowing them to exhibit on a semi-permanent basis (Broadley 1966). By mid-1958 the museum had about five hundred visitors each month, but it had no funds for further development, which lead them to approach the trustees of National Museums and Monuments of Rhodesia to takeover. Having secured grants from the Government and the Umtali Municipality, Sir Edgar Whitehead officially opened the museum in November 1958. Captain E.F Boultbee was then appointed Honorary Curator of the Umtali Museum on 1 September 1959 (Broadley 1966).

The trustees realized that the existing building was unsuitable and, with the help of the Umtali Museum Society, raised funds for a new building for the museum. The new building was officially inaugurated by Sir Alfred Beit on 13 September 1964 (Broadley 1966). When it opened its doors to the public, the museum had displays focusing on antiquities, transport, botany, and geology. Later on, additional displays of ethnographic and archaeological objects were installed in the Beit Gallery. Therefore, the creation of Mutare Museum, and many other museums throughout Africa, is closely linked to colonialism (Arinze 1988). These museums were created as a result of colonial encounters. They share a common history in terms of their development in that they tend to be the by-products of colonialism and they are twentieth-century creations—a period marked by European imperialism. In most cases they were created in specific socio-political contexts that sought to denigrate the local population, diminish self-confidence, and reduce pride in past achievements (Bvocho 2013). Similarly, I argue that exhibitions at Mutare Museum have been frozen in time as many aspects of an independent Zimbabwe have been ignored, hence the growing need to change the displays or even revamp some of the outdated exhibitions. Murambiwa (1999) also argues that between 1965 and 1979 there were deliberate attempts to use museums to undermine African culture while at the same time highlighting the positive impact of colonisation.

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

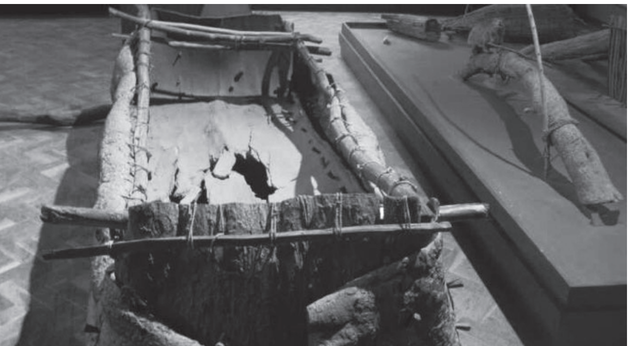
Old ethnographic displays in the Beit Gallery

Before reorganization, the Beit Gallery measured approximately 224 square metres and included a wide range of exhibitions that covered themes related to traditional aspects of the Shona culture in Zimbabwe. Shona is the name widely given to the indigenous population in Zimbabwe, consisting of people who speak a similar language also called Shona. However, the Shona language itself is not homogenous because within it are different dialects that vary from region to region—Eastern Zimbabwe is inhabited by the Manyika, Ndau, Jindwi, Hwesa and Karanga speaking people.

The old Beit Gallery had two entrances. The first entrance was located in the front, close to the main museum entrance, and the other one was situated just adjacent to the Boultbee Gallery. Right by the first entrance to the gallery, a case containing transport accessories was displayed. Objects in this display were placed more or less as if in a storeroom. Opposite this display, there were zoological displays comprising an animal tree and two cases with different kinds of insects. Running the length of the gallery, there were a variety of mixed objects including geological displays and different types of traditional artefacts. There was also a display case with beads, head rests, snuff boxes and a portrait of a traditional chief adorned with symbols of chieftainship such as badges and ceremonial artefacts (Mareya 1999). Next to this was a section showcasing traditional modes of transportation that included bark boats and different types of sledges, all of them displayed on the floor. As depicted above, the old exhibitions in the Beit Gallery did not tell a meaningful story, and visitors could easily mistake it for a storeroom. This is because it was a hodgepodge of exhibits with no clear-cut objectives, nor any specific themes addressing the visitor.

The old ethnographic displays in the Beit Gallery fit within the premise of exhibiting exotic cultures by the colonial authority when the museum was opened to the public in 1964. Karp and Kratz (2000) employed an analytical approach in examining the politics of ethnographic representations in museums. Of fundamental importance to their approach was the careful consideration and examination of the word “ethnography” as central to exhibitions of people’s cultures. In analysing this term, they concluded that “ethnographic displays are not only confined to natural history museums, ethnographic museums or culture history museums” as “they are part of almost all cultural displays, including displays of the ethnographic, and other displays in art museums and outside museum contexts altogether” (Karp and Kratz 2000: 19). Furthermore, they also classified ethnographic displays as emerging out of complex histories and ideological contexts that include at least four elements. These four elements cover aspects of Enlightenment, imperial and colonial expansion history, the actual history of representation, and the history of exhibiting exotic cultures (Karp and Kratz 2000).

Fig. 1: Ethnographic objects displayed on the floor in the Beit Gallery, Feb. 2018. Photo credit: Njabulo Chipangura.



In examining ethnography, Karp and Kratz (2000) distinguished between two forms of authority: the ethnographic authority and the cultural authority. They explained cultural authority as a fundamental resource that museums use to produce and reproduce themselves. The exhibitions in a museum, its documentation and research functions give the museum its cultural authority. However, according to Smith (2006), getting to know people’s experiences about the past is more important than ascribing their heritage to authorised national and international frameworks where expert knowledge has complete hegemony. Instead, she argues that this authorised structure of knowledge in a museum context can be diffused by analysing its production using histories from below—that is to say by focusing on the various socio-cultural processes that resulted in the making of the objects themselves (Smith 2006). Upon the attainment of political independence in Zimbabwe, the indigenous population expected an about-turn in the ways in which their collections were being presented in museums. Debates focused on when they would be granted respect, the right to consultation, involvement and engagement in setting up museum displays (Ucko 1994). However, for decades after the end of colonialism, Mutare Museum was continuously haunted by stereotypical presentations housed as ethnographic displays in the Beit Gallery.

• • • • • • • •

Museums and object agency

In broader and more empirical terms, museums in postcolonial countries have to transcend the empirical practices in which they operate as object archives or repositories of dead collections. This is because objects and their distribution are no longer seen to reflexively mirror human behaviour, instead material culture plays an important role in the construction of social relations that maintain or transform relations of power and inequality (Latour 2005; Hodder 2012). Museum objects used to be regarded as passive and inert materials to which things happened and things were done. However, objects do not merely carry meanings, they make meanings, because they also possess social agency much like the people who made them (Hoskins 1998). Objects may acquire a wide range of meanings during their manufacture and use as they changed hands, embedded in different social strategies and networks (Gosselain 2000; Appadurai 1986; Hoskins; 1998; Lucas 2012).

There is a dialectical relationship between people's behaviour and objects generally referred to as the Actor Network Theory (Latour 2005; Hodder 2012; Faulkner et al 2010; Harbers 2005; Alberti 2016; Brysbaert 2017). In short, ANT accounts for the ways in which non-humans (objects) guide or steer humans (subjects) to do something even when the latter are not aware of that. It centres on the ontological relationality of entities against the background that they are produced in networks (Olsen 2012; Hanare *et al.* 2007; Alberti 2016; Preucel and Meskell 2007). People and materials are interwoven in extensive networks of activities, social relationships and practices. Within these relational ontologies, agency is de-centered from the human subject and distributed among a network of people and things (Lucas 2012; Preucel and Meskell 2007). Thus, there is a radial symmetry of interactions between humans and non-humans which breaks the divide between the object and the subject (Faulkner et al 2010; Harbers 2005; LaMotta 2012; Olsen 2012; Alberti 2016).

Therefore, in planning changes to the ways in which ethnographic objects were displayed in the Beit Gallery, the museum was cognizant of the fact that those were not just mute objects, deprived of agency. They have biographies derived from their socio-cultural uses before they were museumised. Examining object biographies from the perspective of birth, life and death provides a convenient narrative structure which is integral to the analogy of life histories (Hoskins 1998). The biography of an object can be divided into eight processes: procurement, manufacture, use, maintenance, reuse, cultural deposition, reclamation, and recycling (LaMotta 2012; Walker and Lucero 2000). Moreover, objects possess a dual nature which entails that they simultaneously belong both to the physical and the mental realms (Faulkner et al. 2010). The dual nature concept underscores the idea that an object is constituted by both its physical properties and the functions associated with it. Looking at the biography and agency of ethnographic displays in the Beit Gallery also entailed putting in place a well-defined collections policy that put an end to the haphazard and random collections of artefacts. The chosen themes in this new exhibition were aligned to illustrate the main areas of concentration in the Eastern Shona societies. The subthemes in the new exhibition now include a short prehistory of Eastern Zimbabwean agriculture; traditional healing; music; religious practices; and the community's relationship with the natural environment.

• • • • • • • •

Curating experiential change in the Beit Gallery

The Eastern Shona comprises several chieftainships and covers seven major districts—Buhera, Mutasa, Makoni, Chipinge, Chimanimani, Mutare, and Nyanga. During the colonial period, the collecting of ethnographic objects from these areas for scientific study was stimulated by colonial desires to understand the cultural diversity of the natives. In designing the new experiential exhibition, the museum employed ethnomusicological approaches to rethink the placement of traditional drums in one of the ethnographic sections of the Beit Gallery. The use of this approach was premised on the understanding that the drums might have acquired a wide range of meanings during their use, passing from one individual to the other, embedded in different social strategies and networks, before being dislocated from their original context to be included in a museum collection (Gosselain, 1999; Appadurai, 1986; Hoskins, 1998). Within their places of origins, the Eastern Shona people used the drums to give rhythm to songs during their ritual ceremonies. There were different types of music and dances for each occasion. *Chimaisiri* is a good example of a dance performed by the Eastern Shona, punctuated by loud drum beating during the ceremonies. This dance was originally associated strictly with hunting ritual ceremonies but has now become a social dance for beer parties, other joyful occasions, and also funerals. *Chimaisiri* was also performed before a hunting session as a way of asking for guidance and protection from various wild animals that the hunters might encounter in the forest.

Mhande is another indigenous song performed by the Eastern Shona during annual rain petitioning rituals. The *mhande* repertoire consists of distinctive songs and rhythms used for communicating with the *majukwa* (rain spirits). The rain spirits in turn communicate with God *(Mwari)*, the provider of rain on behalf of the people. *Mhande* performances involve singing, drum playing, hand clapping, dancing, and ululation. It is generally believed and accepted by the Eastern Shona that religion is a medium through which complex human problems, especially comprehension of life after death or life beyond the grave, can be addressed. Their social structure rests on religious beliefs and that *Nyadenga* (God), the spiritual being, is responsible for everyone's destiny. Since God was said to be busy in the spiritual world, he could not be accessed by an ordinary man but through spirit mediums—*midzimu*, which correspond to family, clan or *mhondoro* levels. Thus, the Eastern Shona believe that when a person dies the spirit wanders about until it is given permission by the ancestors from the spiritual world to come back and protect its children. Ceremonies were held to give these wandering spirits permission to come back, and the drum was one of the main objects used during the ceremonies. Only fully-grown persons who had children could become effective spirit mediums once they died. The spirits of the dead are believed to convey any message from the living to God and as such are central to religious beliefs of the Eastern Shona (Mupira 2013). Such a well-structured system of beliefs by the Shona strongly refutes old colonial misconceptions about the animistic nature of the same drums displayed as a function of the ethnographic gaze in the museum.

Against this background, experiential ethnomuseology methodology was able to shed light on questions concerning material and ritual technologies used by the Eastern Shona relative to similar objects that were collected and placed in the Beit Gallery during the colonial period. Thus, it was observed that the Eastern Shona still use the type of traditional drums that are found in museum exhibitions during their ritual ceremonies. Such analogical reasoning underpins interpretations of the past developed within the context of personal knowledge of how individuals and communities interact with material culture (Iles and Childs 2002: 193). The traditional drum *(ngoma)* is cylindrical in shape, open and narrower at the bottom than the top. The drum is made from hardwood and has its top covered by animal skin secured on both sides with wooden pegs (Ellert 1984).

Ethnographic methods were used together with museological approaches to explore the contemporary relevance and meaning of the material past. Using ethnomuseology, this study managed to observe the ritual practices associated with the use of the traditional drums. This method also enabled the museum to clarify issues of theory and epistemology by directly observing the social dynamics associated with the use of the drums. In this sense, it was more akin to participant observation as it aimed to produce a comprehensive and empirically based reconstruction of past behaviours that could inform us on the real uses of the drums previously displayed out of context at Mutare Museum.

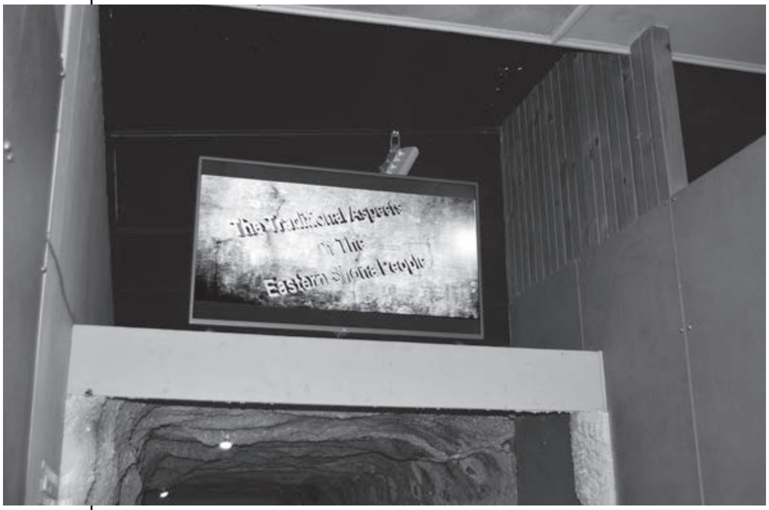


Fig. 2. Entrance into the reorganised Gallery, Feb. 2018. Photo credits: Njabulo Chipangura.

The reorganization of the Beit Gallery

A new exhibition emerged from the experiential ethnomuseology study. In turn, the exhibition was the starting point for the reorganisation of the Beit Gallery, which reopened in June 2016. A proper representation of the Shona ways of life in the re-organised Beit Gallery solved the problem of artefacts meaninglessly lying all over the gallery floor. Interactivity in the Beit Gallery was also imagined by designing a traditional Shona kitchen hut where visitors were allowed to enter and experience it. In this set-up, the hut retained all the cultural attributes of a model Shona kitchen which has survived unchanged for many centuries. This is quite appealing to visitors especially to young stars and urbanites that never experienced the traditional set-up of the homestead in the rural areas as they can rest and recreate in the hut in a traditional way. One visitor commenting on the kitchen display in the guestbook said: “I was quite impressed by the cultural hut section. It is showing the real African culture of many Zimbabweans. The recreated kitchen is exceptional; a lot of creativity has been shown. Keep up the good work you are doing for our children especially those who have never been to rural areas.” Looking at the visitors’ comments in the guestbook and the positive responses that the new displays got, one can argue that digital technology changed the face of Mutare Museum and consequently led to an initial increase in the number of visitors. Also included in the new gallery is an interactive interface showing how hunting and gathering was undertaken in the past by the Eastern Shona people. Thus, a reproduction of the hunting forest was created where visitors make their way through the immersive set of environments as they journey back in time to the sights, sounds, and smells of the forest. Using an

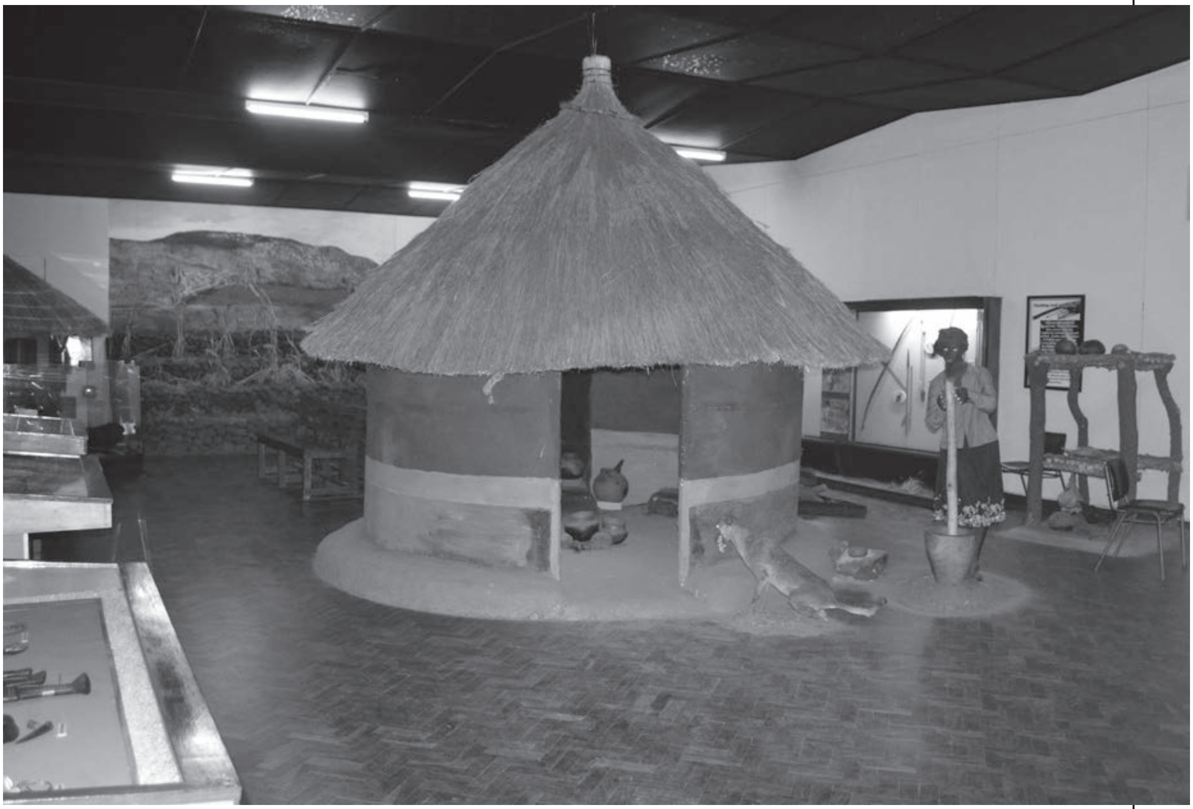


Fig. 3: The kitchen hut reconstructed inside the Gallery, Feb.2018. Photo credits: Njabulo Chipangura.

interactive computer, visitors are exposed to various traditional hunting methods that include the falling log trap and hunting nets.

This interactive element therefore implied that the local people are consistently active participants, as opposed to being passive receivers of information as it was the case in the traditional museum set-up. Given the importance of emotions and societal attachments to cultural objects, the exhibition strived to design ways that maximised visitor experiences of awe and reverence. Such a transformation thus entailed looking at indigenous societies as dynamic entities as well as having a museum that focused more on contemporary issues in their exhibitions. In addition, dialogue between the objects exhibited and the surrounding communities was generated to embody a shared authority in museum knowledge production.

The very nature of this exhibition made it a postcolonial display designed with the full participation of the once marginalised communities. Music and dance are one of the subthemes showcased in this new exhibition which chronicles the traditional aspects of the Eastern Shona people in Zimbabwe. Our experiential ethnomuseological research revealed that the Eastern Shona people were and still are music lovers. They entertained themselves through music and dance, hence music was integral to their day to day activities, such as cultivating, harvesting, and also to their funerals. Although the coming of Western culture had an impact on the musical activity of the Eastern Shona, these forms of entertainment still exist especially in the rural areas. In the new exhibition, events and their specific songs and dances are explained with the aid of short video images of the performances on display.

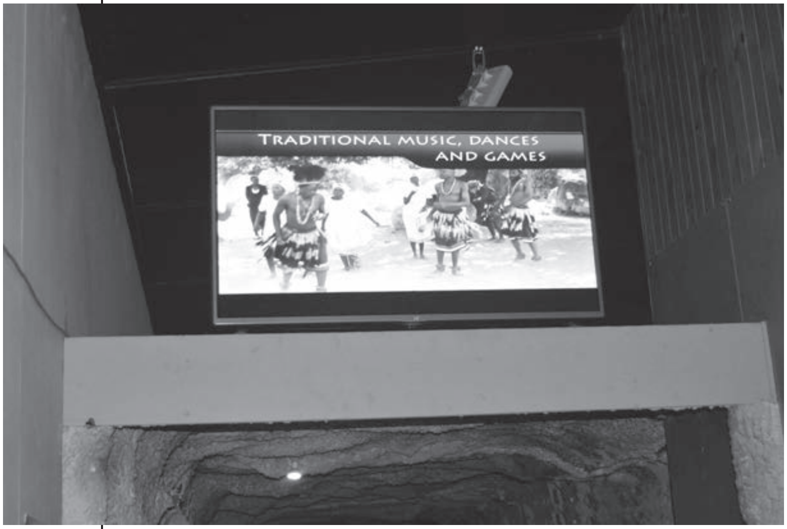


Fig. 4: Video recordings of traditional dances on display in the Gallery, Feb.2018. Photo credits: Njabulo Chipangura.

Therefore, the new exhibition uses both audio and video recordings to illustrate the socio-cultural uses of the drums that were randomly collected when this museum opened in 1964. In this exhibition, it also emerged that apart from helping to fulfil the basic museum functions of documenting, conserving and exhibiting, objects had accumulated individual biographies as they were used in ritual activities.

The changed museum and postcolonial aspirations

As the precursor to the imposition of the Western model of the museum in the early twentieth century, colonialism was responsible for the loss of cultural objects belonging to indigenous people. Ethnographic objects were simply collected from local communities without a proper understanding of their socio-cultural uses and the various relations established with their makers. Writing about the role of museums in postcolonial societies, Harrison and Hughes argue that “post-colonies are connected in terms of their heritage by the need to forge new national identities in the wake of decolonisation” (2010: 238). Identity has emerged as one of the most important issues for postcolonial nations, and as such museums play an important role in helping people to identify both who they are as individuals and the communities to which they belong (Harrison and Hughes 2010). Therefore, the new Shona cultural displays in the Beit Gallery reflect on how societies deal with the aftermath of colonial rule in the search of identity lost in museums because of flawed ethnographic representation. Postcolonial theory is concerned primarily with unveiling, contesting and changing the way that colonialism structured societies and the ideologies associated with colonialism. In rethinking the old collection and exhibiting practices in the Beit Gallery, we considered the genealogy of colonisation and its impact on indigenous communities in terms of how cultural objects were appropriated under the guise of ethnographic research.

Dis-placed from their original context and re-placed in museums, they became objects of ethnography and were assigned with new meanings derived from scientific, historical and aesthetic paradigms of Western knowledge (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991). In thinking about how museums stand at the intersection of scientific work and public display, the “exhibitionary complex,” expounded and elaborated by Bennett (1995: 12), is a useful conceptual tool with regards to how idealized museum ‘publics’ were produced and placed as both the object and subject of the power and knowledge ensuing from their conceived citizenship. In this manner, as Bennett explains with regards to Britain, “the exhibitionary complex (…) perfected a self-monitoring system of looks in which the subject and object positions can be exchanged, in which the crowd comes to commune with and voluntarily regulate itself through interiorizing the ideal and

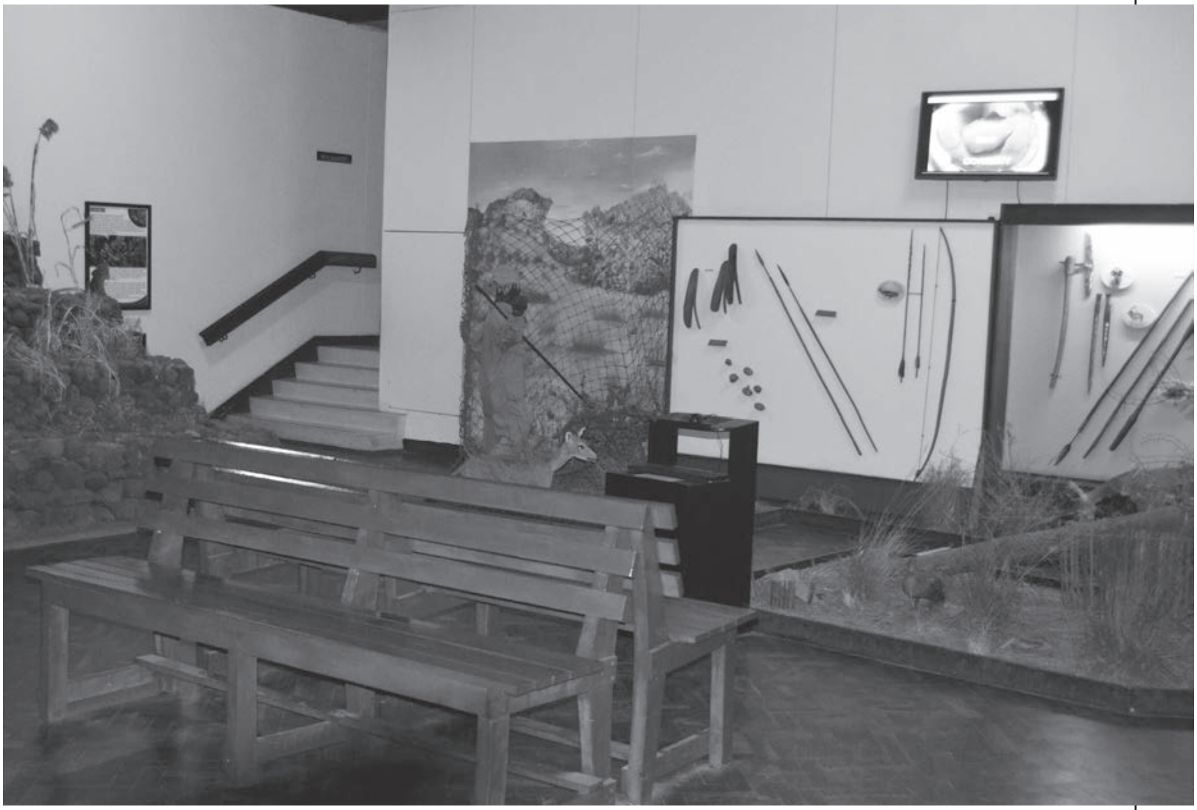


Fig. 5: New interactive interfaces in the Gallery, Feb. 2018. Photo credits: Njabulo Chipangura.

ordered view of itself as seen from the controlling vision of power—a site of sight accessible to all" (1995: 13). In this way, not only was a new 'public' formed within the narratives of national progress through and toward civilization, but it was also placed in "new relations of sight and vision" as well as "new relations of power and knowledge" (Bennett 1995: 13).

Old exhibitions in the Beit Gallery thus occupied a distinctive niche in the development of scientific enquiry, both as a site of accumulation where objects were arranged in specified orders and as the location where people were taught to look at the world, to value the past, and to visualize relations between objects. As a result, many indigenous people came to associate the museum with colonialism, cultural repression and loss of their heritage. Thus, the onus fell on Mutare Museum to transform these displays which had been static for some time and in which indigenous societies have been frozen in a kind of timeless past.

• • • • • • • • •

Conclusion

This article has attempted to provide a critique of collection and exhibition practices at Mutare Museum in the colonial and postcolonial periods. Using the example of exhibits in the Beit Gallery, I have demonstrated how, from 1980 to 2015, ethnographic objects were simply collected for research and then randomly displayed without providing clear contextual meanings. However, to correct this anomaly an experiential ethnomuseology exercise was undertaken to trace the local origin of some of the objects in the Mutare

Museum's collections. This work paved the way for an implementation of changes where the old exhibits were reorganised to reflect their true biographical meanings which were conspicuously absent in the old set-up. Various rituals in which the ethnographic objects were used were also documented in real time through video and audio recordings. These are now integral part of the new multimedia displays of the reorganized Beit Gallery.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alberti, Benjamin. 2016. "Archaeologies of Ontology." *Annual Review of Anthropology.* 45: 1-17.

Appadurai, Arjun. 1986. *The social life of things, commodities in cultural perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Arinze, Emmanuel. 1998. "African Museums: The Challenge of Change." *Museum International.* 50 (1): 31-37.

Bennett, Tony. 1995. *The Birth of the Museum*. London and New York: Routledge.

Broadley, Donald. 1964. "History of Umtali Museum." *Rhodesian Science News.* 8 (5): 1-30.

Brysbaert, Ann. 2017. "Artisans versus nobility? Crafting in context: Introduction." In Artisans versus nobility? Multiple identities of elites and 'commoners' viewed through the lens of crafting from the Chalcolithic to the Iron Ages in Europe and the Mediterranean, ed. by Ann Brysbaert and Alexis Gorgues, 28-45. Leiden: Sidestone Press.

Bvocho, Godhi. 2011. "Multimedia, Museums and the Public: Communicating Heritage Information." *Museum Memoir.* National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe. 3: 1-18.

Chipangura, Njabulo. 2014. "Rethinking the practices of collecting and displaying ethnographic objects at Mutare Museum." In *Museums and the Idea of Historical Progress,* ed. by Rooskana Omar, Shahid Vawda, and Laura Gibson, 134- 148. Cape Town: Iziko Museums Publications.

Chipangura, Njabulo. 2017a. "The Illegal Diamond Mining Exhibition: A Vehicle for Museum Renewal and Effecting Social Change." *Exhibition.* 36 (2): 37-45.

Chipangura, Njabulo. 2017b. "Timeless Displays: reinventing visitor experience through participatory and interactive involvement at Mutare Museum." *The Museum Scholar.* 1 (1): 1-12.

Chipangura Njabulo, and Chiripanhura Pauline. 2017. "Reconfiguring the *Jindwi* traditional drums in a post-colonial Mutare Museum setting." In *Decolonisation of Materialities or Materialisation of (Re-) Colonisation? Symbolism, Languages, Ecocritism and (Non) Representalisation in 21st Century Africa*, ed. by Artwell Nhemachena, Jairos Kangira, and Nelson Mlambo, 219-241. Bermuda: Langa RPCIG.

Chipangura, Njabulo, and Mandizvo Chidochashe. 2014. "Static Collections and Experiential Connections at Mutare Museum." *Museum International.* 257-260: 106-112.

Classen, Constance, and Howes David. 2006. "The Museum as Sensescape: Western Sensibilities and Indigenous Artifacts." In *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture,* ed. by Elizabeth Edwards Chris Gosden, Ruth Phillips, 18-31. Oxford and New York: Berg.

Edwards, Elizabeth, Constance Classen, and David Howes. 2006. "Introduction." In *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture*, ed. by Elizabeth Edwards Chris Gosden, Ruth Phillips, 1-9. Oxford and New York: Berg.

Ellert, Hebert. 1993. *Rivers of Gold*, Gweru: Mambo Press.

Falk, John and Lynn Dierking. 2011. *The Museum Experience Revisited.* California: Left Coast Press.

Faulkner, Phillip. 2010. "Theorising Technology." *Cambridge Journal of Economics.* 34 (1): 1-16.

Gosselain, Oliver. 1992. "Materializing Identities: An African Perspective." *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory.* 7 (3): 187-217.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 1991. "Objects of Ethnography." In *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Displays,* ed. by Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, 87-95. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Harbers, Hans. 2005a. “Introduction: Co-production, agency and normativity.” In *Inside the politics of technology, Agency and normativity in the co-production of technology and society*, ed. by Hans Harbers, 18-34. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Harbers, Hans. 2005b. “Epilogue; Political Materials-Material Politics.” In *Inside the politics of technology, Agency and normativity in the co-production of technology and society*, ed. by Hans Harbers, 3-18. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Harrison, Rodney, and Lotte Hughes. 2010. *Understanding the Politics of Heritage: Global Heritage Perspective*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Hodder, Ian. 2012. “Introduction: Contemporary Theoretical Debate.” In *Archaeological Theory Today (Second Edition)*, ed. by I. Hodder, 43-58. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hanare, Amiria, Martin Holbraad, and Sari Wastell. 2007. “Introduction.” In *Thinking Through Things: Theorising Artifacts Ethnographically,* ed. by Amiria Henare, Martin Holbraad, Sari Wastell, 7-19. London: Routledge.

Hoskins, Janet. 1988. *Biographical objects: How things tell the stories of people’s lives*. New York: Routledge.

Iles, Louise, and Terry Childs. 2014. “Ethnoarcaheological and Historical Methods.” In *Archaeometallurgy in Global Perspective; Methods and Synthesis*, ed. by Benjamin Roberts and Christopher Thornton, 43-66. New York: Springer.

LaMotta, Vincent. 2012. “Behavioural Archaeology.” In *Archaeological Theory Today (Second Edition*), ed. by I. Hodder, 34-41. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Latour, Bruno. 2005. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor Network Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Lucas, Gavin. 2012. *Understanding the archaeological record*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mareya, Beatrice. 1999. “Project Proposal for the Beit Gallery New Exhibitions: The Traditional Aspects of the Eastern Shona in Zimbabwe.” Report, National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe.

Mupira, Paul. 2013. “Storyline for the Proposed Reorganisation of the Beit Gallery Exhibitions.” Unpublished, National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe.

Murambiwa, Ivan. 1999. “Reconciling the museum with its stakeholders: Mutare Museum’s challenge.” A paper presented at the *Museums, Peace. Democracy and Governance in the 21 Century,* Commonwealth Association of Museums’ Triennial Conference, Barbados, May 5-12.

Olsen, Bjørnar. 2012. “Symmetrical Archaeology.” In *Archaeological Theory Today (Second Edition)*, ed. by I. Hodder, 65-78. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Preucel, Robert, and Lynn Meskell. 2007. “Knowledges.” In *Companion to Social Archaeology*, ed. by Lynn Meskell and Robert Preucel, 3-23. Victoria: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Smith, Laurajane. 2006. *Uses of Heritage*. London and New York: Routledge.

Ucko, Peter. 1994. “Museum and sites: cultures of the past within education—Zimbabwe some ten years on.” In *The Presented Past, Heritage, museum and education*, ed. by Peter Stone and Brian Molyneaux, 15-35. London: Routledge.

Walker, William and Lisa Lucero. 2000. “The depositional history of ritual and power.” In *Agency in Archaeology*, ed. by Marcia Dobres and John Robb, 23-39. London: Routledge.

MARTOR

Title: *The Museums of the World and I. My Museum Experience in an Eastern European Country*

Author: Irina Nicolau

Translated from French by: Anca-Maria Pănoiu, and Ioana Miruna Voiculescu

How to cite this article: Nicolau, Irina. 2018. "The Museums of the World and I. My Museum Experience in an Eastern European Country." *Martor* 23: 73-92.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Ţăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/martor-23-2018/

Martor (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Journal) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. ***Martor Journal*** is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Interdisciplinary and international in scope, it provides a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for academic and non-academic readership. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

Martor (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue ***Martor*** est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

Martor is indexed by:

CEEOL, EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Anthropological Index Online (AIO), MLA International Bibliography.

Study Corner.
The Antidote Museum 25 Years On

The Museums of the World and I
My Museum Experience in an Eastern European Country*

Irina Nicolau
Translated from the French by:
Anca-Maria Pănoiu, and Ioana Miruna Voiculescu

ABSTRACT

In the context of the major changes that the the Museum of the Romanian Peasant is currently undergoing, we decided to publish an extraordinarily daring article written by Irina Nicolau in 1994, at a time when the "young" MRP she had co-founded together with Horia Bernea was experiencing another era of change and challenges as it made a fresh start after the fall of communism.
With the bright reflections of young PhD candidate Dominique Belkis serving as her mirror, as in a dialogue between master and disciple, Irina Nicolau tells her story about the scars left by the communist decades on Eastern European countries and, more specifically, on Romanian culture. Being aware of the necessity to rethink the past in order to stage it in a valid discourse for the present and for the future as well, the ethnologist—who relies on intelligent emotions—speaks of mother-like museums in opposition to father-like ones, of the absent museums of her adolescence and the imaginary bridges she built in order to reach them, of the thirst for knowledge under a rigidly prohibitive political regime.
More than twenty years old, Nicolau's and Belkis's reflections prove to be as valid and as topical in the present. But what would an antidote museum look like today? And, above all, could the Missionary Museum of the MRP's early days be a visionary one?

KEYWORDS

Eastern European museums, (post) communism, transition, mother-like/father-like museums, absent/imaginary museums, antidote museum, Missionary Museum, subjectivity.

* Irina Nicolau. 1996. "Moi et les musées du monde. L'histoire d'une expérience muséale dans un pays de l'Est." In *New Europe College Yearbook 1994*, ed. Vlad Russo, 13-42. Bucureşti: Humanitas and New Europe College.

• • • • • • • •

Prologue

IRINA: "Belkis, I am convinced that Schliemann owed his discovery of Troy to Homer. Books nowadays no longer push people to such adventures. Ethnology is carried out without curiosity and wonder. Prudishness and academic rigour keep us from expressing our feelings. I am supposed to think about the museum, write about the museum, or even do my museum work, without letting anyone know how much I love it. And I would be even less allowed to talk about my indecision. For I had to make quite a lot of choices! I did not decide to tell the story of my museum experience, or to write it down in such an unconventional style, for that matter, in the twinkling of an eye. It took time to make such decisions. And I finally settled for this maenad's labour as I reckoned that an ethnologist's confessions on the topic of communist everyday life might prove more useful than other remarks I could have made about the museum. You are young, Belkis, and you have a good education. This is why I have chosen you for a mirror; can you accept to partake in this kind of 'ethnology'? Can you accept the fragility and the informal style that I have openly embraced, this iconoclastic outburst?"

BELKIS:[1] "Not only do I accept them, but I believe they are prerequisites in our discipline. Because in the end, is it not true that ethnology stems from a sensitive and subjective approach to a particular world, even if ethnologists themselves often fail to acknowledge it?

"All the elements that make up its specificity—qualitative research, participant observation, long-term fieldwork, etc.—

[1] BELKIS alias Dominique Belkis, PhD candidate at the Faculty of Anthropology and Sociology at Université Lumière – Lyon II, France. She had been working for three years in Romania and in the Balkans, carrying out research on the Megleno-Romanians (approximately 30,000 people at that time).

correspond to choices that the researcher must make as she participates to her object of study and she becomes as much a subject of her research as the researched group. Failing to integrate this dimension in the analysis, failing to account for this bias imposed by the researcher's personality and choices, on the one hand, and by her presence in a foreign environment, on the other hand, is to falsify the research. I don't mean to say that ethnology has no scientific legitimacy, on the contrary. For so long, ethnology has perceived itself as inferior to the 'hard' sciences, and even to other 'soft' social sciences, struggling to achieve recognition in the science-dominated world generated by the Enlightenment and to apply principles, patterns, and systems borrowed from the natural sciences.

"Nowadays, having overcome its obsession for all sorts of 'isms', ethnology seems to increasingly own up to its specificity and multiplicity, which constitute in fact its richness. What ethnology assumed to be its weakness for a long time has nowadays become its strength, and this, at least partly, accounts for its current popularity. Due to its flexibility, it has a word to say in all the social domains, whether geographically close or remote, rural or urban.

"Therefore, it is the duty of ethnology to question the museum—and museology—as one of its most faithful, even 'traditional' partners, as their histories are intimately linked. And this is even more crucial for Eastern European countries where the museum has been one of the favourite vehicles of communist ideology.

"The approach you are proposing here, any academicism aside, is perhaps just a simple way—albeit a courageous one—to give human experience the place it deserves within ethnological research and to put forward a vision of the museum which is at the same time lived, alive and worth living.

"For is it not your ultimate goal to make the reader go to the museum to gain a better understanding?"

• • • • • • • • •

In My Mother's Museums

I owe my love for museums to my mother. Her interest in museums lacks a discourse. She simply goes there. Some love animals or plants, she loves objects: all of them. The time she spends in a museum, at an antique show, in a flea market or any other shop is a happy time.[2] She was a stay-at-home mum, so I used to go with her everywhere when I was a child. This is how I became familiar with museums at a very early age. With few words, she taught me what one is allowed to do and what is forbidden in there. During our visits, I never asked questions. Every now and then, she would say: 'Well, well!' or 'Look at that!,' which generally meant there was a visual lesson there to be learned. But as a general rule, each of us would focus on the things that drew our attention. After the visit, we never discussed the things we had seen. The tickets were cheap enough for us to return as often as we pleased.

Nowadays she is the one who accompanies me during my visits to museums, but for different purposes. The research I carry out calls for a partner who hasn't yet lost her common sense.

"You know, Mum, I read today some articles on the topic of spaces in museums especially arranged for children. You can drop your children there and then go on with your visit."

"And what about the children?" my mother asked.

"The children stay there and play. There are people trained to draw them into all sorts of educational activities: modelling clay, drawing, and so on."

"What about the museum? This way the children don't get to see the museum!"

"They might be too young for that."

"If they are too young, then I don't like the notion of leaving them with strangers. As soon as they can walk, I take them with me to visit the museum."

"But they might get bored. It is better for them to play."

[2] In the spring of 1994, while in Bucharest, Jacques Hainard expressed the same partiality for bric-à-brac.

"If the museum is that boring for them, then we don't go there anymore. We can do something else."

"But listen, you will eventually go there, I mean the children will go there later on, with their class. They have to learn how to do group visits."

"And what about visits with their mother? When do they get to learn that?"

I accepted her argument. She was right. I promised her never to work on programs dedicated solely to children. Children's museums—yes, why not? These are places where children can be initiated to the codes of the museum. But in other museums, children are just like the rest of us: someone who looks at the objects.

*

Modern societies are increasingly oblivious of the institution of the "mother." There are other institutions competing with it. By targeting the children directly, such institutions alienate their mothers, without anyone being aware of the danger. An ecology of traditional human relations should challenge the brutal intervention into the mother-child-object relationship. A short reference to traditional cultures is helpful in understanding this relationship. In such cultures, mothers, assisted by specific agents commissioned by the community, reveal the world of objects to their children. Teaching is secondary here as explanations are almost absent. The relationship mother-child-object is informed by a rich symbolism. Objects are introduced to the child, and the child is introduced to objects. 'Baby, this is the door; and you, door, meet my baby.' Very often, such two-way introductions take place in a ritual setting. All the while, it is a fact that traditional cultures ignore objects as museum exhibits; the children are introduced to the objects used by the society they live in, objects which they will use one day themselves.

Much more permissive in this respect, urban societies do accept the objects of others. Their attitude is not at all gratuitous, as the objects of others work for the very societies that "cannibalize" them. In a way, these objects belong to them. Some of the objects of others are kept in museums, where they are taken care of by trained people. By taking charge of children, museums both win and lose—even if it is a fact that parents lack special training, their role cannot be easily erased.

Here is an anecdote that sums up a child's visit to a museum, accompanied by her parents. It is intended as a borderline case.

Mother, father and child spend a Saturday morning in a museum. Every time the child discovers an unknown object, she asks questions to her father who follows his all-encompassing "I don't know" with a dreadful swear word. After a while, the mother comes in and scolds the child:

"Enough with your questions!"

"No, let the child ask questions, this is how we learn!" the father then objects.

This anecdote reveals the existence of a second type of museum, the father-like museum. If we consider the anecdote an illustration of the tension established between the two patterns, the mother's intervention 'Enough with your questions!' might be interpreted as her attempt to pull the child out of the father-like museum towards which he was gravitating. In contrast with mother-like museums, which are all about the encounter with unknown objects—that the child appropriates nonetheless—father-like museums explain, reflect, and educate. In the borderline case above, the father never waivers in his respect for asking questions, even those questions that he has no intention whatsoever to answer.

Mother style vs. Father style.[**] Museums have always favoured the "father style." Now, by "mother style" museum work, I do not mean turning museums into nursery schools. As I see it, the "mother style" means two things: greater security ('Don't be afraid to look, mum's with you.') and an even greater freedom of reception ('Nobody will hold it against you if you don't learn

[**] In English in the original. (Translators' Note)

the lesson this museum is trying to teach; we can always come back another time and you'll make your own choices.'). The "mother style" works as an antidote to the hypermnesia that is forced on us not only by father-like museums, but by society as a whole. Another aspect needs to be highlighted here: the mother-like museums provide the first definition of the museum.

"We are going to the museum."

"What is a museum?"

"*A place where you'll see objects which you'll like*."

In spite of being simple, the definition is indeed substantial. The museum is a place. Going to a place involves the right to go there; one cannot simply show up at a place one is not welcome at. We cannot look at objects unless someone shows them to us. In certain societies, going to see objects is an unknown practice.

*

Some people go to museums without actually knowing why. Tourism feeds the museums that appeal to this type of public. Let us only think of the Athenians who have never climbed up to the Acropolis, or the Parisians who have never set foot in the Louvre, but who, when they travel abroad, queue to enter all sorts of museums, the "museums of others." We have already emphasized the huge threat that looms over the museum, namely to become nothing but an appendix to tourism (Davallon 1986: 209).

Another share of the "general public" consists of those who accept the museum as just one more leisure activity. To accept means neither to love, nor to know. The museum thus becomes the equivalent of an ice-cream, a drink on a fine night out, a walk in the park, or a film at the cinema. That is to say, not a lot.

And then there is a third type of public: children. And museums seem to go to great lengths to attract them. They design special programs for them. The museums are expected to sacrifice the fatted calf, because the children of today are the public of tomorrow, hence their being taught to sell their attendance expensively and to demand a great number of quality services in exchange for the price of a ticket. American museums were the first to establish this type of submissiveness: our visitors, our bosses. André Maurois (1946) was surprised to see that American museums taught their visitors how to look at the work of art. And this happened back in 1946; at present, the whole of Europe follows this pattern. "The public comes first" was G. H. Rivière's principle (qtd in Desvallées 1992: 20). In turn, the museums in communist countries developed their own ideological way of teaching a public constrained to go to the museum as part of the compulsory cultural activities of every production unit.

The 1993 issue no. 178 of *Museum International* included a thematic dossier titled "Visitors." Sentences such as: "Visitors have thus become a major force on the museum scene and their needs and requirements play an increasingly preponderant role in the way museums function." and further, "methods and attitudes aimed at making museums an educational environment where communication with the public is a top priority" (M. L. 1993: 3) are illustrative of the kind of doublespeak and narrow-mindedness of this particular visitor-centred approach. C. G. Screven's article particularly struck me with its insistence on warning us that the public does not want to waste any time decoding the message of an exhibit (1993: 4-5). Why are people who visit museums in such a hurry? And why are they so demanding, irritable, impatient, and superficial? I don't like the public that Western museums create.

A dream within a dream might seem a little too pretentious. But this is how I sometimes tackle things that I have a hard time representing. To dream of it is to see it with my eyes closed. So I dream of a museum open day and night, no entry fee, no custodians. Someone told me he once entered a museum during night-time together with a friend, the museum's director. It was a French museum of medieval history. Both of them held lit up candles in their hands. He could never forget that night. The objects had got back their shadows. That night, he became aware of the great loss that is the absence of the objects' shadows in a museum.

Last but not least, there is the category of aficionados—few but loyal visitors who reflect on the exhibits but are unlikely to be targeted by the museum for fear of not being accused of elitism.

But good museology cannot be that driven by fear. Jacques Hainard had the courage to engage in a dialogue with the so-called "accursed elites." According to him, "A true exhibition never dictates; it conveys a message that each visitor must read, translate and adapt to his knowledge and sensitivity. If the approach is elitist, this does not make it any less democratic, as it respects the visitor, turning him from a passive believer into an active follower" (Hainard 1989: 29).

I wonder what would have become of chamber music in particular, and classical music in general, had they been constrained to make themselves loved by everybody? And similarly, what would the museum have looked like, had it been able to address more the connoisseurs than the children, the passing tourists, the cleaning women, the specialists, the students, or the workers? Georges-Henri Rivière distinguished between a museum's actual public and its potential public, postulating that the goal of the museum is to embrace the potential public (1975: 123). I repeat: What a chance for classical music not to be constrained to neglect its own public and to become diluted trying in vain to seduce indifferent people!

The museum aficionado has to put up with many things: the clamour that surrounds exhibits in the name of an often populist education; the excesses imposed by the laws of conservation; the drifting of the institution towards entertainment; and the indifference shown to him.

As an ethnologist, I regret the loss of the myriad definitions and thoughts that the aficionado could have provided. In disregarding them, museums are limited to the definitions provided by the three textbook categories: the bureaucrats, the artists, and the scholars.

The bureaucrats' definitions are the least subtle. They express in a brutal way what the society they live in decides that the museum must be; for each society makes whatever it wants out of the museum. One might think that what these definitions lack in subtlety, they make up in endurance. This is false, as illustrated by two definitions of the museum provided by ICOM (International Council of Museums) at thirteen years' distance.

> Any permanent establishment, admi-nistered in the general interest, for the purpose of preserving, studying, enhancing by various means and, in particular, of exhibiting to the public for its delectation and instruction groups of objects and specimens of cultural value: artistic, historical, scientific and technological collections, botanical and zoological gardens and aquariums. Public libraries and public archival institutions maintaining permanent exhibition rooms shall be considered to be museums. (*ICOM Statutes II*, 1, 1956)
>
> ICOM shall recognise as a museum any permanent institution which conserves and displays, for purposes of a study, education and enjoyment, collections of objects of cultural or scientific significance. (*Status II*, 3, 1969)

Those who go searching for definitions of the museum end up getting entangled in its history. The bureaucrats' definitions often lay hidden within the founding texts of museums. Let us consider, for instance, the Act of Parliament that established the British Museum in 1753 and the Decree of the National Convention that did the same for the Louvre in 1793. They couldn't be anymore different! One spoke in the name of a power that granted the museum to its people, the other, in the name of a triumphant people who transformed the treasures of the rich into national heritage. The museum as a favour *vs.* the museum as a right.

The history of museums is a babel of accounts. If you take a look at my notes, you will see that this one claims that the first museum was the *Museion* in Alexandria (third century B.C.) (Lafranco, Giovanni 1989), that one that the first museum was the Shōsō-in temple in Japan (756) (Girandy, Bouillet 1977), and yet another one that the original museum was Pope Sixtus IV's Capitoline Museum (1471) (Pomian 1990). I have even more notes according to which the first museum would go even further back to the age of pyramids, of temples. There is a lot of confusion. The historians of museums are not endowed with the gift of differentiation, so they mix up treasures, collections and museums. Let us try to amend that.

Ethnology singles out birds and animals such as magpies, ravens, or stoats that have a natural tendency towards "collecting." Already during the Stone Age, we can trace a taste for possessions as evidenced by the collections of objects unearthed by archeologists. But both examples are unrelated to future treasures, collections, and even less to museums. The inventory of tombs, regardless of their age or shape, can be interpreted according to a logic of burial beliefs, namely that the deceased needs a stock of objects to be used in the next world. Once again, nothing to do with my topic.

Treasures are always related to a religious or a princely power. The objects which constitute a treasure are not significant in themselves. The vocation of treasures is to remain hidden most of the time. Occasionally, they are taken out and paraded as part of power and wealth displays. The treasures of churches and monasteries used to be visited by pilgrims and certain privileged people. This is however irrelevant. What if Aladdin had shown his treasure to someone, would that qualify it as a museum?

The dawn of collections goes back to the fourteenth century.[3] Throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, collectors were humanists interested in antiques and contemporary paintings. During the sixteenth century, the categories of collected objects became more diversified as collectors also turned to stamps, coins, natural curiosities, and exotic objects. During the seventeenth century, the bourgeois were already to be found among collectors. The eighteenth century gave way to local antiques. Those two last centuries represented the "age of curiosities"; the collections were displayed in specially designed places called, depending on the country, cabinets of curiosities, *chambres de merveilles*, *gabinetti di meraviglia*, *studiolo*, *Wunderkammern*, *Wundercabinets*, *Schatzkammern*. The nineteenth century saw the discovery of the documentary value of such collected objects. The collections opened to visitors. While the treasure communicates by means of its silence, the collection is talkative. The collector finds pleasure in presenting his objects as well as the knowledge which is beginning to accumulate around them. Carefully inventoried and sometimes even studied, collections produced scholars, and the scholarship of objects became a profession. But no matter how permissive a collection proves to be towards the visitor, its private status makes it so that its success depends on the owner's permission as the visitor has no actual right over it (Hudson 1975).

Some historians distinguish between a prehistory of the museum—treasures amassed by piety or plunder, i.e. stocks of religious offerings and booties; a protohistory—collections created out of mere curiosity or a passion for heritage; and a history—that starts in 1471, when Pope Sixtus IV made a donation of Roman statues to be displayed on the Capitoline Hill, or the second half of the eighteenth century, with the dawn of the notion of national heritage (Deloche 1989: 32). If the museum was indeed born in 1471, then its origin story was one of money and power, as Pope Sixtus IV opened the Capitoline Museums as a statement of the papal monopoly on

[3] For the history of these collections, see Pomian 1990 and 1992.

the antiques market (Lafranco, Giovanni 1989: 22). If it was born in 1753 in England or in 1793 in France, those were also stories of power. Regardless of the nature of its genesis (whether popular, commercial or revolutionary), behind the more or less innocent aficionados and their cultural agendas, there are stakes that only a political history of the museum can unveil (Pomian 1990: 186).

What artists think about museums is even more a mystery than the definitions of bureaucrats. It is hard to find a common thread. Dadognet's book (1993) is of great help for those interested in this kind of reflection, though it does not pretend to be an exhaustive account. Barbey d'Aurevilly, Kafka, Proust, Rilke, Valéry, Alfred de Musset, and so on, each and every one of them expresses his dissatisfaction in his own way. For artists are dissatisfied with the museum. It tires them; it saddens them; it kills them. They overdose on the excess of museums. They cannot breath. Nevertheless, even if they do it grudgingly, artists keep coming back, because the museum is the only place where they can see certain things that they like. What they abhor is the code of the museum.

Scholarly definitions of the museum are so numerous and contradictory that after reading dozens of them, I realized that it would be much easier to summarize them in the form of a kaleidoscope: the church museum, the school museum, the forum museum, the media museum, the machine museum, the ways-of-looking museum, the rupture museum, the art museum, the society museum, the treasure museum, the collection museum, the hospital museum, the cemetery museum, the court museum, the holistic museum, the global museum, the identity museum, the open-air museum, the soil-grown museum, the ecomuseum, the community museum, the environmental museum, the active museum, the neighbourhood museum, the blown-up museum, the site museum, the space museum, the time museum, even the brothel museum, and so on.[4] In fact, the definitions are a faithful reflection of reality, namely the polymorphism of museums and their ever-varying goals. We should all stop using the singular, always the plural in speaking of museums. To answer Dadognet's question, "Which museums for the future?" (1993: 13): *all of them*.

And out of "all the museums," which one to choose for Eastern European countries, since here we have been given the chance to make a fresh start?

• • • • • • • •

Belkis's notes inspired by In my Mother's Museums

BELKIS: "The mother-like museum, the father-like museum; a sensitive approach, a sensible approach; an informal code, a highly formal code?

"Indeed, the child needs both the mother's and the father's model in order to flourish. So, I wonder, without aiming to replace the parental institution, shouldn't the museum consider both models in its not-unique vocation: discovery, knowledge, making c ontact with the beautiful, the rare, as well as with the ordinary, the representative. All combinations are possible, with the only invariants being the place and the presence of objects; do they speak for themselves? We might find them beautiful or ugly at a first glance, but is this enough? Don't we always need a mediator in order to discover and understand?

"No matter who this mediator is, father, mother, teacher, guide, or text, it is their duty to establish the relationship between the visitor and the museum.

"In certain social environments—not necessarily the poorest or the 'least educated'—the child's access to the museum will never be mediated by the parents. In this case, can we blame the school or the museum for their attempt to fill this gap? Undoubtedly, their version of the museum

---

4) "Nothing seemed to me more similar to a brothel than a museum. A brothel understood as something that refers back to the Antiquity in what concerns its slavery market, its ritual prostitution" (Dadognet 1993: 159).

will be a father-like one, but still, it will provide an encounter with the museum.

“Does the democratisation of museums necessarily imply the thinning out of their message?”

IRINA: “I’m afraid so, Belkis.”

The Absent Museums

I was very young when I found out that I would never get a chance to travel abroad. People have a hard time accepting the kind of impairment that the Iron Curtain stood for. But in the end, they do. For instance, I used to say that I would only need three bridges departing from my bedroom: the first to the Louvre, the second to the British Museum, and the last one to the Hermitage. Even if I often mentioned this story, I would never elaborate on it: How would I cross the bridges? How often? How much time would I spend in each museum? It was enough for me to imagine that a relationship had been established between me and the three museums.

“And how did you come to choose these three museums?” my friends used to ask. “There are so many of them in the world.”

“Because of my interest in Greek antiquity, Mesopotamia and Egypt.”

“Then why don’t you want to go to these countries?”

“Because I am not allowed to.”

Back then I was just beginning to grasp the difference between dreaming and wishing: we are free to dream whatever we want, but we have to confine our wishes within the field of possibilities. I invented the story of the three bridges in 1960, when I was fourteen.

In those days, there was a joke going around in Romania about the blind man and the crippled. One day, the two meet, and the crippled says:

“Well, today I drank a glass of milk and it was wonderful.”

“Can you imagine,” replies the blind man in a sad voice, “I don’t even know what milk looks like.”

“Well, it’s white.”

“White?”

“Yes, white just like a swan.”

“And what does a swan look like?”

Trying to help him, the crippled took the blind man’s hands and put them on his arm which was amputated a little below the shoulder.

“See, the neck of a swan is like my arm, then comes the body, like this, then the two wings, then the hind feet… Do you understand?”

“Thank you, my friend, now I know the colour of milk.”

Using the blind man’s logic, I have visited many museums which I will never get to actually see.

I remember my astonishment when I found out that one of my classmates had been to Egypt, where he had seen the pyramids. The trip hadn’t left any traces on his face.

“Are they big, these pyramids?” I asked him.

He wanted to tell me numbers—to me, whom I had read all the books I could find on Egypt.

“Not like that, I want to know if they make you feel awe, if there is something going on deep within you when you are close to them.”

I forgot his answer, which by the way, disappointed me. It happens very often that people don’t know how to describe to others something they have seen.

My classmate’s trip was the more amazing as exceptionally few Romanians got to travel abroad in the 1960s. To put it more clearly, Romanians fell into two categories: those who had travelled abroad before the war and experienced the charm of museums, and those who hadn’t. The former could be divided into two further sub-categories: those serving prison sentences and those who, having been dispossessed by the communist regime, could now barely make ends meet. As for the latter, those who had not travelled abroad before the war, they were either the “big bosses” who had sentenced to prison the former, or the “sons of the people,” workers and peasants, who lived a life as pitiful as those dispossessed by the communist regime.

From time to time, the “big bosses” “got out,” i.e. travelled abroad, to meet their counterparts in other Eastern European countries. Now and again, some people managed to get through to the other side of the Iron Curtain, fleeing to the West. They invented the kind of traveller who departs with only a small suitcase, penniless or with very little money, and comes back riding ten suitcases—we see this kind of miracle happen quite often these days, a phenomenon familiar to all the countries in the East. On their return, the “big bosses” would take up the role of civilizing heroes, bringing back with them classical music records, art albums, photographs, etc. Their offspring were thus trained early to get a taste for travelling. And indeed, after 1964, they were the first to travel abroad. This privileged category provided people who didn’t travel with the stuff of their dreams. Their stories, as well as the memories of those who had travelled before the war, nourished our imagination. For the young people whose parents didn’t travel or hadn’t travelled, the world was much smaller and more abstract. This is why in my dream, there were no more than three bridges.

*

The ethnology of the road and of the traveller…

An overview of the reasons why people travel during all ages and on all continents…

A discussion of the words: *road*, *road trip*, *traveller*, *way*, *wayfarer*, *guide*, *itinerary*.

A reflection on the meaning of *to depart*, *to return*, and *to return no more.*

I remember a poem by Ungaretti where he claimed that Ulysses never came back to Ithaca. How horrid!

The cultural trip was known as early as the antiquity, but not until the nineteenth century would group cultural pilgrimages develop as a general practice in Europe. During the first half of the twentieth century, people moved a lot, even more after the Second World War. But this was not the case for Eastern European countries. In Romania, before 1964, the only ones allowed to leave the country were the *big bosses*. After 1964, the borders became more permeable. But we lack a history of this process of permeabilisation.

In a one-party state, there was a single travel agency, the National Tourism Office (NTO), which practised a kind of *intra muros* tourism: to Romania and other Eastern European countries. Plus China.

This institution organized holidays to seaside and mountain resorts, as well as tours around the country: the monasteries of Moldavia and Wallachia, the cities of Transylvania, the Danube Delta, etc. We were surely not spoilt for choice. Those who accepted these group holidays would apply to the NTO for such services. Every now and then, the groups of Romanian tourists were accommodated in the same hotels as the groups of foreign tourists, having to face the difference between the services paid for in lei as opposed to foreign currency. In addition to that, I should mention the ban on establishing contact with “capitalists,” which was further tightened after 1980. Moreover, to know one’s country was perceived as a patriotic duty. When applying for a passport to travel to a Western country, the Romanian applicant would invariably hear the following question: “Have you already seen all the Romanian sites?”

The NTO trips to Western countries were few and very expensive, and the main eligibility criterion for such a trip was to have a “clean file.” The communist regime liked to keep its enemies confined within national borders. At the stock exchange of trips, the best rated were those to southern USSR—Samarkand, Bukhara, or Tbilisi— followed by China and, for those who intended to flee the country, those to Yugoslavia and, for a short span, to Hungary.

Very quickly, the cultural trips turned into "business" trips for some. This kind of petty trade capitalized on the non-homogenous nature of Eastern European markets—that is to say that the shortages in each country were different. In Hungary, Romanians could sell alcohol, salami, embroidery threads, cotton underwear, and leather goods and buy coffee, tea, and pepper. From Bulgaria they used to come back with leather coats and gloves, having traded them against hand-towels and curtains. For Eastern Europeans, the Soviet Union was the "promised land" of photo cameras, radios and gold jewellery. In exchange, the "promised land" would welcome clothes, especially blue jeans. The same trade-oriented tourism was practised by other people from the East who came to the Romanian seaside or mountain resorts.

I have never been on an NTO trip. It seemed to me that the "business" aspect undermined the pleasurable aspect. I didn't have the courage to travel to the Soviet Union—Leningrad, Samarkand, Bukhara—even if it was the country which most appealed to me. I refused to let myself absorbed by a country where one could hear the phrase "the groups of Romanians from Siberia" spoken during a routine political event. Moreover, no itinerary dedicated to Leningrad more than two and a half days. Only two and a half days in Leningrad! I would rather use one of my bridges.

Some Romanians travelled abroad for work-related reasons. But they were not that many. The "clean file" requirement applied all the same. The same ten suitcases on return. Some turned the work-related trip into a cultural one. Others adapted it to the model of the trade-oriented trip. The latter were probably most likely to emigrate eventually.

After 1964, Romanians were allowed to travel to the West on condition that they had a letter of accommodation and some "hard currency" (ten dollars at first, then fifty, and finally one hundred). The "clean file" prerequisite remained. If you happened to have wealthy parents or friends, you would come back with a lot of stories. If you didn't, you would still come back with stories but you would pay dearly for them. In order to see the museums of Europe, hundreds of Romanians would sleep in their cars, eat the same food they had brought along for weeks in a row, wash whenever they had an opportunity, in parking lots or public toilets. They only spent money on gasoline and museum entry fees. They would return from trips to Italy without even having tasted ice-cream, from Germany without having drunk a bottle of beer, from Greece without having bought one *souvlaki*, or from Turkey without having eaten one *baklava*. Undeniably, such journeys had a heroic side, which would be expressed by means of a phrase borrowed from the mountaineers' code. Climbers would say: "I did that summit." Romanian tourists would say: "I did that country."

On their trips, they would take loads of photographs, some of which they would later turn into slides. I have no idea what Japanese people do with their photos, but Romanians invented a special kind of get-together with friends dedicated to sharing their photos. Each would present his or her trips, share memories, thus enabling many others to visit those places without actually travelling. Malraux (1965) would have been surprised at the richness of our imaginary museum, our capacity for symbolic appropriation, our intimate relationship with the absent reality.

Absent museums have no showcases, no wall panels, and no museum discourse. The object is the thing. The museum thus becomes an address where Mona Lisa or some other chimera lives. The objects known from photographs are accompanied by all sorts of stories. Before visiting the Louvre, I knew that The Victory of Samothrace was displayed on a stairway. Which is true. I also knew that Mona Lisa occupied an entire hall of her own. Which is false. From far away, we were actively involved in the misadventures of stolen or vandalised objects. Gazing at the photos, we dreamed.

*

In bookcases all over Romania, art albums were the centrepieces. Displayed in the proximity of music records, they became a subject for jealousy and a source of prestige. Albums and records were borrowed with extreme care.

During my youth, four types of albums were to be found in the bookcases of Bucharesters: the "ancient" ones (most often nineteenth century editions); those edited in the Soviet Union (which could be bought at reasonable prices, but one had to go there in order to purchase them); Romanian albums (not many before 1965); and "foreign" albums (even fewer before 1965, relatively affordable in the 1970s, and crazy expensive after 1980). The "ancient" ones had rich bindings, beautiful reproductions protected by sheets of Japanese paper, an exquisite scent, and an antiquated look. The Russian albums brought colours into our lives, but as far as most Romanians were concerned, the texts might as well have been written in Chinese; anomie had worked so effectively that, after learning it for eight years in schools, Romanians could not read Russian. Romanian albums, usually printed in poor conditions, and therefore often despised, were nevertheless much browsed. Seldom available but reasonably priced, we were able to buy all of them. But when it came to the market of "foreign" albums, Russian, French, German, or Italian, we went through the torture of having to choose; they were so expensive that we had to make our choice carefully.

The ethnologist who is interested in researching art albums should waste no time, for soon there will be no more witnesses to testify on certain issues. One such issue is the transformation that "ancient" albums underwent during the first decade of the communist regime.

After 1945, for political reasons, many of those who owned art albums—intellectuals and artists—were forced to leave their homes: the men would go to prison, while the other members of the family would move into a single, shabby room. Houses or big apartments were to be vacated within twenty-four hours. In retrospect, many people who were imprisoned then often declared that the true victims were those who stayed, even though they kept their freedom. Within twenty-four hours, they had to carry out the miserable task of sorting, dividing the inventory of the house into three categories: things to be transported to the new home; things to be stored away in the cellars, garages and lofts of friends, if they had any; and things to be abandoned in the old home. No one will ever be able to know the fate of those abandoned objects, nor estimate the extent of the damage caused by storage in the cellars, garages or lofts of friends, where the objects would rot away, be stolen or burnt in stoves during winter by the other residents.

Speaking to people who had lived through such experiences, I would ask them about the books. The question irritated them. To them, it signalled that I had failed to understand the true dimensions of their tragedy, the problem of priorities. 'It was just as in a fire,' a lady once told me, 'you didn't save the things you loved, but the assets: title deeds, jewellery, works of art, furniture, carpets, fur coats. Then, there were the basic, everyday objects: clothes, sheets, dishes, etc.' Even if they did not feature in the accounts, books were saved nevertheless. It was the women's task to make the selection, as most of the men had already been imprisoned. We will never know what a selection made by the men, the actual owners of the libraries, would have looked like. But the women chose the expensive books, the richly bound great editions. In so doing, they didn't only save the art albums, but they saved their families, as the albums were later sold for good money.

Behind the Iron Curtain, we loved art albums passionately. If we couldn't find them in our own homes, we would seek them in other people's homes or in public libraries.

When I was a child, we had a dozen

of them in our home. Even before I could browse the books, I learnt their stories. Half of them belonged to my mother, Romanian art albums: paintings, monasteries, folk art. She had received them as prizes during secondary school. The title page of each book bore the stamp of the donor, *Foundation Carol II*. For fear of a police search, my mother had torn the pages bearing the royal crown. I have never seen those pages, but I knew their stories and I was very proud, as I kept thinking that those books were a present that the King in person had given to us. I wanted to tell my friends about them, except that I had been told not to because it was too dangerous.

The other half, my father brought them home one beautiful morning, telling us that he had bought them from a lady who was forced to sell them to buy food. Even today, looking at those books makes me feel uncomfortable. The ten albums in our home and the twenty more albums which I found in my French teacher's library were enough to stir my interest though.

During my studies, my passion for art albums only grew. We were all so starved for images. I bought everything I could, but people of my social class could only buy Romanian albums. Before long, I discovered that my bookcases were crowded with albums of painters I was not interested in, but lacked those of painters I loved. Apart from that, good foreign albums made me realize the extent to which mine were miserable. I felt manipulated and cheated. And so my decision was made, I would stop buying albums. I began visiting museums, much more reliable, in order to see real objects.

*

I stare at the twenty kilos of publications on the topic of museums, which I gathered during the last four years, while in France. All of them are interesting but still there is something I find embarrassing about them. They are too friendly, too stereotyped, and too impersonal. If I compare a museum flyer to a hotel flyer, the difference is not that big (the museum publication is the one that needs to change). I couldn't say what these twenty kilos of publications would have meant for us during the Iron Curtain years. I venture to say: maybe not that much. In these publications, the object has ceased to be the star.

With this suspicion in my heart, I read the mischievous instructions provided by Umberto Eco for the preface of an art catalogue. Without giving it too much thought, I chose the following excerpt: "… the golden rule for the WIAC is to describe the work in such a way that the description, besides being applicable to other pictures, can be applied also to the emotional experience of looking in a delicatessen window." (Eco 1985:199).

I believe that museum catalogues are not what they used to be. We can no longer rely on them to build imaginary museums.

• • • • • • • •

Belkis's notes inspired by The Absent Museums

BELKIS: There are societies that have museums, societies that do not have them, and societies that are deprived of them.

Would we be able to understand, from here, in France, what cultural deprivation might feel like? And even worse, could we imagine a world where culture is despised and targeted as the enemy? How could such a void be filled? By means of dreaming, imagining and reading, as well as using the experiences of others—as it turns out, the thirst for knowledge is inversely proportional to the ease of access to it. I remember how incredibly stupid I felt the day I took to the Louvre a Romanian friend who had never been to France before and, as we passed by each masterpiece, I listened to her describe it to me just as well, if not better, than a professional guide might have done it.

If Malraux's imaginary museum is precisely this capacity for symbolic appropriation that does not require a material support, then the Eastern European countries are full of such museums. And the three bridges that link Romania to different parts of Europe are evidence of that.

Aunt Helen from Athens

In 1972 I made my first ever journey abroad. I had to wait for six months to get the passport. I even had to go for an interview to the Passport Service of the Securitate (Romania's communist secret police). The interview with the officer was overall humiliating. He asked me the "classic" questions: Why travel abroad when I hadn't yet visited all the Romanian sites? Why wouldn't the person who invited me come see me instead of inviting me to go there? In fact, the discussion was rather stupid. And what made me feel most humiliated was that I was afraid the whole time: before going there, during the interview, and after it. For different reasons, but I was afraid. A passport application was the preferred lure by means of which the Securitate recruited its informants. Luckily, I presented no interest to them.

There were three reasons why this trip to Greece was so important to me: first of all, I wanted to "get out." For many Romanians, "getting out of the country" had become an obsession. I knew persons who would apply for a passport every year, without ever receiving one. This made them mad. Then, the trip to Greece touched on all sorts of identity issues for me: I wanted to visit my mother's country, my "motherland." Finally, there was my fascination with Ancient Greece, the one I had dedicated one of my three bridges to.

When I finally received the passport, it was too late. The prolonged waiting, the interview with the officer, and then another waiting period had killed my excitement about the journey. Apart from that, I didn't find in Greece the "motherland" I had been dreaming of; I didn't like the consumer society engrafted on the Balkan spirit. So I decided not to visit any museum before I could improve my mood. I stayed in the house of my aunt Helen and tried to do what the Greeks generally do: go to bistros and ignore museums. I used to wander in the streets a lot. From time to time, I gazed at the Acropolis. Every time I would tell it: "Don't lose hope, I'll come; I am just not ready yet." *Δεν ϊμε ετϊμϊ*. I talked to the Acropolis in Greek. Two weeks since my arrival, I made the climb. The only memory I keep of that is that for all the time I was up there, I had tears in my eyes. There were all kinds of tears; I don't feel up to interpreting them here.

Ten years later, I went back to Greece. Same passport issues, even harder to overcome this time. If you belonged to the category of those who didn't travel abroad, you were supposed to stay that way. Obtaining a passport was becoming increasingly embarrassing.

A single day in Crete, from sunrise to sunset. Quick, to the Heraklion Museum to see the Snake Goddess with my own eyes. What a huge disappointment! So small! I hadn't paid attention to the actual size when I looked at it in the albums. Bitterly disappointed, I started to circle it. Time passed. It took me a while to understand that I simply couldn't get away from it. I tried go on with my visit, but each time I would retrace my steps back to it, to gaze at it once more. It took a lot of fighting to free myself from its spell. Right there, in Crete, I became aware of the power of objects, both their own and the one we attribute to them.

I spent the rest of my trip (thirty days) in Athens. It was late September. I felt like I was there for the last time. What better way to spend my time than going up to the Acropolis? Every morning. Almost every morning. I would walk up there and sit outside the walls, under a tree, reading a book. A book by Cassirer that I have never finished. I didn't learn anything during my two visits to the Acropolis. Any Japanese tourist having seen the site could trot out the "lesson" better than myself. For the price of the tickets, very expensive for me, I earned the right to go round the Kriophoros, the Korai, and the Owl. I circled them for a long time, just as I had done in Crete with the Snake Goddess. I even wonder if, among the museum aficionados, there might be a category of "circling visitors."

*

I have recently read an article which denounced museology's "sensual nostalgia" and what the author called its "madeleines of reminiscence," to which she claimed to prefer "the austere joys of reflection and theory" (Weis 1992: 3-4). This is funny, for everything I experienced in the Greek museums had to do with the most pure sensuality and "madeleine-ness." Would it be that hard to conceive of a sensual reflection, of thinking madeleines, or intelligent emotions?

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

France, Sweet France

To assess an episode in one's life, one needs to first put it between brackets; having thus erased it, one only has to calculate its consequences. Often enough, the results are shattering. For instance, when I think of my own competences as a museologist, the French experience was so important that if I erase it, I mean if it hadn't happened, there would be nothing to tell about said competences. The three contacts I was able to make with the world of French museums have had the effect of a triple cataract surgery on me.

Of all the museums I have visited in France, there are the ones I love, the ones I am interested in, and the ones that I honestly find boring. I feel bored in those small museums that lack commitment, correctly designed by bureaucrats to make them comply with the logic of the ready-made, ready-to-eat, ready-to-look-at, the product suitable for everybody and for nobody. A big museum is almost by default an interesting one; good or bad, it will most certainly raise issues. My absolute favourites were the personalised museums of Mistral and Obereiner. The former is the fruit of the writer's romantic love for the world of Arles, and because it became the museum of a museum, it was lucky to escape the fury of museological trends. The latter was born out of Jean-Luc's knowledge, so often derided, and his mastery of the game; he knew the destabilizing force of culture and the havoc it can cause, but as an engineer, he also knew how to harness such forces for the benefit of his museum.[5]

But I found that the most subtle issues were raised by ecomuseums. I visited some of them in 1990. This was the third generation of ecomuseums, and I knew positively nothing about them. In Romania, there have been no ecomuseums so far. I took my time to read, to look, and to think about them. To the *coup de foudre* that I felt for the ecomuseum when I first encountered it, I oppose today a conclusion in the form of a Romanian proverb: "*Cine-l are, să-i trăiască, cine nu, să nu-și dorească.*" ("He who has it, may he rejoice in it, he who doesn't have it, may he never wish for it.")

Born out of a school of contestation, as a European version of the American neighbourhood museum (1967, Neighbourhood Museum of Anacosta), the ecomuseum claimed to be the new language of museums, an alternative way to communicate with the public. No more collections preserved for their own sake, no more custodians lasciviously in love with the objects, no more esoteric knowledge of the spatial arrangement, "but a natural and cultural environment to be perceived as a

---

5) An excellent description of the museum in Cuzals can be found in Obereiner (1991: 71-74).

whole passed on to us as heritage, which we are to appropriate, preserve and eventually pass on along with an awareness of the ways in which it has been transformed by human creative and destructive forces." (Desvallées 1992: 222)

In the name of *development*, some practitioners and theorists, such as Hugues de Varine, often citing Mao Zedong and Lenin, opened the gates of the museum for the Cultural Revolution in an attempt to deliver humankind from the narrow concept of culture that had been forced on it by the aristocrats and the bourgeois (de Varine 1969: 57). The focus of the museum is no longer the artefact, "… but Man at his fullest" (de Varine 1969: 59). As they read that, some people from the East start to hiccup. Thanks to André Desvallées's anthology, I became acquainted, by means of selected texts, with the "pioneers," the "masters," and the "founders." Several pages in that book baffled me. I was equally baffled when I visited Antigone, this horrible building in Montpellier. Before I saw it, I believed a certain evil to be exclusively Romanian, the product of Romanian communism, that is. I realize that my rejection of ecomuseums is partly accountable to the literature that supports them. Visiting the ecomuseums, one does not grasp the full extent of their claim to be the alpha and omega of museums. I was surprised by their ambition to be acknowledged, to get organized; their haste to write their own history has also made me question their endeavour. Great culture, true culture is never so practical, so well organized.

But other things, less subjective, can also be reproached to ecomuseums. They claim to oppose the "fetishized fragment"[6] typical of the traditional museums, but all they do is to replace it with another fragment, a larger one, a context which becomes text for another absent context.[7] Born out of frustrations, they generate frustrations. They aim to be a mirror for the community that governs them. But for how long can we actually gaze at our own reflection? And what's more, how many of these mirrors maintain their good faith in time? There are also lying mirrors, just like the evil queen's, which perpetually reflect back young and beautiful faces.

The most insightful and critical account of ecomuseums in French literature comes from François Hubert (1978; 1983). He distinguishes three sequences in the history of ecomuseums: the beginnings in the 1960s, as part of regional natural parks; the 1980s, a period when the ecomuseum discovered its historical and participatory dimensions; and, finally, the "post-1980," when all sorts of pitfalls threaten to drive it off course. First generation, second generation, third generation: "Will there be a fourth generation?" the author asks himself. The answer is yes, but on condition that the ecomuseum avoids the pitfalls. Of all the listed dangers, I retain the danger of becoming a stage for all sorts of micronationalist phantasms. There is also the risk of drifting into ridicule: in its efforts to avoid becoming too dusty and old, the ecomuseum might become "too funny," thus failing its preservation role and instead becoming trapped into that of entertainer. Another line of reasoning cited by François Hubert makes me even more apprehensive. I hadn't noticed to what extent this museum, born out of a protest movement, failed to be subversive. I could even call it submissive. Power holds no grudge against it, and it holds no grudge against power. It cultivates an attachment for a glorified past. Its favourite themes are work and celebrations. I am beginning to understand my attitude of rejection.

*

Is there any future for the ecomuseum in Romania? For the sake of imitation, certain open-air museums will claim the title of ecomuseums, if only because they open a restaurant and provide some make-shift interactive experiences. There won't be any community involvement or any

[6] "…the museum is the place for a fetishist enjoyment of partial objects' and 'An ecomuseum is an anti-museum… It is a museum in which the fantasies of the partial object are refused in an effort to retrieve the joy of the total object" (Clair 1974: 521-522).

[7] "While the ecomuseum remains 'a Procrustean bed', in that it never reaches the true dimensions of either reality or pure invention, it still opens a breach in conventional museography" (Bomberger 1992: 89).

neighbourhood volunteers, and wouldn't this be indeed more sensible? The community gets tired and eventually abandons its own museum. Those who stay are the outsiders, the specialists. And this is probably the biggest failure of the ecomuseum. This brings to mind a joke about two friends who offered to accompany a third to the train station to make sure he got on the train. While having a last drink at the train station's restaurant, the two realized that the train was about to leave so they jumped on it while the third one, the one who was actually supposed to leave, looked on from the platform, missing his train.

Belkis's notes inspired by France, Sweet France

BELKIS: It is true that when it started out, the ecomuseum made claims against the establishment. It is also true that it has failed in its ambitions simply because people are indeed willing to make an effort to look at daily life, but at that of others, not at their own. Apart from that, the visitors cannot appropriate an ecomuseum; it is the ecomuseum which dictates a new way of inhabiting a place, a natural setting, a collective memory. Paradoxically, the ecomuseum depends on the modernisation process, because without it, the critique it produces would have no reason to exist. The ecomuseum is not anti-establishment, but a social climber.

Torches, Dynamite, Barricades

Training workshop at Béziers, lots of people: philosophers, researchers, writers, custodians, students. I tell them about Romanian museums, stressing that the kind of work we aim to do there requires huge quantities of dynamite. I explain to them that for a very long time, the ideal of any Romanian museum was to prove the Romanians' continuity in the space bordered by the Danube and the Carpathian Mountains—beginning in the Stone Age and ending in Ceaușescu's era—in order to glorify it. I insist on the fact that communist propaganda had turned the museum into a cultural broth suitable for the most pathogenic and fierce lies, and that now, in order to sanitize it, one has to bring in the "heavy machinery." I claim that there is an opportunity for the museum in Eastern European countries to make a fresh start and that, at this early stage, it will play a very important civic role; therefore, it will have to take sides—a serene and neutral attitude being out of the question—it will have to turn into a battlefield, a spectacle of torches, dynamite and barricades. Someone interrupted me and tried to dissuade me from using the word "dynamite," or the idea of a brutal intervention which would likely destroy the good things that communism had left behind. I answer him that if I were a Jew recently freed from a concentration camp, he would think twice about trying to convince me of the utility of the roads the Nazis had built so well.

After the experiences of the past years, I reduced the amount of dynamite, as I became aware of the danger represented by residues. We cannot demolish everything, we have to find a way to drain the infection, to bring in antidotes.

*

I work in a museum established in 1906. After 1950 the building was misappropriated as the headquarters of the Museum of the Romanian Communist Party. This was a prevailing practice in Eastern European countries: communist parties would act like cuckoos, leaving their eggs in other people's nests (Unfried 1982: 23). In 1990 the collections of the ethnology museum returned home. But during the first two years, we struggled to dismantle the communist scaffolding. The costs were very high. Dynamite was used in tiny doses. The resulting material was distributed among history museums. Now, five years on, we still fight against residues: panels, showcases inherited from the former museography, which have become unusable. What should we do with them? We are too poor to throw them away. I wonder if the Phoenix could be reborn and still keep its old feathers? Are we doomed to drag along all these residues? And this is not only about old panels and obsolete showcases, but also persons and mind-sets. I believe we are! This is part of the circumstances of our current lives. Bordered by a blemished past in the north and a shapeless future in the south, it is our duty to build the structures of our present.

*

After 1989, there was a lot of talk about a museum of the Revolution. We eulogized the martyrs, and the museum was supposed to sanctify them. Increasingly controversial, the history of the Revolution is not yet ready to be staged in a museum. Apart from that, no one is really interested in it. This is something for the future. For the time being, we can only gather the scraps of it: empty cartridges, objects bearing the seal of the Communist Party, blood-stained clothes. If this museum is to exist one day, it will be a paper museum. There has also been a lot of talk about a museum of the communist prisons. We haven't yet given up on the project.

For five years now, the authorities have remained passive, they have done nothing to put the museums to good use. All they do is try to repress initiatives by promoting as heads of museums their own acolytes, persons who will never challenge the political leaders. This means that the museum has the ability to challenge the establishment, and the authorities are aware of it.

*

The antidote is a specific remedy. There is no such thing as a principle for a universal antidote. The Romanian museum faces a two-fold crisis—first, because of the after-effects of communist ideology and second, because of the danger of wrongly assimilating Western museology. The two diseases share their formalism: one is morose, the other's like a rose. To that, there is only one antidote.

The Antidote Museum (A. M.)
A user's manual

1. The A. M. is recommended during periods of cultural, social and political convalescence (times of transition).
2. The A. M. doesn't allow for one-size-fits-all solutions. It owes its success to its diversity and adaptability.
3. We don't go to the A. M. as we would go to church, to school, to court, to the hospital or the cemetery, but as we would go to the museum.
4. The A. M. is the museum of 'Look at this!' Its elliptical presentations are meant to free the object from all commonplaces, from all stereotyped connections.
5. We come to the A. M. to see objects. To see them again or for the first time.
6. In the A. M., the visitor has only one right: to look at objects.
7. The object presented by the A. M. is nothing but an object (not a witness, not a commodity, etc.)
8. The A. M. is not meant to seduce. It doesn't trade in memories, it doesn't nurture. It doesn't pamper babies. It makes one tired.
9. The A. M. unveils and hides at the same time. It is meant for people who are ready to invest (time, imagination) in it.
10. The A. M. treatment can last from one up to three years.
11. After remission, the A. M. must be taken occasionally in order to prevent the B. M. syndrome (Blasé Museum).

The Museum of the Romanian Peasant worked as an *antidote museum* for two years. Seven small temporary exhibitions, four exhibitions of the Missionary Museum. The seven exhibitions were given names like Durandal. They were called Maria, Anastasia, Ion. Mary had the simplest structure of all. It made people say things like:

"Look at this!"

"Wooow!"

Look at that chair! Look at that mask! Look at the painted eggs for Easter! A foreign ethnologist who was visiting during *Marie des Oeufs* (Mary of the Eggs) asked us if the exhibition was based on prior fieldwork, on a bibliography. It was May 1990. We had just moved into the building. We answered him no. His surprise left us no choice but to give him further explanations. "Here, dear sir, celebrating Easter was almost prohibited for forty-five years; everybody would dye their own eggs red and eat them at home in secrecy. This exhibition is meant as a gesture—'Look at the egg!'—that for us holds a very deep significance." *Marie des Chaises* (Mary of the Chairs) was about bringing out all the chairs from the storerooms. Nothing but chairs. No explanatory labels.

The Missionary Museum produced happenings in the street, starting from particular objects. It provoked the residents of Bucharest to reappropriate the world of the peasantry. Communism had used peasant culture as packaging for its own ideological messages. As a consequence, the intellectuals had overdosed on it, while the "less intellectual" had appropriated the products of folklorism.

After two years of the Antidote Museum, the Museum of the Romanian Peasant opened with an exhibition on the theme of the *cross*. Bucharest was buzzing with rumours. Why the cross? Why not?

We heard the question even from people who were not necessarily hostile to Christianity. The signs that the former communist regime had used for self-representation hadn't yet relinquished their monopoly of the most visible positions. Communist insignia, even marginalized, defaced or violently removed, continued to wage war against the symbols of others. Blacklisted during forty-five years by the communists, the cross will continue to be harassed for a long time by the ghosts of the books we have burnt, the statues we have pulled down, and the rites we have abandoned.

The museum can adopt an equidistant attitude, withdrawing into the wisdom of a work impeccably done, dealing with dead topics, or it can choose one side of the barricade and fight.

• • • • • • • •

Belkis's notes inspired by Torches, Dynamite, Barricades

BELKIS: Can the museum be anti-establishment?

Aren't "museum" and "anti-establishment" antithetical terms?

The museum will always remain an institution and, in this capacity, part of the system that governs the context that has produced it.

If it wants to challenge, then it has to find another means of expression. The museum is the first stage in the process of taming savage, marginal cultures. Jack Lang understood this very well when he introduced the graffiti (a practice of young people from poor suburbs) and the tag into the institution of the museum.

Here (in France), the museum seems to be a means to channel violent forces before they become uncontrollable, and that goes on with the acknowledgement of the public. Can we say that the museum plays another part in the present circumstances of Eastern European countries?

The example of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant seems to provide a positive answer, but it also begs the question: Can an anti-establishment museum survive the transition that Romanian society is currently undergoing?

Epilogue

BELKIS: “When I arrived in Romania in 1991, the Museum at 3 Kiseleff had already been renamed the ‘Museum of the Romanian Peasant’—as illustrated by the banner hung above the entrance. But the interior had not yet been redone, the corridors were still scattered with busts of Lenin and Marx, as well as panels praising Ceaușescu’s achievements. I wandered through vast, half-empty halls, wondering how the team at the Romanian Peasant Museum would go about reclaiming in the name of the Romanian peasant a place so permeated with the symbols of the former regime.

“In 1992, I also visited the History Museum in Bucharest. Just as you said, history is presented there along a horizontal axis leading from the Stone Age all the way to Ceaușescu’s era. A vision of an uninterrupted, logical, infinite progress. When I visited this museum, the last halls dedicated to this view of Romanian history were locked, hidden away, as if the museum had the capacity to erase memory just as it erased the space. Was this intended to obliterate the image of an official history, one dictated by those who held the power, which had nothing to do with research work and testimonies, but only with propaganda and the Single Party? Nothing to criticize here, of course. This is expected after a ‘revolution.’ But such exhibitions, even if they told nothing about the historical realities of the last forty years in Romania, they still told a lot about the means used by the rulers to manipulate history in their desire to shape peoples’ consciences to fit their purposes.

“You say that you must fight against the residues of the old system, but what about reusing them? Couldn’t this be a solution? I don’t believe in the lessons of History—the present is proof enough that this is nonsense—but still, should we give up the fight against oblivion? The museum works as a vector in the collective memory of modern societies, and I don’t think that it is the role itself that we should question, but rather the way the museum fulfils it.

“An exhibition is never objective, it is always contingent on choices—whether they belong to its designers, or they are imposed by the social and political context in which the exhibition is born. In this respect, it cannot avoid being ideological—whether it is an exhibition about the greatness of the Romanian Communist Party or an exhibition centring on the cross. Only values change, and the danger is to be unaware of this.

“The Museum of the Romanian Peasant is a barricade in itself; it defies and challenges; it fights nonsense with common sense. I can’t see how a museum in France could take up such a role; the museums of the former socialist countries of Europe have to be civically engaged; the transition period that these countries are undergoing assigns them a militant role. In France, and in the West generally speaking, the museum is content with being the guardian of History and social values. Even the most daring and original museum experiments do not question the museum’s privilege to be a high-brow *lieu de mémoire*.

“For all these reasons, the dialogue between specialists working in Western museums and those in what we call Eastern Europe can only be advantageous and desirable. For too long, the Western museum has defined itself and reflected on its role only through self-observation. It should therefore show higher consideration towards Eastern European museums, which could work as mirrors. And mirroring is a two-way process.”

IRINA: “You are right, Belkis, and I am aware of the mirage of mirrors, but at the same time I am afraid our eyes are not yet ready for this. Our eyes are often cloudy. First we need to find a fresh gaze.”

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bomberger, Christian. 1992. “Ecomusées et espaces bâtis: des formes architecturales aux significations culturelles.” In *Territoire de la mémoire. Les collections du patrimoine ethnologique dans les écomusées*, ed. M. Augé, 67-89. Editions de l’Albaron.

Clair, Jean. 1974. *Du marteau-pilon à l’écomusée*. Vagues.

Dagognet, François. 1993. *Le musée sans fin*. Ceyzérieu: Champ Vallon.

Davallon, Jean, ed. 1986. *Clacqmurer, pour ainsi dire, tout l’univers. La mise en exposition*. Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou.

Deloche, Bernard. 1989. *Muséologica. Contradictions et logique du musée*. Mâcon: M.N.E.S.

Desvallées, André. 1992. *Vagues, une anthologie de la nouvelle muséologie. Textes choisis et présentés par André Desvallées*. Mâcon: Éditions W. et M.N.E.S.

Eco, Umberto. 1994. *How to Travel with a Salmon and Other Essays*. Transl. from the Italian by William Weaver. New York, San Diego, London: Harcourt Brace & Company.

Giraudy, Danièle, and Henri Bouilhet. 1977. *Le musée et la vie*. Paris: La Documentation Française.

Hainard, Jacques. 1989. *Objets en dérive pour le «Salon de l’ethnographie», Le Salon de l’ethnographie*. Neuchâtel: Musée d’ethnographie Neuchâtel.

Hubert, François. 1978. *Les ecomusées après vingt ans. Ecomusée en France*, Actes des premières rencontres nationales des écomusées. Agence régionale d’ethnologie Rhône-Alpes, Ecomusée Nord-Dauphiné.

Hubert, François. 1983. *Dossiers écomusées. La muséologie selon Georges-Henri Rivière*. Dunod.

Hudson, Kenneth. 1975. “Entry as a Privilege,” “Entry as a Right.” In *A Social History of Museums: What the Visitors Thought*, ed. Kenneth Hudson, 8-30; 31-47. London: Macmillan.

Lafranco, Binni, Pinna Giovanni. 1989. *Museo. Storia e funzioni di una machina culturale dal cinquecento a oggi*. Milano: Garzanti.

M.L. 1993. “Editorial.” *Museum International*. 178 (2), p. 3.

Malraux. 1965. *Les musées imaginaires*. Paris: Gallimard.

Maurois, André. 1946. *Journal, États-Unis, 1946*. Paris: Éditions du Bateau Ivre.

Obereiner, Jean-Luc. 1991. “Cuzals. Musée de plein air de Quercy: tourisme profane ou anthropologie sacrée?” *Musée et société. Actes du colloque,* Mulhouse, Ungersheim, June: 71-74.

Pomian, Krzysztof. 1990. *Musée et patrimoine. Patrimoine en folie*. Paris: Édition de la Maison des sciences de l’homme.

Pomian, Krzysztof. 1992. *L’Anticomanie: la collection d’antiquités aux* $18^{\text{ème}}$ *et* $19^{\text{ème}}$ *siècle*. Paris: EHESS.

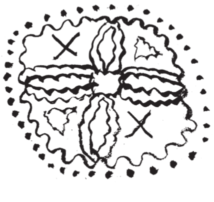
Rivière, Georges-Henri. 1975. *Bibliothèques et musées (Colloque)*. Neuchâtel.

Screven, C.G. 1993. “Visitor Studies: An Introduction.” *Museum International* 178 (2): 4-5.

Unfried, Berthold. 1982. “La Muséification du «socialisme réel».” *Communications, “L’Est: les mythes et les restes.”* 55 : 23-42.

Varine de, Hugues. 1969. *Le musée au service de l’homme et du développement*. Vagues.

Weis, Hélène. 1992. “Collections… collecte…, Hommes et société.” *Revue des musées d’anthropologie*: 3-4.



MARTOR

Title: *Le musée antidote mis en pratique: regards croisés d'un artiste et d'une ethnologue sur le Musée du Paysan Roumain*

Authors: Florian Fouché, Marianne Mesnil

How to cite this article: Fouché, Florian, and Marianne Mesnil. 2018. "Le musée antidote mis en pratique: regards croisés d'un artiste et d'une ethnologue sur le Musée du Paysan Roumain." *Martor* 23: 94-117.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Ţăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/martor-23-2018/

Martor (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Journal) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. ***Martor Journal*** is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Interdisciplinary and international in scope, it provides a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for academic and non-academic readership. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

Martor (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue ***Martor*** est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

Martor is indexed by:

CEEOL, EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Anthropological Index Online (AIO), MLA International Bibliography.

Le musée antidote mis en pratique: regards croisés d'un artiste et d'une ethnologue sur le Musée du Paysan Roumain

Florian Fouché
Artiste, Paris; florianfouche@gmail.com

Marianne Mesnil
Ethnologue, professeur honoraire de l'Université libre de Bruxelles; marianne.mesnil@skynet.be

Au MTR, la salle « L'école du village ». Photo par Florian Fouché.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans un entretien réalisé pendant l'automne 2017 à Bucarest, Marianne Mesnil et Florian Fouché dialoguent autour de leur expérience du Muzeul Țăranului Român (MTR), la première en tant qu'ethnologue, le second en tant qu'artiste. Ils envisagent la pratique muséographique d'Irina Nicolau (1946-2002) et Horia Bernea (1938-2000), en convoquant des points clés de leur expérience. Ce sont, au sein du MTR, la salle « La Peste », les rideaux de « L'école du village », le manifeste « Le musée antidote », ainsi que la conception du « musée-père » et du « musée-mère » selon Irina Nicolau, ou encore la salle « Temps », etc.
À partir de ces réflexions, ils reviennent sur l'exposition que Florian Fouché a consacrée au MTR et qu'il a intitulée *Le Musée antidote* (Centre d'art Passerelle à Brest en 2014), ainsi que sur deux petites expositions faites par Nicolau, l'une en France, *Un village dans une malle* (Paris, 1991), l'autre en Belgique, *Roumanie en miroir, mémoires de tiroir* (Treignes, 1997) en collaboration avec Marianne Mesnil et Ioana Popescu. À l'heure où la fermeture provisoire du musée suppose une transformation de sa mise en espace, cet échange se veut une participation aux débats sur l'expérimentation muséographique qui a eu lieu au MTR sous la direction d'Horia Bernea entre 1990 et 2000.
L'article est accompagné de photographies et vues d'exposition de Florian Fouché.

MOTS CLÉS

Muséographie,
art contemporain,
expérimentation institutionnelle,
Irina Nicolau,
Constantin Brâncuși.

En décembre 2012, Florian Fouché invitait Marianne Mesnil à participer à une conférence sur le MTR (*Muzeul Țăranului Român* – Musée du Paysan Roumain) qu'il organisait à l'École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts de Paris[1]. En septembre 2017, à l'occasion de la présentation de son livre en hommage à Irina Nicolau, *Une partie de ping-pong*[2], Marianne Mesnil invitait Florian Fouché à présenter sa démarche au MTR. De cette double rencontre, entre Paris, Bruxelles et Bucarest, a résulté un dialogue de l'artiste et de l'ethnologue autour de leur expérience du MTR, dont rend compte l'article qui suit.

• • • • • • • •

1. Faire l'expérience du Musée du Paysan Roumain

Marianne Mesnil: Lorsque vous avez vu pour la première fois le Musée du Paysan Roumain *(Muzeul Țăranului Român)* à Bucarest, qu'est-ce qui a provoqué votre intérêt pour ce lieu, au point d'y revenir et de vouloir y consacrer tout un travail personnel ?

Florian Fouché : En 2007, encore étudiant aux Beaux-arts, je suis venu en Roumanie pour voir l'ensemble de Brâncuși à Târgu Jiu[3]. C'est à cette occasion que j'ai visité le MTR pour la première fois. J'ai été frappé par la stupéfiante invention spatiale, entre art et muséographie, à partir d'objets paysans qui eux-mêmes remettent en question les classifications du type « art moderne », « art populaire » ou « art primitif ». Le musée interprète le lien de parenté direct de cet art paysan avec l'œuvre de Constantin Brâncuși et convoque, dans la muséographie même, des procédés, mises en formes et attitudes de l'art actuel. J'ai eu le sentiment de découvrir un musée où la tension entre la vie et la mort prenait forme dans l'espace. Quelque chose s'était produit là et s'était interrompu. Je devais revenir.

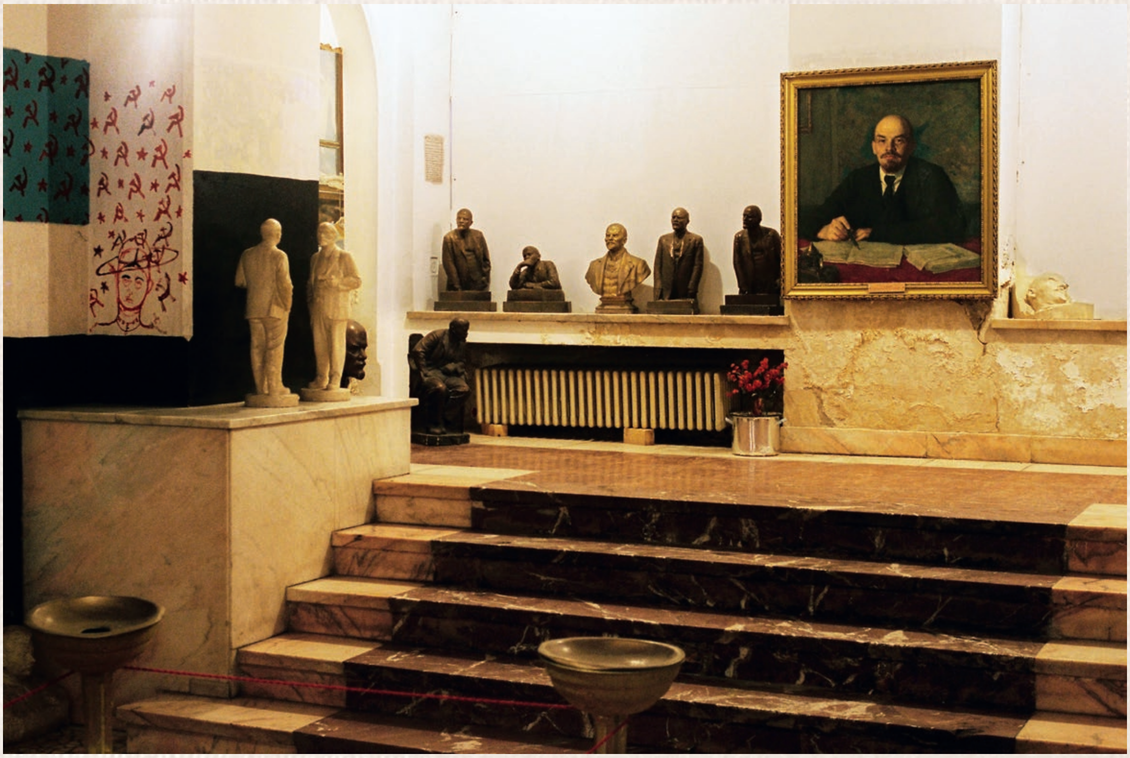
M. M. : Lors de cette première visite, y a-t-il une salle qui a particulièrement attiré votre attention ?

F. F. : Dès l'entrée, il y a ce panneau qui indique la salle « La Peste. Installation politique » en direction du sous-sol. Cette salle est comme en périphérie du parcours, on peut la rater car l'escalier qui y mène est en retrait du hall monumental. C'est une des zones qui s'apparentent le plus à un décor scénique pour un théâtre d'objets sans acteur, constitué d'un enchevêtrement de lieux et d'éléments raccordés d'une façon inquiétante. Des accumulations de portraits et bibelots à la mode réaliste-socialiste forment une sorte de palais-musée monstrueux. Une simple porte à barreaux suggère une prison pour les paysans résistants, à proximité d'un bureau de boyard où traînent des coquilles de noisettes écrasées. Des alignements de coupures de presse disent une organisation contrôlée du quotidien et on voit dans une alcôve des visages de paysans tués par la *Securitate*. Pour moi c'est une salle clé, autant par sa situation que par son sujet : la vision simultanée de l'histoire de la propagande et de la collectivisation de la production agricole en Roumanie à l'époque communiste. C'est là qu'on découvre que le Musée du Paysan est aussi le musée d'une transition politique, que c'est son sujet caché. En lisant plus tard les échanges entre Horia Bernea et Irina Nicolau à propos de cette salle (mise en espace par

[1] Dans le cadre du séminaire « Des territoires » animé par Jean-François Chevrier.

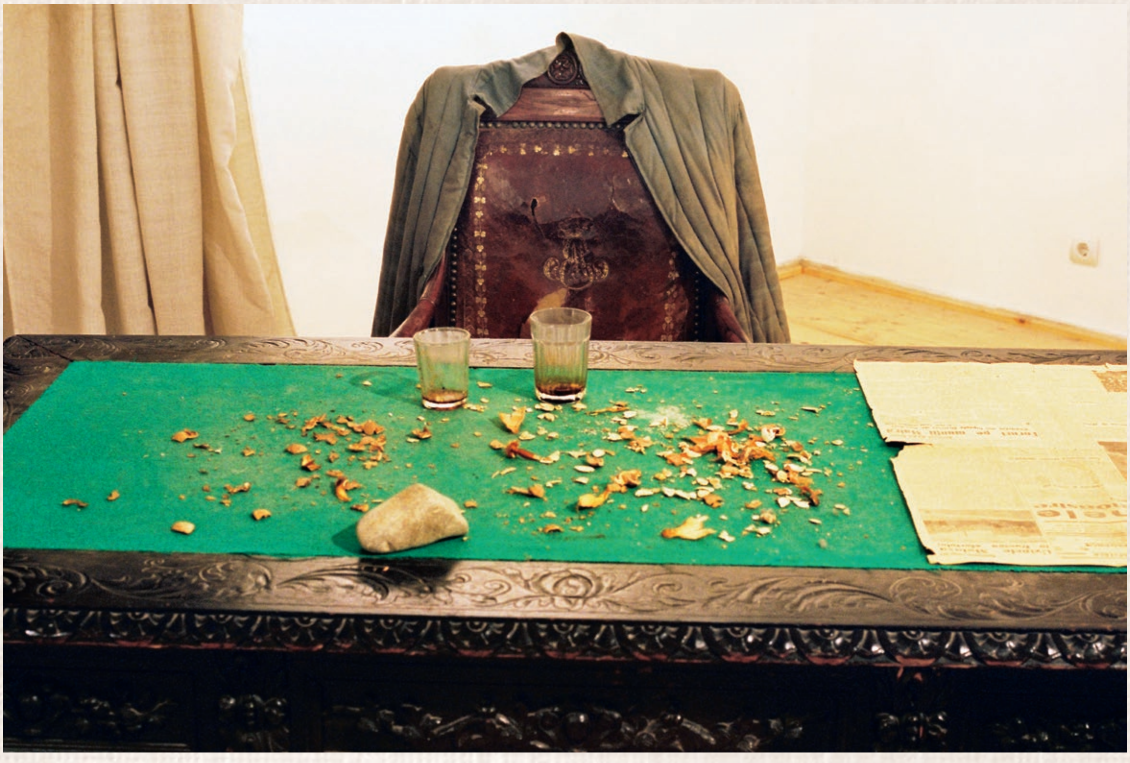
[2] Mesnil et Ionescu-Muscel 2017. La présentation a eu lieu au MTR en septembre 2017.

[3] L'axe de la rue des Héros avec la *Table du silence*, la *Porte du baiser* et la *Colonne sans fin*. L'ensemble a été achevé en 1937.



Au MTR, la salle « La Peste. Installation politique ». Photo par Florian Fouché.

Au MTR, la salle « La Peste. Installation politique ». Photo par Florian Fouché.



Nicolau), j'ai pensé qu'il fallait la comparer à une œuvre de Joseph Beuys, la vitrine *Auschwitz Démonstration*[4]. Beuys parle d'« une tentative pour trouver un remède de remémoration », et affirme que l'atrocité d'Auschwitz est impossible à traduire « par une image »[5]. Quant à Bernea, il invoque une « salle-citation », « un mode de présentation de l'horreur, du dégoût » qui ne soit pas une tentative de « reconstituer » le communisme (Bernea et Nicolau 1998 : 231). Une des questions centrales qui traversent le Musée du Paysan est effectivement celle du refus de la reconstitution.

M. M. : J'ai aussi le souvenir d'avoir perçu cette salle « La Peste » comme un tout à part, comme une trace organisée de ce déboulonnage de statues du défunt régime, qui a eu lieu dans tous les pays ex-communistes. Mais, dans une telle « installation », c'est aussi tout un langage qui est pointé du doigt dans un excès de laideur (que Bernea assimile au faux, au mensonge). En outre, l'accès à cette « installation politique » se fait par un escalier qui est plutôt censé mener aux vestiaires, et plus prosaïquement encore... aux toilettes ! Bref, d'une certaine manière, la spatialisation de ces misérables restes semble ici rejoindre les « poubelles de l'Histoire » (Trotski).

Ce qui m'a également frappée dans cette « mise en scène » de Nicolau, c'est l'usage qu'elle fait de la figure stylistique de la *redondance.* Telle qu'elle est utilisée, je ne peux m'empêcher de penser qu'elle exprime ici la dérision et donne à la salle une dimension subversive trop longtemps réprimée. Est-ce exagéré de voir, dans une telle spatialisation, une petite revanche – sans doute inconsciente – d'une ethnographe qui a choisi de passer ces années de plomb d'avant 1989 dans les caves de l'Institut d'ethnographie et folklore, à classer des archives, jusqu'à ce moment révolutionnaire où, jaillissant de l'ombre, elle a rejoint, cette fois en pleine lumière, l'ancien musée de Kiseleff pour participer à la construction du projet que l'on sait.

Il me semble que l'on retrouve cette figure de la redondance dans presque toutes les salles du musée où l'on peut voir des objets de même catégorie exposés « treize à la douzaine » (les œufs peints, les poinçons à pain, les cruches, etc.). Mais, dans ces compositions (que l'on doit à Bernea), la redondance n'a pas cette dimension subversive voire ironique, comme c'est le cas de l'« installation politique » d'Irina. Des statuettes de Lénine « treize à la douzaine » n'ont évidemment pas la même portée que des cruches !

Autre aspect qui m'a frappé dans la salle « La Peste », c'est la monstrueuse laideur du grand vase placé au centre de la pièce, auquel mène un tapis rouge, qui me laisse une impression de morbidité. Il me semble évoquer une urne funéraire démesurée. Sans doute parce qu'elle contiendrait les cendres d'un demi-siècle de totalitarisme !

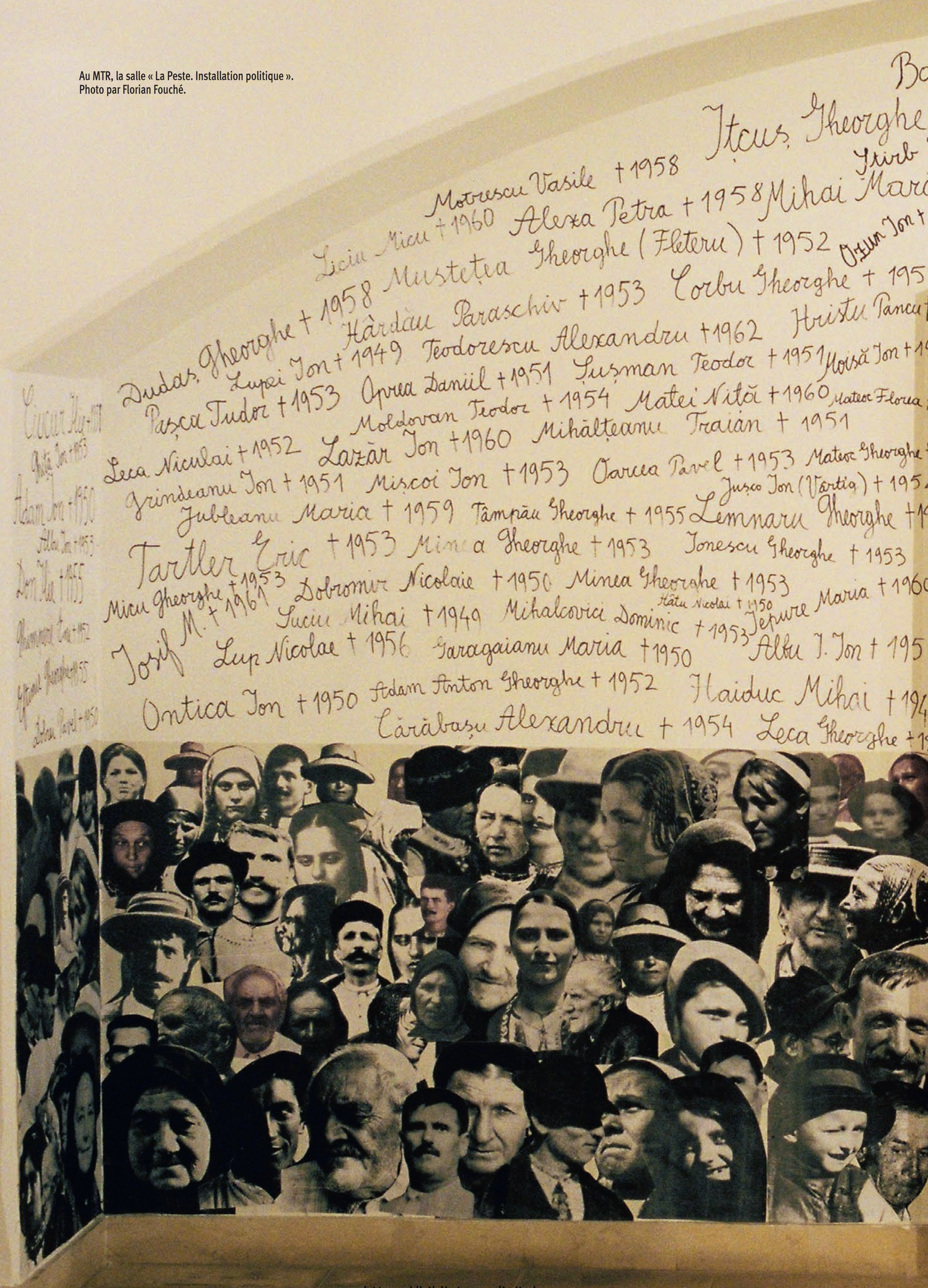
F. F. : Dans la salle « La Peste » comme dans le reste du musée, l'articulation entre les objets des collections et leur mise en espace est une œuvre d'art en soi. C'est clair avec le mobilier, très hétérogène, qui propose une alternative au modèle de la vitrine et à l'idéologie de la surprotection des objets[6]. Les objets ne se consomment pas dans des vitrines, ils se *consument* dans le même espace que nous. Si je prends l'exemple de la salle « Triomphe », il y a cet alignement d'immenses tables-présentoirs en bois, très massives, avec des variations géométriques minimales qui rythment la grande galerie de l'étage. Ce sont des sculptures en elles-mêmes, comme si des structures modulaires de Sol Lewitt étaient combinées avec

---

[4] Vitrine réalisée entre 1956 et 1964, aujourd'hui conservée au *Block Beuys* (Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt).

[5] Beuys précise encore : « [...] *la vitrine d'Auschwitz* n'est en réalité qu'un jouet, je n'ai pas prétendu rendre quoi que ce soit de l'atrocité par ces choses-là. » (Beuys 1988 : 122).

[6] Bernea dit : « À travers le mode d'exposition que nous employons, nous cherchons à rapprocher le visiteur de l'objet. L'absence des vitrines en est une preuve, entre autres » (Bernea et Nicolau 1998 : 233). Il faut noter cependant que, comme souvent au MTR, l'approche dogmatique est finement contredite, ici par quelques magnifiques vitrines en bois et plexiglas. Certaines font penser à des couffins rétrofuturistes.


Itcuș Gheorghe
Motrescu Vasile † 1958
Licin Micu † 1960 Alexa Petra † 1958 Mihai Mar
Dudaș Gheorghe † 1958 Mustețea Gheorghe (Fleteru) † 1952
Hărdău Paraschiv † 1953 Corbu Gheorghe † 195
Lupei Ion † 1949 Teodorescu Alexandru † 1962 Hristu
Pașca Tudor † 1953 Oprea Daniil † 1951 Sușman Teodor † 1951 Moisă Ion
Moldovan Teodor † 1954 Matei Niță † 1960 Mateoc Florea
Leca Niculai † 1952 Lazăr Ion † 1960 Mihălțeanu Traian † 1951
Grindeanu Ion † 1951 Mișcoi Ion † 1953 Oarcea Pavel † 1953 Mateoc Gheorghe
Jușco Ion (Vărtig) † 195
Jubleanu Maria † 1959 Tâmpău Gheorghe † 1955 Lemnaru Gheorghe
Tartler Eric † 1953 Minea Gheorghe † 1953 Ionescu Gheorghe † 1953
Micu Gheorghe † 1953 Dobromir Nicolaie † 1950 Minea Gheorghe † 1953
Iosif M. † 1961 Suciu Mihai † 1949 Mihalcovici Dominic † 1953 Hațu Nicolai † 1950 Iepure Maria † 1960
Lup Nicolae † 1956 Garagaianu Maria † 1950 Albu I. Ion † 195
Ontica Ion † 1950 Adam Anton Gheorghe † 1952 Haiduc Mihai † 194
Cărăbașu Alexandru † 1954 Leca Gheorghe
Adam Ion † 1950
Albu Ion † 1953
Don Ilie † 1955

Au MTR, la salle « La Peste. Installation politique ».
Photo par Florian Fouché.

ako I. Ion † 1953 Turtoi Constantin † 1947
† 1957 Ţicală Vasile † 1950 Zuba Gheorghe † 1949
Ioan † 1959 Matei Niţă † 1960 Zuba Hristu † 1952 Nichita Pavel † 1949
n (Roşu) † 1957 Matei Alexandru (Stegaru) † ? Roşu Ioan † 1952
1951 Caraman Gh. Vasile † 1952 Tomeci Elisabeta - Ecaterina † ? Vlădescu
Balica I. Ion † 1952 Anghel Alexandru † 1953 Ceaturi Gheorghe † 1950 Vlădescu
Beneş Vasile † 1947
Cucu Mih
Trăznitu F. Ion † 1953
Şandor Ion † 1959
Boţoc I. Constantin † ? Ştefănescu
Buzgan Ion † 1954
Andrisan Gheorghe † 1949
Bărbuţ I. Ion † 1950 Todincă Iancu † 19
Şerengă Petre † 1959 Ursu P.
Badea Gheorghe † 1960 Vasilache N. Vasile † 19
Mangu Petre (Vasilichii) †
Voica Ilie † 1949 Vlad Ion † 1962 Moldov
Ceaturi Gheorghe † 1950 Alex
Cârciumaru Gheorghe † 1950 Lörincz
Balc Ion † ?
Cucu Ion † 1953 Anghel Alexandru
Nichita Nazarie † 19
Dinu Gh. Ana † 1950 Urucu
AGRICULTURA
ARESTATĂ

des architectures paysannes réduites et des métiers à tisser verticaux. Elles permettent un déploiement monumental d'objets paysans posés et suspendus.

Le mode de fabrication de ce mobilier laisse imaginer un « musée-atelier »[7]. Il faut remarquer le revêtement de peinture blanche et de plâtre grossier qui s'écaille depuis le début. Ce type de finition est unique dans un musée ; c'est une texture qui correspond à une fabrication manuelle, réalisée sur place, à un mode artisanal qui n'imite pas mais accompagne la matérialité des objets présentés. Ce n'est pas du design commandé à une entreprise extérieure. Dans le même genre, je pense à l'ensemble de petites chaises en bois réunies sur un carré peint directement sur le carrelage au rez-de-chaussée : la peinture est marron, comme de la terre, mais c'est bien la peinture qui s'affirme clairement et du même coup l'artifice du musée ; on n'essaie pas de nous faire croire à une reconstitution du village, on affirme au contraire le nouveau lieu des objets.

• • • • • • • • •

2. Irina Nicolau et l'expérimentation institutionnelle

M. M. : Comment votre enquête sur le musée a-t-elle changé votre perception de ce lieu ?

F. F. : En 2012, je suis venu au musée pour faire des photographies, voir les archives et rencontrer l'anthropologue Ioana Popescu, qui en était alors directrice adjointe et qui avait eu un rôle de premier plan au sein de l'équipe historique du MTR. Elle m'a raconté ce qu'elle appelait « les temps héroïques ». Je n'avais pas réalisé que l'activité du musée, son fonctionnement institutionnel, étaient aussi intéressants que les mises en espace[8]. Dans les salles du musée, l'histoire de l'expérimentation institutionnelle[9], du « musée à l'état perpétuellement naissant » (Bernea 1996 : 209), n'est accessible que de façon lacunaire (à travers ces albums photographiques qui montrent des étapes de construction des salles[10]). Donc il fallait enquêter. J'ai compris peu à peu l'importance de la personnalité d'Irina Nicolau, dont on n'a aucune idée quand on va visiter le musée. Seule une salle de conférence porte son nom. Dans le grand escalier d'honneur, vous remarquez qu'on a les portraits des directeurs successifs et de personnalités de l'anthropologie roumaine : que des hommes, jusqu'à Bernea.

Quand j'ai commencé à imaginer mon exposition sur le MTR, c'était très clair pour moi qu'il fallait mettre en avant Nicolau en partant de son manifeste « *Le Musée antidote* » (Nicolau 1994 ; *infra* 89), dont j'ai fait plus tard une banderole. C'est elle qui déclare le mieux les enjeux de ce moment de transition politique roumain : imaginer les bases d'un monde qui ne soit ni communiste ni capitaliste, « ni morose, ni rose », dit-elle, et le faire pratiquement, dans l'expérimentation artistique-muséographique. Il n'y a peut-être pas eu de révolution roumaine mais il y a eu le MTR. Réinventer le monde à partir d'un lieu pour l'art, ici le musée : peu d'institutions se donnent un tel programme. La norme, c'est plutôt la consommation culturelle. Nicolau le dit très bien : « Le passionné du Musée doit tout supporter : la rumeur qui entoure les objets au nom d'une pédagogie

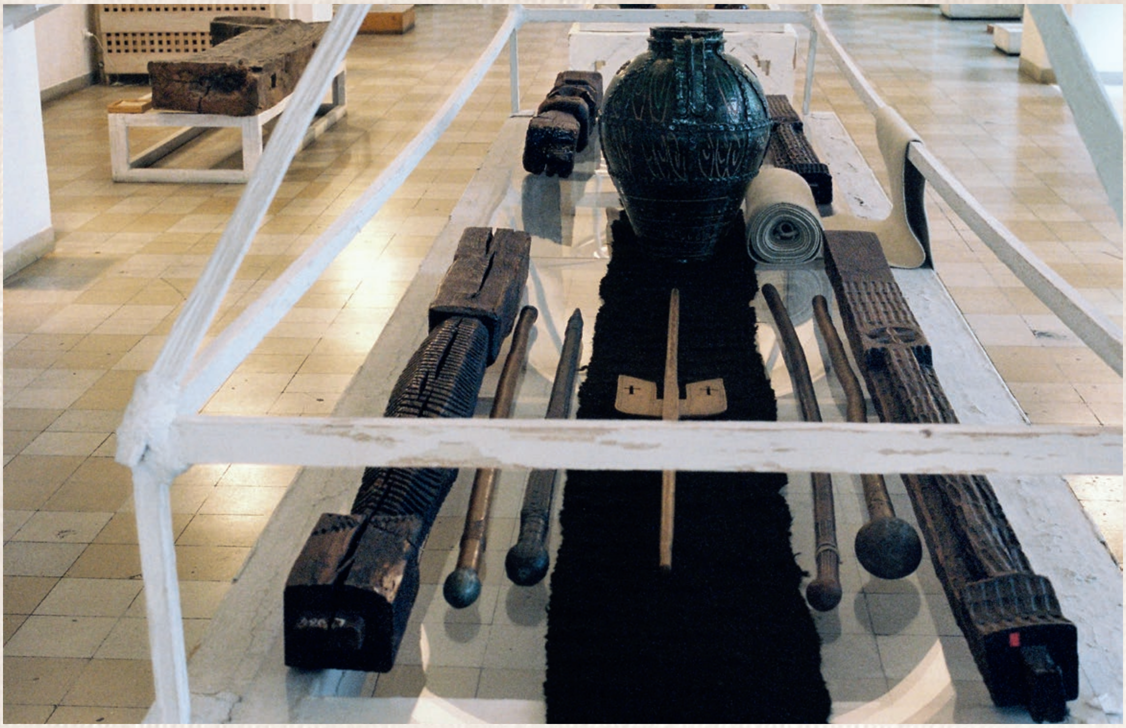
---

[7] « Musée-atelier » est un terme utilisé par Fernand Deligny, dans une lettre écrite à Jacques Lin en janvier 1970, pour qualifier les lieux de la grande expérimentation menée avec des enfants autistes dans les Cévennes. Là, des objets du quotidien sont autant de repères mis en évidence par ceux qu'il convient de ne plus appeler des éducateurs, mais des « présences proches » (Deligny 2018).

[8] Sur la question de l'activité artistique et la notion d'« invention institutionnelle », voir Chevrier (2015 : 43-45, sur mon travail autour du MTR).

[9] Le MTR, au-delà de sa formule institutionnelle inédite (musée dirigé par un artiste, nouveau département de recherche en anthropologie...), expérimente aussi du côté de l'éducation populaire (ce qu'on réduit à la « médiation » dans la plupart des musées) : sous l'impulsion notamment d'Irina Nicolau, le musée menait des actions de rue et organisait des ateliers avec le public.

[10] Ces albums composés de grandes pages cartonnées recouvertes d'écrits, de dessins et de tirages argentiques sont des pièces uniques que les visiteurs peuvent manipuler librement. Par ailleurs, le MTR a édité des livres-objets fabriqués artisanalement, à l'initiative de Nicolau. Celle-ci avait participé à la conception du premier livre consacré aux évènements de décembre 1989 (Marian *et al.* 1990).



Au MTR, la salle « Triomphe ». Photo par Florian Fouché.

Au MTR, la salle « Triomphe ». Photo par Florian Fouché.

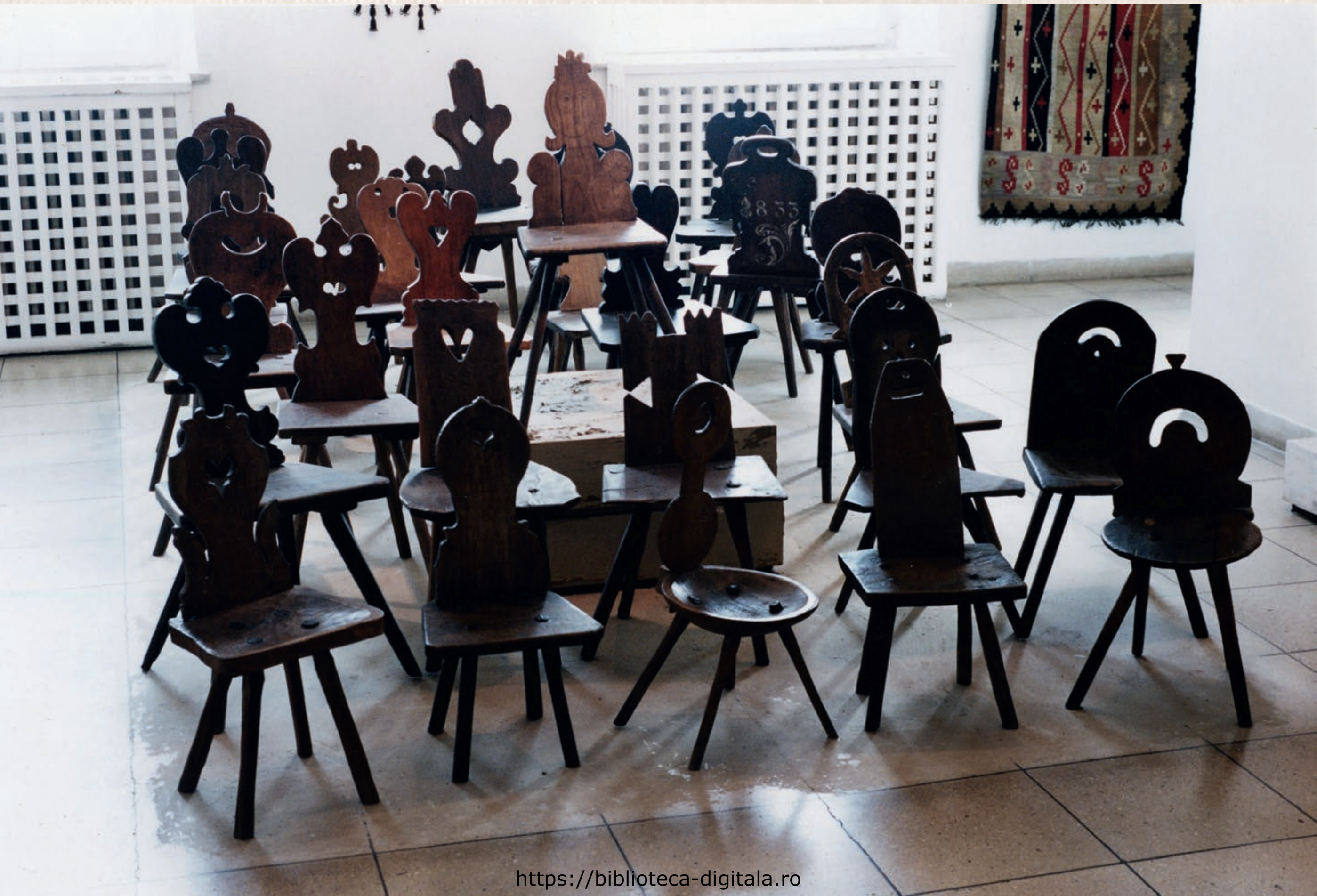
souvent populiste, les excès imposés par les lois de la conservation, la dérive de l'institution vers des procédés médiatiques, et l'indifférence avec laquelle il est traité. » (Nicolau 1994 : 20 ; *infra* 89).

Mettre en avant Irina Nicolau, c'était aussi mettre à distance Horia Bernea. J'ai des réserves sur un certain nombre de ses positions intellectuelles, notamment sur sa façon parfois rigide et dangereuse de penser la tradition. Mais je crois que son mysticisme étrange dépasse cela et que son grand talent d'artiste-muséographe va bien au-delà de l'illustration d'un programme politique. J'ajoute que son idée de la « muséographie négative » est brillante et peut être un outil dans des situations tout autres[11].

3. *Le Musée Antidote* : une exposition mise en abyme

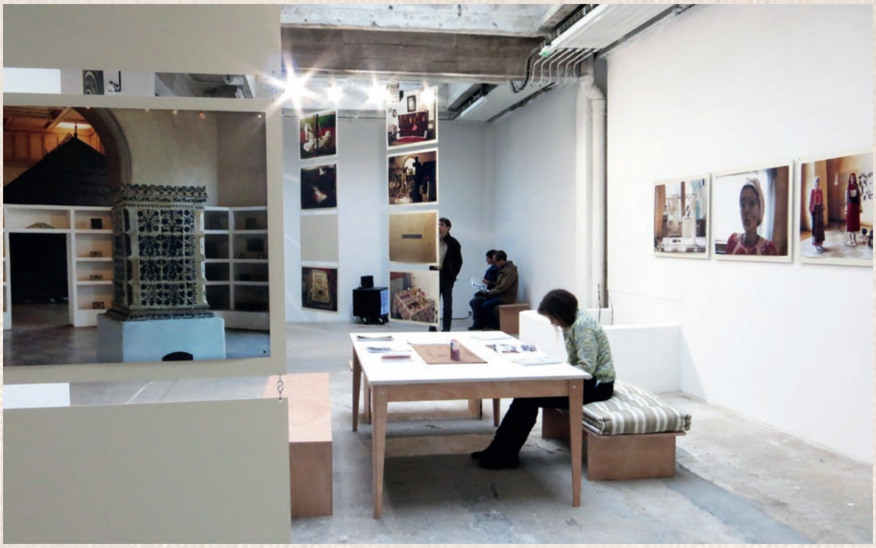
M. M. : En 2014, à Brest, vous avez réalisé une exposition intitulée *Le Musée Antidote* qui mettait en abyme les espaces du MTR. Comment l'avez-vous conçue ?

F. F. : Pendant mes années d'études, j'avais sans cesse cette expérience du MTR à l'esprit, comme une référence alternative. Entre 2012 et 2014, j'ai eu les moyens financiers pour produire un ensemble d'œuvres sur ce sujet. Je voulais inventer un espace entre art et information, sculpture et photographie. Pendant ces deux ans, le MTR a été pour moi un champ

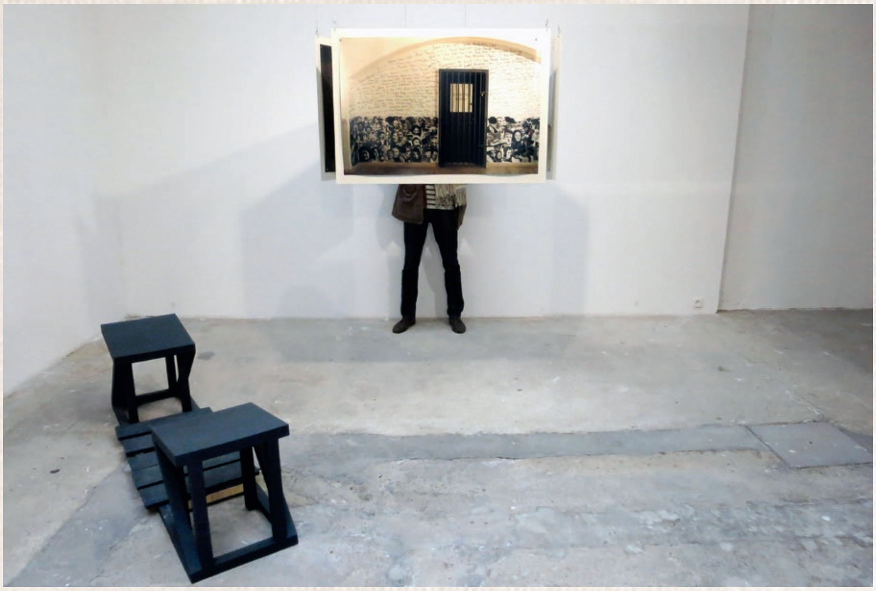

Au MTR, « Petites chaises en bois réunies sur un carré peint sur le carrelage ». Photo par Florian Fouché.

---

[11] Le concept de « muséographie négative » est issu d'une interprétation par Horia Bernea de la théologie négative chez Denys l'Aréopagite. De même que « la théologie apophatique définit – par exclusion – l'indicible et l'indéfinissable » (Bernea 1996 : 200), les formes de vie auxquelles les objets ont été associés demeurent, au musée, invisibles : pas de reconstitution.



Florian Fouché : *Cabinet d'étude à propos du musée du Paysan roumain* dans l'exposition *Le Musée Antidote* (détail), Centre d'art Passerelle, Brest, 2014. Photo par l'auteur.



Florian Fouché : *Cabinet d'étude à propos du musée du Paysan roumain* dans l'exposition *Le Musée Antidote* (détail), Centre d'art Passerelle, Brest, 2014. Photo par l'auteur.

spéculatif qui m'a donné la distance nécessaire pour mettre en place mon propre travail plastique[12].

Mon exposition[13] articulait un espace de documentation et des propositions plastiques a priori autonomes. Dans une longue galerie avec lumière zénithale était déployé le *Cabinet d'étude sur le musée du Paysan roumain*. Là, mes photographies faites au musée étaient aimantées sur des plaques de métal suspendues. J'avais réuni des textes et documents sur une table d'information où l'on pouvait lire assis, confortablement. Je voulais rendre accessible l'activité invisible, par exemple en mettant à disposition des textes clés de la revue *Martor,* et j'envisageais ce travail comme un hommage à Irina Nicolau.

La conception de mon *Cabinet d'étude* reposait sur un choix clair : informer sur la muséographie performée du MTR (les objets de la collection

---

12) J'avais publié en mars 2013 un article intitulé « Le musée du Paysan roumain à Bucarest : un antidote » dans la revue *D'A,* avec une introduction de Jean-Paul Robert, et je prépare actuellement un livre qui sera publié en 2019 (Fouché 2019).

13) *Le Musée Antidote,* CAC Passerelle, Brest, commissariat d'Étienne Bernard.

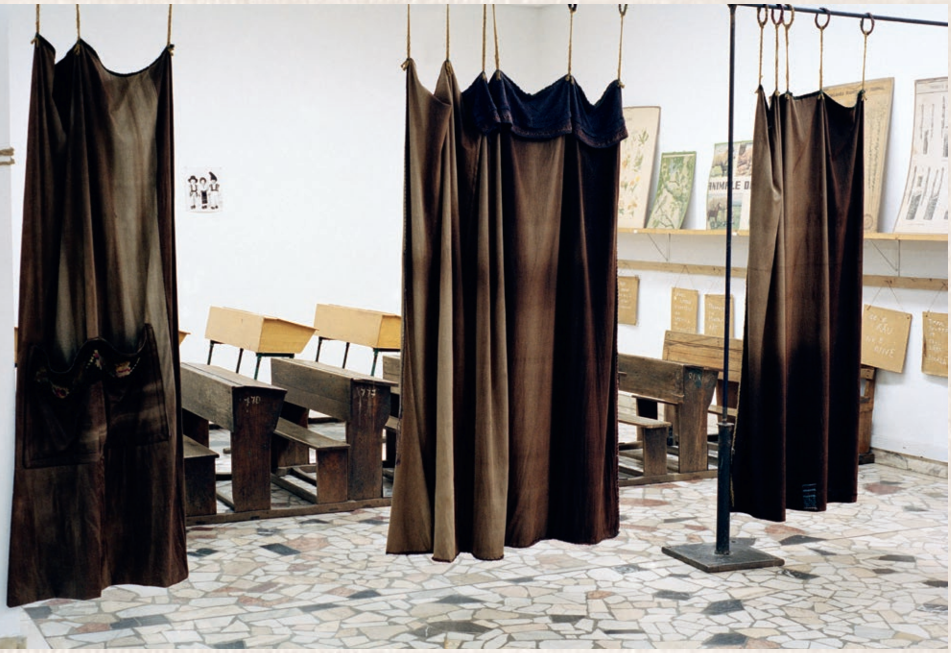
sont secondaires) et en montrer les vestiges par la photographie. Je le faisais en esquivant l'idée du paysan exemplaire de Bernea, et en mettant en avant l'idée du « musée antidote » de Nicolau pour la portée critique, l'humour et le laconisme de son manifeste[14].

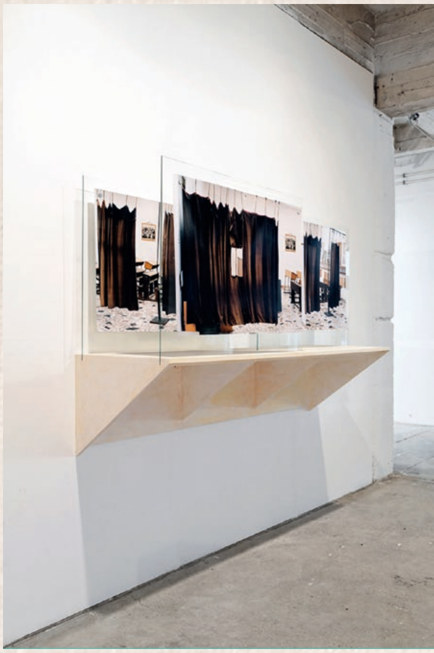
Ma pièce *L'École du village* était présentée à l'extérieur de cette galerie, sur son seuil. Dans les salles contiguës, je présentais un ensemble d'objets hétérogènes, sans lien direct avec le MTR, à la fois proches et discordants.

M. M. : Dans votre œuvre *L'École du village*, qui porte le nom d'une salle du MTR, vous donnez une place importante aux rideaux qui s'y trouvent. Quel sens ont-ils pour vous ?

F. F. : Ces rideaux sont des objets scénographiques sans rapport avec les pratiques traditionnelles paysannes. Ils ont été cousus par Irina Nicolau et d'autres ethnologues du musée, dans la salle même[15]. Ils séparent une salle de classe reconstituée, qui est aussi un des lieux de conférence du musée, du reste du parcours. La salle de classe elle-même est située à proximité d'un des plus importants « Cabinets d'étude ». De la même manière mon présentoir consacré à « L'école du village » était placé sur le seuil du *Cabinet d'étude sur le musée du Paysan roumain.* C'est un de mes premiers objets à photographies, une sorte de relief constitué de trois plaques de verre pour trois plans photographiques.

Le mode de présentation des photos fait qu'une image en cache une autre, de la même façon que, dans l'image, le rideau obstrue en partie la vue sur la salle de classe. Comme le dit Irina Nicolau : « Le musée montre et cache aussi. » (Nicolau 1994 : 38 ; *infra* 89). Le rideau permet de jouer sur plusieurs registres de l'idée d'invisible, physiquement et métaphoriquement : il y a d'un côté l'histoire de l'activité du musée en tant que centre de


Au MTR, la salle « L'école du village ».
Photo par Florian Fouché


Florian Fouché : *L'école du village* (2013) dans l'exposition *Le Musée Antidote*;
bois, verre, peinture, aimants, tirages photographiques argentiques ;
200 x 220 x 60 cm. Photo par Aurélien Môle.

---

[14] On peut rapprocher ce manifeste du texte d'Yvonne Rainer sur son analyse de *Trio A* (Rainer 1966/2002 : 102-103) ou du manifeste *Poetry Is Vertical* (Jolas 1932) qui met en épigraphe une citation de Léon-Paul Fargue : « On a été trop horizontal, j'ai envie d'être vertical... »

[15] Ioana Popescu a notamment participé à la confection de ces rideaux. Elle revient sur ce moment dans un entretien que j'ai réalisé avec elle en 2012. Celui-ci était consultable sur la table de documents du *Cabinet d'étude sur le musée du Paysan roumain* et sera prochainement publié (Fouché 2019).

Au M.T.R., le « cabinet d'étude » dans la salle « L'école du village ». Photo par Florian Fouché.

Au M.T.R., un album dans le « cabinet d'étude » de la salle « L'École du village ». Photo par Florian Fouché.

pensée et de l'autre tout ce qui nous sépare de notre enfance, que le jeu du rideau nous permet de retrouver.

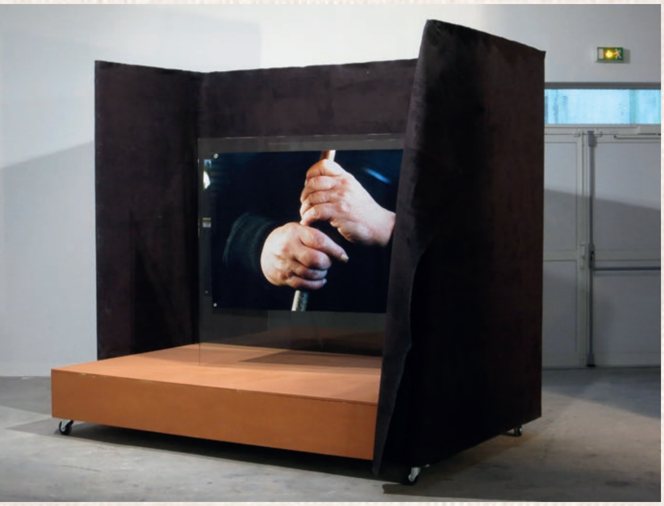
M. M. : Vous avez réservé une place importante à ces trois thèmes des rideaux, de l'école du village et des cabinets d'étude. Et, en effet, ce sont des thèmes qui ponctuent l'espace du MTR. Qui le ponctuent, mais pas n'importe où. Il s'agit toujours d'espaces situés sur les côtés, donc en marge des salles dans lesquelles les objets sont donnés à voir. Que peut signifier une telle spatialisation ? Pour amorcer une réponse, je propose de revenir un moment à l'article de Nicolau « Moi et les musées du monde » (1994), où elle expose la manière dont elle perçoit la visite d'un musée et, ce faisant, met en valeur une conception double et complémentaire de sa muséologie. Elle y distingue le « musée-mère », fondé sur une perception intuitive, dédramatisée et non contraignante de ce qui est exposé, et le « musée-père », qui répond à une conception classique de l'institution muséale issue du mouvement des Lumières et qui vise essentiellement à faire voir une « mise en ordre du monde » dont la portée se doit d'abord d'être éducative[16].

Ainsi, qu'il s'agisse de « L'école du village », lieu d'accueil de cours et séminaires de toutes sortes, ou des « Cabinets d'étude » qui permettent à ceux qui le souhaitent d'en savoir plus sur les objets exposés, ces petits espaces aménagés par Nicolau en marge des grandes salles du MTR conçues par Bernea apparaissent comme autant de points d'arrêt possibles, durant le « libre parcours » des salles Bernea du musée qui s'oppose au parcours « fléché » et ponctué d'étiquettes des musées classiques (voir Mesnil 2006 : 33-48).

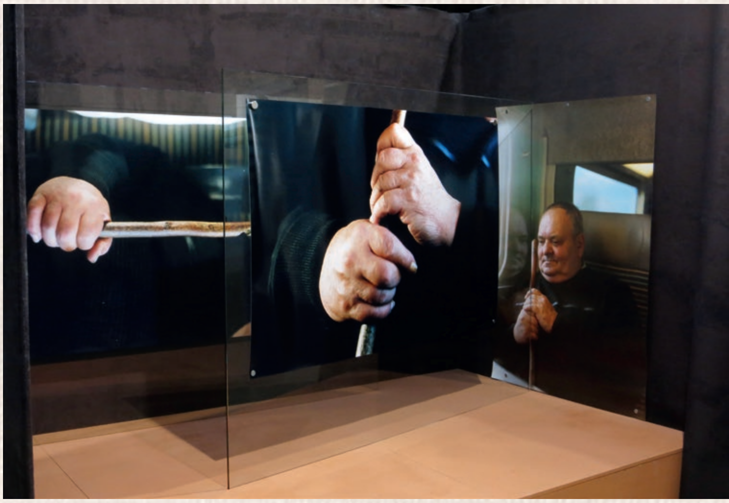
C'est grâce aux informations ethnographiques mises à disposition dans

---

16) À ceux qui reprocheraient à cette opposition de relever d'une conception obsolète du rapport masculin/féminin, on répondra qu'ici, le pôle « féminin » de l'opposition correspond au travail muséographique de l'homme artiste Bernea tandis que le pôle « masculin » correspond largement à l'apport de la femme ethnologue Nicolau. C'est pourquoi, pour opposer « musée-mère » et « musée-père », je préfère emprunter à Jung son opposition entre *anima* et *animus*, chacun de ces pôles correspondant à l'une des composantes psychiques de tout être humain.



Florian Fouché : *Dans le train Lyon Bucarest* (2013) ; bois, peinture, feutre de piscine, verre, tirages photographiques argentiques, aimants, roulettes ; 300 x 250 x 210 cm. Photo par l'auteur.



Florian Fouché : *Dans le train Lyon Bucarest* (détail). Photo par l'auteur.

ces zones de savoir en marge que les objets sélectionnés et exposés selon des critères esthétiques peuvent être recontextualisés par rapport à leur provenance[17].

Enfin, on aura remarqué que ces rideaux ont de grandes poches. Et je ne peux m'empêcher de penser à ce qu'écrit Nicolau à la première page de son livre d'hommage à son père, *Haide, Bre!* : « Je rêve d'un livre qui aurait des poches et des moustaches. » (2000 : 8). Lors de séances de couture comparables à des veillées (cette importante institution villageoise qui a donné son nom de *Şezătoare* à l'une des premières revues d'ethnographie roumaine), en cousant ces poches aux rideaux de « L'école du village », avec l'aide de quelques autres complices, sans doute Irina a-t-elle réalisé une partie de son rêve !

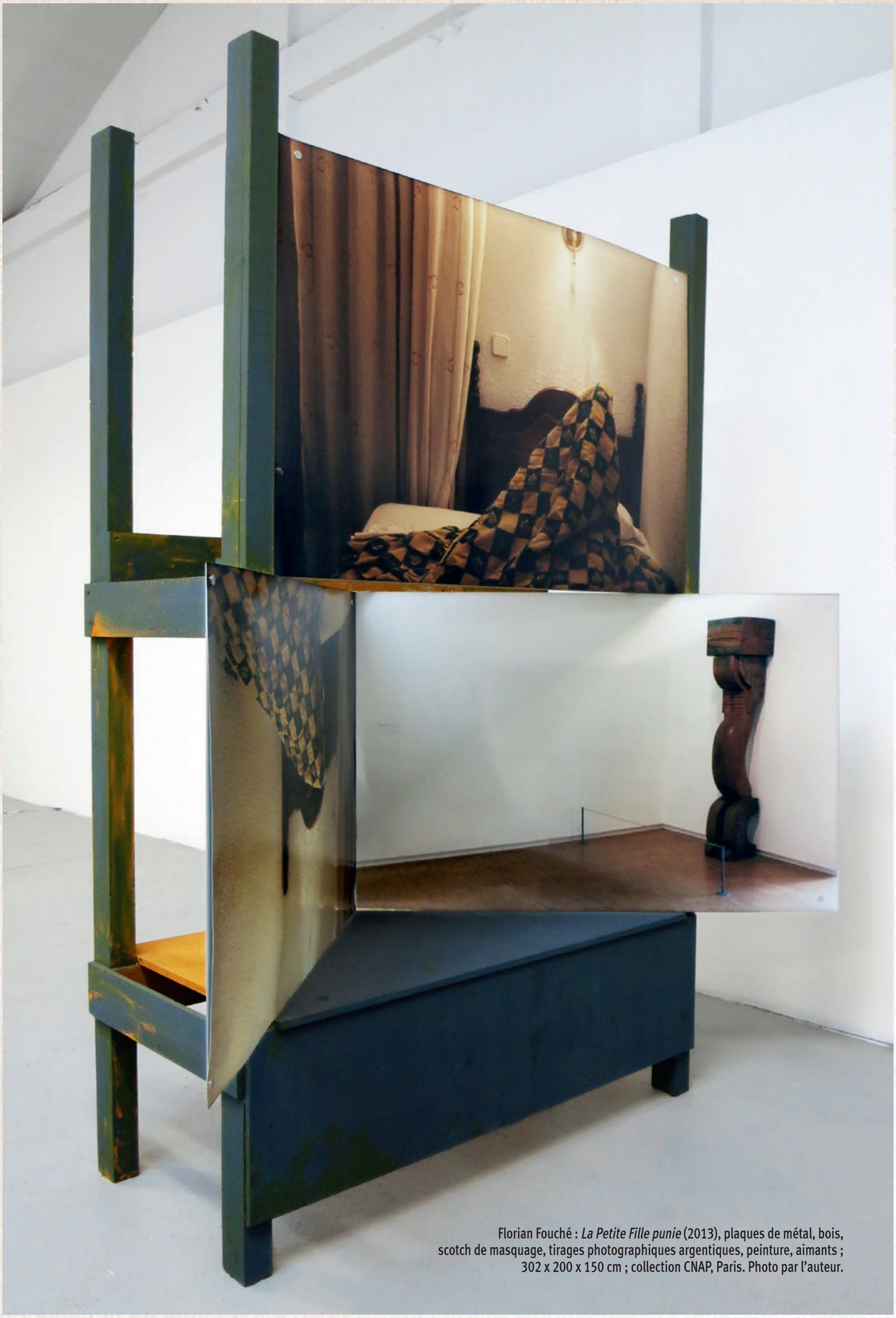
Pour en revenir à votre exposition, je remarque que *Dans le train Lyon-Bucarest* est une œuvre qui délimite un espace particulier d'une façon qui n'est pas sans rapport avec les rideaux du MTR.

F. F. : *Dans le train Lyon-Bucarest* est un petit théâtre sur roulettes, un bloc scénique ouvert qui est à la fois un corps en soi et la présentation fragmentée d'un personnage assis dans un train. Il n'y a pas de vue sur l'extérieur du compartiment. On devine seulement le rebord d'une fenêtre à travers laquelle le visage de l'homme regarde. Ce visage se reflète non pas dans la fenêtre du train mais dans l'une des grandes plaques de verre sur lesquelles deux autres photographies sont aimantées.

Il est un lieu déplaçable *(sculpture as place,* comme dit Carl Andre). Conçu pour résister à toutes les situations d'exposition, à toutes les agressions architecturales : sol, murs, éclairages divers. Il faut l'orienter, le disposer dans l'espace, idéalement un passage, mais il contient sa propre mise en espace. Il met en abyme l'espace d'exposition tout en restant impénétrable. Mais il n'en est pas moins vulnérable, comme tous les objets montrés au musée, c'est-à-dire qu'il est nécessairement associé à un fond, à un décor aux composantes physiques et institutionnelles. Cette question de la fragilité de l'objet perçu dans les circonstances de perception

---

[17] Il ne faudrait pas en conclure pour autant que l'apport de Nicolau au MTR se limite à réintroduire des espaces de rationalité en marge des salles conçues par Bernea. Il suffit, pour s'en convaincre, de penser aux salles qu'elle a elle-même conçues : salle « La Peste », salle « Temps », salle « Fenêtres ».



Florian Fouché : *La Petite Fille punie* (2013), plaques de métal, bois, scotch de masquage, tirages photographiques argentiques, peinture, aimants ; 302 x 200 x 150 cm ; collection CNAP, Paris. Photo par l'auteur.

exceptionnelles du musée ou de n'importe quel lieu d'art nous ramène au MTR. Le train Lyon-Bucarest n'existe pas. Pour ma part, je me suis rendu à Bucarest en avion, depuis Paris. À chaque fois que j'ai montré cette pièce, elle a suscité des fantasmes. Certains y ont vu un aveugle avec une canne, d'autres un Rom ou un paysan.

4. Les piliers de maison paysanne, *La Petite Fille punie*

M. M. : *La Petite Fille punie* semble être une « installation » du même type. Pouvez-vous expliciter ce titre ?

F. F. : Oui, c'était le second de mes grands assemblages à photographies, qui devaient installer un trouble par rapport au sujet MTR. *Dans le train Lyon-Bucarest* était introductif ; *La Petite Fille punie,* plutôt perturbateur. Lors d'une visite au musée national d'Art moderne en 2013, j'ai photographié une sculpture de Brâncuși, la *Cariatide* de 1943-1948. La photographie la décrit telle que je l'ai vue dans l'exposition, retirée dans le coin d'une grande salle blanche, isolée par un système de « mise à distance » : un élastique tendu entre deux petits poteaux gris, au sol, devant elle. Ce jour-là, à Beaubourg, la *Cariatide* était « au coin », maltraitée, et j'ai vu « la petite fille punie ». Ces mots qui allaient devenir un titre me sont venus au musée. Tout part donc d'un fantasme au musée, de ma perception de l'accrochage en tant que mise en scène involontaire et absurde. Dans mon atelier, j'ai rapproché ma photographie de deux autres faites quelques jours après, montrant un lit dans une chambre éclairée par une petite lampe. Une personne, dont on voit seulement la main, est cachée sous une couverture tendue. Le rapprochement physique des images relie deux espaces hétérogènes. Me contenter d'un point de vue sur les ratages de la muséographie contemporaine ne me satisfaisait pas. J'ai voulu enfouir la dimension critique en extrapolant l'absurdité. J'ai d'abord fait une maquette et plus tard *La Petite Fille punie* est devenue un parallélépipède en bois de trois mètres de haut, qui porte les trois grandes photographies aimantées sur des plaques de métal.

M. M. : Avec cette œuvre, le rapport avec le sujet MTR semble à première vue encore plus distant.

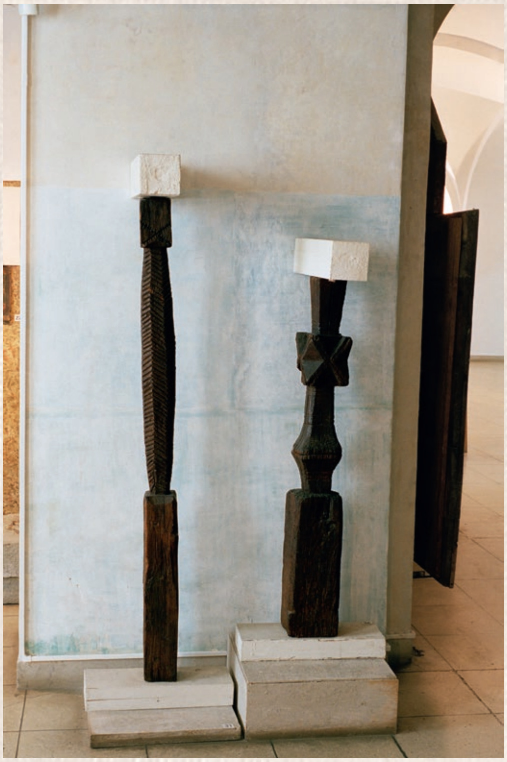
F. F. : *La Petite Fille punie* introduisait une distance avec le monde du MTR tel que décrit dans mon *Cabinet d'étude.* La dimension physique des grands formats photographiques, les jeux optiques et visuels, le mouvement du corps sous la couverture agitée qui passe du haut vers le bas de l'assemblage, introduisaient une tension sexuelle, un érotisme caché, situé du côté de la contrainte, du masochisme. Je voulais faire surgir une représentation que je n'ai pas trouvée au MTR : le corps sexué de la scène primitive freudienne. La spatialisation et le montage des images, para-cinématographiques, pouvaient suggérer aussi un « pseudo-rituel »[18].

M. M. : Par ailleurs, à travers la *Cariatide, La Petite Fille punie* renvoie aussi à la présentation de piliers en bois au MTR, qui renvoient eux-mêmes à Brâncuși.

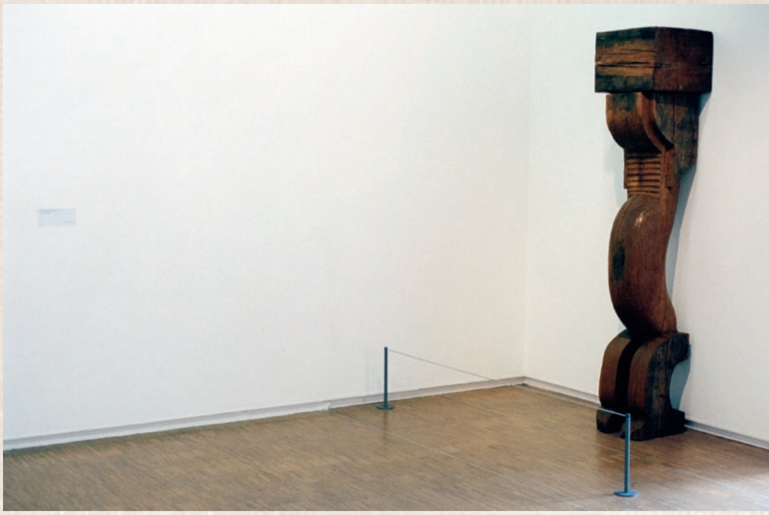
F. F. : Oui, la référence à la *Cariatide* de Brâncuși permettait un dialogue avec une mise en espace spécifique de Bernea : j'ai photographié au MTR

---

[18] Le terme est employé par Mike Kelley (2013 : 367) à propos de son œuvre *Day Is Done* (2005) : « *I've always thought that art is a kind of pseudoritual. It's about the development of some kind of belief system, for want of a better term, that's simply negated and replaced with another one. And to me, it's very much like a materialist replacement for, say, politics and religion. For forms in which you have to invest some belief, art substitutes forms that don't demand such affirmation. You can say that's just entertainment, and maybe it is. But perhaps religion and politics are just entertainments too.* » J'ajoute qu'au MTR j'ai souvent parcouru la salle « Fenêtres » avec à l'esprit *Day Is Done*, qui est sans doute la plus ambitieuse des tentatives récentes pour faire de l'art une anthropologie « sauvage ».



Au MTR, les « piliers de maison paysanne ».
Photo par Florian Fouché.



Florian Fouché : *La Petite Fille punie* (détail : dans l'assemblage est aimanté une grande photographie de la *Cariatide* de Constantin Brâncuși telle que vue au Musée national d'art moderne). Photo par l'auteur.

les deux piliers de maison paysanne d'Olténie qu'il a isolés sur une cloison colorée. Ce sont des fragments d'architecture qui peuvent en soi évoquer le motif générique des *Colonnes sans fin*[19]. Mais leur présentation sur de petits socles et l'ajout des blocs de bois blancs à leur sommet génèrent un nouvel assemblage qui rappelle la *Cariatide* de Brâncuși.

Dans mon *Cabinet d'étude,* j'avais situé cette photographie des piliers dans un angle, à proximité du passage qui mène à *La Petite Fille punie.* Ce rapport dans l'espace permettait d'opposer des normes muséographiques, de faire diverger ce que Bernea nomme des « contextes actifs » (Bernea et Nicolau 1998 : 237). Le fond blanc sur lequel la *Cariatide* apparaît la rend insituable, c'est l'effet fantastique du *white cube* international. Brian O'Doherty décrit le *white cube* comme la seule convention stable de l'art actuel, un lieu assimilable aux limbes, car, pour y être, « il faut être déjà mort » (O'Doherty 1976-1981 : 37). Le MTR est bien un lieu de création actuel mais il n'utilise pas la convention du *white cube.* Il déconstruit la définition classique du musée, de la galerie d'exposition, car c'est un musée qui ne nie pas les processus de vie et de mort des objets : « Nous avons cherché à représenter l'idée de mort assistée », dit Irina Nicolau (Bernea et Nicolau 1998 : 234).

Le MTR invente un lieu idyllique pour des objets. C'est extrêmement rare, et mon travail se développe la plupart du temps sur la base d'expériences moins idéales. Les objets dans le monde m'intéressent quand ce que j'appelle leurs *configurations corrompues* produisent des troubles psychophysiologiques : elles me permettent de construire des sculptures-lieux, comme *La Petite Fille punie.*

[19] Le MTR est le lieu qui permet le mieux de saisir ce que l'art de Brâncuși a pu capter de la vie des formes paysannes.

M. M. : Sur la question de la mise en espace, vous opposez les « configurations corrompues » au « lieu idyllique pour des objets » que constitue le MTR. Pouvez-vous préciser cette opposition ?

F. F. : Certains objets, dès qu'ils quittent leur milieu, sont amoindris, affaiblis. Mais ils gagnent autre chose, un certain éclat du déplacement ou même du dépaysement. C'est cela que j'appelle les configurations corrompues. J'en vois souvent, pas seulement dans les musées, et je les photographie. Parfois je les mets en place moi-même.

5. Avenir du MTR : le musée expose le musée ?

M. M. : Au moment de notre visite de septembre 2017 au MTR, le bâtiment entrait dans sa dernière phase de travaux de restauration et les collections avaient été mises à l'abri. Vous avez proposé que nous visitions ce chantier et vous m'avez confié vos craintes face à la tâche quelque peu écrasante qui incombe à la nouvelle équipe. Et c'est vrai que l'on imagine l'ordre des difficultés à affronter, puisqu'il s'agit à la fois de respecter l'esprit de la première équipe et de ne pas en « fossiliser » la démarche, ce qui serait en totale contradiction avec la vocation « révolutionnaire » des premiers temps. Qu'auriez-vous envie de dire à ceux qui se trouvent en première ligne pour faire renaître ce lieu bien particulier ?

F. F. : C'est un moment historique pour le musée. Les travaux ont un effet de table rase. Étant donné la fragilité des dispositifs de l'époque Bernea-Nicolau, le musée dont j'ai connu les vestiges magnifiques pourrait définitivement disparaître. Mais je pense aussi que l'équipe actuelle peut inventer la façon de montrer son histoire récente. Quand j'envisage une possible disparition, j'ai à l'esprit un antécédent récent. Le MTR est un des rares lieux de l'art actuel où une mise en espace s'est construite dans le temps, où des objets ont trouvé leur place dans le monde ; je retrouve ce type d'investissement radical au *Block Beuys* à Darmstadt ou dans l'appartement-atelier d'Edward Krasinski à Varsovie (où l'art et la vie étaient confondus). Le *Block Beuys* a été restauré récemment : les murs originellement recouverts de tissu orangé ont été changés en murs blancs façon *white cube :* c'est un massacre.

Au MTR, l'idéal serait de privilégier la présentation à l'identique du plus grand nombre de vestiges de l'époque Bernea-Nicolau[20], mais en y intégrant des zones ou salles nouvelles qui donneraient les clés de cette histoire des années 1990 : l'expérimentation muséographique (qui inclut la forme institutionnelle) et le musée d'une transition politique. Le nouvel objet du MTR, au-delà de l'art paysan, devient donc le musée des années 1990 : il faudrait donc muséographier l'acte muséographique. Cela implique de rendre ce geste lisible.

Un des axes de pensée originels du MTR était le refus de la reconstitution (Bernea et Nicolau 1998 : 225), or le musée à venir va devoir inventer la manière de reconstituer ses mises en espace d'origine[21]. Il faudrait qu'on puisse distinguer nettement les mises en espace historiques des nouvelles : pour ces dernières, à mon sens, on ne doit pas chercher à imiter un supposé style Bernea-Nicolau mais plutôt à dégager et interpréter les concepts clés du MTR. Par exemple, l'idée radicale d'un musée sans cartels devrait être respectée (ces dernières années on avait plutôt multiplié les cartels). Une autre invention à reprendre est celle des cabinets d'étude. On pourrait créer des zones d'information disséminées sur la muséographie des années 1990 ; l'une d'elles pourrait être consacrée à Irina Nicolau et à l'idée du « musée antidote ». De façon plus générale, il faudra faire apparaître l'importance de Nicolau, et documenter l'activité du musée sans pour autant tomber dans la morne exposition d'archives. Par ailleurs, à mon sens, des salles réalisées après Bernea et Nicolau, comme « Minorités », « Ensemble » ou « La nourriture qui relie » ne tiennent ni plastiquement ni conceptuellement : les refondre entièrement permettrait peut-être de donner une vraie place à l'histoire des Roms et–autre défi–de transmettre l'esprit de la lutte à la fois paysanne et internationale autour de Roșia Montană.

---

[20] L'architecture, telle qu'elle a été modifiée par la restauration, nécessitera des réaménagements dans des zones clés : la salle « Temps » a été considérablement réduite par un énorme coffrage : un des objets les plus importants, un grand bac en bois taillé dans un seul tronc, ne pourra plus être montré.

[21] Beaucoup de questions techniques nécessiteront une grande délicatesse. Ainsi, les grands présentoirs de « Triomphe », probablement écaillés par leur déplacement, doivent-ils être recouverts à nouveau de plâtre et peinture ? Doit-on réactualiser ce geste ? L'un ou l'autre choix peut aboutir à un fétichisme morbide ou à une actualisation malheureuse. Tout dépend de la manière dont ce sera fait. Mais c'est dans ce type de détail que l'on pourra transmettre ou non la qualité d'espace du musée.

L'institution pourrait aussi renouer avec la tradition des rencontres internationales des années 1990, où un Gérard Althabe réagissait par un texte critique mémorable à la muséographie en cours (Althabe 1993). Il faut aussi se donner du temps, c'est une autre leçon de l'histoire du MTR[22].

• • • • • • • • •

6. *Table du silence* et « Table des fées »

F. F. : Vous avez rencontré Irina Nicolau à l'Institut d'ethnographie et folklore de Bucarest en 1969 puis partagé une recherche de terrain avec elle. Après 1989, vous la retrouvez au MTR et c'est en 1997 que vous collaborez, avec Ioana Popescu, à l'exposition *Roumanie en miroir, mémoires de tiroir,* qui a eu lieu à Treignes en Belgique. Avez-vous étudié l'art populaire roumain pendant votre carrière d'ethnologue ?

M. M. : Mon premier séjour d'enquêtes en Roumanie (de mai à septembre 1967) devait donner lieu à l'élaboration d'un travail de fin d'études portant sur l'art populaire en Roumanie (Mesnil 1967)[23]. Je fus alors dirigée vers le musée d'Art populaire de Calea Victoriei et vers le musée du Village, les deux institutions qui avaient accueilli les objets du musée de la Chaussée Kiseleff (actuel MTR), chassés de ce lieu lors de l'installation du musée du Parti communiste roumain (Mesnil 2006).

Mon premier travail fut donc de visiter les réserves de la Calea Victoriei, et en particulier la collection de piliers sculptés des maisons paysannes. Pour le terrain qui suivit, je fus rattachée à une équipe de chercheurs de l'Institut qui devait se rendre dans les villages de Runcu et Dobrița, deux localités de Gorj (Olténie du Nord), à quelques kilomètres de la petite ville de Târgu Jiu[24].

Le hasard a donc fait que j'ai pu découvrir le site aménagé par Brâncuși dans cette localité. Les trois monuments imposaient d'eux-mêmes le rapprochement entre trois objets de la culture paysanne de la région : *la Colonne sans fin* renvoyait de manière explicite à l'un des motifs de colonnade sculptée des réserves de la Calea Victoriei ; de même que la *Porte du baiser* renvoyait au motif du portique paysan vu au musée du Village. Quant à la *Table du silence,* elle évoqua bientôt pour moi une pièce

---

[22] Voir notamment ce passage : « Irina Nicolau : Tu disais un jour que tu voudrais laisser des socles vides pendant des années, dans une exposition, jusqu'à ce qu'ils trouvent enfin les objets qui leur sont destinés. / Horia Bernea : C'est un degré de liberté que je ne ressens pas comme un excès ou un abus. Parce que cette adéquation doit advenir naturellement et c'est très difficile. » (Bernea et Nicolau 1998 : 236).

[23] L'Académie roumaine m'avait rattachée, en tant qu'étudiante boursière, à l'Institut d'ethnographie et folklore que dirigeait alors Mihai Pop, qui fut également mon directeur de recherche.

[24] Il s'agit de localités qui avaient déjà fait l'objet d'enquêtes, avant la guerre, par l'équipe du sociologue Dimitrie Gusti, dont Mihai Pop faisait alors partie.

Au MTR, la salle « Fenêtres ». Photo par Florian Fouché.

du mobilier des régions méridionales du pays : la petite table en bois, ronde et basse, dont j'allais apprendre la fonction rituelle dans les traditions paysannes liées à la naissance. On la désignait, dans ce cas, du nom de « Table des fées » *(Masa ursitoarelor)*, de ces trois Parques qui venaient, à la naissance d'un enfant, prédire son destin, et à qui on laissait, sur la petite table, une offrande pour les amadouer. Cependant, si ce rapport entre arts savant et populaire semblait aller de soi pour l'Occidentale que j'étais, ce n'était pas le cas dans un rapport inverse, comme l'ont révélé quelques témoignages recueillis en ce printemps 1967, dans ce « parc Brâncuși ». J'y ai fait des photos et posé quelques questions à des paysans de villages voisins, venus se reposer sur l'un des sièges en pierre entourant la *Table du silence*, après une visite au marché. Interrogés sur ce qu'ils pensaient de ce site, tous m'ont répondu : « Ce n'est pas de chez nous. »

Mais une paysanne que j'interrogeais au village de Runcu me répondit : « Je connais les monuments de Târgu Jiu. Ils sont beaux, très beaux, surtout en été. » Une réponse qui n'aurait sans doute pas déplu à l'artiste.

• • • • • • • •

7. « Le cocon de l'ethnologue »

F. F. : Je n'ai pas vu l'exposition *Roumanie en miroir, mémoires de tiroir,* mais d'après les photographies la zone du « Cocon de l'ethnologue » est intrigante. On perçoit sous les combles une sorte de tente faite de deux parois, agrégat de tissu blanc et de plastique transparent. Une fenêtre (comme sur le rideau de « L'école du village ») est taillée dans le plastique transparent, ce qui est une belle invention. Selon la description de Nicolau, le « Cocon » contient « de petits objets utilitaires que l'ethnologue traîne avec lui sur le terrain pour survivre ». Nicolau dit qu'elle fait « un portrait-robot de l'ethnologue Marianne avec des objets colorés en rose et miniaturisés » (Mesnil *et al.* 1997 : 166-175). En quoi consistait cet ensemble d'objets colorés ? Vous reconnaissiez-vous dans ce portrait ?

M. M. : Pour ce qui est de ma démarche d'ethnologue, en partie, sans doute. Se déprendre de ses repères pour aborder l'inconnu est inhérent à toute démarche ethnologique et peut mettre à l'épreuve l'ethnologue, corps et âme. Et, lorsque le besoin de se replier sur soi-même devient une affaire vitale, pour faire face à la grande fatigue qui survient, il faut trouver une parade. C'est ce genre de parade que représente ici le « Cocon » : en dessinant un petit carré dans l'exposition, Nicolau a admirablement traduit plastiquement cette idée du petit espace « réservé » qui offre les conditions minimales d'isolement. Elle a délimité cet espace avec des parois en cellophane et des tissus ajourés dans lesquels elle a découpé des fenêtres. Le cocon apparaît ainsi comme une mince protection qui assure un relatif isolement à l'ethnologue fragilisé par l'épreuve de la mise à distance de soi. Les parois fines et translucides, pas même la coquille mais la membrane d'un œuf, permettent de conserver une certaine perméabilité avec ce qui vient de l'extérieur. Par sa configuration, l'espace du cocon reste très proche de son environnement. Ce que souligne encore le feuillage d'un arbuste fiché à son entrée. Ainsi, à la fois séparé du reste de l'exposition et en prise sur l'extérieur, le cocon me semble bien illustrer un aspect de la conception muséale de Nicolau que vous avez relevée à propos des rideaux de « L'école du village » : l'idée d'un jeu de montrer/cacher, idée que vous reprenez dans votre propre élaboration autour du MTR.

Le « Cocon » de l'exposition délimite un espace clos, donc relativement soustrait au regard du visiteur, si ce n'est que les matériaux utilisés pour cette construction légère sont plus ou moins transparents et que les fenêtres qui y sont pratiquées permettent une certaine indiscrétion qui laisse voir ou deviner le contenu de cet espace d'intimité.

Après ce qui vient d'être dit du « Cocon », l'inventaire de son contenu peut surprendre. En effet, il contient deux catégories d'objets. La première qu'évoque Nicolau relève du kit de survie ou du matériel de camping. Ce sont des objets du type lampe de poche, canif, ou encore, pour les zones électrifiées, le « plongeur » qui permet la préparation à toute heure d'un café (peu probable en milieu rural) ou de toute autre boisson chaude réconfortante. On y trouvera aussi l'indispensable matériel d'enquête : enregistreur, appareil photographique, crayon et bloc-notes. Bref, rien de quoi surprendre. Par contre, ce qui pourrait dérouter, par rapport à l'évocation d'un tel équipement de terrain, c'est de trouver dans ce cocon des objets qui relèvent d'une tout autre catégorie. À commencer par le bureau en bois, encombré de toutes sortes de papiers, encriers, livres[25]. Tous ces objets sont là, non pour faire référence à un lieu concret correspondant à cet espace intime aménagé sur le terrain[26], mais pour renforcer sa dimension symbolique, en y ramenant l'évocation d'un cadre de travail qui est celui du chercheur « chez lui » (dans son bureau). Il y a donc là une double représentation, où sont évoquées tant les conditions matérielles que

[25] En particulier, la couverture d'une brochure, *À travers la Roumanie pittoresque* (Detaille 1935), où figure une jeune paysanne filant sa quenouille ou encore une photo de la collection du MTR également reproduite sur la couverture de mon premier livre traduit en roumain, *Etnologul între şarpe şi balaur* (Mesnil 1997).

[26] Cet espace s'aménage, tant bien que mal. Mais on remarquera que l'on sait généralement peu de chose à son sujet.

mentales de l'ethnologue. Outre le « kit de survie du voyageur », le cocon contient aussi des objets qui relèvent de son univers mental. Ce qui en fait l'originalité, c'est qu'il s'agit d'une véritable fiction spatiale, aux antipodes de la « reconstitution », à la fois comme création d'un espace imaginaire et par ce mélange d'objets de « terrain » et de « bureau ».

Enfin, un dernier objet bien particulier figure dans le cocon sous de multiples variantes : c'est le miroir ! Nicolau en démultiplie la présence en parsemant cet espace de petits miroirs de poche, de toutes formes et de toutes couleurs (l'un d'eux s'inscrit dans un joli ovale rose bonbon[27]). On retrouve ici la figure de style qu'affectionne Nicolau, cette redondance de l'objet que nous évoquions à propos de la salle « La Peste » : elle indique, comme avec de petits clignotants, que nous sommes ici au cœur d'une démarche réflexive : « L'ethnologue est un voyageur aux semelles de miroir », écrivions-nous dans le catalogue de l'exposition *Roumanie en miroir...* (Mesnil et Nicolau 1997 : VI).

Objet à la fois utilitaire et symbolique, le miroir, démultiplié, assure, en quelque sorte, l'interface entre ces deux catégories d'objets à l'œuvre dans le monde étrange/étranger qu'affronte l'ethnologue sur le terrain.

F. F. : Vous me disiez avoir vu Irina Nicolau signer discrètement des espaces qu'elle muséographiait ?

M. M. : Lors d'une visite au MTR où Nicolau s'occupait de meubler la salle « Temps », j'avais été frappée de ce qu'elle y avait fait figurer un tissage que l'usure du temps avait détérioré. Et c'est dans cet esprit que nous avons récupéré, pour l'exposition de Treignes, une jolie chemise brodée pour enfant provenant du Maramures, dont une manche avait été mangée par les souris et que je n'avais pas eu le courage de jeter !

Par ailleurs, lors de la mise en place de l'exposition *Roumanie en miroir...*, j'ai été témoin d'un geste « confidentiel » de la muséographie d'Irina. Alors qu'elle mettait la dernière main à la présentation de pièces de costumes, elle déposa sa vieille paire de bottines au pied d'un manteau de bure *(suman)*,

Roumanie en miroir, mémoires de tiroir : vue de l'exposition depuis l'auvent du « Cocon de l'ethnologue ». Photo par Christian Mesnil.

---

[27] En fait d'objets « colorés en rose » dont parle Nicolau à propos de mon « portrait-robot », le cadre de ce petit miroir est la seule note de couleur rose du cocon !

un objet de ma « collection » de vêtements paysans.

À Bucarest, également, j'avais été témoin d'un geste similaire. Ce jour-là, elle achevait la mise en place d'un coin de salle du MTR où se trouvait un four *(cuptor)*. Et elle avait amené de chez elle une vieille marmite usagée qu'elle déposa sur le four.

Dans les deux cas, elle avait apposé sa signature à son travail muséographique ! J'ignore si d'autres que moi peuvent compléter ces témoignages. Mais ce qui me frappe dans ces deux gestes, c'est qu'Irina ait fait le choix de « signer » à l'aide d'objets détériorés par l'usage qu'elle en avait fait. Une signature imprégnée de l'usure du temps.

F. F. : Vous m'avez parlé d'une exposition restée confidentielle d'Irina Nicolau : *Un village dans une malle*. De quoi s'agit-il ?

M. M. : Au lendemain des événements de 1989, Irina Nicolau devait effectuer un séjour de trois mois à Paris et souhaitait à tout prix faire quelque chose de concret durant cette période. Cependant, tout devait être improvisé très vite, et sans budget. Elle eut alors l'idée de solliciter le milieu de l'immigration roumaine d'avant-guerre, et de demander à chacun « ce qu'il avait mis dans sa valise » au moment de quitter son pays. C'est ainsi que se tint durant quelques semaines, à Paris, dans le quartier du Marais, une toute petite exposition qu'Irina avait bricolée seule et à la hâte. Elle l'avait intitulée *Un village dans une malle*. J'étais venue voir cette exposition et j'en ai gardé le souvenir d'un petit écrin magique d'où émergeaient toutes sortes de tapis et tissus colorés, chemises brodées sortant de vieux coffres empruntés aux antiquaires du quartier.

J'ai tâché d'en savoir plus sur les souvenirs qu'a laissés cette exposition et de retrouver d'autres témoignages à son sujet. Vainement ! Mais nous l'avons évoquée, Irina et moi, en discutant du projet de Treignes et, même si cela n'a pas été dit, il me paraît évident que *Roumanie en miroir...* est une variation sur le même thème qu'*Un village dans une malle*.

De fait, je pense que les deux expositions se font écho, tête-bêche : dans

Roumanie en miroir, mémoires de tiroir : vue à travers la paroi et la fenêtre du « Cocon de l'ethnologue » vue depuis l'auvent. Photo par Christian Mesnil.

cette première expérience « hors MTR » du quartier du Marais, il s'agissait de retrouver des objets soigneusement sélectionnés par des voyageurs forcés d'immigrer d'Est en Ouest et dont la fonction était d'emporter un peu de leur biographie heureuse avec eux. Les objets exposés correspondaient au contenu d'une valise d'immigré, version « luxe » (il s'agissait de l'intelligentsia de la fin des années 1940). Et, pour l'exposition de Treignes, nous avons décidé de ne pas faire de sélection d'objets mais d'y faire figurer tous ceux « qui avaient sauté dans ma valise » et que, en tant que visiteuse occidentale « volontaire », j'avais respectueusement ramenés jusque chez moi, quelle qu'en ait été la valeur esthétique ou autre. D'où cette déclaration que l'on peut lire dans le catalogue de *Roumanie en miroir...* : « Ceci n'est pas une collection. »

Dans les deux cas, il s'est agi d'objets qui ont traversé un miroir, de l'orient à l'occident de l'Europe. Seules les circonstances de leur voyage les distinguent. Dans ces deux cas aussi, les objets ramenés n'ont pas été choisis pour ce qu'ils étaient mais à cause de la relation qu'ils avaient avec ceux qui en étaient les dépositaires. « Qu'ont-ils perdu ? Qu'ont-ils gagné au cours de ce voyage ? », nous demandions-nous encore dans notre « catalogue » de Treignes (Mesnil et Nicolau 1997 : VI).

Les auteurs remercient Violette Astier, Emmanuel Fouché et Adrien Malcor pour leurs précieux avis.

Au MTR, la salle « Temps ». Photo par Florian Fouché.

TIMPUL
OBIECTELOR

BIBLIOGRAPHIE

Althabe, Gerard. 1993. *Une exposition ethnographique : du plaisir esthétique, une leçon politique*. Illustrations de H. Bernea. Bucarest : M.T.R. (réed. *Martor* 1998. 3 : 144-165).

Bernea, Horia. 1996. « Le musée ? Une opération de connaissance libre ». *Martor.* 1 : 194-209.

Bernea, Horia et Irina Nicolau. 1998. « L'installation. Exposer des objets au Musée du Paysan Roumain. Entretien de Horia Bernea avec Irina Nicolau ». *Martor.* 3: 223-238.

Beuys, Joseph, Gaya Goldeymer, Max Reithmann. 1988. « Dernier espace avec introspecteur » (interview de Beuys 1982). In *Par la présente, je n'appartiens plus à l'art*, ed. Beuys Joseph, 122. Paris: L'arche.

Chevrier, Jean-François. 2015. *Œuvre et activité*. Paris, éd. L'Arachnéen.

Deligny, Fernand. 2018. *Fernand Deligny : Correspondance des Cévennes.* Paris : éd. L'Arachnéen. (à paraître)

Detaille, Georges. 1935. *A travers la Roumanie pittoresque*. Bruxelles, (s.ed.).

Fouché, Florian. 2013. « Le musée du Paysan à Bucarest : un antidote ». *Revue D'A*, mars. Avec une introduction de Jean-Paul Robert : 43-46.

Fouché, Florian. 2016. *ASSASINS, l'atelier Brancusi recomposé,* non publié.

Fouché, Florian. 2019. *Le musée antidote. À propos du Musée du paysan roumain* (à paraître).

Jolas, Eugene (ed.). 1932. « Poetry Is Vertical ». *Transition*. 21: 148-149.

Kelley, Mike et Eva Meyer-Hermann. 2013. « Interview with Eva Meyer-Hermann ». In *Mike Kelley,* Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Delmonico Books / Prestel, Munich, London, New York, 367-387.

Marian, Doina, Irina Nicolau, Mihai Boitor. 1990. *Vom muri și vom fi liberi* [Nous mourrons et nous serons libres]. Bucarest: Meridiane.

Mesnil, Marianne. 1968. *Evolution du phénomène d'art populaire dans deux régions de Roumanie. Etude ethnographique*. Mémoire de licence en sciences sociales, Université Libre de Bruxelles, multigr.

Mesnil, Marianne. 1997. *Etnologul între șarpe și balaur* [L'ethnologue entre le serpent et le dragon]. Bucarest: Paideia.

Mesnil, Marianne. 2006. « Histoire tourmentée d'un "lieu de mémoire" : le Musée du Paysan Roumain avant, pendant, après le communisme ». *Martor.* 11 : 33-48.

Mesnil, Marianne et Irina Nicolau,. 1997. *Catalogue de l'exposition Roumanie en miroir, mémoires de tiroir* : VI.

Mesnil, Marianne et Adina Ionescu-Muscel. 2017. *Une partie de ping pong avec Irina Nicolau. Histoires d'objets et de musées*. Bucarest : Ars Docendi.

Mesnil, Marianne, Ioana Popescu, Irina Nicolau. 1997. « Roumanie en miroir. Mémoires de tiroir. (Trialogue à propos d'une exposition) ». *Martor.* 2 : 166-175.

Nicolau, Irina. 1994. « Moi et les musées du monde. L'histoire d'une expérience muséale dans un pays de l'est ». *New Europe College, Yearbook*. Bucarest : 15-42. (ré-édité dans ce numéro)

Nicolau, Irina. 2000. *Haide, bre! Incursiune subiectivă în lumea aromânilor.* Bucarest : Ars Docendi. [en français: 2003. *Vagabondage dans les Balkans. Une incursion subjective au pays des Aroumains*. Traduction, notes et commentaires de Marianne Mesnil. La Tour d'Aigues : editions de l'Aube].

O'Doherty, Brian. 1976. « Inside the White Cube : Notes on the Gallery Space ». *Artforum.* 14 (7) (mars): 24-30. Repris sous le titre « Notes sur l'espace de la galerie », in Patricia Falguières. 2012. *White Cube. L'espace de la galerie et son idéologie* : 37. JRP éd., collection Lectures Maison Rouge (traduction : Catherine Vasseur, revue par Patricia Falguières).

Rainer, Yvonne. 1966. *Tentative d'étude générale de quelques tendances « minimalistes » dans l'activité quantitativement minimale en danse au sein de la pléthore, ou une analyse de Trio*. (Traduction Denise Luccioni). Première parution 1977. *A.* Repris dans Banes, Sally, 2002. *Terpsichore en baskets Post-modern dance.* Paris. Ed. Chiron et Centre national de la danse.

MARTOR

Title: *Towards a Typology of an Emergent Museum Form*

Author: Cheryl Klimaszewski

How to cite this article: Klimaszewski, Cheryl. 2018. “Towards a Typology of an Emergent Museum Form.” *Martor* 23: 121-140.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Ţăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

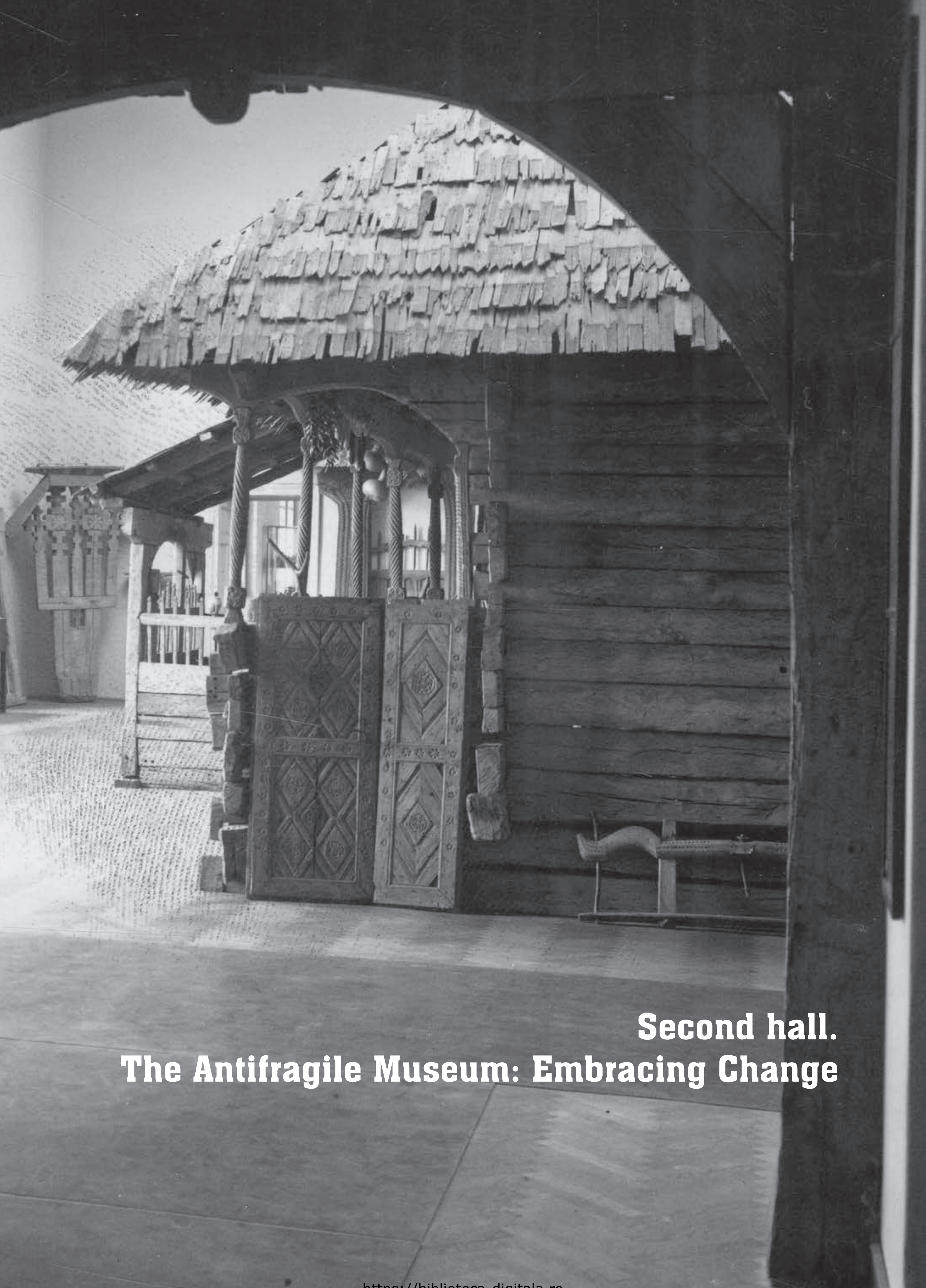
URL: http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/martor-23-2018/

Martor (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Journal) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. ***Martor Journal*** is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Interdisciplinary and international in scope, it provides a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for academic and non-academic readership. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

Martor (Revue d’Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l’anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l’ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue ***Martor*** est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l’accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l’auteur.

Martor is indexed by:

CEEOL, EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Anthropological Index Online (AIO), MLA International Bibliography.



Second hall.
The Antifragile Museum: Embracing Change

Towards a Typology of an Emergent Museum Form

Cheryl Klimaszewski
PhD Candidate, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, School of Communication and Information
ck482@scarletmail.rutgers.edu

ABSTRACT

Personal museums created by enthusiastic individual makers are becoming more visible on the cultural landscape. Recent scholarship studying examples of this emergent institutional form in Colombia, Estonia, Finland, Romania and Spain refer to these museums using a variety of terms, including: *amateur, author, do-it-yourself, family, grassroots, local, naïve, personal, unofficial, vernacular* and *wild*. Having studied this phenomenon since 2011, one challenging problem for me as a researcher has been: what do we call this kind of museum? Adding to the list of descriptors emergent museums, I employ Greg Lakoff and Mark Johnson's (2003) work on metaphor theory to present an analysis of how these terms reflect different aspects of this phenomenon. Understood as knowledge institutions, these experimental spaces foster ways of knowing that contrast with more traditional museum epistemologies, foregrounding knowledge-from-within; knowledge-making; and the individual-as-locus-of-knowledge. I share my experience visiting Cleo's Ferry Museum and Nature Trail, a self-made, self-described museum in Melba, Idaho as a comparative analysis that connects notable experiential moments (captured in photographs) I have had in Romanian emergent museums to notable moments at Cleo's. Connecting patterns of experiences across these spaces using personal examples illustrates the different ways of knowing emergent museums foster. In conclusion, I consider emergent museums as a new model of museum-making that are not simply anomalies or novelties; they provide an example of what all museums *could be*.

KEYWORDS

Emergent museums, knowledge-making, metaphor theory, museum-making models, notable moments, patterns of experience, embodied knowledge.

• • • • • • • •

Introduction

Personal museums created by enthusiastic individual makers are becoming more visible on the cultural landscape. I first noticed examples of this emergent institutional form on a trip to Romania[1] in 2007 and discovered many others on subsequent visits over the past decade. I have also come across these unique, experiential spaces in my travels in Iceland and across the American West. The scholarly corpus (mainly in English[2]) investigating this phenomenon is also growing, studying examples from Spain and Colombia (Moncunill-Piñas 2017); Finland (Mikula 2015); and Estonia (Taimre 2013). This is in addition to articles in English that investigate this phenomenon in Romania (Mateescu 2009; Mihalache 2009a; Mihăilescu 2009; Pănoiu 2017).

A growing list of terms used to describe these spaces emanates from this body of work: *personal museums* (Mateescu 2009); *author museums* (Mihalache 2009a); *local, grassroots* and *could-be museums* (Mihăilescu 2009); as a product of *naïve museology* (Pănoiu 2017); *Wilde Museen* (wild museums) (Jannelli 2012); *do-it-yourself museums* (Taimre 2013); *family museums* and *unofficial museums*

---

[1] Since 2011, my research has focused mainly on the two dozen institutions that are members of RECOMESPAR (recomespar.ro), a national professional association created to recognize, connect and support individual collectors and museum makers within Romania. RECOMESPAR was one outcome of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant's Colecţii Săteşti din România (Village Collections of Romania) 2008-2013, a cultural program whose goal was to bringing visibility and legitimacy to these new institutions (Mihalache 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2011, 2012).

[2] Most absent from this study is an in-depth reading of Jannelli's (2012) work on wild museums because it is in German. References included here are taken from Mikula (2017).

(Klimaszewski and Nyce 2014); *vernacular museums* (Mikula 2015) and *amateur museums* (Moncunill-Piñas 2017). Having studied this phenomenon actively since 2011, I have found that the question of what to call this kind of museum regularly arises. Here I will consider this problem by contemplating what this list of descriptors metaphorically reflects about our experiences of these unique spaces as a new type of knowledge institution.

To do this, I will add to this list an additional term, referring to the phenomenon as *emergent museums* throughout. This term reflects my impressions, informed by personal experience as much as by my readings of the scholarly works, of the ontological in-between-ness of these museums: to visit them is to feel as if they are continually in some state of becoming. They are often described as a kind of borderland, liminal or interstitial, existing between private/public; memory/materiality; individual/community; past/future; display/explanation; history/tradition (see especially Mateescu 2009; Mihăilescu 2009; Mikula 2015; Pănoiu 2017; Taimre 2013). Further, emergent museums, as will be shown, captures something about the way knowledge exists and operates through these creations.

Greg Lakoff and Mark Johnson's (2003) work on metaphor theory will shape this analysis of terms used by scholars to describe emergent museums. Metaphor is essentially "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 5). In the context of museums as knowledge institutions, these descriptors are taken as evidence of experience. First, a brief introduction to the theoretical framework considers the metaphorical implications of how knowledge in the museum has been portrayed historically as being imposed upon visitors as a kind of knowledge-from-without. In contrast, the descriptor analysis considers how emergent museums foreground knowledge-from-within and encourage knowledge-making within the individual-as-locus. I will then share my experience visiting Cleo's Ferry Museum (Cleo's), a self-made, self-described museum in Melba, Idaho. This comparative analysis will connect notable experiential moments (captured in photographs) I have had in Romanian emergent museums to notable moments at Cleo's. My goal is to connect patterns of experiences across these spaces in order to provide a very personal example of the kinds of knowledge-making emergent museums can foster. In conclusion, I consider emergent museums as a new model of museum-making that are not simply anomalies or novelties; they provide an example of what museums *could be* (Mihăilescu 2009).

• • • • • • • •

Theorizing emergent museums as knowledge institutions: a framework

Central to this metaphorical analysis of the terms and concepts used to describe emergent museums are Greg Lakoff and Mark Johnson's work on metaphor theory (2003) and its relationship to Johnson's (1990, 2008) work on the embodied theory of meaning. The chief premise here is that these new museums are steeped not just in their geospatial localities; but also in a locality of knowledge as it emerges through processes of making within individual bodies. I use these theories to explain how metaphor can be understood as an expression of embodied knowledge, described here as knowledge-from-within, that verbally/conceptually expresses the non-verbal and felt patterns and qualities of experience that emerge through the body as a locus of knowledge. In order to understand how knowledge becomes externally real and shared through knowledge institutions, it is important to consider how knowledge originates through and because of individual bodies.

Johnson's (1990, 2008) embodied theory of meaning locates knowledge within individuals. This theory is grounded in the notion that meaning emerges through deeply personal, embodied, spatially-situated interactions through which each individual comes to know. In other words, for each person, meanings both literally and figuratively begin with "me:" because of my unique bodily experiences as an engaged being moving through space and time. Meanings arise through deeply contextualized experiential moments and I relate these meanings to those I have had in other moments, working to incorporate these new meanings into the way I "have a world" (Johnson 1990). I organize my world in relation to past, future and even imagined or possible experiences. My way of having a world encompasses my framework for knowing, allowing me to understand and incorporate additional knowledge into my world over time. In this way, meaning, and by extension knowledge, are relational: I understand a particular embodied, experiential moment in relation to the other moments that cohere into my world (Johnson 1990).

Having a world entails both pre-conceptual/pre-verbal and conceptual/verbal raw materials that become the stuff of knowledge. Johnson (1990) describes the felt patterns of experience that operate continually at pre-conscious, pre-verbal levels as *image schemata*. Image schemata "are structures that relate us to energies and forces that we encounter in the ongoing interactive process that constitutes our understanding, our having of a world" (Johnson 1990: 205). Metaphor provides a means to connect kinesthetic image schematic modes of experience to the conceptual realm. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) describe metaphorical language as being "in large measure, the ability to bend your worldview and adjust the way you categorize your experience" (231). In other words, metaphors are the means through which we navigate by connecting aspects of new or different felt experiences to familiar facets of experiences that we understand. As Johnson (1990) describes it, "Metaphor reaches down below the level of propositions into this massive embodied dimension of our being" (105) with conceptual metaphors "grounded in *correlations* within our experience" (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 154-55, emphasis in original).

The theories of knowledge at work here posit knowledge as relational and embodied, emerging both by and through individuals. In this context, metaphors, as correlations within experience, act as evidence of knowledge understood as both felt qualities as well as concepts and propositions. In the next section, I apply this theoretical framework first to conceptualizations of knowledge in more traditional museums as a contrast to the kinds of embodied knowledge-making happening in emergent museums.

Knowledge in museums: from container/transmission to activity of meaning-making

One aspect of museums portrayed within the scholarly literature is their historical development as exclusive, elitist institutions mainly concerned with high culture and disinterested in and disengaged from their visitors (Hudson 1975; Stocking, Jr. 1985; Whitcomb 2003). For a long period of history, the museum experience was (and in some ways still is) decidedly rule-driven: no touching; quiet contemplation only; look with reverence; read the labels; learn; walk slowly along a pathway through static, unmoving objects encased within glass vitrines; no food, no running, no photographs. Beginning in the 1980s, developments around "new museology" (Heijnen 2010; Vergo 1989) have worked to overcome these less desirable portrayals and move the museum-as-institution in new directions. The notion "new" sets this kind of museology apart from that which came before: the standard, accepted and assumed museological processes that carried with them a certain set of assumed and predictable knowledge outcomes. *New* demarcates a line or boundary has been laid down, separating experience in the museum now from the way it has been historically. I will briefly consider the metaphorical implications of some scholarly conceptualizations of museums in the context of new museology to discern how these changes have made room for the inclusion of emergent museums as a new type of knowledge institution.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2006a) has described a shift in understanding the museum as a *container* of curated objects that is the realm of experts to one of seeing it as an *activity* in which objects are made available for different kinds of uses by different types of people. The container metaphor invokes a sense of static space or a holding cell, bound historically by a focus on knowledge as it relates to elite understandings and interpretations. The museum-as-container works to safely store and keep these selected objects as external representations of knowledge. As a warehouse, museums work to shelter these objects from time and change through, for example, the application careful climate controls, the use of inert archival storage materials and the application of controlled intellectual interpretations. These practices have helped to define a distinct inside and outside of what defines the museum, turning the museum into a protective barrier that stands between its precious objects and an external world full of unpredictable publics and potential environmental disasters. This also assumes knowledge exists externally from human beings, residing in objects that can be sheltered inside the museum from the ravages of time. But the museum-as-container has also compartmentalized knowledge, keeping it highly controlled under the auspices of the few.

This kind of tight control can also be observed in how knowledge has historically moved within the museum conceptualized according to a transmission model, particularly for visitors (Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 2000; Silverman 2010). Under the transmission model, knowledge is received passively, from without, with visitors acting as receptacles for discrete messages conveyed by exhibits of objects selected from the repository by a curator and arranged to fulfill specific, predictable knowledge outcomes. The transmission model carries with it the Foucauldian sense of museums as sites of power that attempt to control how knowledge is presented and received in the museum (Bennett 1995, 2004; Stocking, Jr. 1985). Tony Bennett (2006) describes museums as operating under the logic of culture: "understood as an historically distinctive, and complexly articulated, set of means for shaping and transforming people through their own self-activity" (67). Such self-activity seems to impose a kind of externally located knowledge-from-without. Bennett's (2006) logic of culture implies that once inside the museum, visitor "participation" is somehow carefully prescribed by and through the museum's design that dictates how she will move through and interact with objects and exhibitions in the museum space and, ultimately, what she will know. According to this model, cultural knowledge is transmitted isomorphically as a "right" way of knowing implicit in the objects that should emerge through the museum visit. Considered as metaphoric constructions, these old museological approaches bound up in transmission models and the logic of culture suggests that perhaps there has been some visceral truth to these imposing visitor experiences which has paved the way for new museology.

Visitors to museum spaces in the 21st century are now understood as engaging in acts of meaning-making within museums through dialogues versus a one-way, top-down model (Falk and Dierking 2000; Pearce 1994; Silverman 2010). These shifts from transmission to meaning-making, from museum-as-storehouse to museum-as-activity, in some ways work to disembody the museum, decoupling it from its institutional presence as a physical space primarily concerned with material objects. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (1992) has conceptualized the museum as an “apparatus” for the production of knowledge whose metaprocesses (the practices of classification inherent in collecting, storing, exhibiting) create “structures of knowledge and rules for the production of truth” (191) through the accumulation, classification and interpretation of material objects. Metaphorically, the apparatus metaphor can refer to the museum as a piece of technical equipment (i.e. as a physical thing), but this term also refers to a complex structure or standardized activity. Such a structure, Hooper-Greenhill (1992) points out, does not produce knowledge towards the end as some “essential” museum because there is no one essential way of knowing. Separating museum-as-place and museum-as-process frees museum practices to consider and create different ways of knowing. And this is the thread I want to draw on as I connect back to the realm of metaphors at work in emergent museums: how the shift from place to process has also freed museum practices to be adopted and adapted by those outside the museum community.

Internalizing the museum

That regular, everyday people set out to organize and present their collections as their own conception of a formalized exhibition is evidence itself of the image schematic and metaphorical structuring power of the museum concept. The emergent museums under discussion here have all been self-named as museums by their owners/makers (Mihalache 2009a; Mikula 2015; Moncunill-Piñas 2017; Taimre 2013). These makers have chosen to label their creations as such despite the fact that they may not exactly fit official definitions of what constitutes a museum provided in legislative documents or by professional museum associations (Mateescu 2009; Mihalache 2009a; Taimre 2013). Nevertheless, it has been noted that *museum* is chosen to imbibe these creations with social capital that the museum as a known entity provides (Mateescu 2009; Moncunill-Piñas 2017). But this also suggests that there is something about the museum as a pattern or kind of experience that resonates with the maker’s goals and purposes.

The museum as a concept has been naturalized, a reflection of what Susan Crane (1997) describes as *Musealisierung* or the “internal awareness of the museum function” (57). This internalization of what a museum should do, personal to individual past experiences with museums, shapes expectations about how museums are supposed to work. This internalized awareness is likely at work for emergent museum makers as they construct their museums based on their own understandings and experiences of visiting museums (or not). However, what these creative expressions show is how the internalization of the museum concept happens in different ways for different people. This is perhaps how emergent museums can be alike in their uniqueness (Mihalache 2009a); it is another way of saying they share some basic commonalities but with different outcomes that can be attributed to the different ways of knowing embodied by museum-makers and their visitors. That the shared conceptions of this institutional form are so widely recognized, selecting the name “museum” legitimates emergent museums by making them more easily accessible for a variety of potential publics because “everyone knows” what a museum is. In this way, museum proprietors insert their individual voices into the realm of heritage by self-categorizing their creations as museums.

As they are portrayed in the literature, museum makers all seem to have borrowed in their own way certain standardized practices that have created expectations for what counts as "the museum experience" enacted through collecting, exhibiting, displaying, and interpreting. In this way, emergent museums act as expressions of their maker's understandings of tradition, history and the past; but they are also expressions of how their makers have internalized the notion of what counts as a museum. Taimre (2013) describes these do-it-yourself (DIY) makers as "following modern tendencies of democratisation in the museum world" (34), further suggesting that museum concepts and practices are intuited by more general publics. But as Moncunil-Piñas (2017) observes, by copying these legitimated practices, these makers "are performing microscopic modifications in the historical functioning of the institutionalized practice. They are, often unintentionally, hinting at and timidly revealing its inequalities, struggles and the arbitrariness of museological conventions" (15). In other words, such modification-through-use suggests that *Musealisierung* is not merely internalization; this internalization has the potential to critique and change the form through individual creativity and adaptive reuse. However, it is worth noting that museum creators are not always able to articulate why they chose to create a museum and to name it as such (Taimre 2013). This emphasizes the need to look beyond verbal explanations as evidence of the power and potential of these emergent museums.

Though museum makers are borrowing legitimacy-via-institutional-form, only particular aspects of the museum model are adopted and the form is often remade by the creators according to their own rules and for their own purposes (Moncunill-Piñas 2017; Taimre 2013). Naming their creations a "museum" legitimates both the museum maker's worldview as it is expressed through their museological adaptations and the different ways the museum form functions as a knowledge-making context. This is the spirit in which the subsequent analysis has been conducted: by connecting to the metaphorical implications of the descriptors for emergent museums, I am working towards understanding this new form in relation to the museum as a process of knowledge-making, one that is amplifying types of participation and inclusivity still less foregrounded within new museology.

Metaphorical analysis of emergent museum descriptors

I have so far tried to show how the metaphoric implications of various museum descriptors in scholarly works reflect different aspects of the museum as an activity of knowledge-making. In order to connect this work to emergent museums, this analysis looks at a particular grouping of the key terms used by scholars in a selection of the literature that studies emergent museums (Jannelli 2012; Klimaszewski and Nyce 2014; Mateescu 2009; Mihalache 2009a; Mihăilescu 2009; Mikula 2015; Moncunill-Piñas 2017; Pănoiu 2017; Taimre 2013; Mihăilescu 2009). Grounded in the theoretical framework described above and in the conceptions of museums as knowledge institutions, this analysis focuses on how these terms describe: knowledge (amateur, naïve, wild, unofficial); as locality (personal, local, vernacular, grassroots); and knowledge-making (author, hybrid, do-it-yourself). These groupings are shown in Figure A.

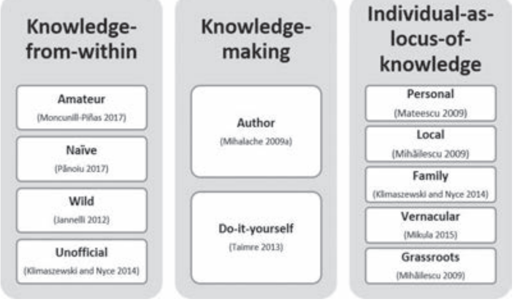


Fig. A: Terms from a selection of the scholarly literature describing emergent museums organized according to their analytic groupings.

A thick description of these groupings and their metaphorical implications, presented next, will show how emergent museums cultivate the production of knowledge-from-within by foregrounding the kinds of knowledge that is deeply personal and seemingly "outside" of established, expert or elite knowledge realms more traditionally foregrounded in museums. This is the kind of highly personal knowledge that originates within individuals and emanates from and between individuals as entwining localities. As will be discussed, this has implications for the emergent museum experience for both makers and visitors.

• • • • • • • •

Emergent museums as knowledge: amateur, naïve, unofficial, wild

Interested in the museum as a knowledge endeavor as conceptualized in the theoretical framework, the investigation into the metaphoric use of these terms considers them in relation to knowledge. Amateur, naïve, wild and unofficial stood out as relating to how knowledge in these museums was emerging in contrast to established, official or expert knowledge that usually fall within the museum purview. For instance Pǎniou (2017) has chosen naïve "not to indicate absence of value but rather to give a name to a form of artistic expression that does not keep step either with the time period in which it is produced or with artistic tradition or with expectation of elites" (150). In this way, museum-making is not necessarily concerned with somehow pleasing or even dialoguing with more dominant ways of knowing; it does its own thing. This sense of being apart from and asynchronous with elite expectations about what constitutes a proper museum is key. The kind of expertise foregrounded within these museums more often relates to the intense and focused passion of how these makers interact with and showcase their collections (Mihăilescu 2009; Mikula 2015; Mihalache 2009a).

In this way, these museums are wild, as Jannelli (in Mikula 2015) uses the term in relation to Levi Strauss's notion of the noble savage, whose knowledge must "keep step" only with itself and its own internal rationality; its own way of having a world. Such knowledge is not focused on outside measures or confirmations, but feels correct and makes sense on a small scale and in relation to more immediate surroundings. These museums and the knowledge they generate are enjoyable to experience precisely because they feel untethered, unexpected and free. The rules imposed are only those of the maker, and as a guest experiencing a unique creation, I am ready to conform to these rules to experience for a time another's way of having a world.

This is a kind of knowledge made within unofficial realms, by amateurs, that is not completely unprofessional but can be seen as a kind of serious leisure (Moncunill-Piñas 2017). Her use of this theoretical frame locates this creative activity of museum-making within the realm of avocation, of a qualified serious—not serious enough to be what is more generally regarded as professional or expert, but more serious than other free-time pursuits (which is another way emergent museum-making exists in a kind of in-between state). Amateur most directly contrasts with the notion of expert or institutionalized knowledge—again setting these makers outside and apart from established realms. They are unofficial, outside and, again, in-between. As a knowledge form, these museums become an extension of the kinds of knowledge and expertise their makers are thought to have in part because they operate outside of the institutionalized museum realm.

Amateur, naïve, unofficial and wild describe what I will refer to here as knowledge-from-within. This suggests small knowledge, itself emergent, in-formation and in process, whose internal locus is similarly small in scale: corresponding to an individual, a family, a small museum; and perhaps only tangentially corresponding to some external or objective shared knowledge (e.g. of a community, a region, a nation). Such knowledge might be only of relatively limited application (limited to the individual's way of having a world, for instance) and may feel small because it is not immediately applicable to other realms. It can seem incongruous with knowledge-from-without, which describes the kind of knowledge stored in museums that can feel big, imposing, omnipresent because it has been thoroughly vetted and can be accepted without question. Knowledge-from-without is the kind of knowledge we seek when we want answers and formal guidance. It feels big and imposing and important and can be at times intimidating, particularly when we are not so familiar with it. This contrasts to knowledge-from-within that has a feeling of being expressive and creative, original and unique and maintains a sense of being "outside" of more generally accepted knowledge realms and, in this way, can feel less imposing and more approachable. Though the fact that these museums generally work to present their maker's own worldview, it is worth noting, has been described as both a major strength and weakness of these museums (Mihăilescu 2009; Mikula 2015; Taimre 2013).

Knowledge-from-within conveys how knowledge is experienced in emergent museums as outside or separate from institutionalized, established realms and closer to and emanating from individuals. It has its own internal validity that creates opportunities for different kinds of small-scale relationality with other knowledge that may feel peripheral, tangential or nascent. The next section that focuses on the knowledge-making processes encouraged within emergent museums can help us to consider how knowledge-from-within relates to those processes through which knowledge is created and related into different ways of having a world.

Emergent museums and knowledge-making: author, do-it-yourself

Author and *do-it-yourself* are the terms that metaphorically describe processes of how knowledge-making happens in emergent museums, though within the existing literature is has focused mainly on the roles and activities of makers. These are museums that are expressed through an embodied individual and his or her interactions with objects, with tangible, material culture and heritage as knowledge about the past (Mihalache 2009a; Mihăilescu 2009; Mikula 2015). Where authorship invokes a sense of inscribing, of maintaining a certain level of creative integrity, do-it-yourself connects to the sense of a body, of individual hands working to craft a knowable world through the hands-on arrangement of objects. This characterizes the felt nature of the craft of emergent museum-making.

Author further connects to the storytelling aspects inherent within this museum form, particularly as it relates to the life-story of the museum-maker as the main constructor, the cause or source of a story that only he or she can tell. Again, the story is highly individualized, with these makers being as integral to their creations as their collections objects (Mateescu 2009). As such, these museums "bear the mark of a single man's personality and thinking" (Mihalache 2009a: 123). Writing with objects through the immediacy of material culture weaves the intangible through the tangible. This entwines with the maker aesthetic of the do-it-yourself movement. It also invokes Levi-Strauss' (1966) notion of the bricoleur as one who makes do with what is at hand. These makers craft their museums by using what they have found in the world around them, which has inspired them to begin collecting, arranging and maintaining their objects, ordering and reordering, like an endless editing project. These tendencies of making are inherent in other realms of crafting, as a sense of the hand-made connection to traditional ways of knowing and doing that happened in the past. Such creations are self-evident, telling a story that shows how internalized knowledge emanates outward through an individual body, as examples of how logics of culture operate on personal levels, encouraging more open-ended outcomes for such self-activity.

Knowledge-making helps to connect how those senses of knowledge (amateur, naïve, wild, unofficial) play out through these makers as bricoleurs who orchestrate their stories with their own skills, ingenuity and know-how. This is one way to show how the internal rationality of these worlds is related to the wider whole, providing a context in which these museums stand holistically outside of the museum mainstream and also apart from other emergent museums. It is in this sense that amateur museums become highly localized and individualized, containing one authorial voice telling a personal story that stands apart, with the makers capitalizing on a do-it-yourself aesthetic. This shapes the potential for what happens for both visitors and makers within these highly localized spaces—which is local not only in terms of place but in terms of individual bodies.

• • • • • • • • •

Individual-as-locus-of-knowledge: personal, local, family, vernacular, grassroots

The small scale of emergent museums inherent in *personal*, *local*, *family*, *vernacular* and *grassroots* can be considered in how these museums connect to different kinds of localities. Because they are personal, local both to a place and to a person, these small museums contained within a home and bound by a sense of family feel rooted to the earth. In this way they become a locus of activity, places that afford (Gibson 1979/2014) different possibilities for visitors both in the knowledge contexts of *who* made them as much as *how* they were made. This is another way of describing small-scale knowledge that feels relatable or manageable in a way different from that warehoused in institutionalized realms. I have found that interactions within these small, intimate museum spaces carry with them a kind of intimacy that feels more like visiting a long-lost family member than it does a formal museum space.

Particularly when they are tied to villages or neighborhoods, these kinds of museums can feel as if they contain all the specificities of place related to geography, history, tradition and ways of life (Mateescu 2009; Mikula 2015). But this personal knowledge is rooted to an individual body as much as it is tied to a particular spot on the earth, in both cases as if rooted (as in the sense of grassroots) to a ground and emanating upward or outward from it. These museum-makers are authors in the sense that they create their own biographies that are deeply informed by elements of place. These local elements become embodied as felt patterns of experience that come to define a sense of everyday life. In this way, place and individuals root these museums in a kind of mutual grounding. The museum-maker-as-storyteller, through his or her interactions with other individuals, then allows them to become the carriers that move this knowledge through the world, acting as locus of experience active in relational embodied knowledge-making.[3]

Emergent museums, through their authorial voices and handmade constructions, are often ensconced within the personal space of a home, a vernacular space that "encapsulat[es] the 'domesticity' of the practice" (Mikula 2015: 758). But these private spaces become public as visitors are welcomed inside. This creates a productive tension at the intersections between public/private and personal/communal (Mateescu 2009; Mikula 2015; Taimre 2013) which creates possibilities for different kinds of meaning-making between museum-makers and visitors. These different ways of connecting create different outcomes for visitors, including and sometimes even "contaminating" the visitor with something of the museum-maker that she takes away (Mihalache 2009a: 124). Indeed, I have felt this sense of "catching" a museum-maker's enthusiasm about his creation[4] that inspires me, for instance, to take a photograph because I want to keep a particular moment. This suggesting something about the nature of the knowledge exchange that will be conveyed in my impending discussion of Cleo's Ferry Museum and Nature Trail.

---

[3] Though I have not done so here, it would be interesting to consider these ideas through Greg Urban's (2001) work on metaculture, for there are many correspondences.

• • • • • • • •

Analysis summary

So far, I have considered the relationship between emergent museums and knowledge as expressed metaphorically through terms describing these creations in the scholarly literature. I have categorized these terms to reflect embodied dimensions of knowledge-from-within, as knowledge-making and through the individual-as-locus-of-knowledge. Focusing on how knowledge "happens" through individual bodies and experiences within these museums provides an example of the image schematic and metaphoric ways language works to express different elements of these experiences which may be backgrounded in more traditional museums. As such, emergent museums and the terms we used to describe them provide evidence of the different kinds of knowledge processes at work that relate the small-scale, seemingly peripheral or tangential ways each of us comes to have a world. Connecting knowledge to embodied modes of meaning-making and the felt qualities of experience helps us to reconsider how individual acts of museum-making rely on internalized understandings of the museum as place and as process. In support of this analysis, I next provide some examples of how my own localized, individualized experiences of knowledge-making visiting museums in Idaho, United States and in several Romanian villages to connect these developments to the potential for visitor experiences in emergent museums.

• • • • • • • •

Knowledge in emergent museums: Connecting moments from Cleo's Ferry Museum and Romania

The goal of this section is to detail examples of knowledge-from-within, knowledge-making and individual-as-locus-of-knowledge that surfaced for me during a visit to Cleo's Ferry Museum and Nature Trail in Melba, Idaho. I relate these moments to resonant experiences I have had visiting three different Romanian emergent museums to provide a sense of these spaces from one visitor's perspective. I want to illustrate the nature of relationality at play in my way of having a world as a reflection of the theoretical framework. After briefly introducing these museums, I focus on describing and connecting moments of knowledge-making expressed as photographs I took at each site. This personal approach is required to understand experiences of other visitors to these museum sites because I need first to understand the intricacies of my own knowledge-making processes.

• • • • • • • •

The museums

This analysis conveys experiences that happened across four different emergent museum sites listed in Table 1.

Though each of these museums is remarkable because of the specificity it offers, I want to focus here on enumerating those relational elements that linked these museums as similar within my mind. These

[4] How else does one explain the decision to pursue an advanced degree on this subject?

Museum	Location / Website
Cleo's Ferry Museum and Nature Trail	Melba, Idaho, USA/ https://www.facebook.com/Cleos-Ferry-Museum-233675496834208/
Muzeul Interetnic al Vãii Hârtibaciului (Interethnic Museum of Hârtibaciului Valley)	Alţâna, Sibiu County, Romania/ http://recomespar.ro/hartibaciului.html
Muzeul PASTORAL Jina (Pastoral Museum of Jina)	Jina, Sibiu County, Romania/ http://recomespar.ro/pastoral.html
Colecţia Etnograficã George Nechiti (Ethnographic collection of George Nechiti)	Feldru, Bistriţa-Nãsãud County, Romania/ http://recomespar.ro/george_nechiti.html

Table 1:Emergent museum sites, locations and URLs included in this study.

were mainly visible correlations, including the rural locations of each, characteristics that appeared obvious to me at first sight upon arrival. There was a felt sense to these visual qualities that impressed me, again enhanced by their "out of the way" locales, which can best be described as a sense of being handmade, rough and rustic, and "old" or historical; each one of these eclectic spaces appeared to me to innovate in its own way through the repurposing and rearranging of old or unusual things.

But when I arrive at these sites, I also know (because I have read about them in advance), that these spaces are tied intimately to the lives of their makers. This is the one key difference between my experiences at the US versus Romanian sites. At Cleo's, the original makers have passed, but the family has committed to keeping the museum open and ongoing, though when I was there no one from the family was present at the site. It is run as a public space with regular opening hours, with donations accepted on the honor system: visitors are expected to respect the space and to donate an entry fee as they see fit. This contrasts with the Romanian examples featured here whose makers were all living and who graciously welcomed me as I arrived at each site. Further, the Romanian museums were in private homes and as such required a fully-guided tour through the home and collections. This might explain another felt difference between Cleo's and its Romanian counterparts: the Romanian museums did not rely on signage to describe its objects and displays; the museum-makers provided this narrative to me directly in English or through a translator. At Cleo's, signage was essential and integral to the museum experience. However, as will be shown, it did not come in the form of extensive museum labels but through informal, rustic signs with bold block letters. In this way, the museum maker's tour through Cleo's was more metaphysical than absent.

Each museum, whether in Romania or Idaho, expresses its aesthetic distinctness based on its locality: Cleo's architecture was more stereotypically "American," correlating, for instance, to depictions of the US commonly featured in old Western movies, while the Romanian museums present aspects of peasantness that as a group "look" distinctly Romanian but individually also showcase regionally specificity, particularly in the design and form of handicrafts on display. Further, the main "focus" of each Romanian museum could be generally described as connecting to some sense of heritage at national, regional, local or family levels. This is different from Cleo's, which calls itself a museum, but is often featured in the tourist literature that classifies it more often alongside folk or outsider art and roadside attractions[5] as a kind of Americana. Elements of this are evidenced in a comparison of the following descriptions:

Cleo's is described by the website Atlas Obscura[6] as:

> Spread throughout the winding nature trail and its preserved 1860's ferry service buildings are thousands of bird houses, ceramic lawn decorations, signs espousing random religious philosophies, bronze statues, a graveyard, and even a flock of live peacocks. Combined, the effect of all the totally non-related elements is dizzying and absolutely unique. (Atlas Obscura 2018)

[5] For instance, listed in *Roadside America*: https://www.roadsideamerica.com/tip/34014.

[6] https://www.atlasobscura.com/

Romanian emergent museums are described as:

> Retrieved testimonies, old objects, historical documents, archive photos, local manufacturer products gathered from the villagers and arranged in different ways and tonalities help them give a meaning to some spaces where local culture, which bears the mark of a single man's personality and thinking, acquires original, strong or ingenuous forms and interpretations. (Mihalache 2009a: 123)

What stands out as most resonant to me from within these descriptions is that each includes a listing of what one can see: there is so much at each site, it requires enumeration to capture the expansiveness of the visual lists (Eco 2009) these sites present as kind of a feast for the eyes (and other senses). These descriptions further capture the sense of do-it-yourself and author qualities described previously in connection to the kinds of knowledge-making they employ. They are not linear and direct; one "winds" through them, through different "ways and tonalities" of "dizzying" uniqueness and ingenuity. These descriptions are featured here because they encapsulate those experiential qualities I have come to desire from this kind of museum. Being immersed within these museums and visually devouring their offerings engenders a relatedness between these so-called "non-related elements" that develops through an intimacy created as another's internal logic entwines with my own. These quotes exemplify the senses of knowledge at work in these museums, tied as they are to uniqueness and ingenuity.

As a visitor to Cleo's, I was ready to be open to this new world, further prepared for my visit by the sign that welcomed me, as shown in Figure B.

The sign in the photograph that greets all visitors to Cleo's reads:

This Place was Built
As a Vibrant Faith
Adventure
You are My Special
Friend and Visitor Today
Please Keep it Free From Harm.

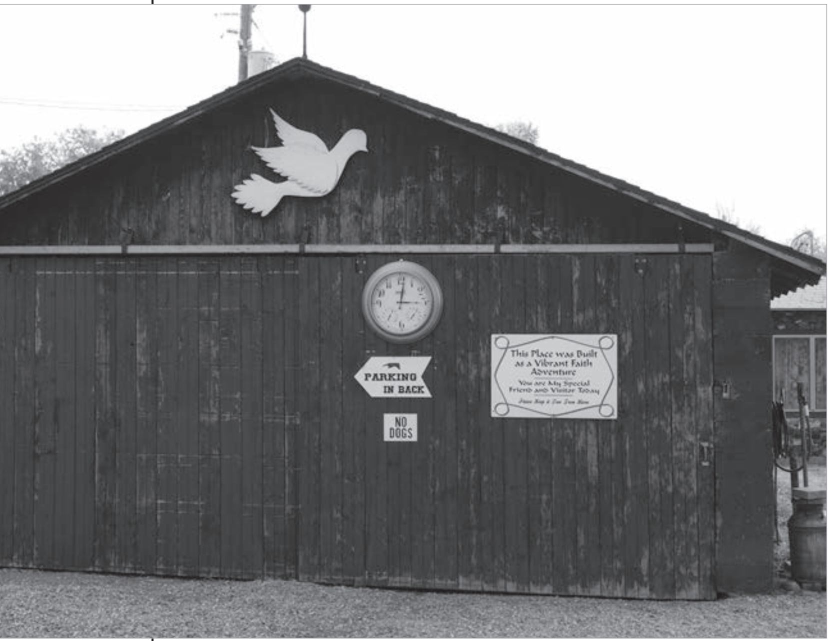


Fig. B: Showing the sign that encapsulates museum-maker's intentions and visitor responsibilities at Cleo's Ferry Museum. Photo credits: Cheryl Klimaszewski.

It helps the visitor to prepare for their visit by instructing them on what the site might ask of them: a vibrant faith adventure requires more than mere blind acceptance or a misplaced love of adrenaline, it means being open and ready to trust. This concept of a *vibrant faith adventure* signaled to me that if I could pay attention and be engaged at this place, perhaps I could also even be a little bit changed through my visit—which is in some ways what I have come to expect from my time spent at emergent museums. Cleo's sign acts as a personalized welcome, even though the original creators of this place, Cleo and Samuel Swayne, were no longer alive. Further, while Cleo and Samuel were not present physically, all that stood around me was a product of their embodied intentions and experiences that had gained a materiality that was able to outlive them, enmeshed with and carrying forward their own particular aesthetics of visuality and faith—their ways of having a world. From the outset, this invoked in me a sense wonder about life and the great beyond that put me in the perfect mindset to contemplate all this nature trail had to offer.

It is perhaps also worth noting that I did not come to Cleo's as a "researcher;" this visit happened in the context of a vacation. This is unlike my Romanian research visits, which took place under the guise of "fieldwork." The main notable difference is that at Cleo's there was no spoken tour narrative to audio record; though photographs were taken extensively Cleo's in the same way I would approach photographing at the Romanian sites: responding to what felt like "notable moments" (Klimaszewski 2016) that I wanted to record and remember. However, it must also be pointed out that the moments I have connected to in my Romanian museum visits do not represent what were arguably the more central stories those museums work to tell about heritage, peasant ways of life and the past. The moments from both museums depicted here were those that were more peripheral to the "main themes" that could be identified as exemplary of these museum visits. This is another way of saying that I am not trying to suggest any essentiality about these museums through the examples I present; quite the opposite, I am trying to illustrate the value of considering deeply seemingly nascent or tangential moments that resonate as patterns of felt experience and what these mean within the expanding contexts of museum experience. The photographic pairings featured here present a selection of visual moments that illustrate knowledge-making and its relation to locality of knowledge and knowledge-from-within, in an effort to capture something of the felt modes of experience that create relationality between physically and temporally distant museum experiences. Here, the focus of my imagined connections is to consider possibilities for visitors within emergent museums.

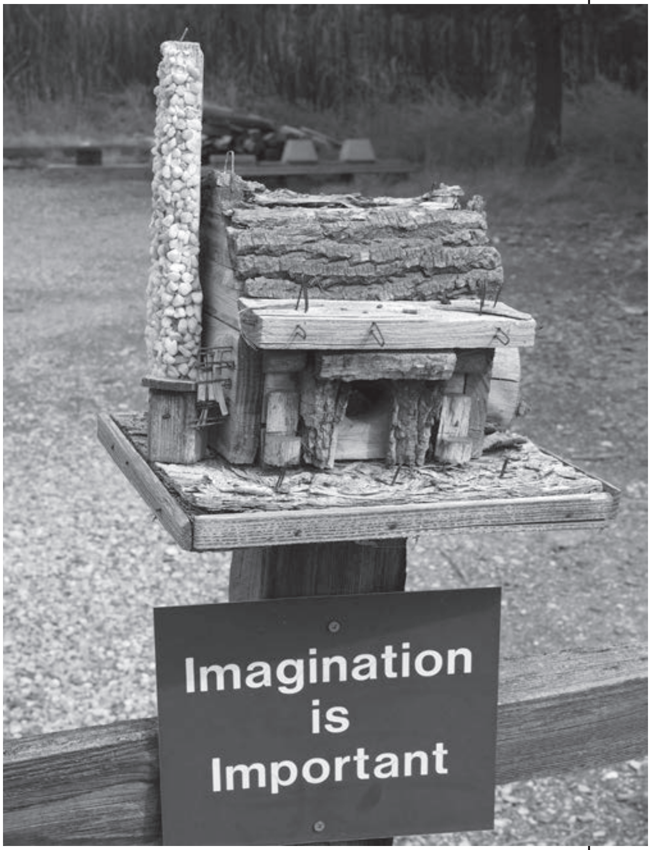


Fig. C: A birdhouse and instructional signage along the path of the nature trail at Cleo's Ferry Museum. Photo credits: Cheryl Klimaszewski.

• • • • • • • •

Imagination is important

The nature trail at Cleo's begins (or ends, depending on which way you decide to move through the property) with a series of homemade birdhouses mounted on fence posts lining a paved trail. Each birdhouse/sign pairing presents its own bit of folk wisdom or food for thought. I find myself wondering, as I wander along this inviting pathway, are these signs interpretive, instructive, factual? And I have to stop myself from taking a photograph of every last birdhouse. But I could not keep myself from photographing this one (Figure C).

The aesthetic feel is rustic and handmade, the creator(s) of these birdhouses compulsive and prolific. There are several dozen and, I will find, more to be found throughout the property. As I walk and look, I work to balance immersive moments of contemplation with the excitement that moves me to want to go through the trail too quickly, eager to see what else there is, to discover more. But this message: *Imagination is important*—stops me.

In the context of the birdhouse path, this sign encouraged me to wonder: who or what lives in these birdhouses? Are they just birds—or perhaps ideas, or maybe even imaginary beings, like fairies, elves or gnomes? This sense of subtle, spiritual instruction caught me, for reading the signs at Cleo's did not feel like an imposition or a command but an invitation. This was advice for enjoying the museum, but it was also advice for life: I could carry this instruction with me and rely on it in times of stunted creativity or boredom and remind myself: imagination is important! Mostly I consider, what is implied by all of this? My mind wanders again to the imagined birds who inhabit these homes (because I prefer birds over the other creatures). What a wonderful place to live. If I am reincarnated as a bird, I want to live at Cleo's. It also reminds me of something I saw at the museum in Alțâna (Figure D).

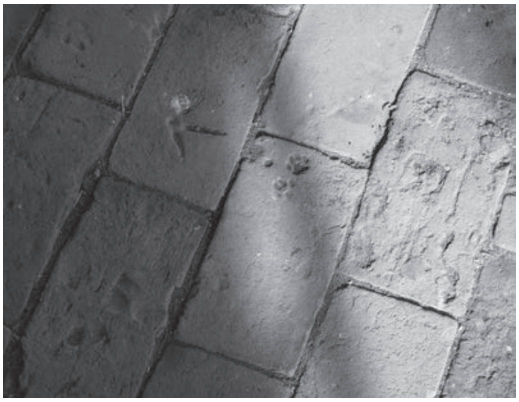


Fig. D: Animal footprints in the handmade bricks lining the porch of the museum in Altana. Photo credits: Cheryl Klimaszewski.

This photograph of animal footprints in the homemade bricks on the porch of the Interethnic Museum of Hârtibaciului Valley in Alțâna, Romania came to mind. I remembered this museum visit with the museum-maker who was young and so enthusiastic in sharing his collection. The visit lasted for several hours and he talked with me and my translator first in his office, sharing with us parts of his collection that were not housed in the museum building (a private home located nearby in the village). After enjoying herbal tea and admiring some of his favorite objects, we moved on to tour the formal museum space. But as we entered, we stopped for a moment to survey our surroundings, the yard, the surrounding fields and the late-day sun, and he pointed out this small detail: footprints in the bricks left by animals (birds, cats, others?) as they were drying. This is that sense of small knowledge—not small because it is insignificant, but detailed, focused, seemingly minor, but full of possibilities if one actually stops to consider it. Thinking about these implied animals as sentient beings moving through the world, building homes, impressing themselves upon these handmade bricks was fun and unexpected. It allowed me to see the world through the eyes of the makers, considering different details that I might not notice without them.

• • • • • • • •

Don't be afraid

Wandering through Cleo's, happily immersed in my experience, enjoying the discoveries happening around every corner, I came across this imaginary being shown in Figure E.

Created from a log that resembles an antlered creature, this do-it-yourself creation is pure folly. I wonder whether the sign is suggesting that the creature should not be afraid of me or if the creature is communicating that I should not be afraid of it. Because I feel open, having been encouraged to imagine, I appreciate how a dead tree has been brought back to life with

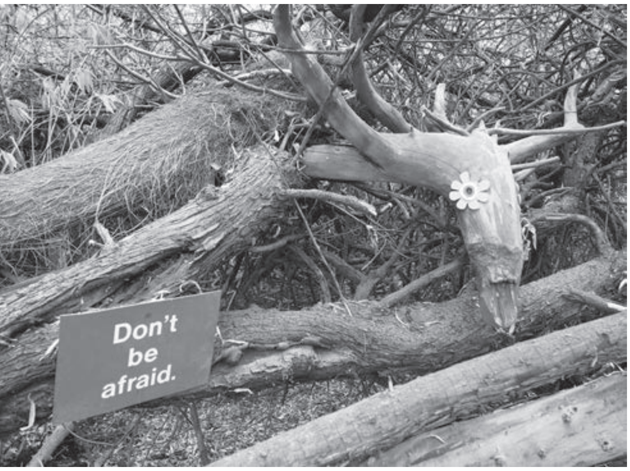


Fig. E: A creature fashioned from an old tree branch emerges from a tangle of roots and trees to encourage visitors walking along the nature path. Photo credits: Cheryl Klimaszewski.

yellow flower-shaped eyes and a painted red tongue. Except for the eyes, the other parts of the creature are all integral to the basic form, delineated through different colors of paint. S/he emerges (curious, it seems, welcoming me) from a tangle of tree trunks and branches as a glorious example of transformation and reuse of natural materials—turning the tragedy of a dead tree into a new being with a new life and purpose. I find this encounter comforting, as if I have made a friend in a new world.

This reminds me of my visit to the museum at the Ethnographic collection of George Nechiti in Feldru, Romania. It contained, in addition to the more traditional handicrafts and objects of daily life, many examples of this kind of natural art, shellacked tree roots and taxidermied creatures, at that point more so than in other Romanian museums I had visited. Upon walking up the stairs inside this museum that is deeply entwined with the proprietors' living spaces, I encountered this waterfowl presenting a collection of knotted, twisted tree roots (Figure F). This small space tucked in felt like a playground for these natural objects-turned-museum-pieces, as if I had invaded their privacy. Nevertheless, it felt as if the duck was inviting me to look more closely

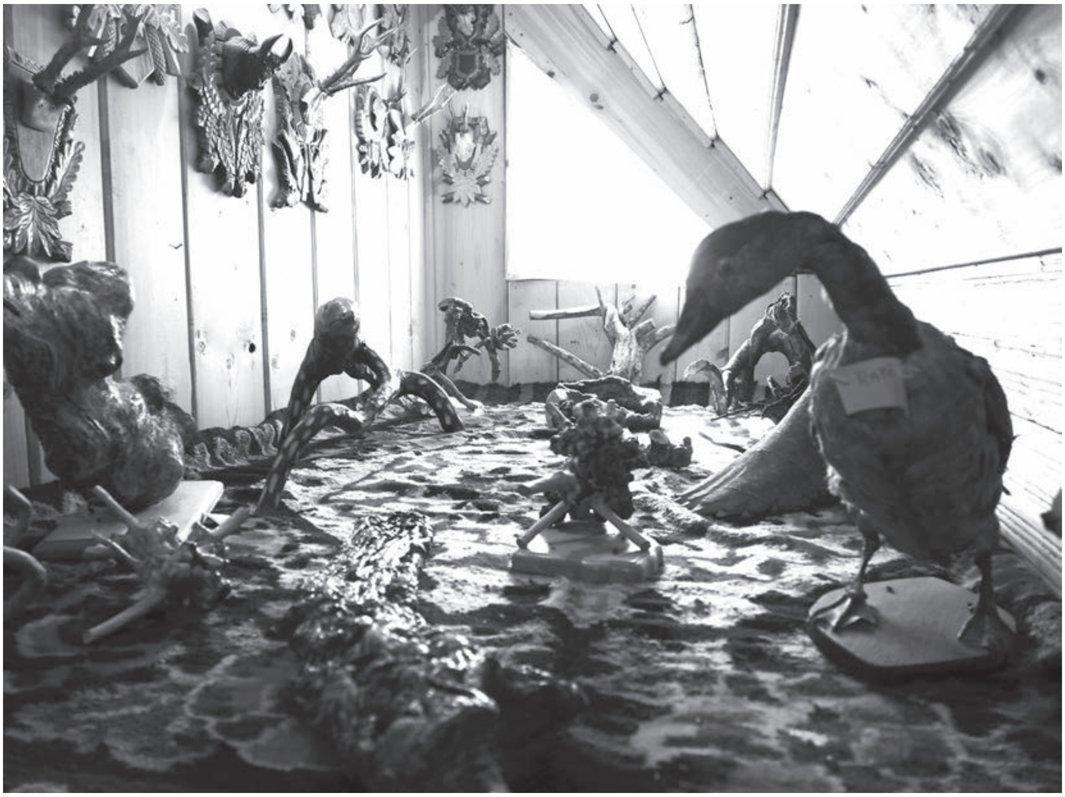


Fig. F: A taxidermied waterfowl introduces a collection of roots displayed in a small nook at the top of the stairs at the museum in Feldru, Romania. Photo credits: Cheryl Klimaszewski.

at his collection of transformational root creations.

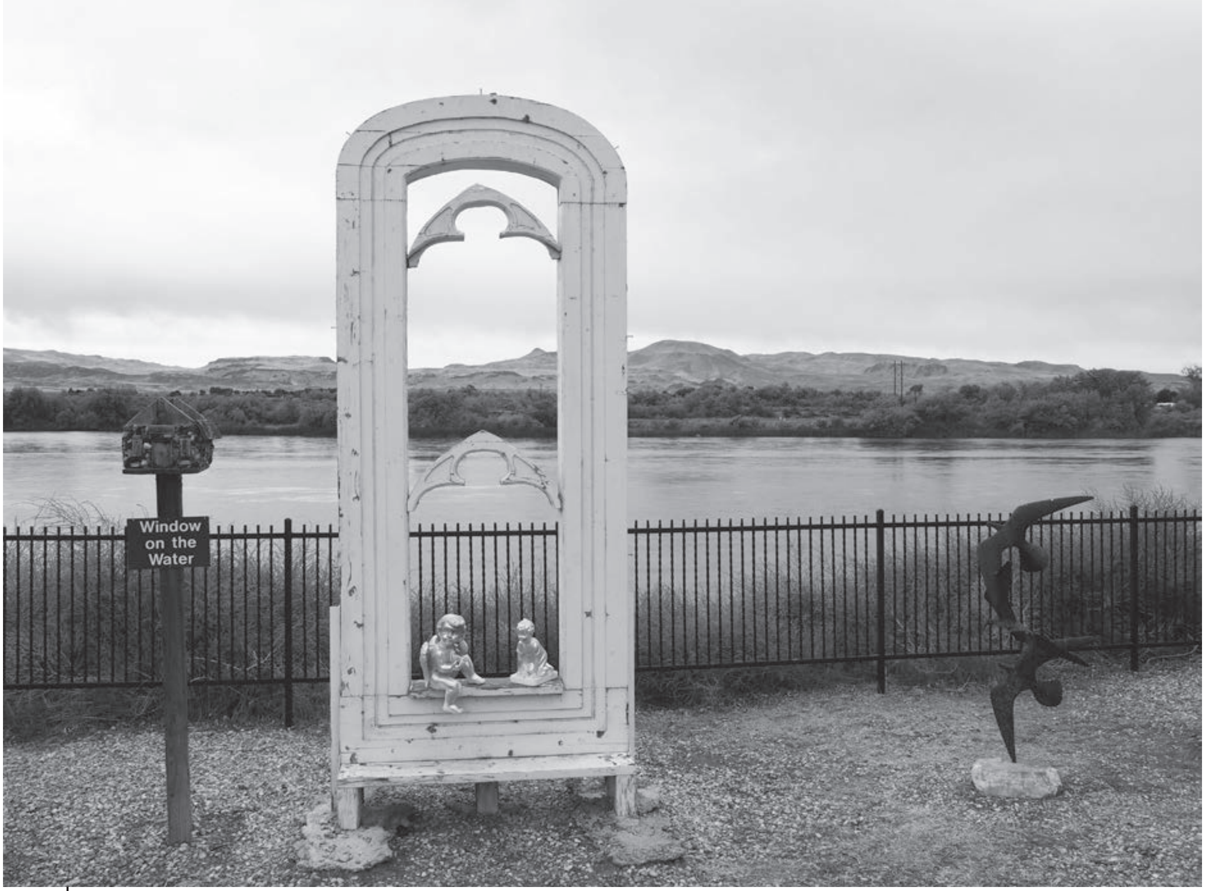
This sense of visual metaphor, of seeing and experiencing one thing as another (roots as a collection of art objects; a fallen tree transformed into a creature), shows a kind of play with relationality. It invited me to look differently, to imagine how one thing can become something else; that not every object is only as it seems. Imagining in this way, bending the way of being of an object particularly through a context of folly, influences the flexibility of my own worldview. This is perhaps an example of how ingenuity, as a way of knowing new things, arises through creativity, particularly with organic objects. This illustrates also the sense of livelihood that I have found to be present in emergent museums more generally, where individual creativity acts as a reminder of fun, of folly, of laughing with versus laughing at. In its own way, this kind of creative visualization provides an exercise in how to encounter difference.

• • • • • • • •

Window on the water

Window on the water provides a play on words that, at this point in my visit to Cleo's, has become normalized (Figure G). Literally right next to the river, this old architectural window sits along the bank of the Snake River with the lovely landscape as a background. A bench (providing the perspective from which this photograph was taken) invites one to sit and take in the view,

Fig. G: Window on the water, one of the many plays on words found at Cleo's Ferry Museum. Photo credits: Cheryl Klimaszewski.



to really be in this place in a larger sense, to take some time to attempt to truly see it. As a place of contemplation, I join the figurines perched on the window's edge and playful birds-in-flight for the view, noting again the presence of yet another birdhouse. This is arguably my favorite part of the trail—getting to really be near this river that has structured so much of the life of this place (in its history as an old ferry crossing).

I wonder about where the window came from, what views has it offered throughout its existence. Is it happy to not have been relegated to the trash heap? What did Cleo and her family see through this window? Did she often contemplate this view? In this way, I feel connected to this point in space in Melba, Idaho, but I also feel connected to Cleo and her family who have made this place. I now carry with me not just a sense of their fun, folly and spirituality, I am steeped in the sense that my body has now moved along this pathway and now embodies this view. And I remember visiting the museum at the Pastoral Museum in Jina, Romania.

In Jina, the drive up into the hills to get to the museum was stunning. Arriving at the museum, and moving through this long, narrow property, through multiple rooms filled with traditional objects, it felt like the museum tour would never end. Eventually it did, however, with our small group of four people being led through to enjoy the view from the rear of the property (Figure H). Connecting to this memory allows me to think about how, at Jina, I was immersed in different dimensions of locality: within the private home; within the collections as objects of daily lives long ago lived. But this movement through the propety in its entirety, to see this view, more fully located these experiences within a landscape of how this place looked and felt, that defined the lives lived there and shaped the purposes of everyday objects.

This sense of immersion in the locality—a deep sense of connecting not just with facts and information but with the viscerality of being there, of feeling the sun and the breeze and that sense of really not wanting to leave . . . to want to take it all in and take it with me. For me this sense of embodying the figural, of internalizing what it felt like to be in this place, describes something about my role in the overall relationality of knowledge through which I attempt to connect these experiences. It is perhaps what I am attempting to capture through the terminology of *emergent museums*. These places are sites of multiple emergences: individual ways of having a world that intermingle and entwine on a small, manageable scale; feelings creating opportunities for connecting to other ways of knowing through people, places and things. Within emergent museums, as I hope I have shown through these three examples, having a world connects viscerally to what it means to be in the world, moving away from the sometimes rarified experience of visiting more traditional museums.

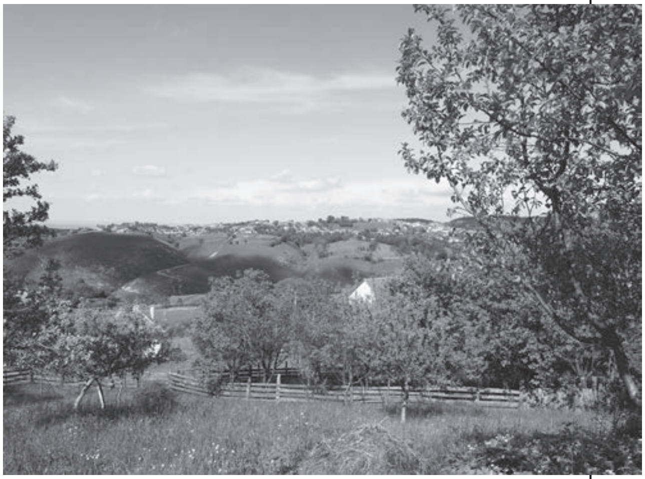


Fig. H: The tour of the musem in Jina, Romania ends with a walk to the back of the property to survey the landscape. Photo credits: Cheryl Klimaszewski.

• • • • • • • •

Conclusion and ways forward: Emergent museums as could-be museums

Using the example of emergent museums, which has been growing within the scholarly literature, I have tried to show, in the spirit of Lakoff and Johnson (2003), how the metaphorical language used to describe these unique creations is not merely descriptive; it actually reveals modes of experiential understanding and reflects the relational knowledge-making processes at work in how each of us comes to have a world (Johnson 1990). In the context of new museology that focuses on meaning-making (as opposed to transmission) models of knowledge-making, knowledge becomes less entwined with the museum-as-place. Reconceptualizing the museum as an apparatus for knowledge-making (Hooper-Greenhill 1992) decouples the notion of museum from place and facilitates different ways for these processes to be put into practice in other realms. Emergent museum-makers have (re)interpreted the role and function of museums according to their own rules, creating unique, interactive spaces outside the museum mainstream that provide different opportunities for knowledge-making because of their do-it-yourself and authorial approaches to crafting museums.

Where amateur, naïve, wild and unofficial describe knowledge-from-within, these become variations on “outsider” knowledge (that which stands outside of established knowledge) through which future connections can perhaps be drawn between emergent museums as form of creative expression akin to outsider art (Cardinal 1972), that kind of art being made outside of the traditional, established cultural boundaries and in strong contrast to that which is accepted as “high art” or “high culture.” This kind of knowledge is not transmitted from on high but originates within and emanates outward from and between individuals. This sense of the individual-as-locus-of-knowledge is expressed through the senses of personal, local, family, vernacular and grassroots, tying knowledge to a sense of place through individual bodies. To illustrate these concepts, I have presented a selection of my own moments of knowledge-making that surfaced across emergent museum visits in the United States and Romania. This has hopefully illustrated opportunities for the depth and creativity of knowledge about people, places and things (present and absent; real and imagined) emergent museums provide.

One of my favorite descriptions of emergent museums is “could-be” museums (Mihăilescu 2009). On the one hand, this suggests that emergent museums are only aspiring to become museums; on the other, it proposes that these unique, ingenious spaces open possibilities for the museum form more broadly. Emergent museums are metacultural (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006b; Urban 2001) with their makers acting as entrepreneurs who facilitate the movement of the old into the new (Urban 2001) providing us with new ideas about what museums could be in the future. In this way, emergent museums fit within the new museological approaches that embrace visitor-centric, experience-based, grassroots approaches to the museum (Heijnen 2010). But there is something more. They can also challenge the museum mainstream and encourage “the experts” to reconceptualize the nature and purpose of their museums to incorporate more individualized, localized knowledges. Emergent museums are experimental spaces, modifying the rules of museology for their own needs and ends, with unexpected results for makers and visitors alike. They are spaces where seemingly peripheral or tangential, highly individualized knowledge can find its place through the personalization of institutionalized museum practices. These are just some of the ways that contemplating the metaphorical nature of how we describe emergent museums as knowledge institutions has implications for what they can mean within the wider cultural landscape in the 21st century.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Atlas Obscura. 2018. “Cleo’s Ferry Museum and Nature Trail.” Atlas Obscura [Available online at: http://www.atlasobscura.com/places/cleo-s-ferry-museum-and-nature-trail].

Bennett, Tony. 1995. *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. Culture: Policies and Politics. London; New York: Routledge.

Bennett, Tony. 2004. *Pasts beyond Memory: Evolution Museums Colonialism*. Museum Meanings. London; New York: Routledge.

Bennett, Tony. 2006. “Exhibition, Difference, and the Logic of Culture.” In *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, edited by Ivan Karp, Corinne Kratz, Lynn Szwaja, and Tomas Ybarra-Frausto, 46-69. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Cardinal, Roger. 1972. *Outsider Art*. London: Studio Vista.

Crane, Susan A. 1997. “Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum.” *History and Theory.* 36 (4): 44-63.

Eco, Umberto. 2009. *The Infinity of Lists*. New York: Rizzoli.

Falk, John H., and Lynn D. Dierking. 2000. *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning.* American Association for State and Local History Book Series. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Gibson, James J. 1979. “The Theory of Affordances.” In *The People, Place, and Space Reader*, edited by Jen Jack Gieseking, 56-60. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Heijnen, Wilke. 2010. “The New Professional: Underdog or Expert? New Museology in the 21st Century.” *Sociomuseology.* 3 (37): 13-24.

Hooper-Greenhill, Eilean. 1992. *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. London & New York: Routledge.

Hooper-Greenhill, Eilean. 2000. *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*. London; New York: Routledge.

Hudson, Kenneth. 1975. *A Social History of Museums: What the Visitors Thought*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.

Jannelli, Angela. 2012. *Wilde Museen: Zur Museologie Des Amateurmuseums*. Berlin: Transcript Verlag.

Johnson, Mark. 1990. *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Johnson, Mark. 2008. *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. Paperback ed. Chicago, Ill.: Univ. of Chicago Press.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 2006a. “Exhibitionary Complexes.” In *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, edited by Ivan Karp, Corinne Kratz, Lynn Szwaja, and Tomas Ybarra-Frausto, 35-45. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 2006b. “World Heritage and Cultural Economics.” In *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, edited by Ivan Karp, Corinne Kratz, Lynn Szwaja, and Tomas Ybarra-Frausto, 161-202. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Klimaszewski, Cheryl. 2016. “Third-Party Classification: Exposing Likeness between Satellites Dishes, Troll Figurines and Mass-Produced Bedspreads in a Romanian Local Museum.” *Journal of Documentation.* 72 (1): 156-71 [available online at: https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-02-2015-0030].

Klimaszewski, Cheryl, and James M. Nyce. 2014. “Towards a Study of ‘Unofficial’ Museums.” In *Annual Review of Cultural Heritage Informatics*, edited by S.K. Hastings, 179-89. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.

Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. 2003. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1966. *The Savage Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mateescu, Oana. 2009. “Evidence in the Museum: Subjects, Objects and Memories in Vrancea.” *Sociologie Românească.* 7 (3): 51-71.

Mihăilescu, Vintilă. 2009. “Local Museums? Village Collections in Recent Romania.” *Martor.* 14: 11-18.

Mihalache, Carmen. 2009a. “Museums and Village Collections of Romania. A Pleading for Initiative.” *Martor.* 14: 123-30.

Mihalache, Carmen. 2009b. “Patrimoniu şi identitate locala [Heritage and Local Identity],” web page of the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant [available online at: http://www.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/acasa/patrimoniu-si-identitate-locala-pagina-unu.html].

Mihalache, Carmen. 2009c. “The Museum as a Hobby: An Uncommon Hobby - the Museum.” *MARTOR*. 14: 159-61.

Mihalache, Carmen. 2011. "Programul cultural COLECȚII SĂTEŞTI DIN ROMÂNIA (2008-2013)" [Cultural Programe Rural Collections in Romania (2008-2013)], web page of the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, Bucharest, Romania [available online at: http://www.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/acasa/programul-cultural-colectii-satesti-din-romania.html].

Mihalache, Carmen, ed. 2012. *Robii frumosului: Colecții etnografice particulare satesti din România* [Workers of the Beauty. Rural Ethnographic Private Collections in Romania]. 2nd edition, completed. Bucharest: Martor.

Mikula, Maja. 2015. "Vernacular Museum: Communal Bonding and Ritual Memory Transfer among Displaced Communities." *International Journal of Heritage Studies.* 21 (8): 757-72 [available online at: https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2015.1020961].

Moncunill-Piñas, Mariona. 2017. "The Practice of Everyday Museum Making: Naturalization and Empowerment in the Amateur Consumption of Museographic Language." *European Journal of Cultural Studies.* September: 1-19 [available online at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549417722113].

Pănoiu, Anca-Maria. 2017. "A Sense of the Past: Usages of Objects in Naïve Museology." *Martor.* 22: 149-64.

Pearce, Susan M. 1994. "Objects as Meaning; or Narrating the Past." In *Interpreting Objects and Collections*, edited by Susan M. Pearce, 19-29. London and New York: Routledge.

Silverman, Lois H. 2010. *The Social Work of Museums*. London; New York: Routledge.

Stocking, Jr., George W. 1985. *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*. History of Anthropology, Volume 3. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press.

Taimre, Liisi. 2013. "Do It Yourself Museums. Study on Small Museums in Estonia and the People behind Them." *Museological Review.* 17: 26-35.

Urban, Greg. 2001. *Metaculture: How Culture Moves through the World*. Minneapolis, MN: Univ Of Minnesota Press.

Vergo, Peter, ed. 1989. *The New Museology*. London: Reaktion Books.

Whitcomb, Andrea. 2003. *Re-Imagining the Museum: Beyond the Mausoleum*. London and New York: Routledge.

MARTOR

Title: *Cracks and Light: Observing the Resilience of the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina*

Authors: Selma Harrington, Branka Dimitrijević, Ashraf Salama

How to cite this article: Harrington, Selma *et al*. 2018. “Cracks and Light: Observing the Resilience of the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina.” *Martor* 23: 143-161.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Ţăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/martor-23-2018/

Martor (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Journal) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. ***Martor Journal*** is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Interdisciplinary and international in scope, it provides a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for academic and non-academic readership. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

Martor (Revue d’Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l’anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l’ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue ***Martor*** est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l’accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l’auteur.

Martor is indexed by:

CEEOL, EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Anthropological Index Online (AIO), MLA International Bibliography.

ПРАВДА
ОСОБАЯ СВОДНАЯ
АГИТ-ЭСКАДРИЛЬЯ
им. МАКСИМА ГОРЬКОГО

Cracks and Light: Observing the Resilience of the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Selma Harrington
PhD. Candidate, University of Strathclyde
selma.harrington@strath.ac.uk

Branka Dimitrijević
Professor, PhD., University of Strathclyde

Ashraf Salama
Professor, PhD., University of Strathclyde

ABSTRACT

Among the seven national institutions of the former socialist Yugoslav period that appear to have been assigned to the category of "contested" and "unwanted" heritage, the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina stands out. Originally built as a Museum of Revolution, it bears a legacy of a specific identity and cultural narrative developed in the socialist period, which has been projected in the architecture displaying the hallmarks of early Modernism. Even though the Museum was listed as a national monument by the Commission to Preserve National Monuments in 2012, the building is in an alarmingly advanced state of disrepair, with little indication that such trend will be reversed any time soon.

The article firstly discusses the Museum in the context of current international developments and the aspects related to museum architecture. Secondly, the Museum is observed through a critical heritage lens and within phenomena of a deliberate destruction of heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Since 2003 the Museum has a permanent exhibition, *The Besieged Sarajevo,* illustrating the practical modes of survival during the 1990s war, consisting of artefacts donated by citizens. Other exhibition themes, ranging from the labour movement traditions, the legacy of World War I, life in former Yugoslavia, the Dayton Peace Agreement mapping, and *The Obliteration of Cultural Heritage* project, posit critical questions for and about the contemporary society in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This work combines two disciplinary fields, architecture and public history, to inquire into selected contemporary activities of the Museum. Its resilience is viewed as representative, symbolic, and symptomatic of an over-reaching cultural, political, and economic condition in the country.

KEYWORDS

Contested heritage, architecture and public history, renovation, resilience.

> *"Few museums, outside the nationals and any other rock stars of the tourist world, can continue to exist in their present form. [...] There must be equally rapid changes in the definition and public practice of museums if they are to remain relevant to twenty-first century audiences and, therefore, to survive. The challenges facing museums belong to two inter-related fields: those that are the result of wider societal change, and those that directly challenge the traditional roles of museums.*
> *- Black 2012: 1*

It has been estimated that some 90 percent of museums worldwide were founded after the World War II, creating a significant growth of activity, as well as academic interest in and publications on the subject (Fyfe 2011). The museums are examined from the perspectives of cultural heritage studies, art history and policy, memory and identity studies, and to some extent from the perspective of architectural history. Drawing on the reference framework in

A Companion to Museum Studies (Macdonald 2011), this article outlines the development of museums in general and focuses on the case study of the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo. The Museum was founded in 1945 to curate the national liberation narrative created after World War II, when Bosnia became a republic of socialist federal Yugoslavia. Damaged in the 1990s war, the original edifice, built in 1963 in Sarajevo, with its pronounced early Modernist design, is now in a state of decay.[1]

The paper is part of a larger research that aims to understand the current situation of the Museum from a history perspective, starting with its foundation, and in comparison with other public history museums on the periphery of larger nations, which have been marked by major systemic transformations in the twentieth century. The Museum is studied as part of the cultural and architectural heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina and as an institution of public history whose original narrative construction ceased to be viable. The qualification "public history" is used here in its broader meaning, as it emerged some thirty-five years ago in the U.S. among professional historians and history educators, as "a movement, methodology, and approach that promotes the collaborative study and practice of history; its practitioners embrace a mission to make their special insights accessible and useful to the public" (Weible 2008: 1).

Applying the concepts of "communicative discourse"[2] and "resilience thinking,"[3] the research is seeking to address the transformation and the potential of an active and symbiotic condition of the Museum's institution and architecture. It aims to identify and analyse the enabling conditions for the Museum's continued relevance, function, and use, in a changing environment.

* *

Evolution of museums: place, form and content

The oldest eighteenth- and nineteenth-century museums are usually associated with the period of Enlightenment and their buildings with the architecture of Historicism, whilst the newer museum architecture explores "a range of stylistic modes and social roles" challenging Sir Nicolaus Pevsner's claim that no new museum building types emerged after World War II (Giebelhausen 2011: 223). In fact, Pevsner's view is formed through an architectural history lens and, according to Giebelhausen, "oscillate[s] between two paradigms: [museum as] monument and instrument," a binary that often resurfaces in different disguises in the architectural critique of the last century in the Western world (Giebelhausen 2011: 223). Looking at the developments of museums in the last quarter of the twentieth century, she examines the same binary, coupled with the perceived articulation of an independent building type in museum architecture and "its symbolic and architectural lineage," along with the global proliferation of museums (Giebelhausen 2011). Tracing the birth of the museum from the tradition of collecting in European princely palaces, she attributes the development of museum building types to French and German eighteenth-century traditions. In her view, the lectures of Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand at the École Polytechnique in Paris, "provided European architects with blueprints for a wide range of old and new building types" (Giebelhausen 2011: 225). This included Durand's "ideal museum" design that featured a symmetrical block with four wings into which four pavilions in the shape of a Greek cross were inscribed, with a central rotunda and four inner atriums. The plan became an influential template whose variations can be identified in a number of German museums, including the Glyptothek in Munich designed by Leo von

---

[1] The authors of the winning architectural competition design in 1957 for the Museum of Revolution in Sarajevo were architects Boris Magaš, Edo Šmidihen and Radovan Horvat, all from Zagreb, Croatia.

[2] The concept of communicative discourse has been adopted from the critiques of the "Theory of Communicative Action", as discussed in Outhwaite (1994). The concept is not further detailed in this paper.

[3] The concept of *resilience* as "the capacity of ecosystems to absorb change" (Holling 1973) has, according to Falke (2016), currently evolved to *resilience thinking,* a dynamic concept integrating Resilience, Adaptability and Transformability. The evolution of the concept is not further detailed in this paper.

Klenze and Karl Friedrich von Schinkel's Altes Museum in Berlin (Giebelhausen 2011).

New museum buildings in the last century often made a significant impact on their locations by generating a sense of public pride and belonging and by actively projecting an image to the outer world. Usually associated with initiatives by city mayors and local authorities, new museums and cultural quarters channelled political and economic ambitions, expecting that the public and tourists would be attracted to the spaces designed by world-renowned architectural practices. The museums and their architecture were thus conceived as a pivotal part of an urban regeneration and reinvention strategy, with a message that a city was open for business, tourism and cultural entertainment, a practice which continues to date. Associated with the European Capital of Culture initiative, one such example is the Museum of the Civilisations of Europe and the Mediterranean (MuCEM), opened in Marseille in 2013 (Delabroy 2013). Designed by the architect Rudy Ricciotti, in association with the architect Roland Carta, MuCEM connects the seventeenth-century Fort Saint-Jean with the new exhibition space in the form of a cube wrapped in an innovative black latticework made of fibre-reinforced concrete. It is the first French national museum outside of Paris whose exhibitions aim to address cultural encounters, including colonisation and conflict, or, in the words of its director, the "deep ties and intense exchange" (Delabroy 2013).

Museum buildings play an important role in shaping an identity of locality or, in architectural parlance, they contribute to *place-making*. Giebelhausen reviews the evolution of the concept of the museum as an instrument for "embodying permanence," where the architecture of the nineteenth-century museum "was designed to make a symbolic statement, at once civic and educational" (Giebelhausen 2011: 231). The twentieth century witnessed a shift to "the notion of the museum as time's arrow," attributed to Le Corbusier whose 1939 design for the Museum of Unlimited Growth combined the square and spiral shape to outline the building which could be extended in the future following that same form (Giebelhausen 2011: 232). Le Corbusier revisited the same idea in the Museum of Knowledge proposed for the Ahmedabad Cultural Centre in India in 1951, a design concept with characteristic *pilotis* supporting an elevated cubical spiral volume enveloping the central atrium from where the stairs rose to the main entrance at first-floor level.

The Modernist ideas and concepts of "neutrality," "flexibility" and an aesthetic of the "white cube" became the leading idea to be embedded in museum design and practice. The exhibition "Modern Architecture," curated by Hitchcock and Johnson at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York in 1932, presented the work of leading European architects to an enthusiastic American audience (Frampton 1992) which helped a global launch of Modernism manifested as International Style (Giebelhausen 2011). However, this "neutrality" of International Style was gradually abandoned and, in some cases, outrightly rejected in the West after World War II. Such rejection becomes evident in other art forms, which rebelled against the "neutrality" of forms perceived as aestheticized and depoliticised. Giebelhausen claims that "in the modernist aesthetic, architecture played a subservient and allegedly 'neutral' role" (2011: 234). Its subsequent departure from ascetic forms, as illustrated by Frank Lloyd Wright's Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (1959), "modulate[d] [...] [the] museum's architecture [...] into a dynamic form [...] [in which] museum space is reconceptualised as sculpture" (Giebelhausen 2011: 234). In her view, this moment marked the rise of the "signature building" designed by an international star-architect, where location, building design and museum fuse into the trademark or brand, increasingly pushing the concept of identity of place toward commodifying agency.

The 1980s brought about a "self-conscious and playful meditation on the building type," as in Aldo Rossi's unbuilt Museum of German History, whereas in the 1990s, Alessandro Mendini with Coop Himmelb(l)au and Philippe Starck designed the Museum in Groningen, the Netherlands, as a series of structures, each with a personalised architectural stamp rather than a unifying cultural interpretation of the brief (Giebelhausen 2011: 235).

Today, Modernist architecture has gained heritage status, joining older structures which are already the focus of the conservation and reuse discourses. Many older museums housed in historic buildings, have successfully integrated the original space and new additions, while meeting the needs of natural growth and conservation requirements. Similar approaches in reuse of Modernist heritage are rare and lack the necessary conservation framework and debate. If the concept of adaptive reuse is to be upheld, the future research, and practice, will need to bridge the gap between the inherent conservation aspects of the Modernist heritage and the best examples of modern interventions on older structures. For example, a recent new museum, the House of European History in Brussels (opened in May 2017), located in an old park near the European Union institutions, combines renovation and extension of a historic building to accommodate new collections spread over six floors. The Museum's permanent exhibition is an attempt to present an evolving and inclusive European narrative. With an emphasis on rupture, some of the themes showcased here are: Accolades and Criticism; Shattering Certainties; Rebuilding a Divided Continent; Europe: A Global Power; Europe in Ruins; and Shaping Europe (House of European History 2017). The exhibitions include references to the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s and display some twenty-eight related artefacts on loan from the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, an institution further discussed in this paper.

As these examples show, there is a dynamism and a pronounced hybridity in spatial organization and forms of museums, which points to the fluidity and changing attitudes in the way the museums represent and interpret their collections and how they engage with their audiences. In other words, the presentation of "museum narrative" as well as of "museum as narrative" is an active process, calling for new modes of observing, understanding and communicating, which is further explored here.

Heritage, public history and museum narratives

Abt sees the evolution of the museum "as an institutional form [...] resulting from chance confluences of individual interests and ever-widening social demands" (2011: 132). And Kaplan argues that the "twenty-first century promises to challenge the identities that came to be assigned and defined by [...] [the nations and museums of the late nineteenth and twentieth century] as ideas and places, both imagined and experienced physically" (2011: 152). She examines the institutional birth of national museums in the Western hemisphere associated with "the early mix of early medieval mercantile capitalism and fifteenth-century European global expansion" and rooted in the humanism of the Italian Renaissance, which continued to flourish during the eighteenth-century era of scientific experimentation, rationalism and ideas of the Enlightenment (Kaplan 2011: 152). Initially, the royalty, aristocracy and educated elite collected rare objects, antiques and curiosities which then became the basis for the gradual establishment of the national museums in European capitals.

The edited volume *Heritage, Ideology and Identity in Central and Eastern Europe: Contested Pasts, Contested Presents* draws some parallels, but also highlights key differences, between countries in Western Europe and those in Central and Eastern Europe with regard to the development of the heritage discourse, and, by extension, the development of museums (Rampley 2012). According to Rampley, since the nineteenth century, the British heritage discourse and politics was marked by sentimentalism and a celebration of the Imperial past, transitioning to the twentieth-century heritage as an *industry* in its own right, and leading to a proliferation of museums and heritage centres in the latter part of the twentieth century. In his view, the British heritage policies were mainly responding and adapting to the changing nature of tourism, education and the dominance of "a commodity culture," thus suggesting that identity as a national characteristic was obscured by the bias of modern consumerism.

Rampley (2012) further suggests that heritage is appropriated differently in Central and Eastern Europe, depending on the path to nationhood taken by each country, given the region's history of foreign and colonial rule. Similarly to Kaplan (2011), he recognizes the complexity of identity formation in countries with a colonial past, as it involved both struggle with and rejection of foreign dominance and a complex social and ethno-national realignment (Harrington 2013), which impacted the sense of ownership of symbols and ritualistic representations of identity.

The changes of political rule and power, often abrupt, equally resulted in a sudden and revolutionary change of symbols and memory constructs, forcing changes of meaning, status and attitudes toward cultural heritage and its preservation. There are numerous examples of monument demolitions and overnight changes of street names and plaques, following political upheavals and situations that challenged the identity of a particular group, community or society. This is by no means unique to Europe or exclusive to armed conflict circumstances, as demonstrated by the recent controversy and civil unrest in New Orleans due to the planned removal of four older monuments dedicated to the Confederate side defeated in the American Civil War (Teague 2017).

In case of many smaller Nordic nations or countries like Ireland, Scotland or Northern Ireland, which are or have been a part of a larger political structure, cultural heritage may be seen as a tool to assert their uniqueness, tradition, or specificity in order to distinguish one nation from another, the smaller culture from the larger one, the weaker from the dominant. Alternatively, it can be seen as a backdrop to address issues of what is contested and controversial. In other words, if there is a shift from content to context, cultural heritage can be approached as a canvas for new interpretations and creation of new narratives which may better serve present needs. Crooke argues that "away from museum debate and government policy, rural and urban groups are coming together to explore their history and heritage and forming their own exhibitions and collections" (2011: 170). She notes that some such initiatives in Northern Ireland address social exclusion and other forms of community breakdown (Crooke 2011).

In parallel, multiculturalism and free movement of people in Europe and elsewhere challenge the presentation and interpretation of heritage. What used to be an instrument for representation and preservation of local identity as distinct from the identity of "others," can no longer serve the changed demographic profile of the communities. The fixed identity has become more and more an internal condition, necessitating a redefinition of what and how is manifested and whose heritage is being commemorated and preserved in public institutions. Bligaard (2000) asserts that there is a need for a broader concept of heritage as a manifestation of identity, given that hardly any nation today can claim ethnic homogeneity and the numerous forces are at work within modern nationhood. Multiculturalism is an active process in a modern pluralistic society and has already gained various forms of an institutional recognition in many countries.

In contrast, the museums devoted to a singular memory narrative of particular value to a single group, community or nation, operate within the realm of exclusivity. The singularity of thematic narrative serves the purpose of enforcing a meaning and an identity of a group, selecting and conveying signs and messages that attract and preserve interest, empathy and support, which speak either of that group or only to such group. The exclusiveness of memory representation in such a case can become problematic if it can no longer serve a rapidly changing modern pluralistic society, making the representation either redundant or contested, as has been the case, for example, of the Sarajevo Assassination narrative (Harrington 2016).

If the need for exclusivity is recognized and treated with sensitivity, as argued by McLean and Cooke, the places of a singular memory can be transformed into "sites of discursive formation, a space where the 'legends and landscapes' of the nation are presented and represented and where identities are made and re-made" (2000: 9). This proposition is based on the example of the New Museum of Scotland which is currently showcasing the heritage of the "stateless nation" in a political union with others and brimming with the changing narratives that will always be open for debate and dispute (Harrington 2013).

Whilst the questions of identity gained prominence in museum studies in the second half of the twentieth century, the more recent focus has shifted towards the museum public. Understanding not so much *what the Museum is about* but *who is the Museum for* brings to the fore the concepts of "public engagement" and "public participation." Black (2012) argues for the transformation of museums by externalisation of purpose and by self-initiated collaborative engagement with users.

Museum professionals already operate in a climate of fluidity which has necessitated more frequent review and reflection on the details of museum exhibitions and their messages. The trend of democratising and decentralising the museums is broadening the scope and questioning the meaning of "national," which points to the evolution of an institution and a potential redefinition of what a museum is.

This has been manifest more in practice rather than in any outward formal announcement. For example, the shift from the representation of a "national" to an "international" narrative has been observed in the National Museum of Ireland, in particular in the exhibitions preceding the commemorations of World War I and of the 1916 Easter Rising.[4] It appears also that the drivers of policy have changed. The policy programming up to the 1980s seems to have been gender-biased in favour of male-dominated academia, only to shift in favour of education-led policy in the 1990s and, finally, in favour of marketing-led programming and curatorship in the 2000s (Dimitrijević and Harrington 2017). Under the influence of experts with cultural and museum studies backgrounds, it is also suggested, the current programmatic leadership places the emphasis on context and creation of innovative exhibition concepts favouring "narratives" over the traditional display of objects (Dimitrijević and Harrington 2017).

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Early heritage and museum practice in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Bosnia and Herzegovina's first museum was the *Zemaljski muzej* (Landesmuseum) in Sarajevo, founded in 1888 during

4) The exhibition *Soldiers and Chiefs* in the National Museum of Ireland at Collins Barracks is showing the engagement of the Irish at home, abroad and in the twenty-first century, drawing on Ireland's military history from 1550 to present (National Museum of Ireland, 2018).

the Austro-Hungarian administration. Translated from German to English, according to Donia (2004: 4), the Museum had a Provincial or Regional status (Donia 2007: 6), with the mission to record, collect and preserve the heritage of the Province. Under direct rule from the Joint Finance Ministry in Vienna and close supervision by Minister Kallay, a purpose-designed complex of four pavilion-type buildings grouped around an interior botanical garden was built at the edge of the provincial capital Sarajevo, near the Army Barracks, in 1913.[5] It was designed by Czech-born architect Karel Pařík, who was employed in the Building Department of the Provincial Government *(Zemaljska vlada)*. The design of the Museum was in "a late Historicist" style, in line with the Central European museum traditions which were extensively studied while preparing a brief for Sarajevo's museum (Dimitrijević 1991).[6] The Museum comprised Departments of Archaeology (Prehistory and Antiquity), Natural Sciences and Ethnography, a Library, staff offices, conservation workshops and storage space.

Despite the patronising element of Habsburg officials who "saw themselves as missionaries of a cultural revival [...] [designed to] [...] end the backwardness and particularism [...] that bedevilled Bosnia's peoples" (Donia 2007: 1), the fact remains that with *Zemaljski muzej* they have set up a significant cultural centre for preservation, research and learning with "combined [...] functions of archive, library, museum, scientific institute and archaeological research" (Donia 2007: 6).[7]

Since Bosnia and Herzegovina was under the direct rule from Imperial Vienna for forty years, from the occupation in 1878, it can be said that the country's museum practice draws direct lineage from Austro-Hungarian practices and attitudes to heritage. Together with Germany, the Habsburg Empire laid the foundations to theories of restoration, conservation and preservation, based on the principles of recording and documenting. In the nineteenth century, heritage acquired almost cult status in both countries, which enabled the foundation of modern heritage practices (Rampley 2012).

However, the approaches differed between the two countries as a result of a different composition of their territories and population. The official German policy was formulated to secure the integrity of German national heritage within its national territory, and therefore the institutions associated with national heritage had a mission to shape the national identity. The situation was different in Austria-Hungary, a monarchy comprising, in addition to the two nations, a number of other territories inhabited by different, mainly Slavic populations. The heritage policy of the dual monarchy had been significantly shaped in Vienna through the work of Inspector General for Monument Protection of Austria-Hungary Professor Alois Riegl. His views underline "the multi-valent nature of architectural monuments [in the Monarchy] […] [in which] there were only a few cases where a single group—or ethnicity—could lay sole claim to being the heirs of a particular site or structure" (Rampley 2012: 2-3). This might imply that Riegl had developed and practised a sensitivity based on direct experience of a multi-ethnic cultural space, which at the time also incorporated Bosnia and Herzegovina. Riegl's significant contribution to the development of modern art history and theory (Reynolds Cordileone 2014) and the preservation of monuments (Arrhenius 2012) must have at least indirectly influenced the cultural policy of the Monarchy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a period briefly considered in this paper.

Operating only four years from its new premises until the demise of Austria-Hungary after World War I, the *Zemaljski muzej* fulfilled its public function throughout the subsequent historical periods—the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, socialist Yugoslavia and the 1990s war—till present. Closed on and off in recent years due to the lack of funding, the Museum reopened in 2015 following a public campaign (Kujundžić 2012). Like other six institutions associated with the socialist period, it has been in a legal and financial limbo since the 1990s war, receiving so far only partial and limited government support.[8]

---

[5] Recent research suggests that the significance of the institution of Zemaljski muzej and its purpose-built structure as a "most ambitious example of early museum architecture in a vast region between Budapest and Athens, Vienna and Istanbul" (Hartmuth 2012:1), has been extraordinarily overlooked. During the campaign for the reopening of the Museum in 2012, the author seeks to reinterpret the original conditions predating the building and credits the Museum staff for pushing for its completion.

[6] Pařík was posthumously dubbed "The Builder of Sarajevo," having designed and built a staggering number of buildings in Bosnia, out of which some forty-three in Sarajevo (Dimitrijević 1991: 229-232).

[7] A number of Bosnian (Juzbašić 2002; Kamberović 2013) and international historians (Vervaet 2007; Donia 2007) have revisited this period, examining, among others, how its colonial and postcolonial undertones became instruments of various current political agendas.

The original permanent exhibition in the Ethnography Department of the *Zemaljski muzej* shows the domestic life of an affluent urban family in a replicated interior décor from a Sarajevo merchant house. Together with the replica of a traditional courtroom setting with mannequins in period costumes, it all evokes the lifestyle, power and prestige vested in the Bosnian elite. The exoticism of Ottoman Bosnia that imbues these largely unchanged displays and its encounter with the Habsburgs' rule have sparked a new interest and a postcolonial reading of this "Little Orient" (Ruthner 2008; Hartmuth 2012). The Museum collections gathered in the socialist period have been extended to include the representations of rural culture and crafts.

• • • • • • • •

From Revolution to History: a new Museum for a new society

In 1963, next door to the *Zemaljski muzej,* a new purpose-designed modern building was completed, showing off its architecture in a manner of Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, in stark contrast with its neighbour (Fig. 1). It seems that the architecture of the building matched the determination of the authorities to create and support an institution representative of a new foundational narrative, aimed to speak of a new society and its alignment with progress. Originally founded as the Museum of Revolution in 1945, today's History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina was given the task to collect, document and commemorate the country's anti-fascist and national liberation struggles during World War II (Leka 2010).[9] Similar institutions were also established in other parts of Yugoslavia.

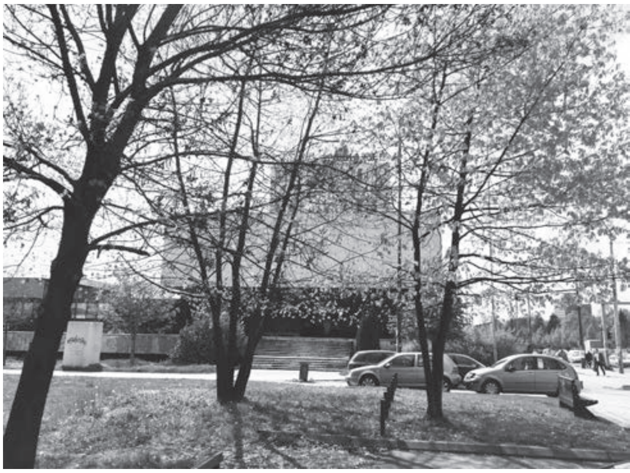


Fig. 1: The History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, view from *Zemaljski muzej,* April 2017. Photo credit: Selma Harrington.

The legal creation of the Museum of National Liberation in Sarajevo was ratified in the National Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 13 November 1945, some six months after the liberation of the country from fascist rule (Kaljanac 2010). It defined the Museum as a national institution to be overseen directly by the Ministry of Education of the National Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Article 1), whose funding would be provided by the government (Article 3) (Anon 1945). The rules regulating the internal organization and the functioning of the Museum were within the authority of the Minister for Education (Article 4) (Anon 1945).

The content, wording and timing of the law show awareness, ambition and determination to mark, celebrate and commemorate liberation as a huge popular achievement, even though a lot of detail could not be planned at the time, and it would have taken more than a decade to have a fully functioning Museum in place.

By all accounts, the Museum of Revolution had a modest output in its first decade, suffering from the lack of professional expertise and adequate premises for offices and archives. The Museum staff initially organized exhibitions in other public institutions in Sarajevo. Up to 1950, these were mainly photographic exhibitions with records from the liberation war in other parts of Yugoslavia and commemorations of the liberation of the city of Sarajevo. As the collections of military artefacts grew, including small and large weapons, uniforms and medals, the exhibitions expanded to the narratives of major battles in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the works of painters, visual artists and writers. Only in the early 1960s new professional curators, historians, art historians, architects and photographers joined the Museum staff, coinciding with the appointment of an energetic new director, Dr Moni Finci, who oversaw the construction of the new building (Leka 2010: 9).

---

[8] The seven "unresolved" national institutions are: *Zemaljski muzej BiH*/National Museum; *Historijski muzej BiH*/History Museum; *Muzej književnosti i pozorišne umjetnosti BiH*/Literature and theatre museum; *Nacionalna i univerzitetska biblioteka BiH*/National and University Library; *Kinoteka BiH*/Cinematheque; *Umjetnička galerija BiH*/Arts Gallery; and *Biblioteka za slijepa i slabovidna lica BiH*/Library for the Blind and Visually Impaired (Kujundžić 2012).

[9] First named the Museum of National Liberation, it was changed shortly after to the Museum of Revolution (Leka 2010).

Once established and with a privileged position and support by the political structure, the Museum's scope broadened to create and lead the network of thematically similar regional centres. Between 1975 and 1984 it continuously organized scientific conferences and published a periodical *Zbornik radova (Almanac).* The contributors came from former Yugoslav centres like Zagreb, Belgrade and other towns, but also included distinguished guests such as Zbynek Z. Stransky from former Czechoslovakia.[10] Thematically covering Museology and Museum functions, at a glance, *Zbornik radova* features recurring topics on the museum exhibit and its objectification, including the examination of the current situation of museums and the implications for future practice (Zbornik 1975-1984).[11]

The latter years show a preoccupation with the perceived general crisis of museums (Bauer 1982) and the critique of the existing practice (Hasanagić 1982). This included ideas to further develop the specific societal themes to examine the economic conditions, civic engagement and history of political parties and revolutionary workers' movement. Critical of museum stagnation, Bauer listed problems, such as the "inadequate condition for the protection of museum collections; lack of working space; professional crisis due to inadequate structure of expertise and absolute lack of technical expertise; internal academic, scientific and professional deficiency; communication fatigue towards the public; negative attitudes to the funding of culture; lack of active promotion and educational work of museums" (1982: 17-8). He strongly called for a change in local practices, for a move from "passivity" at the workplace, and for the establishment of a formal Museum Network (Bauer 1982: 24-7).[12]

In summary, the contributions to the *Zbornik radova* issues show that it was already clear in the late 1980s that the existing museum concept in the region was, as Leka puts it, ideologically "frozen" (2010: 16). The internal debates about the need to widen the Museum of Revolution's mission and focus began to be externalised, including the initiatives to change its name.[13]

• • • • • • • •

Charting Bosnian sovereignty up to the break-up of Yugoslavia and the post-Dayton peace

The transformations of the Museum of Revolution and its current incarnation, the History Museum, are in many ways symbolic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country seeking to reconstruct its identity and to steady its course to a durable prosperity. The break-up of Yugoslavia and the 1992 aggression, whose aim was to "carve up" Bosnia between neighbouring Croatia and Serbia, have also exposed the underlying issues of historical continuity, territorial integrity, state sovereignty over the entirety of its territory and equal rights to all its citizens. These were all gravely violated during the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the period briefly sketched here, with reference to the earlier history of the country.

---

[10] Stransky is considered the "father of scientific museology" rooted in the social sciences and the founder of the School of Museological Thinking in Brno, which aimed to connect museum practice to a specific theoretical system.

[11] The information from the original sources in Bosnian/Croat/Serbian language is translated by the lead author.

[12] Bauer's authority and expertise may have been strengthened by his international networking through the International Council of Museums—ICOM and the participation at the General Assembly themed "The Responsibility of Museums for World Heritage" in 1980.

[13] The name History Museum was printed in some tourist brochures prior to the official name change in 1993 (Sarajevo Tourist Guide 1990).

Caught between the external threat and an internal vulnerability due to its composition which defies the "logic of the ethnic nation-state,"[14] the official Bosnian identity narrative sought its roots in the Medieval Bosnian Kingdom (1180-1463).[15] According to Malcolm, it was during this time that, "despite its intermittent civil wars and invasions, Bosnia had achieved real prosperity" (1994: 24). After that, the country and the wider region fell under the military, political and cultural domination of the Ottoman Empire for some four hundred years. This was followed by the forty years of Austro-Hungarian rule (1878-1918) and the subsequent incorporation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the two Yugoslav states after World War I.[16]

Malcolm maintains that "Bosnia was the only constituent element of [Kingdom of] Yugoslavia which retained its identity" (1994: 156-173), by way of retaining its territorial integrity within the reorganized thirty-three regions of the newly formed Kingdom. This changed in 1929 with the abolition of the constitution and King Alexander's dictatorship. This "imposed a completely new division of the Yugoslav territory […] arranged […] to cut across the old borders of the constituent elements of the Yugoslav state," which meant that "[f]or the first time in more than four hundred years, Bosnia had been partitioned to the detriment of each if its communities" (Malcolm, 1994: 169). The internal political crisis in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, fuelled by Serbian nationalism and matched by the Croat one, further escalated ahead of the Nazi occupation. The secret 1939 Agreement between the Croat and Serb leaders Maček and Cvetković eventually led to the break-up of the Kingdom and, consequently, the absorption of Bosnia into the Independent Croatian State allied to Hitler's occupational force.

After World War II, Bosnia and Herzegovina became one of the six constituent republics and two autonomous regions of the "second Yugoslavia," a country forged as a socialist federal project, through the national liberation movement of partisans led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Ramet 2006). The successive federal Yugoslav constitutions were designed to maintain a balance of power among the republics and prevent more populous ones from dominating the smaller ones. Despite the strong one-party state system, "the country was decentralised to an unprecedented extent" (Silber and Little 1995: xxvi). Having broken away from the Soviet-dominated Eastern Bloc in 1948, Yugoslavia navigated between East and West under President Tito, also forging political and commercial alliances with developing and non-aligned countries in Africa and Asia.[17] Its political and economic model was based on the Marxist principles, characterised by the privileged public ownership and distribution of wealth, managed by institutions and mechanisms and defined as a socialist self-management system of governance. The system permeated all aspects of life, but it is important to distinguish it from the so-called "state socialism" models characteristic to countries in Eastern Europe at the time (Bošković 2011). The socialist agenda was to make culture accessible and participatory for "working people," as opposed to the perceived older exclusive or elitist practices. Culture and sports were seen as means to promote socialist values, whose definition remained a work in progress. The participation of the left-leaning intellectuals, writers, poets and painters, in the national liberation war gave them a prominent role in the foundation of the new state, its narratives, identity formation and its institutions (Bošković 2011). This also included architects.

The rise of Serbian nationalism among Belgrade intellectuals in the mid-1980s, the subsequent harnessing of nationalist rhetoric by Slobodan Milošević and a matching reaction in Croatia, led eventually

[14] Bringa astutely observes: "Since being Bosnian was a synthesis of the historical and cultural experiences of all three *nacije* living on common territory where the different sources of people's identities were acknowledged and even emphasised, it represented a contradiction of the logic of nationalism which, after the defeat of the Yugoslav credo of 'brotherhood and unity,' seems to have been the only viable recipe for political mobilization and state building" (1995: 33).

[15] As an example, a copy of the Charter of Ban Kulin, written on August 29, 1189, in the name of this Bosnian ruler and granting trade and passage rights to Ragusan traders, is today kept in the entrance hall of the Government building in Sarajevo.

[16] The First Yugoslavia was founded as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, 1918-1929. It was subsequently renamed The Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 1929-1941. Having been proclaimed in 1943 in Jajce, Bosnia and Herzegovina, during the World War II national liberation struggle the country was first named Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FNRJ), 1945-1963. This was changed to Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ), 1963-1991 (Ramet 2006).

[17] Socialist Yugoslavia was the founding member of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which was officially established at Belgrade Conference in September 1961 at President Tito's initiative (Government of Zaire 2001).

to the dismantling of the Yugoslav system which, according to Silber and Little "was deliberately and systematically killed off" (1995: xxiii). The aggression on Bosnia and Herzegovina and war on its territory has already been recognized as targeted destruction (Malcolm 1994), genocide (Gutman 1993), and ethnic cleansing *(etničko čišćenje)* (Silber and Little 1995). The conflict was engineered from outside, fuelled initially from Belgrade, and performed by nationalist Serb forces made of paramilitary units and the former Yugoslav army, which effectively transformed itself into an eighty-thousand strong Bosnian Serb Army. Stationed in Bosnia in 1992, it soon occupied some 70 percent of the territory expelling non-Serbs (Silber Little 1995: 268; Baumann *et al.* 2015).

This was further complicated from 1992 to 1994 by the outbreak of fighting between Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats and the formation of the Croat-controlled autonomous region (Malcolm 1994; Silber and Little 1995). Mindful of the complexity of the war which cannot be detailed here, it can be said that, in effect, the multiple localised fighting added a civil war dimension with atrocities happening on all sides (Shrader 2003).

For almost four years, the international news broadcasted the details of the shelling, atrocities, expulsions, killings, concentration camps, mass rape, the siege of Sarajevo and the destruction of infrastructure throughout the country, including the targeting of the Old Bridge in Mostar by the Croat paramilitaries (Silber and Little 1995: 323). The Dayton Peace Agreement (1995), launched in the U.S. on November 21, 1995 and signed in Paris on December 14, 1995, put an end to the war. The parties to the agreement were the new successor states of former Yugoslavia—Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (now the Republic of Serbia)—as the countries with responsibility and vested interest in the conflict.[18] It was agreed that the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina would comprise two "entities:" the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and the Republic Srpska (RS),[19] with a separate District of Brčko. The overall governance was by order of the Office of the High Representative (OHR) assigned to the State on March 8, 2000 (Anon 1997). The Federation was further divided into Cantons and these into Municipalities, whereas the Republic Srpska was divided into Municipalities.

The OHR in Bosnia and Herzegovina is charged with overseeing the civilian implementation of the Dayton Agreement but is deemed to close as a precondition even for a candidature for EU membership (Anon 2009). However, the recent address by the High Representative to the UN Security Council in fact calls for the increased efforts by the international community to promote reconciliation, including the need for more "prescriptive" measures concerning necessary reforms, and for maintaining "all of the tools at […][OHR's] disposal to prevent any further deterioration of the situation" (Inzko 2018).

• • • • • • • •

Destruction of heritage and fragmentation of memory and institutions

The catastrophic scope and intensity of the 1990s war shattered the trust and all previously shared cultural narratives, but also profoundly altered the institutions of governance. These are now dominated by the three main nationalistic parties, representing Bosniaks, Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs, who have risen to power during the war and have benefited from the post-war transition and privatization of the economy in line with a neo-liberal doctrine. This means that the institutions of the former system were replaced, subsumed or demoted within an asymmetric, complex and complicated system with built-in tensions and separatist tendencies. The impact on spatial and urban planning, building control and heritage protection is a further fragmentation of responsibility and an exposure to crude neo-liberal developments and foreign investment with limited regard for place-making (Ugljen Ademović and Turkušić 2012).

---

[18] Article I of the Dayton Peace Agreement (1995) states: […] the Parties shall fully respect the sovereign equality of one another, shall settle disputes by peaceful means, and shall refrain from any action, by threat or use of force or otherwise, against the territorial integrity or political independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina or any other State.

[19] This is not to be confused with Republic of Serbia which is one of the successor countries of former Yugoslavia.

This situation places cultural institutions (re)constituted after the Dayton Peace Agreement in a precarious position, between numerous designated patrons at the state, entity, district and cantonal level, which is further complicated by the post-war transition in economy and society (Bray 2004). Whilst the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage and institutions in the war were acts of "obliteration of memory," the post-war political structure allowed a "segmentation of memory," in which Sarajevo's archives, libraries and museums have been either devastated or actively neglected by the authorities (Donia 2004). The selective undermining and marginalizing of the institutions that survived the war, means that the "de(con) struction" by military means has been effectively replaced by peaceful measures, or the lack of them, with the same effect.

The UNESCO overview shows that there are only two state-level institutions in charge of protection and preservation of heritage in the country: the Commission to Preserve National Monuments and the Ministry of Civil Affairs; nine other institutions have this responsibility in the two entities (Republic Srpska and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the Brčko District, with six other institutions at the cantonal levels (Mekić 2006). The status of the Commission to Preserve National Monuments is based on the constitutional provisions inAnnex 8 of the Dayton Peace Agreement, where the right to cultural heritage is linked as a condition for the return of communities. Given the scope and aims of the war, the Commission's task of compiling the list of protected monuments is enormous, as elucidated in a comprehensive study *Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage* (Walasek *et al.* 2015). Its role is also limited and stops short of implementation of protection, which then becomes the duty of owners, local authorities or entity institutions without adequate enforcement provisions. The lack of political consensus on the significance, ownership and care is also complicated by a commonly adopted classification of heritage, which often favours the ethnoreligious criterion rather than a qualification by a historic period.

The examination of Sarajevo's museums by Gunsburger Makaš outlines the key thematic narratives and tracks the gradual change and fragmentation of alignment from the socialist period (Gunsburger Makaš 2012). She observes the display of periods of ruptures: Histories of the 1914 Assassination of Franz Ferdinand, Histories of World War II, and Histories of the 1990s Siege of Sarajevo, as the representations of major conflicts that have marked the country. This implies a trend of singularisation of narratives tailored to each institution. Equally, the multicultural message persists across a number of institutions displaying the "self-reliance and clever resourcefulness of Sarajevans who managed to survive the forty-four months they were cut from the rest of the world" (Gunsburger Makaš 2012:12). In her view, "[t]his multicultural identity […] [is] stressed through some major omissions [...] [so that] World War II, the interwar and communist periods are not discussed in any branch […] [.] [I]t is as if Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina were never part of Yugoslavia. […] [The] contemporary historiography […] more generally has overwhelmingly shifted to a focus on the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman eras as well as the medieval Bosnian kingdom" (Gunsburger Makaš 2012:13).

However, in view of the more recent developments and the persistence of commemorations with the anti-fascist narrative, these observations deserve further scrutiny. According to the Director of the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the only two regular remembrance events, the Day of Liberation of Sarajevo (April 6, 1945) and the Day of the Bosnian statehood (November 25, 1943), receive funding by the City of Sarajevo or the Cantonal Government with predictability.[20]

• • • • • • • •

Transition and the *Besieged Sarajevo* exhibition

Located close to Government buildings and Tršćanska ulica, which became known as the Sniper Alley,[21] the Museum building suffered from shelling and fighting in the war. Close-up, there are bullet holes, severe marks of water damage, steady loss of stone cladding, exposed concrete and corroding steel. Its once-sharp edges and smooth volumes are deformed. The dilapidation caused by war damage and post-war lack of maintenance is slowly turning the building into a seemingly abandoned urban ruin. Walking past the entrance towards the river Miljacka and negotiating by an armoured vehicle from World War II, the view opens to Café Tito, named after the former Yugoslav President. Occupying part of the former plant room, its walls and alcoves are adorned with posters, slogans and memorabilia themed on the leading figure and symbols of the socialist period (Harrington *et al.* 2017).

Having overcome a period of bare survival until the early 2000s, the History Museum in Sarajevo has taken a new course. Although, since 2012, it has been formally recognized as a national monument based on the quality of its modernist architectural composition and its public mission, it lacks the security of funding and general care. While continuing the institution's public function, the Museum's small professional team is almost completely left to its own devices.

Entering the main exhibition hall on a gloomy and cold winter day, the space looks bleak. The ceiling tiles are missing, exposing the light aluminium grid and concrete soffit underneath the damaged glazing of the roof-lights. Scattered around are a few original tube-and-glass display cabinets with unusual exhibits—a plastic crate on wheels, a recycled cardboard lamp pedestal, a remodelled pressure cooker/stove, a "hand-made lamp of cannibalised bicycle parts […] with the handle of a coffee grinder," and so on (Goodman 2014: 55). To a typically young Western visitor, it is at first difficult to understand what the exhibition is about (Fig. 2).

The memories of personal experiences expressed through these real and virtual records represent what might be termed as a "heritage of destruction." The objects are displayed with sparse descriptions and commentary open to interpretation by the visitor. Seemingly a deliberate avoidance of dissent is visible in "a thematic approach with objects and information grouped under headings such as water, light, food, weapons, communication, hygiene, medicine, sport, and so on" (Gunsburger Makaš 2012: 11). Close-up, the artefacts donated by citizens who experienced the siege of Sarajevo between April 5, 1992 and February 1996, convey how the city (and the country) was cut off from normality, during almost four years of constant shelling from the surrounding hills. This was accompanied by shortages of electricity, gas, food, water and dependence on, at times, "perversely unhelpful" humanitarian aid (Goodman 2014: 55). The ironic take on the quality of such food aid is expressed in the nearby monument in the shape of an enlarged military food can.

The current permanent exhibition themed on the siege is a work in progress. First installed as an improvised display in 2003, titled "Survival Skills," it gained support from Sweden as a touring exhibition *"Opkoljeno Sarajevo* (Besieged Sarajevo)" in 2004 and 2005. It returned

[20] Lead author's interview with the Museum Director, May 6, 2016.

[21] This area was heavily targeted by the besieging Serb-nationalist forces in an attempt to split the city in two parts.

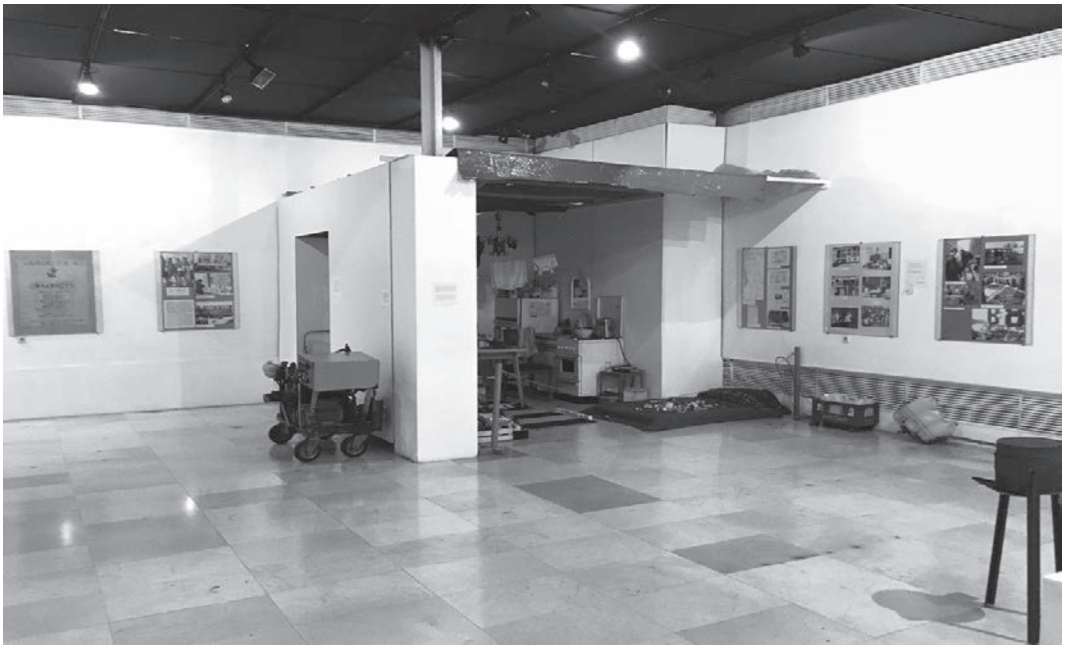


Fig.2: The *Besieged Sarajevo exhibition,* the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, July 2017. Photo credit: Selma Harrington.

home in 2007 to broadened display in the main hall of the Museum, which had in the meantime opened after a period of closure due to lack of funds (Gunsburger Makaš 2012). Although the displayed material and objects “suggest the senselessness of the siege and the innocence and helplessness” (Gunsburger Makaš 2012: 11), they are also proof of the Sarajevans’ will to resist it “by preserving their dignity and maintaining the memory of normal life by ingenious improvising” (Goodman 2014: 55).

A number of recent temporary exhibitions relate to the workers’ movements like the *“Husinska buna* (The Husino Miners’ rebellion)” (Anon 2014) and the *“Dostojanstvo rada* (The Dignity of Work),”[22] thus linking to the legacy of the socialist period. Other projects, such as *“Nikad im bolje nije bilo?* (They never had it better?)” with the Museum of Yugoslavia in Belgrade (M.Ču. 2015), or the Open Archives project, use the material loaned from public and the Revolution collections, respectively. Whilst making up for some previously observed gaps, these, as well as the permanent exhibition, tend to be curated in a manner which speaks for itself. In as much as that might be obvious to generations of local public, many of the messages of this clearly important and rich period might be missed by other visitors, due to the sparse interpretative material.

The Museum team, like six other “unresolved” national institutions, continues to operate within the systemic vacuum, colloquially described as *“ni na nebu, ni na zemlji* (neither in the sky nor on earth)” (Šimić 2013). This means that state or other government funding is sporadic and the Museum competes with other institutions for project grants from the Ministry of Civil Affairs or from the City authorities. Such situation is a huge challenge, but “being off the radar” also leaves a possibility for a creative resourcefulness, on which the Museum seems to thrive.

The openness to creative networking and alignment with the global commemoration themes and trends brings new forms of transnational collaboration. With responsiveness, adaptability and a relaxed formality, the Museum has undertaken joint

[22] The latter was in partnership with the *Sindikat radnika trgovine i uslužnih djelatnosti BiH (STBiH)* (Syndicate of Trade and Service Workers of B&H) in 2016 (Anon 2016).

projects, among other, with institutions commemorating the Holocaust, such as the Museum Jasenovac in Croatia, the Shoah Memorial in Paris and with the Imperial War Museum in London (Šimić 2013).

Through association with a number of architectural initiatives, the campaign continues for the renovation of the building by emphasising its value as part of a Socialist Modernity (Ugljen Ademović and Turkušić 2012). The Museum was a guest at a prelude to the Venice Biennale 2016 under the banner "People's Museum" (Korody 2016). It has also received funding from the U.S. Embassy for emergency roof repairs.

Conclusions

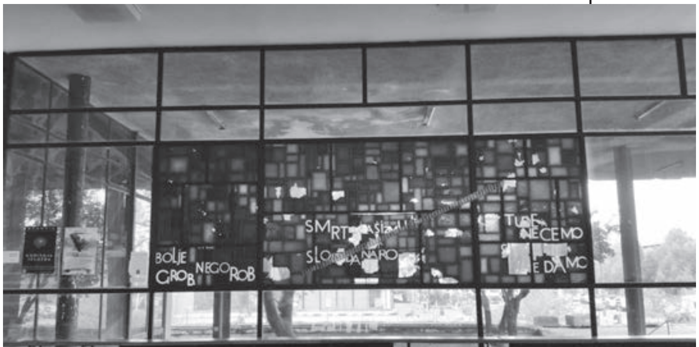
The gaze back to the first incarnation of the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the Museum of Revolution, points to the importance of political will and secured government funding, as essential at the time of its foundation. Ideologically biased, there was a determination to create the material expression of the revolutionary character of evolving socialist Yugoslav narrative. This created a solid position and space for the Museum to evolve professionally in keeping with the regional and international trends. Its thematic narrative gradually lost the appeal to the public, not only for ideological but also for cultural reasons. Its original concept was *inclusive,* "people" oriented, but the singularity and fixity of memory could no longer respond to the changing society in the same format. When the 1990s war necessitated the Revolution collections to be moved to the basement, this also symbolically turned them into the repository of the past and opened up a vacant space to be filled with new thematic content.

To architecture enthusiasts, despite its rundown appearance, the Museum building still represents an embodiment of a Modernist dream, of the ideal "neutral," "white cube," whose abstraction and asceticism was well matched to the early development of Bosnia and Herzegovina in socialist Yugoslavia. Taken as a materialisation of a pure possibility, it is shocking and ironic to observe this "ideal" slowly turning into a ruin.

The answer to the question: "Why is a protected national monument left to such ruination?" lingers in the gap between the two state entities, where the only prop available to the Museum team is resilience. Such resilience is underpinned by self-reliance and a will to transform while reframing and reaffirming the core values set at the foundation of the Museum (Fig. 3).

The evident orientation to the realm of "public" rather than "national" is redefining the meaning of "people's museum" (Urban Think Tank 2016). An inclusive and international approach and sensitivity with specific narratives are demonstrated by several temporary exhibitions and events, so that even without a structured process of reconciliation in the country, the Museum is effectively opening up as a safe space for a dialogical communication between communities. Engaging on a collegial basis and outside of the formal institutional framework, it is often defying the entity divisions. Its resilience as an institution is an illustration and a metaphor for the fragile and resilient State, as both are daily

Fig. 3: Main entrance hall with original stained glass artwork, including anti-fascist and independence slogans, History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, October 2016. Photo credit: Selma Harrington.



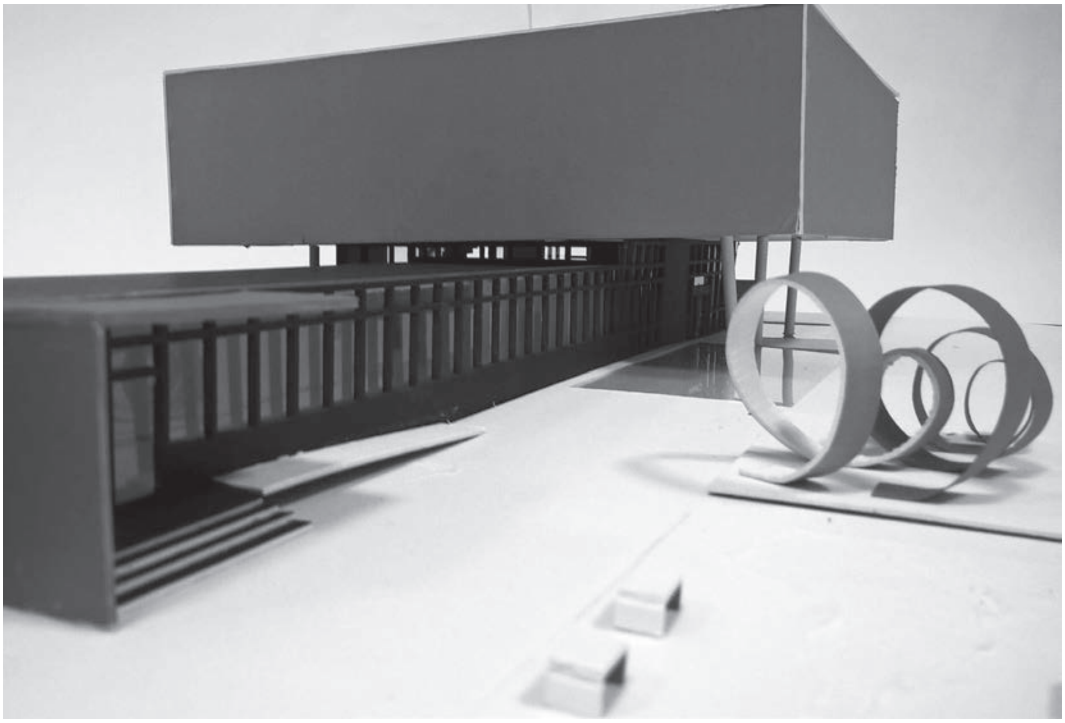


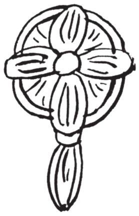
Fig. 4: Group Design Studio project-GCD 2016. Lead author's photo archive.

negotiating the present while defragmenting the recent past in order to move forward.

The original architectural structure of the Museum has to be understood, evaluated and brought to a condition which suits the present needs. The symbiotic bond of original architecture with the core mission of the Museum is an embodiment of the shared social achievements, a heritage whose universal values could provide a template, an open space and a new frame for a (re)construction of the public narratives in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The permanent "Besieged Sarajevo" exhibition and its public ownership is an important part of living memory. This evolving narrative has placed the Museum amidst local, regional and trans-national professional collaboration and remains crucial for the process of questioning the past for the benefit of the present. Its dominant message of resourcefulness and survival may well indicate that in future this will become the Museum of Resilience, with a mission to research, study and educate in self-reliance and inventiveness, which are all necessary and universal skills in a world of recurring war-and-peace cycles.

The Museum's outreach is signalling the potential for a wide range of co-creational projects in education and public engagement (Fig. 4). That is gradually changing the perceptions and understanding of public, private and inter-institutional collaboration, leading to the development of new business models and interaction. Whilst the biggest challenge remains to be an adequate institutional support at the level of decision-making and funding allocation, the new research needs to focus on systemic issues, identification of obstacles and development of new forms of facilitation and support methods for the new, emerging museum practice.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abt, J. 2011. "The Origins of the Public Museum." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. S. Macdonald, 115-134. Chichester, West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Anon. 1945. "Law on constituting of the Museum of national liberation in Sarajevo." *The Official Gazette of Federal Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo: Federal Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 28 November.

Anon. 2016. "Nije vrijeme da dostojanstven rad zavrsi u muzeju (FOTO)." *fokus.ba*. 7, October. [Available online at: https://www.fokus.ba/vijesti/bih/nije-vrijeme-da-dostojanstven-rad-zavrsi-u-muzeju/486214/; accessed 10 May 2018].

Anon. 2009. "Communique of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council." 19/11. [Available online at: http://www.ohr.int/?p=35249; accessed 16 May 2018].

Anon. 1997. "A World Bank Country Study Bosnia and Herzegovina. From Recovery to Sustainable Growth:" 1-138. Work in Progress for Public Discussion. Washington DC: The World Bank, 1997. [Available online at: http://documents.worldbank.org; accessed 11 May 2018].

Anon. 2014. "Rudari Kreke posjetili Historijski muzej u Sarajevu (FOTO)." 23 December, *radiosarajevo.ba*. [Available online at: https://www.radiosarajevo.ba/metromahala/kultura/rudari-kreke-posjetili-historijski-muzej-u-sarajevu-foto/175269; accessed 2 March 2018].

Anon. 1990. "Sarajevo Tourist Guide." Sarajevo: Turistički Savez Grada Sarajeva.

Arrhenius, T. 2012. *The Fragile Monument, On Conservation and Modernity.* London: Artifice Books.

Bauer, A. 1982. "The Modern museum and its influence on future museums." *Zbornik radova Muzeja revolucije Sarajevo*. Godina VII, 7: 15-29.

Baumann, R. F., G.W. Gawrych, and W. E. Kretchik. 2015. *Armed Peacekeepers in Bosnia*. Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press.

Black, G. 2012. *Transforming Museums in the Twenty-first Century.* Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Bligaard, M. 2000. "The Image of Denmark, Museums as Sanctuaries of Identity." In *Heritage and Museums, Shaping National Identity*, ed. J. M. Fladmark, 287-298. Aberdeen: Donhead Publishing.

Bošković, D. 2011. "Intelektualci u vlasti: Društveni obrasci u formativnim godinama druge Jugoslavije." *Filozofija i društvo.* 3: 121-135.

Bray, J. 2004. "MIGA's Experience in Conflict Affected Countries: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina." *CONFLICT PREVENTION & RECONSTRUCTION,* Paper No.13/June. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PAPERS: 1-61.

Bringa, T. 1995. *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way, Identity and Community in a Central Bosnian Village*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Crooke, E. 2011. "Museums and Community." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. S. Macdonald, 170-185. Chichester, West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Delabroy, C. 2013. "Marseille museum a bridge between Mediterranean cultures." June, *france24.com*. [Available online at: https://www.france24.com/en/20130604-marseille's-mucem-offers-bridge-between-mediterranean-europe; accessed 23 February 2018].

Dimitrijević, B., and S. Harrington. 2017. "Architecture and Museum Studies: Contemporary Challenges." Workshop Report. Glasgow: Department of Architecture, Engineering, University of Strathclyde.

Dimitrijević, B., 1997. "Arhitekt Karlo Paržik." *PhD Thesis*. Zagreb: University of Zagreb. [Available online at: https://www.karloparzik.com, accessed 2 March 2018].

Donia, R.J. 2013. "Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Proximate Colony in the Twilight of Empire." *anubih.ba*. [Available online at: http://www.anubih.ba/godisnjak/god42/40.30.pdf, accessed 16 May 2018].

Donia, R.J. 2007. "THE PROXIMATE COLONY: Bosnia-Herzegovina under Austro-Hungarian Rule." *KAKANIENREVISITED*. [Available online at: http://www.cidom.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Robert-Donia-The-Proximate-colony-Bosnia-Herzegovina-under-Austro-Hungarian-rule.pdf; accessed 18 August 2018].

Donia, R.J. 2004. "Sarajevo Archives and Cultural Memory under Fire: Destruction and the Post-War Nationalist Transformation." *Historijski arhiv Bosne i*

Hercegovine. [Available online at: https://web.archive.org/web/20100917210622/http://www.arhivsa.ba/ica2004/robert.htm; accessed 16 May 2018].

Falke, C. "Resilience." *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Environmental Science,* Sep 20. 161-68. [Available online at: https://environmentalscience.oxfordre.com; accessed 26 June 2017].

Frampton, K. 1992. *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Fyfe, G. 2011. "Sociology and the Social Aspects of Museums." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. S. Macdonald, 33-49. Chichester, West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Giebelhausen, M. 2011. "Museum Architecture: A Brief History." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. S. Macdonald, 223-244. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Goodman, J. 2014. "Improvised Design in the Siege of Sarajevo."*A Magazine of Unexpected Creativity*, Issue 4: 42-57. [Available online at: https://worksthatwork.com/4/improvised-design-in-the-siege-of-sarajevo; accessed 21 May 2018].

Government of Zaire. 2001. "The Non-Aligned Movement: Background Information." 21 September. [Archived from the original at *web.archive.org* on 9 February 2016. Retrieved 23 April 2011; accessed 11 May 2018].

Gunsburger Makaš, E. 2012. "Museums and the History and Identity of Sarajevo." *Cities and Societies in Comparative Perspective.* Conference paper. Prague: European Association for Urban History: 1-13.

Gutman, R. 1993. *A Witness to Genocide*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Harrington, S. 2017. "Pure Architecture and Anti-fascist Revolution: The Case of the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina." *Society of Architectural Historians.* Conference paper (unpublished). Glasgow: 9 May: 1-6.

Harrington, S. 2013 "The Politics of Memory: The Museum Sarajevo 1878-1918 and the Centenary of the Catastrophe." *MPhil Thesis.* Dublin: Trinity College Dublin, 31 August.

Harrington, S. 2016. "A Girl Called Bosnia, the Prince and the Villain. How We Remembered the Sarajevo Assassination." In *The Long Shots of Sarajevo 1914,* eds. Preljević, V.& C. Ruthner, 663-681. Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto Verlag Gmbh + Co. KG.

Harrington, S., B. Dimitrijević, and A. Salama. 2017. "Modernist Architecture, Conflict, Heritage and Resilience: The Case of the Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina." *Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research*. November: 178-192.

Hartmuth, M. 2012. "The Habsburg Landesmuseum in Sarajevo in its Ideological and Architectural Contexts: A Reinterpretation." *Centropa* XII/2, May: 194-205.

Hartmuth, M. 2012. "The Architecture of the Zemaljski Muzej in Sarajevo: A Reconsideration of its History and a Reassessment of its Significance." [Available online at: http://www.cultureshutdown.net/the-architecture-of-the-zemaljski-muzej-in-sarajevo-a-reconsideration-of-its-history-and-a-reassessment-of-its-significance/; accessed 9 May 2018].

Hasanagić, E. 1982. "Savremenost kao osnov muzejske tematike." *Zbornik radova Muzeja revolucije Sarajevo.* Godina VII, 7: 31-39.

Holling, C.S. 1973. "Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems." *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*. 4: 1-23.

House of European History. "Pocket Guide-Permanent Exhibition." *House of European History.* Brussels: European Parliament, 2017.

Inzko Valentin, 2018. "Remarks by High Representative Valentin Inzko to the UN Security Council." [Available online at: https://www.ohr.int.05.08.2018; accessed 13 May 2018].

Juzbašić, Dž. 2002. "Politika i privreda u Bosni i Hercegovini pod Austrougarskom upravom." [Available online at: http://www.anubih.ba/images/publikacije/posebna_izdanja/OHN/35_posebna_izdanja_CXVI_35_full.pdf; accessed 10 May 2018].

Kaljanac, M., ed. 2010. *65 godina 1945-2010, Historijski muzej Bosne i Hercegovine.* Sarajevo: Blicdruk.

Kamberović, H. 2013. "Historiografija u Bosni i Hercegovini u službi politike." January. [Available online at: http://www.researchgate.net, accessed 3 March 2018].

Kaplan, F.E.S. 2011. "Making and Remaking National Identities." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. S. Macdonald, 152-169. Chichester, West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing. Ltd.

Korody, N. 2016. *Examining the 2016 Venice Biennale:* "*Sarajevo Now.*" 28 May. [Available online at: https://archinect.com/features/article/149947453/examining-the-2016-venice-biennale-sarajevo-now; accessed 10 May 2018].

Kujundžić, E. 2012. "Sedam institucija kulture u Sarajevu i njihov status." 24.10. [Available online at: http://www.tacno.net/novosti/sedam-institucija-kulture-u-sarajevu-i-njihov-status/; accessed 16 May 2018].

Leka, A. 2010. "65 godina Historijskog muzeja Bosne i Hercegovine." In *65 godina Historijskog muzeja Bosne i Hercegovine*, ed. M. Kaljanac, 7-20. Sarajevo: Historijski muzej Bosne i Hercegovine.

Malcolm, N. 1994. *Bosnia: A Short History*. London: Macmillan Publishers Limited.

Macdonald, S., ed. 2011. *A Companion to Museum Studies.* Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

McLean, F. & Cooke, S. 2000. "Communicating Identity, Perceptions of the Museum of Scotland." In *Heritage and Museums, Shaping National Identity*, ed. J.M. Fladmark, 147-159. Aberdeen: Donhead Publishing.

M.Ču./Faktor.ba/. 2015. "Historijski muzej BiH: Otvorena izložba 'Nikad im nije bilo bolje.'" 17 October. [Available online at: https://www.faktor.ba/vijest/historijski-muzej-bih-otvorena-izlozba-nikad-im-nije-bilo-bolje-foto-212772; accessed 2 March 2018.

Mekić, B. 2006. "Chart of Institutions responsible for the Protection and Preservation of National Monuments in Bosnia and Herzegovina." Internal, UNESCO, Cultural Heritage Laws Database. [Available online at: http://www.unesco.org/culture/natlaws/media/pdf/bosnia-herzegovina/ba_chartinstrepsblesnatmonts_engtof.pdf; accessed 10 May 2018].

Ministarstvo civilnih poslova Bosne i Hercegovine. 2018. “Potpisan Memorandum o razumjevanju s ciljem podrške radu ustanova kulture od općeg značaja i interesa za Bosnu i Hercegovinu za period 2016-2018 godina.” 15.09. [Available online at: http://www.mcp.gov.ba/vijesti/default.aspx?id=5983&langTag=hr-HR; accessed 11 May 2018].

National Museum of Ireland. 2018. “Soldiers and Chiefs - The Irish at War at Home and Abroad from 1550 to the present day.” [Available online at: https://www.museum.ie/Decorative-Arts-History/Exhibitions/Current-Exhibitions/Soldiers-Chiefs-(1); accessed 10 May 2018.

Outhwaite,W. 1994. *Habermas: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ramet, S.P. 2006. *The Three Yugoslavias. State Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005.* Washington D.C: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

Rampley, M., ed. 2012. *Heritage, Ideology and Identity in Central and Eastern Europe: Contested Pasts, Contested Presents*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press.

Reynolds Cordileone, D. 2014. *Alois Riegl in Vienna 1875-1905: An Institutional Biography.* Burlington,VT: Ashgate.

Ruthner, C. 2008. “Habsburg’s Little Orient. A Post/Colonial Reading of Austrian and German Cultural Narratives on Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1878-1918.” 22.05. [Available online at: http://www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/fallstudie/CRuthner5.pdf, accessed 11 May 2018].

Silber, L., and A. Little. 1995. *The Death of Yugoslavia*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.

Shrader, C.R. 2003. *The Muslim-Croat Civil War in Central Bosnia: A Military History, 1992-1994.* College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press.

Šimić, A. 2013. “Dovijamo se kako znamo.” 23 August. [Available online at: https://sarajevo.co.ba/dovijamo-se-kako-znamo/; accessed 16 May 2018].

Teague, M. 2017. “‘If I had my gun on me, I’d shoot him’: the civil war over statues in New Orleans.” 1 May. [Available online at: https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/may/01/gun-shoot-civil-war-statues-new-orleans; accessed 8 May 2017].

The Dayton Peace Agreement. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. 14 December 1995. [Available online at: https://www.osce.org/bih/126173; accessed 16 May 2018].

Ugljen Ademović, N., and E. Turkušić. 2012. “Sarajevo Marijin Dvor the Formation of a New City Centre.” In *Unfinished Modernisations: Between Utopia and Pragmatism,* eds. Mrduljaš, M. and V. Kulić, 233-245. Zagreb: Croatian Architects’ Association.

Urban Think Tank. 2016. “Reactivate Sarajevo, Venice Biennale 2016.” 26 May. [Available online at: http:///www.archnet.com; accessed 30 August 2016].

Vervaet, S. 2004. “Some Historians from former Yugoslavia on the Austro-Hungarian Period in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1878-1918): A Reality of Imperialism Versus the Golden Years of the Double Eagle?” 18 July. [Available online at: http://www.kakanien-revisited.at. beitr/fallstudie/SVervaet1.pdf; accessed 3 March 2018].

Walasek, H., ed.; contributions by R. Carlton, A. Hadžimuhamedović, V. Perry, and T. Wik. 2015. *Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage*. Farnham, Surrey & Burlington VT: Ashgate.

Weible, R. 2008. “Defining Public History: Is it Possible? Is It Necessary?” March. [Available online at: https://www.historians.org /publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/march-2008/defining-public-history-is-it-possible-is-it-necessary; accessed 30 April 2018].

Zbornik radova Muzeja revolucije.1984. *Zbornik radova.* Sarajevo: Muzej revolucije, 1975-1984.

MARTOR

Title: *From Iconoclasm to Museum: Mussolini's Villa in Rome as a Dictatorial Heritage Site*

Author: Flaminia Bartolini

How to cite this article: Bartolini, Flaminia. 2018. "From Iconoclasm to Museum: Mussolini's Villa in Rome as a Dictatorial Heritage Site." *Martor* 23: 163-173.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Ţăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/martor-23-2018/

Martor (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Journal) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. ***Martor Journal*** is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Interdisciplinary and international in scope, it provides a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for academic and non-academic readership. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

Martor (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue ***Martor*** est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

Martor is indexed by:

CEEOL, EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Anthropological Index Online (AIO), MLA International Bibliography.

From Iconoclasm to Museum: Mussolini's Villa in Rome as a Dictatorial Heritage Site

Flaminia Bartolini
PhD Candidate, McDonald Institute for Archeological Research, University of Cambridge
fb282@cam.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

In the last couple of years, public attitudes towards Fascist material legacies in Italy have been at the centre of a heated debate in the academic world, which has by now grown to involve the press and social media. This paper will look specifically at how this is reflected in a museum display at a heritage site that was once Mussolini's residence in Rome. The underlying question of this paper is what role museums as heritage sites play in the renegotiation of a problematic past, and whether they can also have an active role in either supporting or challenging the official narrative. As heritage is socially constructed and defined through present circumstances, the narratives of this particular museum reveal a conflicting past as mirrored by the national narrative. The paper also questions whether public perception of this site has changed over time and considers how the recent transformation into a museum signifies a shift from the post-war interpretation, which may or may not reflect a high-level political agenda.

KEYWORDS

Italian Dictatorship, Fascist legacies, Villa Torlonia, Difficult Heritage, Mussolini.

• • • • • • • •

Heritage of the dictatorship in Italy

This research, which began as a pilot study for the author's doctorate carried out in 2016, focuses on Mussolini's residence in Rome—Villa Torlonia—which will be analysed as a dictatorial heritage site using visual and textual analysis and ethnographic interviews. This site is today a museum with a dual function: 1) it showcases the original eighteenth-century property formerly owned by the Torlonia family; and 2) it is the only state-owned museum with a display on Mussolini.[1] To this day, Italy lacks both a national museum providing an interpretation of the country's Fascist past and a War Museum debating Italy's role in World War II, which makes Villa Torlonia a crucial case study in understanding the renegotiation of Italy's Fascist past.[2]

The results of the pilot study shed light not only on how the museum has decided to remember Mussolini's life, but also on the public perception of the place: far from being a place of negative emotions, this site is today a leisure place for Romans and tourists alike. From *damnatio memoriae* in the post-war period, followed by abandonment and neglect, to full rehabilitation, it becomes clear that the dark memories once attached to Villa Torlonia have been removed, which raises questions regarding the role and shift of emotions in relation to a dictatorial heritage site.

This paper will be divided in three parts. Firstly, I will discuss the current political debate around Mussolini's material legacies, and how the decision to open a museum inside Mussolini's residence fits within that debate. Secondly, I will describe the museum display and how Mussolini's life at the Villa is depicted, along with the contemporary perception of the place as revealed by interviews with staff and visitors. Thirdly, I will present some concluding remarks on the role of museums in showcasing difficult histories and the impact that these interpretations have on public debate.

---

[1] For details of a privately owned collection of Mussolini iconography, see G. Pieri (2013: 235).

[2] The city of Bolzano was the first to display a permanent exhibition on the Italian dictatorship in the basement of the Monument to Victory, a Fascist memorial to the annexation of South Tyrol by Italy in World War I. For details about the Fascist dictatorship exhibition, see *BZ '18-'45. Un monumento, una città, due dittature. Un percorso espositivo nel Monumento alla Vittoria* (Vienna/ Bolzano: Folio; Milano: Morellini, 2016).

The theoretical framework of this article starts from and challenges Sharon Macdonald's book on Nazi heritage in Germany. According to Macdonald, "difficult heritage" arises when a past is recognised as worth remembering but at the same time creates difficulties in the present, as it generates conflict in dealing with contemporary identity (Macdonald 2009: 7). Similarly, the "difficult" Fascist heritage generated a fear of perpetuating social division and fuelling divided memories in the post-war period, so a process of removal of Fascist symbols from public buildings was put into place (Arthurs 2014).

When, after a global or civil war, a country needs to rebuild its identity, negotiating a dictatorial past creates tremendous tensions around the concept of "shared memory." Aside from national memorials to the victims—which might also reveal some contested memories—other places associated with the dictatorship may be "forgotten" and therefore be an expression of taboo, amnesia or denial (Carr 2014; Connerton 1989, 2008). Given that the ideologies conveyed by such heritage produce dissonance, contested memory and social division (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996), this paper will show how the display on Mussolini is an example of a national struggle to come to terms with a particular regime.

The transformation of places associated with the dictatorship and the way they have or have not been reused, testifies to the shift in meaning attributed to these places. The creation of a museum can serve both to remember or forget a difficult past, or even provide a selective narrative of the dictatorial past. As we shall see, Villa Torlonia was an attempt to present Mussolini as a historical figure, but one which spoke of a national difficulty in dealing with the Fascist past.

Mussolini's cult of personality

The cult of Mussolini was at the core of the strategies implemented through propaganda to build consensus among Italians; this pervaded not only the twenty years of his dictatorship but continues to be present in popular culture today in a diluted form (Gundle *et al.* 2013). The cult of Mussolini opened a direct communication channel between the leader and Italians in a way which polarised sympathies toward *Il Duce* but not necessarily the Fascist party (Bosworth 2005). This division has also allowed the cult of Mussolini's personality to survive in the post-war period, regardless of criticism of Fascism itself.

Mussolini's memory in popular culture is today preserved in Predappio, *Il Duce*'s birthplace. Regarded as a place sacred to the cult of the leader, it has been a site of pilgrimage since the foundation of the modern town in 1925. The regime encouraged people to pay tribute to the "Dux" by making an almost mandatory visit to the house where Mussolini was born, the church where he was baptised, and the school were his mother worked (Serenelli 2013). From 1957, when Mussolini's body was buried in Predappio, neo-fascist gatherings started again to pay tribute to their mythical leader. At present, thousands of neo-fascists visit Predappio three times a year—to celebrate Mussolini's birth, death, and the March on Rome —, giving rise to a new, disturbing form of "dark tourism" (Luzzatto 2014). However, despite plans for building a museum of the History of Totalitarian Italy, which should open in Predappio in 2020, places in Predappio directly linked to Mussolini have not undergone a process of heritage-making:

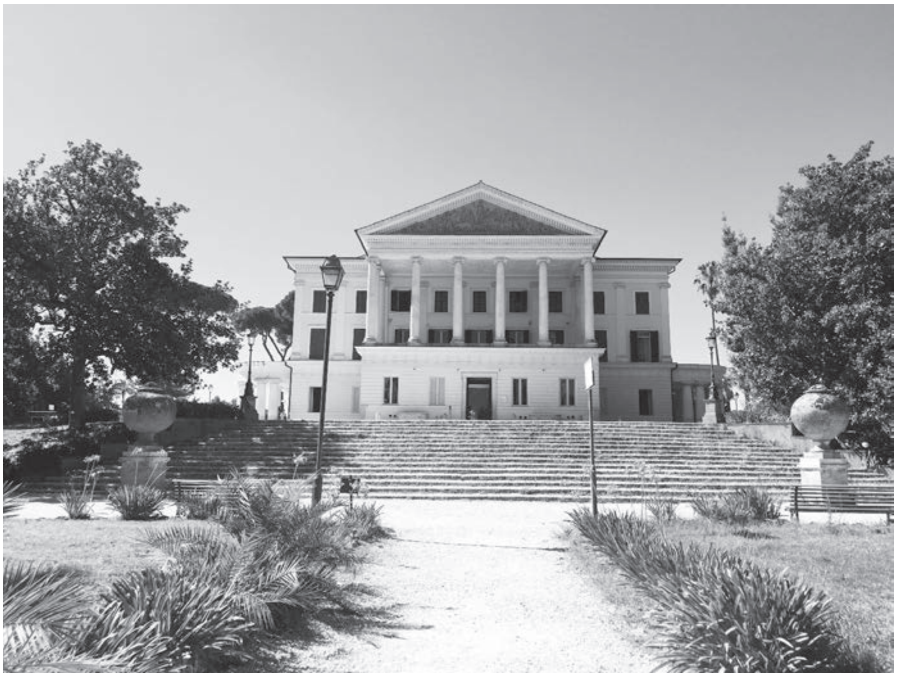


Fig. 1 Rome, Villa Torlonia: façade of the Villino Nobile. Photo credit: Flaminia Bartolini.

none of his properties has been transformed into a state-owned interpretation site, nor have any been destroyed (Bartolini 2018). They simply stand there as places of nostalgic worshipping, an expression of the Italian state's impasse over dealing with the dictator's material legacies.

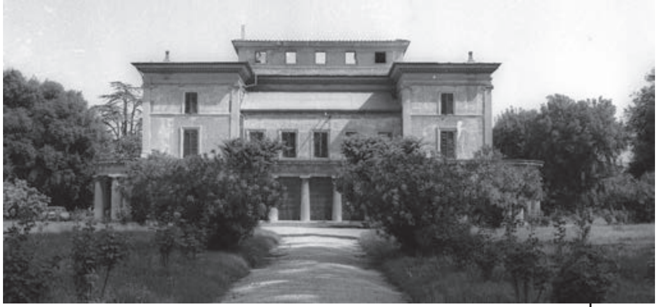


Fig. 2 Rome, Villa Torlonia: rear façade of the neglected Villino Nobile in 1977. Photo credit: Archivio Storico Capitolino

Villa Torlonia: historical background

Located on the Via Nomentana, Villa Torlonia is an eighteenth-century Villa, formerly owned by the Torlonia family from 1797 to 1978 (Fig. 1-2). Marino Torlonia, originally from France, purchased the property in 1797 after he made a fortune as a banker in Rome. The new owner had great plans for the property and hired Neoclassical architect Giuseppe Valadiertore to design the Villa. The result was a main building, Casino Nobile, and an additional building for parties, Casino dei Principi, as well as fountains and sculptures. The main hall of the Casino Nobile is decorated with sculptures, and a series of rooms attached to it are decorated with flowers and grottoes with neoclassical copies of Roman murals. A description of the Villa made at the time by Giuseppe Checchetelli shows how the inspiration for this work was in fact Adriano's Villa at Tivoli (Agati 2010: 12). False ruins were created as a visual reminder of an inspiring past: the Temple of Saturn was inspired by the temples of Antonius and Faustina in the Forum, and fake obelisks were positioned around the garden.

What makes the property original is the number of different styles and false ruins, including an amphitheatre, a nymphaeum, a sports arena, and a coffee house. Approached from Via Nomentana, the property was meant to recall a Roman villa: even the walls around the property were built using

Roman construction techniques—*opus incertum* and *opus reticulatum*. The final decorative touch was the erection of two obelisks in pink marble in front of the main entrance. A replica Etruscan tomb was found during the restoration of the Villa, with imitation frescoes and decorations (Agati 2010). The layout of the property, its obelisks and the murals made the Villa a perfect Roman replica, which is why, I argue, Mussolini probably choose it as his home. The Roman style of the property supported the dictator's desire to be seen as the successor of the Emperor Augustus, embracing and performing a Fascist reframing of the Roman past as the basis of the new Fascist State.

Mussolini at Villa Torlonia

According to the official narrative, in 1925 the property was offered by Giovanni Torlonia to the Mussolini family to use as their residence in Rome, but arguably this property also suited Mussolini's desire to live like a Roman Emperor. Within the Fascistization of *Romanità*—the actualised concept at the basis of the new Fascist State—to live in a Roman-like villa was for Mussolini consistent with his constant preoccupation for his image. As other scholars have noted, the reuse of the symbols and ideals of the Roman Empire characterised the Fascist propaganda from the 1922 March on Rome onwards, when Mussolini's attitude towards the city strategically changed (Gentile 2007; Arthurs 2014; Neils 2011). As Arthurs argues, for Mussolini the Roman past was not just a mere repository of symbols that he could reuse; on the contrary, Fascism built its new State on the fundamental principle of recreating the Roman Empire in the modern era. For Mussolini it was crucial to be seen as either Caesar or Augustus in public, using iconography to support his resemblance (Neils 2011): the Villa Torlonia, with its grand Roman style, allowed the dictator to feel and be seen as a modern-day Emperor.

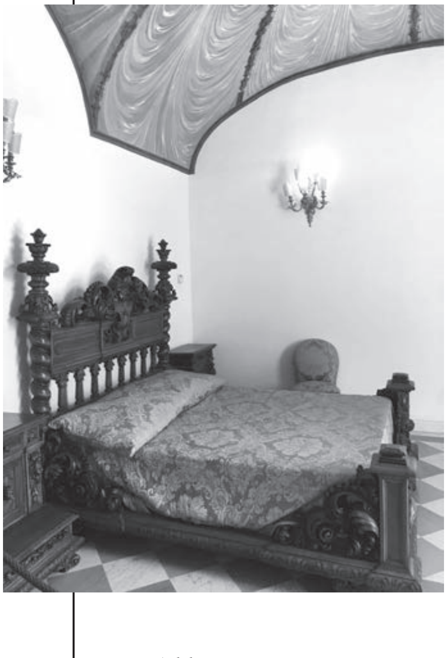


Fig. 3 Rome, Villa Torlonia: Mussolini's bedroom. Photo credit: Flaminia Bartolini.

This property was to be Mussolini's residence during the entire time of the dictatorship, and in the collective memory, this place represents his home. The Mussolini family continued to pay a symbolic rent after the death of Giovanni Torlonia, occupying the Palace or Casino Nobile until Mussolini's arrest on July 25, 1943. The Orangery was utilised as a cinema to watch newsreels and as the headquarters of the *Istituto Luce*. Mussolini modified some features of the property, creating a covered corridor above the first-floor balcony to link the two main bedrooms and two adjoining bathrooms. (During works to restore Valadier's early nineteenth-century neoclassical design of the Villa, all Mussolini's "edits" of the property were removed.) On the mezzanine, which was not in use at the time, he allocated bedrooms for the children and created an area for the servants, which is ultimately the most extensive remodelling of the property. Further corridors and stairs were added at this time, some of which are not open to the public today, while outside he set up a tennis court.

The first floor is where Mussolini and his wife Rachele had their apartments, symmetrically distributed around the main central marble staircase (Fig. 3-4). Similarly to other eighteenth-century properties, several ante-chambers and study rooms preceded the main bedroom itself. The

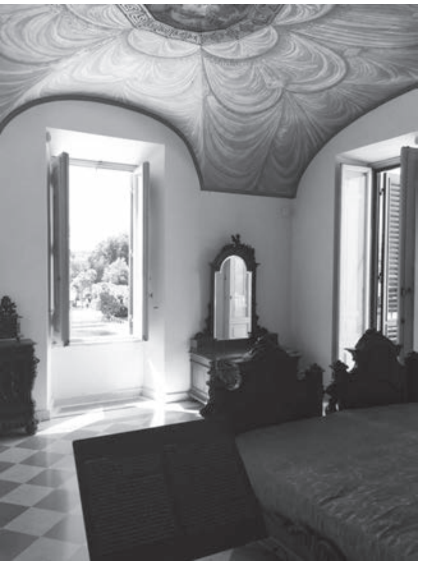


Fig. 4 Rome, Villa Torlonia: Rachele Mussolini's bedroom. Photo credit: Flaminia Bartolini.

current furniture in these rooms belonged to the Torlonia family, and the description of the rooms in the guidebook barely mentions the fact that Mussolini and Rachele lived in those bedrooms for twenty years. The Mussolini family made three structural changes to the property: the master bathrooms on the balcony, the mezzanine, and the two shelters and bunker.

After the liberation of Rome in 1945, the property was occupied by the Allies. When the property was returned to the Torlonia family in 1947, some of the buildings were in such an advanced state of disrepair that they decided to demolish rather than restore them. After 1938, when Giovanni Torlonia died, no direct descendants lived on the property, a situation which later led to a legal battle among relatives.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the property was abandoned, with overgrown grass, dead trees, and anti-fascist graffiti on both the exterior wall of the Casino Nobile and the main precinct of the property. Today, the only graffiti are some neo-fascist ones on the south-west corner of the external precinct.

In 1977, following a popular demonstration, the Villa was acquired by the State and the park was opened to the public in 1978 (Agati 2010). Despite being opened to the public, the buildings within the park were not restored, and many of the objects inside were stolen or damaged as a sign of protest. During that period, all the furniture from the time of Mussolini was burned or removed, and the Casino Nobile in particular sustained considerable damage.

Mussolini's comfortable residence in Rome, which he occupied at a time when many Romans had been displaced from their homes either because of his urban redevelopment plans or later because of the Allied bombings, became a place for collective remembrance for people who had experienced the war.

From 1996, the City Hall financed several conservation projects that started with the park and culminated in 2001 with the refurnishing of the property (Agati 2010). In 2002, the *Casino dei Principi* was re-opened as a museum to host the Torlonia collection and the archive of the Roman School of Painting (1920-1940); it was only in 2006 that the *Villino Nobile* was finally opened to the public, with furniture and sculptures from the *Casino dei Principi* and the Orangerie. In the catalogue Mussolini's alterations of the property were classified as "twentieth-century wrong-doing," and, where possible, the structures of his time were removed or abandoned in the garden (Agati 2010: 8). As for the second floor, which was in effect a space that the museum could use, it is now the home of the permanent collection of the Roman School of Modern Art.

Former centre-left wing Mayor of Rome, Walter Veltroni, declared in the pages of *La Repubblica* "I give you back the Villa of *Il Duce*," claiming that it was time to give the monuments of Fascism back to the public and that "it was not a good strategy to be afraid of Fascism and to hide it under the carpet" (qtd in Silvestri: 2006). In Rome he supported a crucial re-opening of Fascist frescoes, namely the uncovering of the apotheosis of Fascism in 1996—the wall painting on the Salon of Honour in the Foro Italico complex, which had been covered up with stucco (Carter and Martin 2017). This shift in perception of places linked to Fascism has been interpreted by scholars as a sign of the political revisionism which

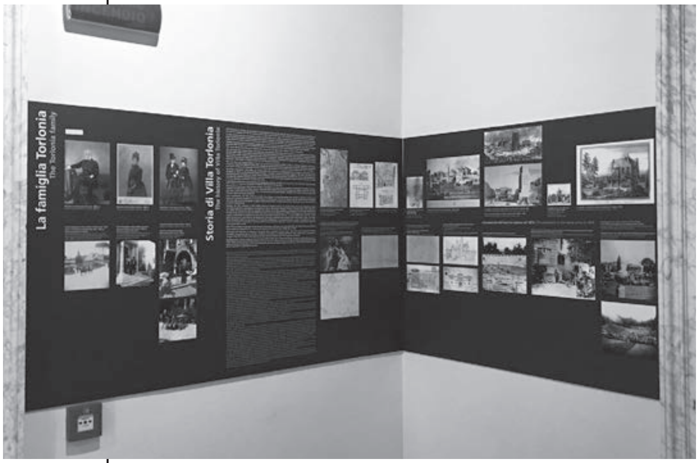


Fig. 5 Rome, Villa Torlonia: information panels about the Torlonia family. Photo credit: Flaminia Bartolini.

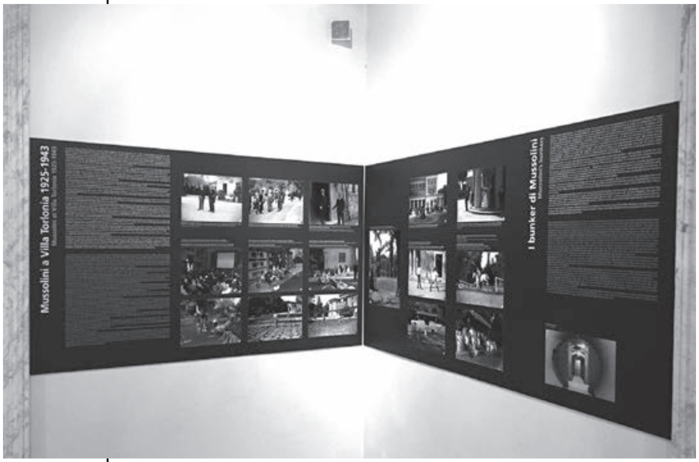


Fig. 6 Rome, Villa Torlonia: information panels about the Mussolini family. Photo credit: Flaminia Bartolini.

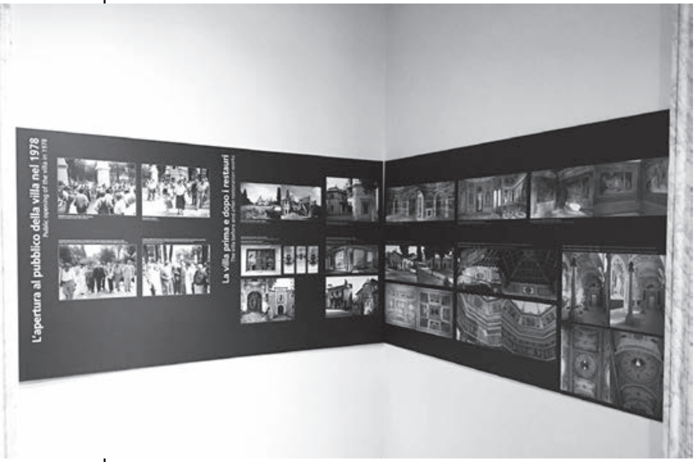

L'apertura al pubblico della villa nel 1978
La villa prima e dopo i restauri

Fig. 7 Rome, Villa Torlonia: information panels about the restoration of the villa. Photo credit: Flaminia Bartolini

started during the Berlusconi era in the 1990s (Carter and Martin 2017; Malone 2017; Ben-Ghiat 2017). From Veltroni's statements, however, it is clear that the initiative did not come only from the right, but also from the centre-left.

Mussolini's display

In my research, I looked at how Mussolini's life at Villa Torlonia has been presented to the public and I used visual and textual analysis to disentangle internal narratives. The visual analysis consisted of examining the visual effect of the descriptive panels about Mussolini's life displayed at the Villa and comparing the spaces devoted to the Mussolini and to the Torlonia families, respectively. Textual analysis considered the text produced in the form of catalogues, marketing materials, and display panels in order to discern the message that the museum chooses to share with the public. Finally, the narratives and discourses emerging from interviews with both staff and visitors gave a sense of how public perception of places linked to the dictatorship has changed from the post-war period to recent years.

The Museum of Villa Torlonia has one room dedicated to historical information about the property (Fig. 5-7). The room is divided into four sections: half of the room is dedicated to the previous owners of the Villa, namely the Torlonia and the Mussolini families, and the other to the state of ruination the property was left in the post-war period, prior to its restoration in 2006. The section on Previous Owners is evenly divided between the Torlonias and the Mussolinis, even though the former lived on the property for almost two centuries and the latter for only twenty years. Visually the layout of the two panels is the same—white on a black background—with the Mussolini photos also in black and white, giving a general sense of uniformity. Overall, the visitor is made to compare these two families as two "equal" owners of the Villa, creating an imbalance in terms of historical relevance. The black and white effect gives a sense of antiquity, placing the protagonists in the same distant past.

In contrast, the part of the room which documents the ruination and subsequent restoration is full of colour, with a "modern/contemporary" feel to the display. Visual observation allows the visitor to chronologically distinguish the past, immediately to the left of the entrance in black and white, followed by the colourful contemporary period on the right. Mussolini is presented as just one of the historical figures that lived on this property, just as relevant as the original owners, but with even more personal photos of him at the Villa than there are paintings of the Torlonias. While his historical presence is made readily available visually, as the panels are the first thing the visitor sees on entering the room, there is, however, a substantial amount of information missing from the display, as we shall see below.

The textual description of the property consists of the official museum catalogue and the interpretation panels. The catalogue favours description over photos compared with the display, as the interpretation panels are not too densely written. Most of the information on Mussolini refers to what, for simplicity, are called the Bunkers, even though they are two bunkers and a shelter, and as mentioned before, no reference is made to Mussolini as a dictator or to Fascism as an authoritarian regime. Mussolini is not introduced—knowledge of who he was is assumed—and the only kind of information provided to the visitor by the catalogue and the interpretation panels is about his activities at the property. Separate entities manage the Museum of Villa Torlonia and the Bunkers: the former is managed by Soprintendenza Capitoline, and the latter by a privately owned organisation.

Mussolini's shelter and the bunkers

Once Italy entered World War II, Mussolini feared for the safety of his family under the threat of Allied bombing. The first option for a shelter was the wine cellar underneath the Fucino Lake, at the back of the Villa. Two steel doors, anti-gas masks, a ventilation system, electricity, telephone line, and beds were all installed there. A second exit was created beneath a hill on the other side of the lake. Believing the lake itself to be easily recognisable from the sky, Mussolini had it covered with mud. However, as there was an open-air walk to reach the shelter, he decided it would not be safe enough to reach at night (Agati 2010).

Consequently, he decided to use the basement area beneath the ballroom as a bunker, which would be easily accessible from the rooms above. The first bunker was an anti-gas one equipped with an antechamber supplied with decontamination showers. A new protective cover of concrete, 1.2 meter thick, was put on the roof of the bunker. There were two exits within the Villa; these are not currently accessible to the public. Both bunkers were supplied with a complete military support system including gas masks and a manually powered electricity generator in case of blackout.

When the bombings became more frequent, Mussolini decided to build a new nuclear bunker. This was built under the fake ruin of a fountain, and it is today accessible from the area in front of the fountain. The bunker is 6.5-meter deep and consists of a series of rooms connected by a corridor. There were two safety exits: the current main entrance and a second one found next to the recently discovered replica Etruscan tomb. The bunker has a cylindrical shape to absorb the impact of bombing better and 4-meter thick concrete walls around a steel framework (Fig. 8). One section of the interior wall is on display today to show that the quality of steel was poor because of the

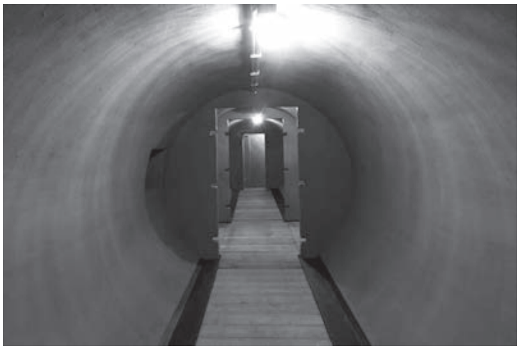


Fig. 8: Villa Torlonia, Mussolini's bunker, central corridor.
Photo credit: Flaminia Bartolini.

war conditions. During a tour, the guide made fun of the fact that even Mussolini himself couldn't get things done properly in Rome and that the final price was three times more expensive than the first quote. It is also said that Mussolini had bad feelings about this place, and the bunker was still unfinished when he was arrested. The main entrance door to the bunker had not been installed, and the interior had not been furnished.

The opening of the Bunkers to the public was part of an outsourcing project that, in 2014, saw the management of the Villa given over to a private association of tour guides. The general ethos and the way the bunkers and shelter sites have been presented to the public reveal a new tendency for promoting Fascism as a tourist opportunity, a trend. Tours of the so-called Mussolini's Bunkers proved immediately to be very popular, partly due to the lack of information on this period in the city of Rome and in Italy generally. Information panels were on display only in the Villa shelter and the bunkers, as the old wine cellar had no space for panelling. Both the shelter and the bunkers have recently been renovated, providing the visitor with a good understanding of the space and its use. A variety of information about World War II, the Allies, and Mussolini is randomly distributed on the walls, including yet more family photos of the Mussolini family, but with no general chronology or exhibition narrative.

What emerged immediately from the visitor interviews was that the concept of "difficult heritage," attached to places of post-dictatorial memory, is not always perceived in that way. Neither the Villa nor the Bunkers were seen as negative, or shameful, or associated with any other sub-definition of "difficult heritage." Regardless of age, there was more interest in the historical events, but no negative value was attached to them. Visitors to the Villa were mainly interested in the older historical features of the property; for them it was simply "history," something that stays in the past. A sense of ownership surfaced in the comments on how the park had finally been given back to the Romans—as has traditionally happened with the other estates that had once belonged to noble families.

There is always a strong positive value attached to monuments and cultural heritage, associated with a nostalgic and idyllic past. Visitors to both the Bunkers and the Villa were principally coming here for leisure, to a place where they could enjoy a day out with family and friends, and where they could reconnect with a traditional Roman place. As already emphasised, possibly because the connection with Mussolini was not that evident or because his role as a family-man was stressed, this place was not perceived as "difficult."

• • • • • • • •

Conclusions

As the analysis of Mussolini's Villa has suggested, heritage involves a continuous process of renegotiating the past, which can tell us more about the present than about the past. The concept of "heritage of dictatorship" can be a useful tool, helping our understanding of the shifting narratives that societies have constructed around dictatorial heritage sites in different political climates. As we have seen, the heritage-making process at Mussolini's Villa reflects the diverse values which Italian society has attributed to Mussolini himself and which have informed heritage decisions at different times.

The theoretical framework of this paper was that Fascist heritage belongs to "difficult heritage," and its aim was to analyse Mussolini's Villa in Rome as a place of conflicting memories. Based on previous ethnographic work, most notably Sharon McDonald's work on Nazi heritage, there was an expectation that the public would experience a sense of uneasiness, if not trauma, walking around Villa Torlonia, known in the post-war period as the "Villa of the Evil" among Roman residents—a dark place, closed to the public. As we have seen, interviews proved that expectation to be wrong.

Defining places of the dictatorship as unequivocally "negative" gives a selective perception of how the public might experience these sites. I argue that categorising places tainted with the memory of a dictatorial past as "heritage of dictatorship" rather than "difficult heritage" would foster a conceptualisation of this particular heritage that allows for conflicting memories and interpretations to co-exist.

From a museum display point of view, the interpretation panels would have benefitted from a critical approach to the primary sources used, particularly the photographs from the *Istituto Luce,* which as they stand, leave the visitor without any form of contextualisation. The Villa is not any property, it is where the Italian dictator lived for the entire duration of his regime, first as prime minister and later as absolute leader. It was also the place that witnessed his first major defeat, when the Fascist Parliament deposed him on July 25, 1943, followed by his arrest and deportation to Mount Gran Sasso.

This is the place that, together with his office in Palazzo Venezia, saw the rise and fall of Fascism and of Mussolini as a leader. None of this is acknowledged in the current display. A detailed description of Mussolini's life at the Villa and what happened in the post-war period is totally missing from the interpretation panels. Possibly because the destruction and abandonment of the property underlines how highly symbolic this place is for Fascism, inclusion of substantial references to Mussolini would have led to further problematic questions on how historical narratives about Fascism have been presented or omitted.

The museum display in the Villa, with its lack of reference to Mussolini as the Fascist leader, in contrast to the extensive display on Mussolini's family life, is an example of conflicting national narratives of the regime, as illustrated by the juxtaposition of the image of Il Duce in popular culture and the post-war de-Fascistization process that divested the country of Fascist insignia. As we saw in Gundle *et al.* (2013), the cult of the dictator survived this fall and is still strongly rooted in the Italian public perception, promoted by films and cultural media. Sometimes Mussolini is subject to ironic reinterpretation, as a ridiculous version of the dictator in vignettes and satirical shows, but at other times, a humanised version of the leader is presented as a "family man" (Pieri 2013).

The display on the one hand gives a flavour of Mussolini's life as Head of State, and on the other hand, it deliberately omits any reference to Fascism and dictatorship, while the black and white rendering suggests almost a desire for this past to be distant. The selection of photos shown on the interpretation panels is the same as the one used by Mussolini's propaganda team, some of which are quite well-known: pictures of him meeting Heads of State or participating in family weddings and ceremonies. Showing such propaganda pictures, which were at the core of Mussolini's personality cult, in a national museum setting without any context of when and why those photos were taken is a dubious museological process which is arguably supporting the portrayal of Il Duce in a more acceptable, "humanised" way.

The renegotiation of Fascism that followed the fall of communism in 1989, which coincided with the beginning of the Berlusconi era in Italy, and the so-called crisis of the anti-fascist paradigm, has been defined as an "edited" version of Fascism (Ventresca 2004; Focardi 2014). The absence of any reference to Fascism or dictatorship in the Mussolini display might suggest the museum's intention to avoid political debate on this problematic past, while at the same time offering a "softer" and "better" version of Mussolini as a historical figure.

As in Spain and several other post-dictatorial societies, the need for unity and reconciliation after the devastation of war overcame the need to analyse and understand the events. After the first fall of Mussolini in July 1943, there was an immediate attack in Rome on the material symbols of Fascism, the Villa Torlonia being one of the victims of this de-Fascistization process: in this case it was not simply a question of Fascist symbols being removed, but the entire Villino Nobile was targeted, as the house was perceived as a symbolic reference to Il Duce himself. However, at the time of its reopening in 2006, given the stated intention of the Mayor Walter Veltroni that the country should finally come to terms with its Fascist past, it is questionable whether the display on Mussolini could really address the Italian interpretation of the past, or yet again sought to avoid doing so.

Elsewhere, in contemporary Spain for instance, the way the country is renegotiating its Fascist past has seen a different trend. Following the post-Franco "pact of silence," in 2007 legislation on Historical Memory was passed during the Zapatero administration, and the country is now trying to come to terms with the trauma of the Civil War, including a national campaign for the exhumation of mass murder sites (Gonzalez-Ruibal 2017). Franco's apartment in the Retiro Palace was closed to the public in 2008, with the explanation that there was nothing "historical" about his belongings. Furthermore, in Austria, following a long debate between the owner of the property and the City Hall, Hitler's house in Braunau has recently been transformed into the House of Responsibility, run by a charitable association whose aim is to ensure "difficult" history is not forgotten.

To conclude, I argue that the absence from the display of an in-depth analysis of Mussolini as a historical figure might be seen as a strategy by the museum to transform a place of negative memory into a positive one, but it also reflects a national struggle to question and confront the past. As emerged from my interviews, neither the museum visitors nor the visitors of the Bunkers have felt any kind of emotional discomfort in visiting these places: by eliminating the most traumatic events and any links to Mussolini as a dictator from the display, the visitor is not challenged, and the overall result is a pleasurable experience.

But, I must ask, what are the consequences of this over-simplification? Indeed, the visitor experience is a positive one, but at what price? What has emerged is that this comfortable narrative is in line with a renegotiation of Fascism as less divisive to meet the needs of a population characterized by conflicting memories. But when a "soft" reading of a dictatorship enters a national museum, this misinterpretation becomes part of the official narrative, and it may well lead to a distortion of the historical facts and serve attempts to construct an apologetic version of the past.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Agati, A.P. 2010. *Villa Torlonia*. Roma: Electa.

Arthurs, J. 2014. *Excavating Modernity: The Roman Past in Fascist Italy*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca and London.

Bartolini, F. 2018. "L'esposizione dell'Olocausto all'Imperial War Museum: un'analisi comparativa per una' ipotesi di museo sulla storia del fascismo" proceedings of the conference Narrating Fascism, Predappio, January 29, 2016. *E-Review. Rivista degli Istituti Storici dell'Emilia Romagna in Rete*. 6. [Available online at: https://e-review.it/bartolini-esposizione-olocausto; DOI 10.12977/ereview136].

Ben-Ghiat, R. 2017. "Why are Fascist Monuments still standing in Italy?" T*he New Yorker*, 5 October 2017 [Available online at: https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/why-are-so-many-fascist-monuments-still-standing-in-italy#].

Bessière, J. 2013. "'Heritagisation', a Challenge for Tourism Promotion and Regional Development: An Example of Food Heritage." *Journal of Heritage Tourism*. 8 (4): 275-291.

Bosworth, R.J.B. 2005. *Everyday Mussolinism: Friends, Family, Locality and Violence in Fascist Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carter, N., and S. Martin. 2017. "The management and memory of fascist monumental art in post-war and contemporary Italy: the case of Luigi Montanarini's Apotheosis of Fascism." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*. 22 (3): 338-364.

Carr, G. 2014. *Landscapes of Occupation: Heritage, Memory, and Archaeology in the Channel Islands*. Berlin: Springer.

Connerton, P. 1989 [2008]. *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dolff-Bonekamper, G. 2008. "Sites of Memory and Sites of Discord: Historical Monuments as a Medium for Discussing Conflict in Europe," in *The Heritage Reader*, eds. G. Fairclough, R. Harrison, J. H. Jameson, and J. Schofield, 132-138. London: New York, Routledge.

Focardi, F. 2014. *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano*. Roma: Edizioni Laterza.

Gentile, E. 2007. *Fascismo di Pietra*. Roma: Laterza.

Gonzalez-Ruibal, A. 2017. "Excavating Memory, Burying History. Lessons from the Spanish Civil War," in *Between Memory Sites and Memory Networks. New Archaeological and Historical Perspectives. Berlin Studies of the Ancient World 45*, eds. R. Bernbeck, K. P. Hofmann, and U. Sommer., 279-302. Berlin: Edition Topoi.

Gundle, S., C. Duggan and S. Pieri. 2013. *The Cult of the Duce: Mussolini and the Italians*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.

Luzzatto, S. 2014. *Il corpo del Duce*. Milano: Einaudi.

Macdonald, S. 2009. *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge.

Malone, H. 2017. "Legacies of Fascism: Architecture, Heritage and Memory in Contemporary Italy." *Modern Italy*. 22(04): 1-26

Meskell, L. 2002. *The Nature of Heritage: The New South Africa*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Neils, J. 2011. *From Ancient to Modern: The Myth of Romanità during the Ventennio Fascista. The Written Imprint of Mussolini's Cult of the "Third Rome."* Turnhout: Brepols.

Pieri, G. 2013. "The destiny of the arts and artefacts," in *The Cult of the Duce: Mussolini and the Italians*, eds. S. Gundle, C. Duggan, and S. Pieri, S., 227-40. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.

Serenelli, S. 2013. "A Town for the Cult of the Duce: Predappio as a Site of Pilgrimage," in *The Cult of the Duce: Mussolini and the Italians*, edited by S. Gundle, C. Duggan, and S. Pieri, 93-109. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.

Silvestri, G. 2006. "Dai Torlonia al Duce." *La Repubblica*, 23 March 2006 [Available online at: http://www.repubblica.it/2006/c/sezioni/arte/recensioni/torloniaduc/torloniaduc/torloniaduc.html].

Smith, L. 2006. *The Uses of Heritage*. London and New York: Routledge.

Tunbridge, J.E., and G. J. Ashworth. 1996. *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past as a Resource for Conflict*. Chichester, New York: J. Wiley.

Uzzell, D., and R. Ballantyne. 2008. "Heritage that Hurts: Interpretation in a Post-modern World," in *The Heritage Reader*, eds. G. Fairclough, R. Harrison, J. H. Jameson, and J. Schofield, 502-513. New York: Routledge.

Ventresca, R.A. 2004. *From Fascism to Democracy: Culture and Policy in the Italian Election of 1948*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Viejo-Rose, D. 2011. *Reconstructing Spain: Cultural Heritage and Memory after Civil War*. Brighton, Portland, Toronto: Essex University Press.

Winter, T. 2008. "Post-conflict Heritage and Tourism in Cambodia: The Burden of Angkor." *International Journal of Heritage Studies*. 14 (6): 524-539.

MARTOR

Title: *Material Remembrance in Contentious Spaces: Framing Multi-Scalar Memories and National Culpability in the* Museo della Fondazione della Shoah

Author: Martijn van Gils

How to cite this article: van Gils, Martijn. 2018. "Material Remembrance in Contentious Spaces: Framing Multi-Scalar Memories and National Culpability in the *Museo della Fondazione della Shoah*." *Martor* 23: 177-198.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Ţăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

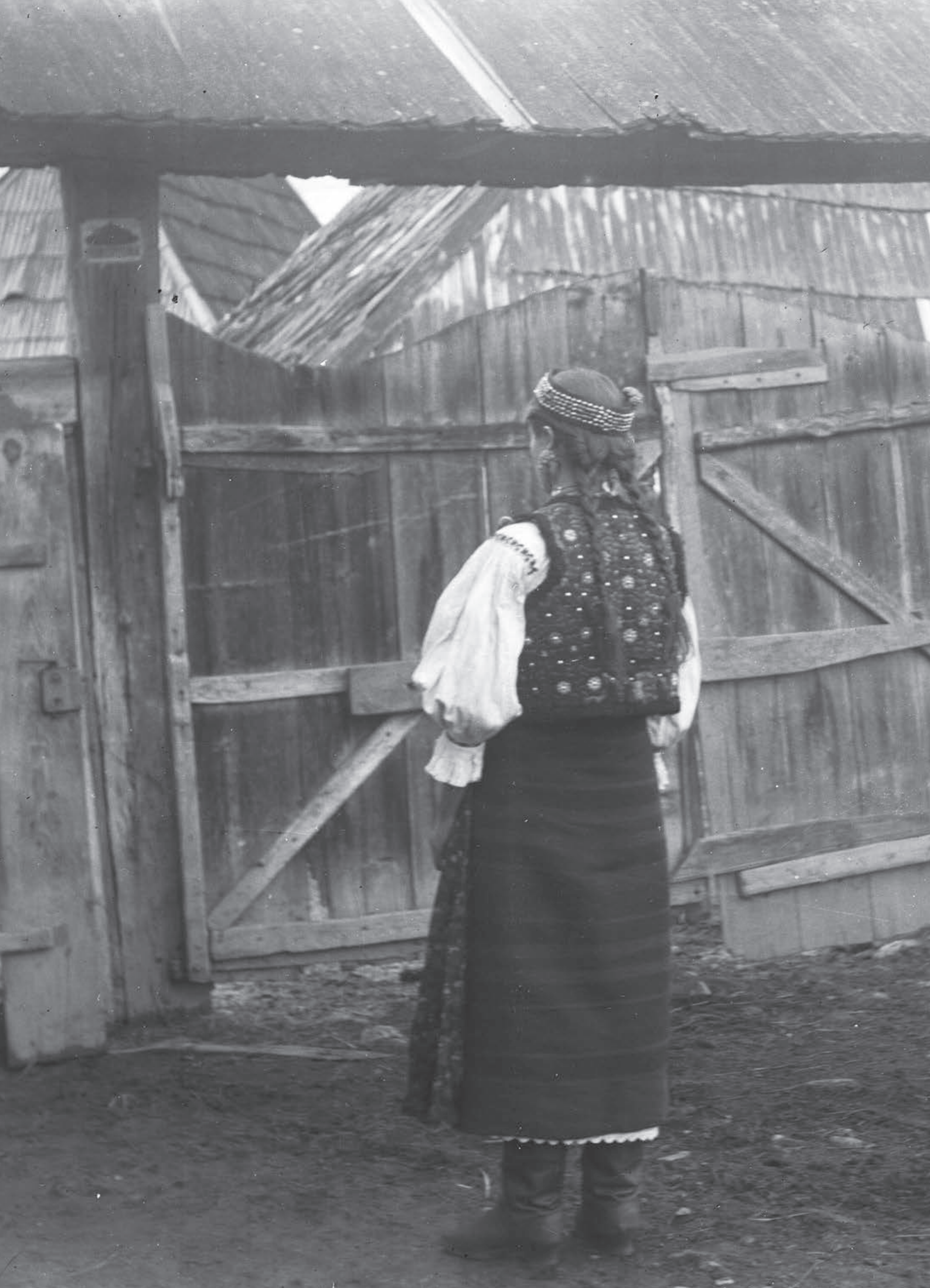
URL: http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/martor-23-2018/

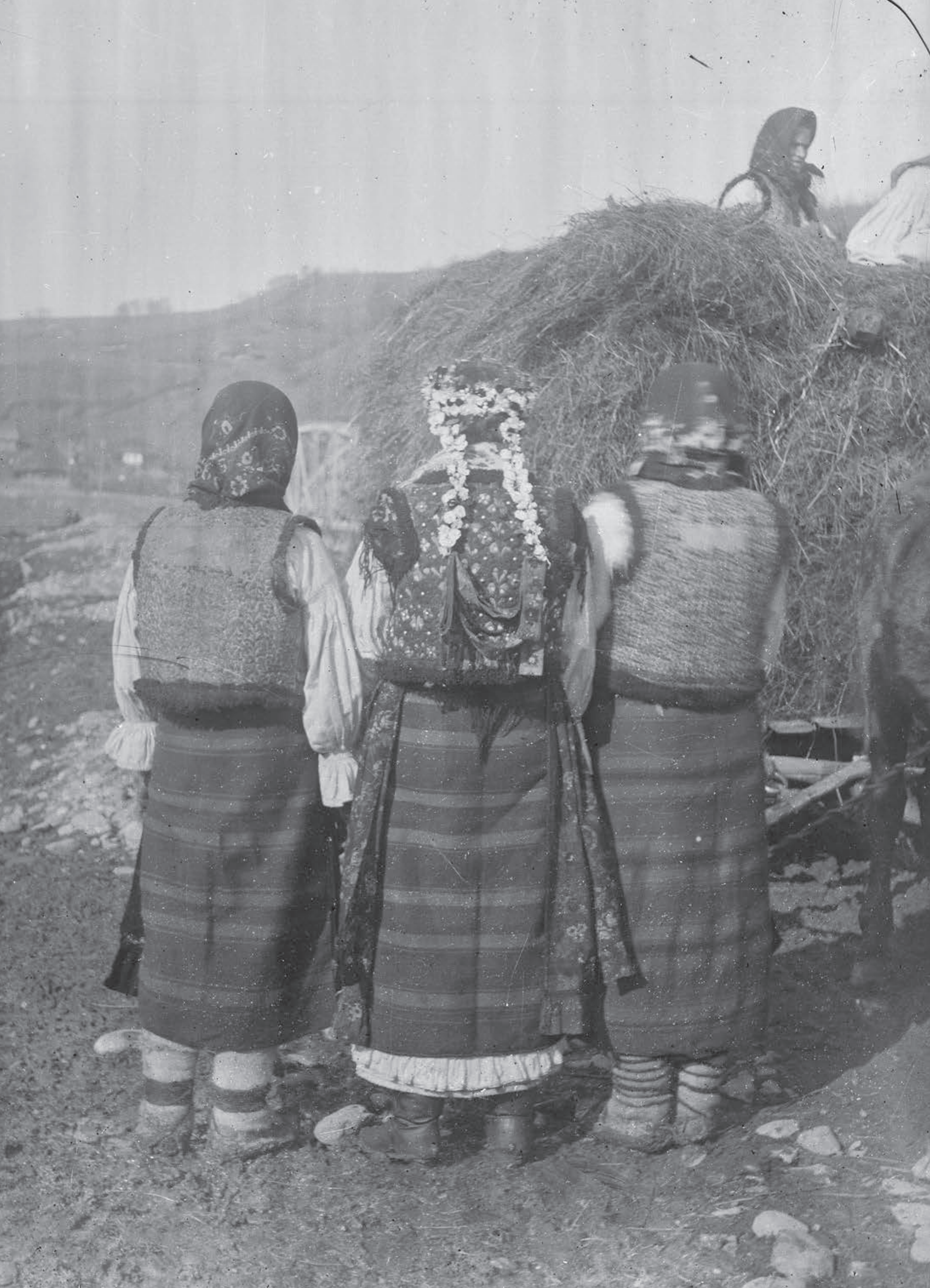
Martor (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Journal) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. ***Martor Journal*** is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Interdisciplinary and international in scope, it provides a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for academic and non-academic readership. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

Martor (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue ***Martor*** est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

Martor is indexed by:

CEEOL, EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Anthropological Index Online (AIO), MLA International Bibliography.





Material Remembrance in Contentious Spaces: Framing Multi-Scalar Memories and National Culpability in the *Museo della Fondazione della Shoah*[1]

Martijn van Gils
Research MA, Comparative Literary Studies, Utrecht University
martijn-max@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

In the last decade, several initiatives to build a state-of-the-art Holocaust museum in Rome have been proposed only to subsequently fail to materialize—primarily due to fund cuts. Instead, today, the *Museo della Fondazione* della Shoah consists of a small, self-sufficient project with very limited display space (one floor), often dependent on travelling collections. The museum's development and its current status are relevant for memorial discourses in Italy. The memories of Fascism and Italy's role in the Holocaust sit uneasily in public discourses: from the post-war era, there has been a tendency to defer national responsibility through circulation of the *brava gente* myth and the focus on Nazi occupiers rather than Italian collaborators and the ideology of fascism that preceded Hitler. While such initiatives as the creation of the Day of Memory have generated a platform for debate, this apologetic attitude has persisted in public circles, leading to a divided memory scape.

As a material and symbolic entity, the *Museo* makes a conscious attempt to intervene in this divided memory. In this paper, I will engage with two of the *Museo*'s past exhibitions to analyse its discursive framing of Italy's role in the Holocaust, incorporating a multi-scalar analysis and drawing on the concept of "cosmopolitan memory." I will argue that the *Museo* is a local site of memory that establishes a dialogue with transnational memorial discourses. This is reflected in both the *Museo*'s contents as well as its setup: due to its small size, the Museo is often dependent on travelling collections. In its exhibitions, the Museo provides interrelational descriptions of the socio-political climate in the 1930s and focuses on multiple ethnic and national groups. However, it does not reflect on individual perpetrators, which would further aid its desired—and necessary—pedagogical function of contextualising its historical subject matter from the framing of the present.

KEYWORDS

Italy, Holocaust, memory, cosmopolitanism, museum, perpetrators.

In the last decade, several initiatives to build a Holocaust museum in Rome have been proposed only to subsequently fail to materialize. Funds were freed up by city authorities, but progress was delayed and funds were subsequently dropped (Jewish Telegraphic Agency 2014). The anticipation that came with this long process is visible in a number of online articles by a variety of Jewish and Italian news agencies. Some examples of news article titles, in chronological order, are: "Rome Closer to Shoah Museum" (Italy Magazine 2008); "Italy's First Holocaust Museum to be Built in Rome" (Palmieri-Billig 2011); and then "Plans for Rome Holocaust Museum in Jeopardy" (Jewish Telegraphic Agency 2014). The planned museum promised to be a state-of-the-art building, located in the Villa Torlonia, a "grand neoclassical residence where Mussolini and his family lived from 1925 to 1943" (Italy Magazine 2008), and where ancient Jewish catacombs are located (Jewish Telegraphic Agency

---

[1] This article emerged out of research I carried out during a masterclass by Ann Rigney and Joep Leerssen at the Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome. My gratitude goes out to professors Rigney and Leerssen, as well as the Institute, for enabling me to do this research. Furthermore, I would like to thank Andrea Di Pastena, a Roman-born fellow student at Utrecht University, for translating several Italian texts to aid my analysis.

2014). These plans have, to date, not come to fruition. Instead, today, the *Museo della Fondazione della Shoah,* located in the Jewish quarter (or former Ghetto) of Rome, forms a small, self-sufficient exhibition project with very limited display space (one floor), often dependent on travelling collections—although, as I will discuss, they also design their own exhibitions. The *Museo* opened its inaugural exhibition on 27 January, the Day of Memory, in 2015.

The *Museo*'s development and its current status are relevant for memorial discourses in Italy. The memories of Fascism and Italy's role in the Holocaust sit uneasily in public discourses: from the post-war era, there has been a tendency to defer national responsibility through circulation of the brava gente myth and the focus on Nazi occupiers rather than Italian collaborators and the ideology of fascism which preceded Hitler (Knittel 2015: 154-155; and Clifford 2013: 5-6; see below). As Natascha Chang states, "[u]nlike Germany, Italy never underwent a formal de-fascistization process and never had a chance to acknowledge collectively or even to begin to come to terms with its past" (Chang 2008: 106). While several developments from the 1990s onwards have generated new platforms for discussion, and there is now increased recognition of national responsibility, memory remains divided in Italy, and no national "duty to remember" has emerged so far. As a material and symbolic entity, the *Museo* makes a conscious attempt to intervene in this divided memory. Echoing Chang's claim, the director of the *Museo*, Marcello Pezzetti, states that "Italy, like Austria, was a partner of Nazi Germany—not a victim, as the populace generally holds. Unlike Germany, we have never even begun the process of soul-searching. Italians don't feel involved—they do not consider themselves as having collaborated" (Palmieri-Billig 2011, n.p.). He also prospectively states that the *Museo* will engage with such issues of culpability. In the present time, this raises the question of how the *Museo* has engaged with these memorial discourses in practice.

In this paper, I will investigate the ways in which the legacies of Fascism and the Holocaust are remembered in the newly-created *Museo della Fondazione della Shoah.* While the focus is on a localised site of memory—the museum—this space exists in dialogue with the city of Rome as well as national and international discourses of remembrance. My method therefore incorporates a multi-scalar analysis, prominently including a consideration of how the *Museo* frames Italian culpability within the context of a divided memory scape. First, I will outline the complex status of the memories of Fascism and wartime persecutions of Jews in Italy, as well as relevant theories from the field of cultural memory studies, including "cosmopolitan memories," "divided memories," and "frames." Then, I will analyse two of the *Museo*'s exhibitions to gain insight into the ways in which the *Museo* does not simply record history, but actively contributes to shaping it into a narrative, framing Italian culpability in the Holocaust by drawing on transnational influences, both materially and symbolically.

Historical and theoretical background

Historical context

Before turning to the analysis, it is important to establish some relevant historical and theoretical contexts. Firstly, a short outline of the histories of the Jewish ghetto in Rome and Italian fascism is in order. The Jewish ghetto was defined and established in 1555 by a Papal bull issued by Pope Paul IV, which forced all the city's Jews to move into the area (Gruber 2013: 121). Stephen Dunn describes this bull as "one of the most ferocious pieces of anti-Semitic legislation ever carried through anywhere before

1933" (1958: 132). Curfews were instated in the ghetto; Jews could not engage in any occupations except refuse-collecting and trade; and they could not own property or associate with Christians—among other restrictions (Dunn 1958: 132). The walls of the Ghetto were not broken down until 1848, by order of Pius IX, although the wall-less Ghetto remained operational under Papal rule until 1870 (Lerner 2002: 1, 32). Afterwards, the quarter remained the primary centre of Jewish life and culture in Rome (Lerner 2002: 1), and it continues to be an important site of Roman history today—this is where the old synagogue is located, as well as the contemporary synagogue which hosts Rome's Jewish museum.

There are various manifestations of Holocaust remembrance in the Jewish district today, including plaques and Stolpersteine. Both of these material interventions into the city scape illustrate the interplay between personal narratives and collective remembrance—an important characteristic of memorial practices. Regarding the former: one of the plaques in the area commemorates the arrests of October 16, 1943, presenting a personal narrative by someone who knew the people that were deported from the place where the plaque stands today. The plaque states that the people mentioned in the account "represent all the families destroyed by anti-Semitic hatred."

Similarly, this dynamic of giving concrete representation to individual victims is also illustrated in the phenomenon of *Stolpersteine* (literally stumbling stones). These are small, brass cubes bearing an inscription of the names of victims of Nazi persecution (Figure 1). There is a Twitter page dedicated to Stolpersteine with more than 12,000 followers as of 1 February 2018. It regularly posts updates about new Stolpersteine in various cities (such as Stockholm and Frankfurt). Reportedly, as of December 2017, there are around 63,000 Stolpersteine across twenty-one European countries (Demnig, December 16, 2017). In Rome, a number of Stolpersteine are present, with a proliferation of them occurring in the Jewish quarter. At one spot, there is a cluster of no fewer than ten Stolpersteine. The proliferation of Stolpersteine across Europe constructs a larger narrative out of individual ones. The purpose of Stolpersteine is to make people stop to look at them and give some thought to the victims. Moreover, wherever they stick out of the ground, they can literally become 'stumbling' blocks, forcing one to take note of them at the very least. This manner of commemorating individual victims contributes to an international network of Holocaust remembrance, constructing an affective connection with the past.

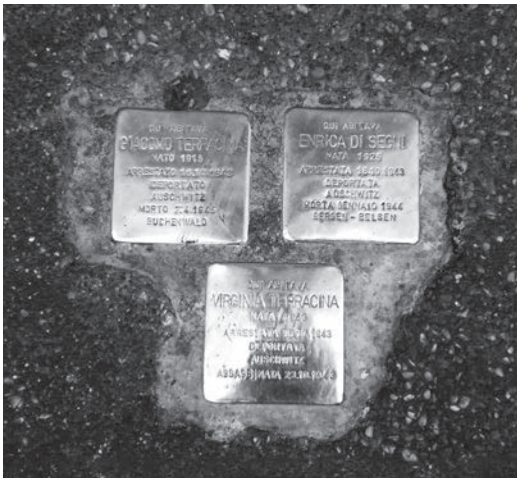


Figure 1: Stolpersteine in the Jewish quarter, Rome.
Photo credit: Martijn van Gils.

Fascism as an ideology rose to popularity in early twentieth-century Italy through the agenda of Benito Mussolini, who founded his radical National Fascist Party following the political crisis of the post-World War I years. Mussolini destroyed his opposition by using systematic violence, before being elected to power in 1922 (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2018). Stanislao Pugliese provides a concise overview of the relationship between Italian Fascism and anti-Semitism. He outlines how there was no trace of official anti-Semitism in the Fascist Party of 1922. By this point in history, Italian Jews participated actively in society and were even present in the highest echelons of the fascist hierarchy. Only from 1934 onwards did the anti-Semites within Fascism rise to prominence, which culminated in the Racial Laws of 1938, which mainly targeted Jews, banning them from almost all areas of society (Pugliese 1999: 242). It has often been commented that these laws, while they may have functioned to strengthen ties with Germany, were not the result of any direct German interference (Michaelis 1978: vii; Clifford 2013: 73).

Following Mussolini's fall in July 1943, the German occupation of Italy began. The German occupiers ruled through violence and the aid of local fascists. At this time, throughout German-occupied Italy, many Jews and opponents of the regime were rounded up and sent to detention camps or prisons, with many Jews being sent straight to concentration and extermination camps in Poland and Germany (Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Italy –Anti-Fascist Movements" 2018).[2] Rebecca Clifford notes that some Italian officials saved Jewish lives; however, their motivations were not always pure as, within the context of the occupation, many of them had the maintenance of Italian authority in mind (Clifford 2013: 76). Furthermore, German round-ups of Jews were made much easier due to the pre-work done by the Fascist Party (Clifford 2013: 77), and there was a significant number of deportations orchestrated by Italians alone (Zimmerman 2005: 21).

Cultural memory: the core concepts

Following this complex socio-political situation during World War II, Italy was forced to engage in a renewed process of identity formation, in which the state would have to negotiate its relationship with past political allegiances. Alessandro Portelli describes this as "the continuing struggle over the question of what kind of Italy emerged from the ruins of the Second World War" (Portelli 2006:32). I shall provide an outline of how discourses around Italy's role in the Holocaust developed after World War II; for now, I will first outline the trends in cultural memory studies that inform my article. In the following paragraphs, I will engage with the transnational formation of cultural memories, the concepts of *divided memories* and social *frames,* and the issue of engaging with perpetrators instead of only victims.

Particularly in recent years, there has been an emphasis on collective memory as constituted by transnational flows (see De Cesari and Rigney 2014). An early concept that posited the importance of highlighting memory cultures which transcend the nation-state is that of "cosmopolitan memory." This term was coined by Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider in their 2002 article "Memory Unbound," to engage with the transition from national to cosmopolitan memory cultures. Cosmopolitanism, according to Levy and Sznaider, refers to processes of "internal globalization," in which issues of global concern are incorporated into the local experiences of an increasing number of people (Levy and Sznaider 2002:88). The Holocaust is the most prominent example of "internal globalization," and also the focus of their article. Levy and Sznaider emphasise the role of global media representations in shaping cosmopolitan memories, and trace the historical roots of the emergence of cosmopolitan memories to remembrances of the Holocaust. A core feature of cosmopolitan memory is the increasing focus on the remembrance of the victims, as an incorporation of the "Other," which has become the "central mnemonic event" in contemporary times (Levy and Sznaider 2002: 103).[3]

Anna Bull and Hans Hansen critically engage with the concept of cosmopolitan memory, putting it in contrast to the concept of "antagonistic memory," which exists alongside the cosmopolitan mode of remembrance. Antagonistic memory reimagines national territories in exclusionary terms and is based on a rigid boundary between "us" and "them" (Bull and Hansen 2016: 393). In their article, Bull and Hansen put forth the concept of "agonistic memory" to reconcile the co-existence of the two forms of memory. According to them, the agonistic mode of remembering avoids the pitfalls of the other two modes of remembrance by not pitting "good" against "evil" "through acknowledging the human capacity for evil in specific historical circumstances," and by integrating both perspectives on the past: the victim's and perpetrator's (Bull and Hansen 2016: 399).

---

[2] For an excellent, more comprehensive overview of Jewish life in Italy under Fascist rule, see *Meir Michaelis' Mussolini and the Jews: German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy 1922-1945* (1978).

[3] The increased predominance of the victim's standpoint in collective memory cultures is also addressed in Jeffrey Olick's book *The Politics of Regret* (2007).

There are two issues raised by Bull and Hansen which I will delve into here: the need to engage with perpetrators and the issue of reception. Firstly, Bull and Hansen emphasise the need to engage with a multiplicity of perspectives in order to arrive at a historical understanding. Remembrance of the past should rely on testimonies from both perpetrators and victims (Bull and Hansen 2016: 399). In this regard, Bull and Hansen's article is emblematic of a new trend in memory studies: the area of perpetrator studies. As outlined in the Editors' Introduction to the newly established *Perpetrator Studies Journal*—whose mere existence illustrates the growing interest in this area of research—we are experiencing a perpetrator studies "boom." While there has been research centred on perpetrators for a few decades now, as a field it has come to its own only in the last five or ten years (Critchell *et al.* 2017: 1-2). The core assumption of perpetrator studies is a rejection of the notion that perpetrators were "beyond human understanding" (Clendinnen 2002: 79; Knittel 2015: 142). These scholars argue instead that there is much to gain from understanding the historical positioning and ideological motivations of perpetrators; where *understanding* means just that, and not identification or justification (Clendinnen 2002: 89; Knittel 2015: 142).

Critchell et al. argue that "refusing to engage with perpetrators for fear of losing one's moral compass is to ascribe to them a power and influence that is both unwarranted and dangerous" (2017: 2). In order to ensure that "Auschwitz not happen again," as Adorno famously stated in his essay "Education after Auschwitz" (1966), it is imperative to study perpetrators and the systems that gave rise to them. This involves a recognition of what Hannah Arendt influentially called the "banality of evil." Dovetailing with Bull and Hansen's emphasis on acknowledging the human capacity for evil in specific circumstances, the banality of evil refers to the unsettling notion that everyone carries the potential to commit acts of evil (Critchell *et al.* 2017: 4-5).

Secondly, there is the matter of *reception* which Bull and Hansen's article raises in noting how the cosmopolitan mode of remembrance has failed to supersede the national model (2016: 390-391). Similarly to modes of remembrance, memories themselves are not unified and are subject to local interpretation. To engage with this, I shall turn to the concept of *frames* which has become increasingly important within memory studies. As Frank van Vree points out, within frames, certain memories are accepted and circulate throughout the public sphere, while others are filtered out, as there is no social space which gives these narratives shape and meaning—although they may circulate within limited spheres (2013: 7-8). This notion is more fluid and apt at accounting for silences than merely focusing on hegemonic state influences or perceived collective traumas. For the purposes of my paper, the question is how Italian society engages with the issue of national responsibility in memories of the Holocaust. The *Museo* must be situated within a context of social frames, in which the notion of national responsibility holds an uncomfortable position as a divided memory, as I will outline below.

Marianne Hirsch, while she endorsed Van Vree's use of the concept, added a more critical note in stating that the model does not explain "how frames can be shattered, scenarios restaged or narratives rewritten" (2013: 17). In his book *Emerging Memory,* Paul Bijl coins the concept of "emerging memory," to provide additional insight into how frames can be altered. Similarly to Van Vree, Bijl speaks of the "ambiguous presence" of certain memories in society (2015: 12). Bijl puts greater emphasis on the reciprocal logic between the "frame" and the "framed" as they produce one another. Following Butler, he argues that, while frames structure modes of recognition, they are not all-determining, and certain media objects have the power to question dominant frames (Bijl 2015: 30). Emerging memories are "those representations of the past that are periodically rediscovered while retaining their shady presence" (Bijl 2015: 13).[4] Thus, frames are constituted through a complex interplay between such facets as traumatic forces, "official" and individual narratives pushing against each other, a sense of national identity influenced by international forces, etc. Furthermore, they are affected by social and temporal changes, which are produced to a significant degree by media objects.

The concept of "frames," apart from accounting for historical silences, may also help to explain how memories are *reconfigured* in certain ways by subsequent generations, depending on the socio-political climate. This brings me to "divided memories," an important concept from memory studies which is key to this paper. "Divided memory" as a concept first came to be used in historical debates in Italy of the 1990s, when alternative memories became an object of study (Foot 2009: 8). As the notion of "frames" suggests, and as Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone put forth in their book *Contested Pasts,* the past is constituted in narrative, representation and construction (2003: 2). The interplay between individual and collective memories leads to a "battlefield" situation "where nothing is neutral and everything is continually contested" (Passerini, "Memories of Resistance," qtd. in Foot 2009: 1). "Divided memory" thus refers to a situation in which two or more competing narratives on the same historical timeframe exist simultaneously. Foot defines divided memory as follows: "Divided memory is the tendency for divergent or contradictory narratives to emerge after events, and to be elaborated and interpreted in private stories as well as through forms of public commemoration and ritual. These memories are often incompatible, but survive in parallel" (2009: 10).

Rather than remaining static, however, divided memories are sites of endless contestation. Foot contends that these "conflicts" can be affected by politics, historical research, and cultural change (2009: 10). Having outlined the relevant theories, it is time to consider how the memory of the Holocaust developed in post-World War II Italy.

• • • • • • • •

Holocaust memories in Italy

Italy's role in systematic anti-Semitism is a suitable example of contestation of memory, as it sits uneasily within discourses around the Holocaust. Post-war myths in Italy generally involved a displacement of agency: a comfortable "negationism" which allowed distance from a sense of responsibility by focusing on the Nazi occupation (Clifford 2013: 5; cf. Knittel 2015: 154). This is echoed in the statement by Chang cited above, namely that Italy never had a formal "de-fascistization" process. "To invoke the memory of fascism in the Italian context," she states, "inevitably points to unresolved questions of agency and accountability that are part of a sustained scholarly and public debate" (Chang 2008: 106). In the aftermath of World War II, the essentialised image of the largely victimised yet heroic Italians prevailed in public consciousness. Fascism

---

4) A similar argument is put forth by Alexander Wilde, who discusses "irruptions of memory," where symbols of memories are sporadically given public expression by events such as official ceremonies, book publications, or the discovery of the remains of disappeared persons, reminding the political class and citizens of an "unforgotten past" (1999: 475).

was framed as a lamentable "parenthesis" in Italian history, which was mild compared to the much more violent Nazi occupation (Clifford 2013: 5; Knittel 2015: 154).

While some academics, in different periods, claimed that Italian society has largely accepted responsibility for wartime conduct (see Michaelis 1978: vii; and Sarfatti 2006: xi), the academic consensus holds that the memory of Fascism as a "parenthesis" has remained very powerful (Perra 2008 & 2010; Gordon 2012; Clifford 2013; Knittel 2015; Girelli-Carasi n.d.; Maria 2017). Dan Stone even claims that, in Silvio Berlusconi's Italy, "the so-called 'post-fascist' narrative that all Italians were victims became the norm" (2013: 23). Clifford outlines the complex development of Holocaust commemorations in Italy after World War II. Glossing over the decades after World War II until the start of the twenty-first century, Clifford states that, before the creation of the Day of Memory in 2000, there was no central commemorative ritual in Italy marking the persecution and deportation of Italian Jews during the Fascist period and the war (Clifford 2013: 91). Commemorative ceremonies were primarily held at the local level and did not draw sustained attention from the broader public. Even when the genocide was commemorated, the idea that the war period had been a parenthesis and that the general populace had "chosen a 'good' path during the war, even if their leaders had chosen a 'bad' one," remained prevalent (Clifford 2013: 101).

This narrative would begin to be more seriously challenged after the fiftieth anniversary of the Racial Laws, in 1988, which marked "a revival of interest in the history of Italy's Jews, and a notable interpretative shift as scholars began to question the extent of Italian involvement in and sympathy for Fascist anti-Semitic policies" (Clifford 2013: 105). Clifford contextualises the shift in consciousness in the deceleration of the Cold War, which brought with it a re-evaluation of the history and memory of World War II in many European countries (2013: 6). However, although scholarship on Jews in Italy proliferated in the 1990s, commemorative practices largely remained unchanged at first (Clifford 2013: 106).

It was yet another fiftieth anniversary—which came not long after—that stirred debate, as some memorial activists demanded a reconsideration of the 1943 round-ups in Rome and their place in national history and memory (Clifford 2013: 141). These activists felt that a rethinking of the past was necessary due to "the growth of the extreme right, the search for new national identities as the old ideologies of the left crumbled, and concerns about the increase of violent racism both at home and in Europe as a whole" (Clifford 2013: 141). This rethinking did not however produce a unified memory: historians from both the Left and the Right revisited the history of the Fascist period, generating a wave of controversial historiographical debate (Clifford 2013: 145). Despite the controversy, the genocide increasingly became the subject of media and cultural attention (Clifford 2013: 151). Illustrating the divide, two distinct proposals for a "Day of Memory" emerged in Italy in the 1990s, which differed in their approach to the issue of culpability. One proposal emphasised Italian responsibility for Fascist-era treatment of Jews, and one centred on Fascist responsibility for the persecution of a wide range of people, not only Jews (Clifford 2013: 171). When one bill was hopelessly stalled in the Senate, the Parliament postponed the debate on the two motions for "a period of reflection" (Clifford 2013: 181).

Clifford outlines how, during this period from 1997 to 2000, several governments across Europe created official Holocaust memorial days, and the European Parliament called for 27 January to be adopted as a Europe-wide Holocaust Memorial Day (Clifford 2013: 222). Thus, by 2000, a commemoration day became a political necessity for many Italians. Italy had joined the "Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research" and signed the Stockholm Declaration, committing to encourage appropriate forms of Holocaust remembrance (Clifford 2013: 223). Despite the fact that diplomatic considerations played a large role in these decisions, it remains noteworthy that the initiatives, including the first proposals for a Day of Memory, emerged following public debate on Italian responsibility during the Holocaust, illustrating the effects of social debates on issues of historical responsibility, which were given a platform in the 1990s. In spite of increased calls to recognise Italian responsibility, the Day of Memory which was instated in Italy in 2000 was, as Clifford states, "politically neutral." It called more generally for remembrance of "extermination and the persecution of the Jewish population and of military and political Italian deportees to Nazi camps," never explicitly referring to the Fascist regime (Clifford 2013: 229-230).

Further, Clifford states that the Day of Memory in Italy was, and remains, characterised by "hesitant and hazy state participation" (Clifford 2013: 222). Rather than a single event, the Day of Memory is characterised by hundreds of events across the country which are organised by various Jewish communities or groups representing the victims of Fascist and Nazi persecution (Clifford 2013: 231). The state's lack of involvement notwithstanding, the number of events illustrate the willingness of members of the public to commemorate the Holocaust. Clifford states that the commemoration "became a platform for the re-examination of certain key aspects of post-war Italian identity" and a site to contest the *brava gente* myth (Clifford 2013: 234). Within the space of a few years, the issue of national responsibility "had gone from being almost completely absent from official discourse surrounding the Day of Memory, to being a common theme in official statements" (Clifford 2013: 240). While these statements had become politically fashionable, however, they did not constitute a sustained "duty to remember," being rather an end in themselves (Clifford 2013:242).

While there is no concrete study as to the precise degree of recognition of Italy's anti-Semitic oppression during Mussolini's rule—in Italy or abroad, or among the older and younger generations—it is clear that there is a tension between the discourses, and that the memory of Italian accountability for Jewish persecutions remains divided. That the *Museo* is hosted by a grassroots organisation and lacks governmental funding is unsurprising, given the continuing hesitation by political leaders to engage in national remembrance of Italian responsibility during the Holocaust. At the same time, the *Museo*'s existence is itself exemplary of the public commitment to acknowledge Italian responsibility for Jewish persecutions, and the desire to educate an increasing number of people. I will now investigate how the *Museo*'s curatorial practices embed it within a transnational discourse of Holocaust memory, and how the *Museo* frames the issue of national responsibility in two exhibitions from 2017.

• • • • • • • • •

Primary analysis: *Museo della Fondazione della Shoah*

The *Museo della Fondazione della Shoah* provides insight into the contemporary status of Holocaust remembrance in Rome and Italy. It is a recent addition to the memorial spaces of the Jewish quarter, alongside the plaques and Stolpersteine as mentioned earlier. In my analysis of the *Museo*, I will discuss two of its exhibitions: an exhibition on Nazi and Fascist propaganda, which ran from 30 January to 7 May 2017; and the exhibition that followed it, on *European Sport under Nazism,* which ran from 18 May to 28 July. The former was an original construct by the Fondazione, whereas the latter was an import from Paris. I will analyse these exhibitions in relation to the *Museo*'s aims and the above outlined theories of cultural memory studies. For the first exhibition, I draw on a book the *Museo* published based on it, which contains the exhibition's primary arguments, as well as photos and brief descriptions of the documents that were present in the *Museo* at the time. For the second exhibition, I draw on an analysis of the spatial organisation of the museum spaces, the posters and objects present in the *Museo*, and a complementary booklet which was provided to visitors.

A museum can be considered a medium, similarly to print, film, and social media. Museums participate within networks of storing and disseminating information, playing a crucial part in identity formation (of cities, nations, families) in the connections they establish with the past. As Jenny Kidd states, museums require visitors to "perform identities they may be uncomfortable with (…), to locate themselves and their communities within (or perhaps in opposition to) politically charged and ideologically loaded displays" (Kidd et al. 2016: 1). Museums convey a narrative which forces the viewers to position themselves in relation to the past it conveys (or constructs, as museums construct their own narrative of the past). By confronting Italian visitors with a narrative of their Fascist past, the *Museo* does just that; but, as Susanne Knittel states, "perhaps a certain degree of unsettlement is exactly what is required to shake visitors out of a distancing, even complacent idea about the past" (2015: 168).

This interpellation of the visitor to perform new identities is revealing of the relationship between the museum and its visitors. The project of the Shoah museum in Rome is part of an attempt to foster understanding of the Holocaust. According to the *Museo*'s website, their aim is simply to educate visitors about the Holocaust in general, glossing over the pedagogical function of teaching Italians specifically about their own past. In 2011, director Marcello Pezzetti stated that they planned to "speak directly to Italians" about their past in a special section on Italy (Palmieri-Billig n.d., n.p.). Since the planned state-of-the-art museum was never built, there is no clearly-marked area which performs this role. This is not to say that this aspect of the *Museo*'s intervention has been removed. During my own visit to the *Museo*, the curators provided our group with a tour. Verbally, they emphasised the lack of recognition of Fascist responsibility in public discourse, although they focused their tour largely on the exhibition and only mentioned the contemporary discourses in Italy with respect to Fascist responsibility at the end. So, at least in oral communication, the curators make attempts to have people reflect on Italy's duty to remember its own role in the history the *Museo* presents. In the analysis of the exhibitions that follows, I will discuss the role Italy's past plays within the exhibitions, considering the *Museo*'s use of a multi-scalar framework and the issue of national culpability.

European Sports under Nazism: the spatial organisation of an exhibition

Beyond the position of museums within broader media ecologies which I mentioned above, a museum utilises a variety of media. Walking through the Shoah Museum in Rome, one encounters posters with pictures and complementary text, a screen which plays a short film in a loop, as well as old objects such as magazines, postcards, shoes, and a brass cup. Visitors who do not speak Italian are provided a booklet of over fifty pages, conveying the information in a language that they understand. This booklet, too, contains a variety of media: there are pictures with accompanying notes,

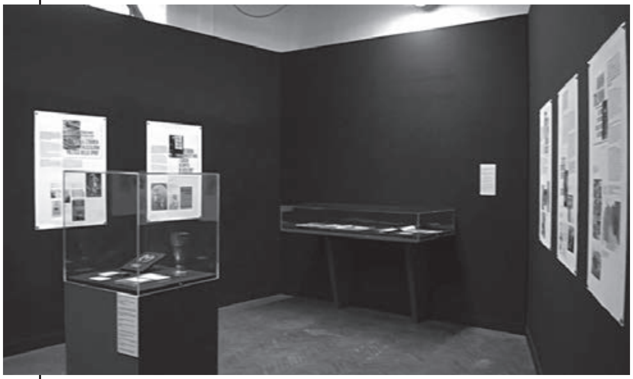


Figure 2: Display cases and posters at the exhibition European Sports under Nazism. Photo credit: Martijn van Gils.

historiographical texts by different authors, and even an autobiographical account, as well as an interview. The *Museo* makes use of visual as well as textual presentations to convey its exhibition topics.

The primary source of information for visitors are numerically organised posters which describe different aspects of the history of European sports in the 1930s and 1940s. In my analysis below, I shall focus on these posters and the manner in which the *Museo*'s framing contributes to historicising Italy's role in the Holocaust. Before turning to this, I will discuss the materiality of the *Museo*: its use of objects, the spatial organisation of the exhibition, and the *Museo*'s situatedness in Rome's Jewish district. The study of material culture has increasingly turned to the direct engagements by visitors with the objects themselves, rather than seeing the objects as only attaining meaning through their contextualisation within a narrative (see Dudley 2009, 2012). While this is an intriguing way of considering museum objects, it is an approach which is most suitably applied to those exhibitions that allow a greater degree of engagement with the objects. Sandra Dudley argues that our encounters with material objects in most museums do not mirror real-life subject-object encounters, as the objects are usually separated through glass and "Do Not Touch" signs, leading to a predominance of the visual (2012: 2-3).

In the *Museo della Shoah,* objects are largely treated the same way: sealed within glass cases and accompanied by notes providing their historical context (Figure 2). This is not necessarily a "wrong" approach: despite her focus on the irreducible materiality of museum objects, Sandra Dudley does not argue against the value of interpretations and meanings. She states that "clearly, the very resonance and power of material objects in and outside museums is often, if not usually, inextricable from their history and links" (Dudley 2009: 5). The presence of the objects primarily serves to grant the exhibitions a historical aura, which is constitutive of the experience of walking through a museum. Objects form a visible part of an archive, imbuing the exhibition with a sense of authenticity. During our informal tour of the *Museo*, a curator proudly mentioned their exhibition on anti-Semitic propaganda—which occurred prior to the one on sports, and which I also discuss in this paper—stating that "important documents" had been present in the *Museo*. This illustrates the dominant usage of objects in museums as part of an "object-information package" (Dudley 2009: 5).

This is not to say that this authenticity is the only function of the displayed objects. As shown in Figure 3, beyond presenting historical documents, as in the *Razza Nemica* exhibition, the exhibition on sports also contained more everyday objects, including shoes, and in another case, a ball. These are not documents merely imparting an aura of authenticity, but form an actual window into the past life of people who actually owned these objects. Through this display of mundane objects, the *Museo* does, to a degree, allow for affective engagement with the objects, although this engagement remains limited to the visual.

With respect to the spatial organisation: the *Museo* contains a central room, a slightly elevated open space on the right-hand side of the entrance, and a separate room on the left-hand side. The numerical

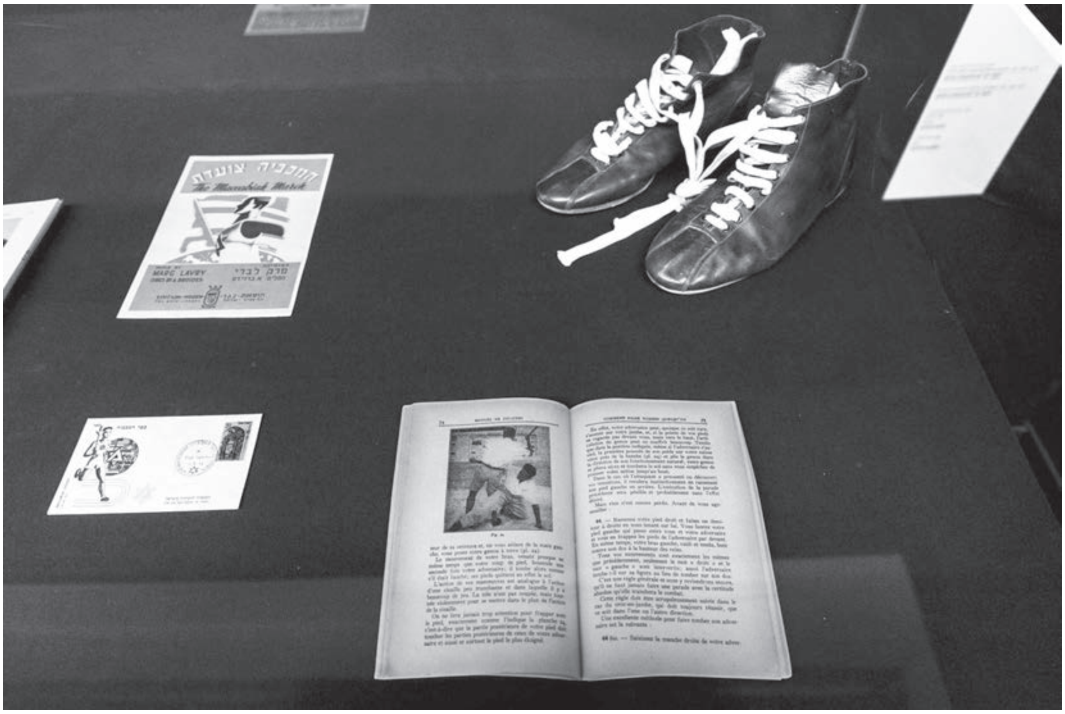


Figure 3: Shoes alongside historical documents at the exhibition *European Sports under Nazism.*
Photo credit: "Fondazione Museo della Shoah—Onlus" Facebook page (uploaded 29 May 2018).

organisation of the posters stimulated the visitor to trace a path which would begin on the right-hand side and lead back through the central room into the final room. In this room, which is relatively closed-off from the rest, a second set of posters—different from the primary set of posters—were on display. Whereas, as I will discuss below, the majority of the posters (from one to twenty-one) conveyed a general narrative on sports in Europe within the given time frame (Germany, Italy and France together), the set of five posters in the third room focused on Italy. This dovetailed with the *Museo*'s goal to incorporate a special section on Italy—however, the third room was not fully dedicated to the posters centring on Italy, as it also included the final few posters from the primary set. This is noteworthy, as it reveals how the size of the *Museo* does not allow for a special section on Italy, and the curators are forced to improvise. As a result of the hodge-podge in the third room, this section of the *Museo* was not clearly marked (through a sign above the door or similarly) as being dedicated to Italy. Indeed, in their set-up, the curators delineated a path for visitors to follow along all the posters, and made an effort to "separate" the posters on Italy, so if the spatial organisation of the exhibition left to be desired, it was because of the very limitations of the venue.

Finally, before moving to my analysis of the framing used in the exhibitions, it is worth reflecting on the location of the venue itself. The *Museo* embodies the transnational memory of the Holocaust in Rome. Eric Gable states that museums and modern cities have grown up together. Museums are deeply intertwined with a city's "civic project," as they are emblematic of a city's image (Gable 2013:32). More specifically, the *Museo* is a site of memory within the Jewish quarter. Located near the ancient synagogue and the contemporary synagogue, which also serves as the Jewish museum of Rome, the *Museo* della Shoah is embedded within local spaces associated both with Jewish life in Rome more generally, and the deportations of October 1943, more

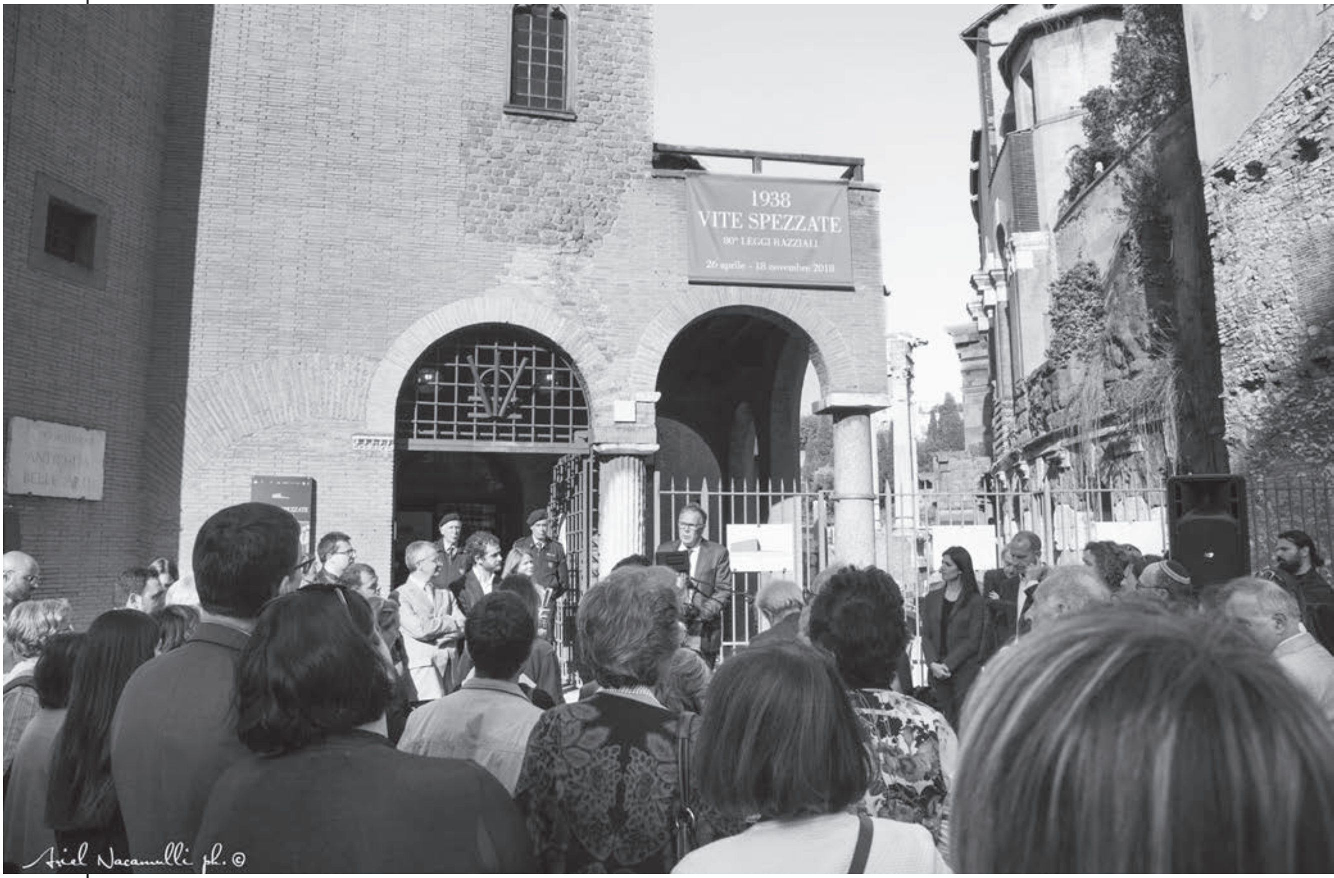


Figure 4: Crowd gathered before the Museo. Photo credit: “Fondazione *Museo* della Shoah—Onlus” Facebook page (uploaded 26 April 2018).

specifically. The Fondazione’s social media presence suggests that the *Museo* is quite well-known locally: on their Facebook page (which has nearly 5,000 likes at the time of writing), photos may be found of sizeable crowds gathered before the *Museo* during particular events (Figure 4). Further, in a personal interview, one curator revealed that the *Museo* is often visited by groups of primary school students from Rome or its surroundings. Through these visits, they are able to stimulate the next generation to start to come to grips with the memory of the Holocaust and Italy’s role within it.

Its local fame notwithstanding, the photo also reveals that the *Museo* is not explicitly visible to people unfamiliar with the area. Just behind the speaker, a small plaque is visible on the fence, which is the only true indication outsiders have that the *Museo* is situated there. The poster hanging above it is more visible, but it advertises only the exhibition, and not the *Museo* itself. If I may draw on an anecdote: when our group was scheduled to receive a tour of the *Museo*, we had a hard time locating it, despite knowing the address. After some fruitless searching, we found it mainly due to telephonic contact with the curator who was to give us the tour. That the *Museo* appears to be known locally—as evidenced by their social media presence and the primary school groups that visit it regularly—but is more obscure to outsiders may reflect the Fondazione’s strong focus on the Italian public. Beyond this, it is also further indicative of the limited resources they have access to. As I have argued, the *Museo* is a site within a specific part of the city, where it is also best known. Despite this, as I will now go on to argue, the exhibitions do not simply focus on Rome, but instead on the developments within Italy as a whole, as well as Germany and France. The *Museo* does not present nations as discrete entities, but instead as constantly interacting with each other.

Historical contexts: the focus of the exhibitions

In the following sections, I will analyse the *Museo*'s framing of Italy's national responsibility for Jewish persecutions, including an account of its treatment of historical figures. One noteworthy aspect of the *Museo*'s exhibitions is their temporal focus. Significantly, the *Museo* resists a strong focus on the years of the Nazi occupation, from 1943 to 1945. Instead, the exhibitions largely focus on the socio-political climate and the lead-up to the Holocaust by centring on propaganda or legal developments. This is more obviously manifest in the exhibition *La Razza Nemica,* which centred entirely on anti-Semitic propaganda in Germany and Italy. However, it is also foregrounded in the other exhibition, on *European Sport under Nazism,* which covers the years 1936 to 1948 but centres on the lead-up to the 1936 Berlin Olympics and the contentious climate in Europe regarding racial issues. Further, for the eightieth anniversary of the 1938 Racial Laws, the *Museo* created an exhibition to commemorate a dark chapter in the history of a country that "considered itself 'civil'" (Fondazione, "Itinerant Exhibition," n.d.). From the very outset, the *Museo* has made efforts to avoid deferring responsibility for Jewish persecutions in Italy to the German occupation.

The focus on propaganda and the socio-political climates is clearly visible in both exhibitions under analysis. Firstly, a major point the exhibition on sports makes is how sports were an important outlet for German and Italian propaganda. The first poster and the introduction of the booklet outline how the Fascist regime was the first in Europe to launch a large-scale sports policy, as sports functioned as training and leisure activities for soldiers, as well as instilled inspiration in the masses during wartime (Dietschy 2017, n.p.). The posters and the booklet provide much background to the interrelationship between sports and propaganda, notions of boycott and the "alternative" Olympics (in Barcelona, as well as the Maccabiah Games for Jewish athletes), and the role of sports in internment camps. They stress how the Berlin Olympic Games were "the media event" of the 1930s, and the epitome of the Nazi and Fascist regimes' display of power. The first poster states how both Hitler and Mussolini took advantage of public sporting events to assert themselves as great leaders. The exhibition emphasises how sports tourism flourished, and propaganda was disseminated in multiple countries. The booklet states that the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda "covered the globe with postcards, badges, information bulletins in 14 European languages, not to mention the 200,000 posters translated into 19 languages" ("The Reich Games" 2017: 25).

These developments, the booklet stresses, were directly related to the political climate of the time. In his contribution to the booklet, "The Nazi Olympics: A Prelude to the Holocaust," George Eisen claims that the Berlin Olympic Games changed the balance of power on the continent. The success of the Games "proved to be a key ingredient for reinforcing the Nazi hold on German society" and world opinion in general (Eisen 2017: 75). Earlier on, the booklet links the sports policies of Germany and Italy to war: dovetailing with the posters, it argues that sports competitions became demonstrations of power, "less and less metaphorically so," to flaunt Nazi flags or Fascist uniforms ("Sports: The March to War" 2017: 52). One particular example, illustrated by the ninth poster of the exhibition, is Leni Riefenstahl's 1938 film *Olympia*, which was a display both of the strength of the male body and technological modernity, as new filming techniques were used by having the camera move above and below water. With respect to Italy in particular, the second poster outlines how the Fascist regime attempted to turn Italy into a nation of sportspeople after coming to power in 1922. Mussolini was presented as "the first sportsman of Italy," and in 1928 the Fascist Party took control of the sports associations through a Sports Charter—and subsequently began to exclude undesired members, such as socialists, communists, and eventually Jews, particularly following the 1938 Racial Laws.

The second exhibition under analysis, *La Razza Nemica (The Enemy Race),* very explicitly deals with propaganda, as it is entirely focused on anti-Semitic propaganda in Germany and Italy. Contrary to the exhibition on sports, this exhibition was the Fondazione's own design. Following the exhibition, the curators of the *Museo* published a book outlining the main points from the exhibition and presenting many pictures of the documents they had on display. In the introductory remarks to this book, the team of curators emphasise that their aim was to understand how common people could have been driven to participate in a system of oppression, or stay complacent within it (Pezzetti and Berger 2017: 9-13).

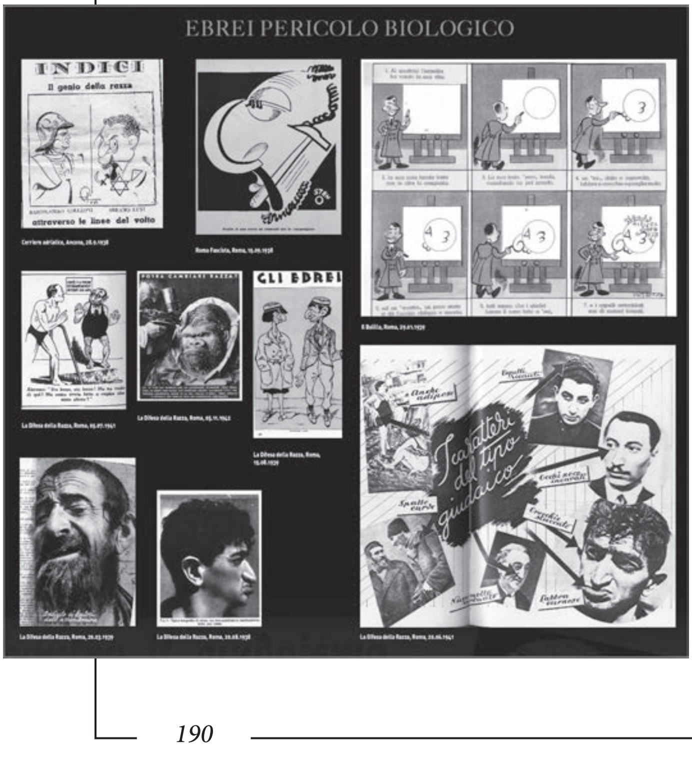


Figure 5: Photocopy of a poster from the "La Razza Nemica" itinerant exhibition. Caption at the top reads "Jews, a biological threat." Photo credit: Web page of the Fondazione della Shoah [http://www.museodellashoah.it/mostreitineranti/la-razza-nemica-la-propaganda-antisemita-nazista-fascista/].

One section in the booklet centres on caricatures of Jews, arguing that Italy and Germany attempted to impart racist ideas on history and society onto their populations. In order for these notions to register effectively, prominent use was made of a variety of visual media—such as comics, and pictures in books and journals (see Figure 5). The exhibition emphasised that anti-Semitic propaganda accelerated from the mid-1930s onwards, influenced by the increased cooperation between Italy and Germany through the Rome-Berlin axis. The book goes on to show how anti-Semitic propaganda in this time re-worked the themes of traditional anti-Semitism within Catholic circles, but also carried a new biology-informed message, framing Jews as not belonging to the Aryan race, as opposed to Italians. Mussolini promoted the spread of propaganda, which soon reached every corner of Italian society. This propaganda culminated in the publication of the manifesto *Fascism and the Problem of Race,* and paved the way for the 1938 Racial Laws, which excluded Jews from society (Pezzetti and Berger 2017: 77).

The exhibition stresses that, not only was the propaganda designed to paint a picture of Jews as dangerous, it was meant to actively stimulate the marginalisation of Jews, so that people would stay complacent, or even actively participate in, their disappearance (Pezzetti and Berger 2017: 98). I shall return to an analysis of the book later; for now, I wish to emphasise the scope of the exhibitions. As I have illustrated, the exhibitions do not focus solely on the deportations and killings of Jews by the Nazis in the period from 1943 to 1945. Instead, both exhibitions negotiate the socio-political climate in Europe and the operational logics of anti-Semitic propaganda. By shifting the focus from a decontextualized presentation of deportations to also include propaganda, the *Museo* historicises anti-Semitism in Italy and beyond, revealing how this propaganda was received in, and shifted, Italian social frames. The public is thus framed as (partly) responsible in the framework of Jewish persecutions.

Staging cosmopolitan communities: victim narratives and culpability

Beyond the focus on propaganda, the exhibition on sports also prominently draws on personal narratives, which transcend national and racial boundaries. Featured in both the posters and the booklet, there is the narrative of Alfred Nakache, an Algerian-born French Jew who was a professional swimmer. At the beginning of the German occupation, Nakache could continue participating in competitions. However, he increasingly became the target of anti-Semitic attacks in the media and was barred from entry in the 1943 French championships, before being deported to Auschwitz the next year. He continued to swim—sometimes as an act of resistance to maintain his dignity, other times as an act of subservience as the guards would force him to swim. His wife Paule and daughter Annie were also sent to Auschwitz, where they met their end. Nakache survived his Auschwitz experience, and would go on to participate in the 1948 Olympics ("Alfred Nakache" 2017).

Nakache's narrative exemplifies many of the issues at stake in the exhibition space. Though situated in Italy, the exhibition focuses many of its personal stories on people from other locations. That the exhibition prominently draws on Nakache's narrative is unsurprising, given that this exhibition is an import from France. Beyond Nakache's narrative, however, other examples include Johann Trollman, a German Sinto, and Jesse Owen, an African American. Both of these figures have their own poster dedicated to them in the exhibition. This goes to show that the narratives cover a diversity of backgrounds; they do not focus solely on Jews, but extend to other oppressed minorities. Often, Holocaust discourse centres on Jewish oppression, and while this is certainly understandable, the corollary is that certain other groups fall out of narrative representation. The cross-cultural connections made in the *Museo* contribute towards a diversification of Holocaust memory, since the experiences of different national and ethnic groups are represented as interconnected.

Even though the *Museo* is located within the Jewish quarter and its exhibitions focus largely on anti-Semitic propaganda, the sports exhibition nonetheless allows scope to articulate the sufferings of other groups. While it does not equate these groups as such, it does place them within the same memorial field and divides its attention between the groups proportionately. As I discussed above, part of the *Museo*'s "aura" lies in its presence in the Jewish district of Rome, surrounded by the ancient Synagogue, the modern Jewish museum, and a multitude of plaques and Stolpersteine. By organising an exhibition which, through its spatial organisation, leads visitors down a narrative track which only ends in the "special section" on Italy—insofar as this exists currently—and which provides narratives of multiple different groups, the *Museo* participates in a kind of "internal globalisation" described by Levy and Sznaider. Drawing on transnational narratives without providing a rigid distinction between the sufferings endured by different groups, the *Museo* articulates new communal identities, expressed within a common narrative. This is symptomatic of what Levy and Sznaider describe as the modern turn to the victims, in which societies choose to "incorporate the suffering of the 'Other'" (Levy and Sznaider 2002: 103).

Levy and Sznaider also note that the function of this cosmopolitan memory is a "future-oriented dimension," in that no new formative myths are constructed—instead, the Holocaust and other memories come to symbolise a world of uncertainties (Levy and Sznaider 2002: 101-102). While I do not question the validity of memory as a tool for learning from the past, I would note that, in Italy, the problematic debates surrounding national responsibility for the Holocaust structure much of the discussion, instead. A recognition of wrongdoing is necessary before social acceptance of the perceived "universality" of the Holocaust can occur. By universality, I mean what Levy and Sznaider state is now the common perception of the Holocaust in Europe: that "it can happen to anyone, at anytime, and everyone is responsible" (2002: 101). In Italy, where the memory of national responsibility is divided, issues of culpability centred on the past remain crucial to negotiate. The focus on propaganda which I described above is a step towards involving the wider public in this narrative of responsibility, avoiding a view on culpability as attributable to only a few prominent figures.

However, beyond the personal narratives of victims which the exhibitions provide, neither of the exhibitions I considered contains reflections on individual *perpetrators*. Beyond the central figures of victims such as Nakache, which have entire posters dedicated to them, there are many instances where another victim is mentioned, and a brief outline is given of who they were. However, perpetrators are largely cast in broad terms. The above-mentioned outline of propaganda in Italy, for instance, begins by stating that until the mid-1930s, "Fascism did not persecute Jews" (Pezzetti and Berger 2017: 77). This use of the broad word "Fascism" recurs throughout the text. Mention of individual perpetrators is primarily limited to Mussolini and Hitler; and, although other figures are mentioned, such as Jean Borotra, the new sports commissioner under the Vichy regime, there is no attempt to contextualise these figures or understand their motivations.

For an organisation that wishes to highlight issues of culpability, it would indeed be worthwhile to include narratives about individual perpetrators. Characteristically of cosmopolitan modes of remembrance, the *Museo* retains the features of engaging primarily with victims. However, as Bull and Hansen (2016), as well as other scholars working in perpetrator studies, point out, memorial sites have a pedagogical obligation to engage with perpetrators to give visitors an understanding of who they were, and what systems gave rise to them. While the *Museo* usefully focuses on propaganda, and highlights how common people were made complicit to or even participated in the system of persecution, it fails to address individual perpetrators and their specific developments and motivations. In practice, therefore, the *Museo* does not contribute towards understanding perpetrators as much as it should, and a shift in curatorial practice would be desirable in this respect.

Transnational framing: a multi-scalar approach to national culpability

This is not to say, however, that the *Museo* does not take positive steps towards recognising Italian culpability. As I have already argued, the *Museo* usefully highlights the role of the public by educating people about propaganda. I now wish to highlight a different aspect which is particularly significant in framing *Italian* responsibility: the manner in which the relationship between Italy and Germany is framed. This theme was prominently treated in the *Museo*'s exhibition on anti-Semitic propaganda in Germany and Italy. The books' merit lies in its balanced, inter relational discussion of the two countries. Its very title, *La Razza Nemica: La propaganda antisemita nazista e fascista*, implies a division, as it distinguishes between Nazi propaganda and Fascist propaganda. At the same time, the information in the book provides a view on the two as working together and often operating within the same spheres.

One section of the book is devoted to propaganda in Germany and one to propaganda in Italy. There is also a shorter section on their interrelation. In my analysis, I want to focus on the information in the section focusing on propaganda in Italy. Paraphrasing the contents of the section, it outlines how, until the mid-1930s, Fascism did not actively persecute Jews, and Italian Jews actively participated in society. Italy was even a safe haven for some German Jews. A shift took place following the creation of the Rome-Berlin axis in 1936, when the countries strengthened their ties. Then, anti-Semitic propaganda truly exploded and reached every corner of society. Of particular significance was the publication of *Fascism and the Problem of the Race* in 1938. Mussolini actively promoted and accelerated this propaganda. In 1938, the Racial Laws were pushed through in Italy; in Germany such laws had been active since 1933. Jews were then seen in Italy as not belonging to the Aryan race, as opposed to Italians. The ideological climate of the late 1930s in Italy may be characterised as similar to the one Nazism constructed in Germany, although anti-Jew artefacts and movies were not very prominent in Italy, and the time span was not as long (Pezzetti and Berger 2017: 77).

The brief description of the rise of anti-Semitic propaganda and sentiment in Italy which the book provides is interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, while it provides an interrelated discussion of Italy and Germany, it deals with them separately and does not displace the full blame onto Germany for pushing an agenda onto Italy. Despite this, it is not overly damning to Italians, ensuring that fair descriptions are given: it takes pains to emphasise that while anti-Semitic propaganda and laws were rampant in Italy, they were still worse and lasted longer in Germany. Finally, of particular note is how it characterises the discourse as similar to Nazism, not inspired by it or any such phrasing—even as the book notes that the racial laws in Germany preceded those in Italy. This balanced, interrelated account of Italy's role in the past alongside Germany is a great example of how the issues of agency should be addressed. Rather than framing Fascism as a "parenthesis" in history, the book sheds light on Italian responsibility for the development of anti-Semitism in the 1930s.

At the same time, the section on the interrelation between the two countries stresses the cooperative nature of these developments. For instance, the book mentions a German paper, *Der Stürmer,* which commented on and drew inspiration from Italian anti-Semitic propaganda and legislation (Pezzetti and Berger 2017: 164). Further, the book devotes a section to an anti-Jewish film, Suss, the Jew, which was produced in Germany but first screened in Venice. As the film was circulated in Italy, it led to anti-Semitic demonstrations in various cities—such as Florence, Rome, Turin—and even a case of arson in a synagogue (Pezzetti and Berger 2017: 169). This narrative exemplifies the transnational flows enabling the spread of anti-Semitic propaganda, and crucially, that the film was well received within Italian social frames.

The exhibition on sports employs largely the same framing, of discussing Germany and Italy within the same breath without however subordinating one to the other. This exhibition is not as focused on Italy as the other one: as I have stated, the French context plays a relatively large part in this exhibition. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that while the title of the exhibition *La Razza Nemica* focuses both on Nazism and Fascism, the title of this exhibition is *European Sports under Nazism*. Despite the larger focus on the Nazism aspect, Italy is still present in the contents of the exhibition itself. One poster, for instance, delves into the role of football within the Fascist and Nazi regimes, outlining how both regimes assumed control over their respective sports federations. Moreover, in one poster that addresses the Vichy regime in greater depth, it is stated that the Vichy government wanted to reform physical education. As a result, a Sports Charter was adopted in 1940, which was "inspired by the 1928 Italian Sports Charter." Thus, the exhibitions largely deals with the two countries separately, although they do investigate the transnational flows between them. Most importantly, the Fascist regime is presented as an entity which acted autonomously.

This dimension of Italian autonomy within the framework of Jewish persecutions is discussed in the exhibition's "special section" on Italy. The fourth poster in this section provides an outline of the relationship between sports and racism in Italy, stating that the Fascist regime promoted an idea of sports as a tool for "racial regeneration," presenting an ideal "new man." This figure of the new man, intimately connected with sports, was imbued with racial ideas, as notions of race increasingly came to be defined from a biological viewpoint. Significantly, when the poster turns to an outline of deportations, it outlines how the Italian sports world "zealously" carried out the exclusionary politics set forth in the 1938 Racial Laws, taking a first step towards their systematic deportation following the occupation in 1943, when Jewish sportspeople were left to their fate and quickly forgotten. The exhibition thus draws attention to the historical aspect I outlined in my background section, acknowledging that work performed by Italian officials not only excluded Jews from society, but directly made possible their deportation at a later stage.

Furthermore, the exhibition stresses the public's complacency within this system. The section following the one on deportations concerns resistance. This section begins by stating that only a few isolated examples of courage stood out in the face of a majority who was indifferent to the erasure of the names and achievements of the Jewish sportspeople. In stressing the role of officials within the sports world as well as the complacency of the public, the exhibition highlights Italian responsibility within the framework of the Fascist regime before the occupation. Through this framing, the *Museo* speaks to Italian visitors, who must engage in a process of working through their own past without the comfort of deferring the full responsibility to an occupying force.

Situating the *Museo* within transnational figurations

Finally, I wish to return to a consideration of the material, through a discussion of the *Museo*'s position within transnational flows of Holocaust remembrance. Beyond the cross-cultural connections drawn in the contents of the exhibitions, the very setup of the *Museo* positions it within transnational discourses and figurations. As the Holocaust is a phenomenon which exceeds national boundaries, so too is Holocaust remembrance something that cannot be performed or formulated in national terms. The phenomenon of Stolpersteine, as well as the displays of the *Museo* discussed above, already illustrate this. The transnational nature of the *Museo* is further illustrated in the ways in which the project operates: as the *Museo* is not so much a proper museum as a small project, often depending on travelling collections from other museums to construct its exhibitions. While the exhibition on propaganda was their own construct, the exhibition on sports was imported from Paris. This helps explain the relative focus on French figures (such as Nakache) in the exhibition; although, as I illustrated, its subject matter transcends national borders.

Furthermore, one of the *Museo*'s first events was the itinerant Anne Frank exhibition, "conceived and designed by the Anne Frank House of Amsterdam and promoted by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Italy" (Fondazione, "Anne Frank" n.d.). This exhibition, which according to the website has been translated into over twenty languages and has visited over one hundred countries, has "long been a stimulus and source of inspiration for educational activities and projects" (Fondazione, "Anne Frank" n.d.). The exhibition conveys a localised memory while travelling and being re-inflected wherever it goes, depending on that locale's connection to the memory. Beyond this, the exhibitions which are the *Museo*'s own creation—including *La Razza Nemica*—are promoted on their website as being available upon request for use in institutions, schools, or cultural organisations that wish to host them (Fondazione, "Itinerant Exhibitions" n.d.). The exchange of travelling exhibitions reveals how the *Museo* is part of a network of Holocaust remembrance, in which the memory of the Holocaust is localised in various contexts by drawing on transnational flows.

This is echoed on the website of the *Museo*, where it is stated that "[t]he creation of the museum in Rome will allow the capital of Italy to join the great cities of the world (Jerusalem, Washington, Berlin, London, Paris) that have museums dedicated to the Shoah" ("The Foundation" n.d.). With the (small) museum which now exists, Italy has taken an important step in joining this international figuration of discourses surrounding Holocaust remembrance. The *Museo* thus constructs a dialogue between itself and other spaces of remembrance—elsewhere in Europe, in Israel, and in the U.S. This results in an interaction between the local and the global: while the *Museo* displays many transnational narratives, there is still a focus on the Italian context. In line with the stated aims of the *Museo* to educate Italians about their own past, the *Museo* takes Italy (and Germany) as its primary focal points, while still embedding itself within a larger, transnational discourse.

Considering my earlier discussion of how the *Museo* itself forms a site of memory within the Jewish district of Rome, it becomes clear that many scales come together within this museum: the local, as a site of Italian Jews' historical oppression and contemporary life; the municipal, as the site containing the Jewish quarter within the capital city of Italy; the national, as a "duty to remember" encouraged by the *Museo*; and the transnational, in the material and linguistic exchange promoted by the exhibitions and the treatment of multiple contexts. All these scales form part of the *Museo*'s scope in addressing issues of national responsibility.

Conclusion

To conclude, analysing Rome's Holocaust museum, and considering the lack of one entirely until 2015, reveals the problems underlying Italian memories of the Holocaust. The *Museo* holds a paradoxical position: on the one hand, its material difficulties are illustrative of hesitant state participation; on the other hand, its existence now and its embeddedness in local practices show increased recognition of its narrative. The *Fondazione della Shoah* attempts to make its narrative heard through the mouthpiece of the museum, but as long as they are restricted to a tiny exhibition space, while being dependent on travelling exhibitions and lacking funding, they have some way to go. In general, as scholars such as Clifford have outlined, Holocaust memorialisation remains a relatively disperse and uncomfortable act.

The *Museo*'s uneasy beginnings and its present status are symptomatic of this.

As I have argued, the *Museo* stimulates reflection on the Holocaust and achieves partial success in addressing the role of Italy within it. Focusing on the socio-political climate in Europe leading up to the Holocaust, the *Museo* is true to its aim of interrogating how common people could have been driven to participate in a system of oppression, or stay complacent within it. The exhibitions display a multi-scalar mode of remembrance which draws connections between various national and ethnic groups, addressing the Holocaust as a transnational phenomenon and constructing new cosmopolitan identities by incorporating the suffering of the "Other." Beyond addressing the victims only, the transnational connections also frame Italian culpability via the depiction of the relationship between Italy and other nations, particularly Germany. The relationship is framed as one based on cooperation and mutual inspiration. While the *Museo* recognises that systemic violence was truly realised by the Nazi occupation, it stresses the role of socio-political dynamics in Italy in the 1930s, and particularly the 1938 Racial Laws, as leading up to the events of the Holocaust. The narrative presented by the *Museo* in its book on the topic provides a balanced and inter-relational discussion of the Fascist ideology as similar to, not inspired by, Nazism. Going even further, the exhibitions historicize how the Fascist regime inspired other regimes, e.g., the 1940 Sports Charter in France which was based on the 1928 Italian Sports Charter.

The very setup of the *Museo* draws cross-cultural connections, as its presence within the city of Rome draws Italy into an international figuration of Holocaust memorial sites. The Fondazione is partly dependent on travelling collections. Particularly exhibitions such as the Anne Frank exhibition connect the museum space to other localised contexts, which is symptomatic of the transnational flows of memory on the Holocaust. The curators of the *Museo* are making every effort to keep the project alive, waiting for the funding that has been withheld from them for over a decade. The discourse it presents in recognising mutual wrongdoings by Germany and Italy is valuable. One can only hope that the foundation will soon achieve its goals of a proper memorial space, so that Italians can truly begin working through this still contentious facet of their past.

Despite its focus on propaganda and its framing of national responsibility, the *Museo* mirrors the problems in the cosmopolitan mode of remembrance, as it has failed to reflect on individual perpetrators. It largely works from a reductive top-down approach, speaking of perpetrators only in broad terms. This is where the *Museo* can still improve, as engaging with the historical specificity of perpetrators is crucial in realising the pedagogical function which the *Museo* set for itself. As Knittel argues, "without a nuanced, critical en gagement with the perpetrators, 'learning for the future' is at best superficial and at worst entirely lacking" (2015: 166). In an age where killing has become increasingly "easy" or large-scale and even impersonal (when use is made of tools such as drones), it is ever so important to draw pedagogical value from studying perpetrators. Understanding their historically specific positions and motivations is necessary in order to build a more inclusive future, based on a public recognition of past wrongs.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aicher, Peter. 2000. "Mussolini's Forum and the Myth of Augustan Rome." *Classical Bulletin.* 76 (2): 117-139.

"Alfred Nakache: 1915 – 1983." 2017. *European Sport Under Nazism*, information booklet property of the *Museo della Fondazione della Shoah*. Rome.

Bijl, Paul. 2015. *Emerging Memory*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP.

Bull, Anna Cento and Hans Lauge Hansen. 2016. "On Agonistic Memory." *Memory Studies.* 9 (4): 390-404.

Chang, Natascha. 2008. "Forgetting Fascism: Memory, History, and the Literary Text in Umberto Eco's *La misteriosa fiamma della regina Loana*." *Italian Culture.* 26: 105-132. Project MUSE.

Clendinnen, Inga. 2002. *Reading the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

Clifford, Rebecca. 2013. *Commemorating the Holocaust: he Dilemmas of Remembrance in France and Italy*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

Critchell, Kara, Susanne Knittel, Emiliano Perra, Uğur Ümit Üngör. 2017. "Editors' Introduction." *Journal of Perpetrator Research.* 1 (1): 1-27.

De Cesari, Chiara and Ann Rigney. 2014. "Introduction." In *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales,* edited by Chiara De Cesari, and Ann Rigney, 1-25. De Gruyter.

Dietschy, Paul. 2017. "Italian Sport: From the Great War to Fascism." In *European Sport Under Nazism*, information booklet property of the *Museo della Fondazione della Shoah*. Rome.

Demnig, Gunter. "Stolpersteine" Tweet, 16 Dec 2017 [available online at: https://twitter.com/_Stolpersteine_/status/942073487425986565].

Dudley, Sandra. 2009. "Museum Materialities: Objects, sense and feeling." In *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations*, edited by Sandra Dudley, 1-18. Routledge.

Dudley, Sandra. 2012. "Materiality Matters: Experiencing the Displayed Object." *Working Papers in Museum Studies.* 8: 1-9. University of Michigan.

Dunn, Stephen. 1 February 1958. "An Outsider Visits the Roman Ghetto: The Past Lives On." *Commentary Magazine* [available online at: https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/an-outsider-visits-the-roman-ghettothe-past-lives-on/].

Eisen, George. 2017. "The Nazi Olympics: A Prelude to the Holocaust." In *European Sport Under Nazism*, information booklet property of the *Museo della Fondazione della Shoah*. Rome.

Encyclopaedia Britannica. Updated 1 February 2018. "Italy – The Fascist Era." [available online at: https://www.britannica.com/place/Italy/The-Fascist-era].

Encyclopaedia Britannica. Updated 1 February 2018. "Italy – Anti-Fascist Movements." [available online at: https://www.britannica.com/place/Italy/Anti-Fascist-movements].

Fondazione Museo della Shoah. "Anne Frank. A Current Story." N.d. [available online at: http://www.museodellashoah.it/2016/01/27/anna-frank-storia-attuale/].

Fondazione Museo della Shoah. "Itinerant Exhibition '1938 – The History'." N.d. [available online at: http://www.museodellashoah.it/mostreitineranti/mostra-itinerante-1938-la-storia/].

Fondazione Museo della Shoah. "Itinerant Exhibitions: How to request them." N.d. [available online at: http://www.museodellashoah.it/mostre-itineranti/].

Foot, John. 2009. *Italy's Divided Memory*. Palgrave MacMillan: New York.

Gable, Eric. 2013. "The City, Race, and the Creation of a Common History at the Virginia Historical Society." In *Museums and Communities: Curators, Collections and Collaboration*, edited by Viv Golding and Wayne Modest, 32-46. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Girelli-Carasi, Fabio. N.d. "Jewish Memoirists: The Role of Memory in the Discourse of Identity." *Brooklyn College*, [available online at: http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/modlang/carasi/articles/memorialistica2.html].

Gordon, Robert. 2012. *The Holocaust in Italian Culture, 1944-2010*. Stanford: Stanford UP.

Gruber, Samuel. 2013. "Mapping Jews: Cartography and Topography in Rome's Ghetto." In *Giambattista Nolli and Rome: Mapping the City before and after the Piana Grande*, edited by Ian Verstegen and Allan Ceen, 121-131. Studium Urbis.

Hirsch, Marianne. 2013. "Reframing 'Absent Memories'." *Cultural Analysis.* 12: 16-17.

Hodgkin, Katharine and Susannah Radstone. 2003. "Introduction: Contested Pasts." In *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory*, edited by Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, 1-22. Taylor and Francis: Abingdon.

Italy Magazine. 8 November 2008. "Rome Closer to Shoah Museum." [available online at: http://www.italymagazine.com/italy/lazio/rome-closer-shoah-museum].

Jewish Telegraphic Agency. 16 September, 2014. "Plans for Rome Holocaust Museum in Jeopardy." [available online at: http://www.jta.org/2014/09/16/news-opinion/world/plans-for-holocaust-museum-in-rome-in-jeopardy].

Kidd, Jenny. 2016. "Introduction: Challenging History in the Museum." In *Challenging History in the Museum: International Perspectives*, edited by Jenny Kid, Sam Cairns, Alex Drago and Amy Ryall, 1-22. Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group.

Knittel, Susanne. 2015. *The Historical Uncanny: Disability, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Holocaust Memory*. New York: Fordham UP.

Lerner, L. Scott. 2002. "Narrating Over the Ghetto of Rome." *Jewish Social Studies.* 8 (2/3): 1-38. Project MUSE [available online at: https://doi.org/10.1353/jss.2002.0009].

Levy, Daniel and Natan Sznaider. 2002. "Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory." *European Journal of Social Theory.* 5 (1): 87-106.

Maria, Angelo. 2017. "Mediated Holocaust Memories in Italy from 1945 to Present." *Journal for Communication Studies.* 10 (1): 255-266.

Michaelis, Meir. 1978. *Mussolini and the Jews: German-*

Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy 1922-1945. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.

Palmieri-Billig, Lisa. “Italy’s First Holocaust Museum to be Built in Rome.” *The Jerusalem Post*, 22 February, 2011 [available online at: http://www.jpost.com/Arts-and-Culture/Entertainment/Italys-first-Holocaust-museum-to-be-built-in-Rome].

Perra, Emiliano. 2010. *Conflicts of Memory: The Reception of Holocaust Films and TVProgrammes in Italy, 1945 to the Present*. Oxford: Peter Lang.

Perra, Emiliano. 2008. “Narratives of Innocence and Victimhood: The Reception of the Miniseries *Holocaust* in Italy.” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies.* 22 (3): 411-440.

Pezzetti, Marcello and Sara Berger. 2017. *La Razza Nemica: La propaganda antisemita nazista e fascista*. Gangemi Editore International.

Portelli, Alessandro. 2006. “The Massacre at the fosse Ardeatine: History, Myth, Ritual, and Symbol.” In *Memory, History, Nation: Contested Pasts*, edited by Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, 29-41. Transaction Publishers.

Pugliese, Stanislao.1999. “Bloodless Torture: The Books of the Roman Ghetto under the Nazi Occupation.” *Libraries & Culture.* 34 (3): 241-253. [available online on JSTOR at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/25548739].

Sarfatti, Michele. 2006. *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy: From Equality to Persecution*, translated by John and Anne Tedeschi. U of Wisconsin P.

“Sports: The March to War.” 2017. In *European Sport Under Nazism*, information booklet property of the *Museo della Fondazione della Shoah*. Rome.

Stone, Dan. 2013. *The Holocaust, Fascism and Memory: Essays in the History of Ideas*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

“The Foundation.” N.d. *Fondazione Museo della Shoah* [available online at: http://www.museodellashoah.it/la-fondazione/].

“The Reich Games: propaganda, boycotts and performances.” 2017. In *European Sport Under Nazism*, information booklet property of the *Museo della Fondazione della Shoah*. Rome.

Van Vree, Frank. 2013 “Absent Memories.” *Cultural Analysis* 12: 1-17. UvA-DARE [available online at: https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/2558635/160571_Absent_Memories.pdf].

Wilde, Alexander. 1999.“Irruptions of Memory: Expressive Politics in Chile’s Transition to Democracy.” *Journal of Latin American Studies.* 31: 473-500.

Zimmerman, Joshua. 2005. *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

MARTOR

Title: *Objects + Things = Stuff. A Visitor's Guide to Berlin's* Museum der Dinge

Author: Jasmina Al-Qaisi

How to cite this article: Al-Qaisi, Jasmina. 2018. "Objects + Things = Stuff. A Visitor's Guide to Berlin's *Museum der Dinge*." *Martor* 23: 201-206.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Ţăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/martor-23-2018/

Martor (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Journal) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. ***Martor Journal*** is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Interdisciplinary and international in scope, it provides a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for academic and non-academic readership. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

Martor (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue ***Martor*** est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

Martor is indexed by:

CEEOL, EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Anthropological Index Online (AIO), MLA International Bibliography.

Third Hall. Museums Reviews and Interviews

Objects + Things = Stuff
A Visitor's Guide to Berlin's *Museum der Dinge*[1]

Jasmina Al-Qaisi
Archivist and Researcher, SAVVY Contemporary Art and Project Space
alqaisijasmina@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Museology has shifted its focus in some places of the world: artefacts and historical objects are being repatriated, returned as permanent loans, institutions are questioning the ownership of indigenous objects, selections are made by kids, and texts are being written by visitors.

The following case study discusses the reprioritization of a dynamic imagination around a museum's purpose in a jejune way, from the perspective of an independent cultural worker, trained in visual communication and schooled in visual ethnography. The text, a non-linear narrative of the visitor's experience, is interspersed with excerpts from a recorded conversation between two visitors of the Werkbundarchiv—*Museum der Dinge,* Berlin.

The Museum of Things does more than try to find a place for the *Werkbund* "stuff," it opens up a continuous material dialogue that includes different perspectives on the history of design in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Founded in Munich, in 1907, the *Deutscher Werkbund* or the German Association of Craftsmen was an organisation of artists, artisans and architects that strove to ensure good design and craftsmanship in times of mass-production of goods and architecture. The *Made in Germany* label is commonly associated with durable products and viable design precisely due to the work of the Deutscher Werkbund, which made efforts to create those associations linked today with German architecture or industrial, commercial, and household German products. A visit to this museum can last forever due to the extra satirical layer, combining ethnographic methods with personal narratives. This text is a sample of a specific visitor experience in an unusual educational institution that, using almost exclusively analogue methods, reaches remarkable levels of interactivity.

KEYWORDS

Museum, visual anthropology, objects, things, Berlin, interactive, testimony, *Deutscher Werkbund, Museum der Dinge.*

"That's the whole meaning of life, trying to find a place for your stuff.
—George Carlin, comedian (2007)

Museums are no longer merely hosts for stuff that belonged to long-deceased owners or creators incapable to edit the labels attached to their things; or hosts for "objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying" (Adorno 1967: 175). Some museums refuse this role. Contemporary museums that display "the stuff of the present" are indirectly preparing people for the future, using accurate and legitimate descriptions and categories the public is acquainted with. Ideally, such museums function as research platforms that tell participatory narratives of the land the objects come from; these institutions use experiences as learning processes and seem to strive for an inclusive language that conveys information in various ways so as to stir the curiosity of extremely diverse publics. Museology has shifted its focus in some places of the world: artefacts and historical objects are being repatriated, returned as permanent loans, institutions are questioning the ownership of indigenous objects, selections are made by kids, and texts are being written by visitors. In Germany, to the surprise of wide audiences, big institutions still fail to engage inclusively with the past, while small independent ones are trying to make up for the general lack of empathy. Still, we live in a time when almost "anything can be a museum" (Dillenburg 2011: 8) and a visit to the museum can have you experience "everything imaginable" (Jordanova 1989: 22-40).

---

[1] Excerpts from a conversation with David Heim. Edits by Gwen Mitchell.

The following case study discusses the reprioritization of a dynamic imagination around a museum's purpose in a jejune way, from the perspective of an independent cultural worker, trained in visual communication and schooled in visual ethnography. And the name of that museum is the Werkbundarchiv—*Museum der Dinge*, in Berlin. The Museum of Things does more than try to find a place for the Werkbund "stuff," it opens a continuous material dialogue that includes different perspectives on the history of design in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

"Kitsch, you learned a new German word."

There's more to design than Bauhaus. Founded in Munich, in 1907, Deutscher Werkbund or the German Association of Craftsmen was the organisation of artists, artisans and architects that strove to ensure good design and craftsmanship in times of mass-production of goods and architecture. The *Made in Germany* label is commonly associated with durable products and viable design precisely due to the work of the Deutscher Werkbund, which made efforts to create those organizations associated today with German architecture or industrial, commercial, and household German products. The group's concern was to satisfy the needs of modern society, and it was realized through a rejection of historicism and the practice of giving more credit to ordinary aesthetics. The Werkbund did not reject mass-production, unlike the British Arts and Crafts, but integrated technology to conform with the changes in society. Basically, they were the unofficial "police" of sustainability and functionality for both architecture and everyday objects.

"This obviously did not work because the work demanded for fast, cheap production"

At present, the *Museum der Dinge* in Berlin's Kreuzberg hosts both the things the Deutscher Werkbund thought of as appropriate and the things they would never approve of. Visitors trudge up a dark staircase, surrounded by the thick walls of the building previously used as a workshop, until they reach a sign that reads "*Museum der Dinge*." Just outside the entrance to the museum shop, there is a vending machine that sells a selection of random objects packaged in a transparent bag for four euros.

It's dark outside. The bars and small restaurants are buzzing. Berlin as usual. A soft light over a white desk marks a dustless depository—the five hundred square-meter open storage space full of things, full of stuff. The official description points to the storing method as *grouped into sample-collections* (Museum der Dinge 2018). But a visitor could simply call it fascinatingly odd.

"You recognized a lot of things, and you are young."

Mastering the German language allows for a certain kind of engagement with the spoken comments of the visitors, which can enrich and add context to the collection of this unusual educational institution. A huge key, a phone with a dial, a striped teapot, an icon, and a bucket, an old kettle are pointed at and identified as items that the visitor has previously owned. Mediated by the objects as *social actors,* without which this social action would not be possible (Gosden and Marshall 1999: 173), a museum experience with a mnemonic dimension ensues. Max and Moritz salt and pepper shakers by Wilhelm Wagenfeld, the designer who worked for Rosenthal and Braun, advertisements for Thonet Chairs, Florena and Nivea cream boxes, they are all available for examination by a more specialized eye.

Similar to music recognition, where people happily sing along and feel satisfaction when they know what they hear (Margulis 2014), recognition of vernacular objects in a public institution might deliver the key to an accessible, modest, yet complex educational space, in which you are familiar with the objects exhibited, but suddenly you regress to infancy by not being able to use them.

"I don't understand: Jugendstil, do they like it or not?"

The tale of beauty, of tolerated design includes the disappearance of Jugendstil ornaments from household objects. Moving too fast on a first visit, one can get disrupted by the swastikas present here in various forms. The Werkbund activity was diverse and divided. Suspended during the First World War, it resumed in Stuttgart in 1927 with the famous housing estate built for exhibition headed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, which dwelled on the standardisation of both design and material for the sake of efficiency in architecture. And these were not the only milestones in the history of the Werkbund; most noteworthy, there was the dissolution of the organization by Nazi rule, and its return after the Second World War ("Deutscher Werkbund" 2015).

"So they listed all the products they thought were terrible."

The *Museum der Dinge* holds a mysticism that can be read in the various methods of categorising contemporary objects designed to provide a highly entertaining, yet institutionalized learning experience. A visit to this museum could last forever due to the extra satirical layer, combining ethnographic methods with personal narratives.

There are two main categories of objects: the ones in charge of narrating the importance and activity of the Werkbund (arranged longitudinally) and an outstanding variety of twentieth and twenty-first century objects designed for domestic use (arranged transversely). Famous objects are displayed next to replicas, handcrafted objects next to mass-produced copies, famous objects next to infamous ones; copies of copies, DIY objects, wartime products and creations, unidentifiable, generic objects, signifiers of objects, symbols of objects, precious materials or plastic replicating them, brands and copycats of brands, such is the stuff that the museum's collection is made of. The visit is likely to be a long one because the archive, established in the 1970s, consists of approximately 35,000 documents and 40,000 objects. (Museum der Dinge 2018)

"But the giraffe is not a beauty product."

One can only speculate about the archiving method, as for the interpretation, that is up to the visitor. A new vocabulary of arrangement seems to emerge from the way objects talk to each other in a language whose words you know, while you are free to choose how to interpret them. This gives you the feeling that you are visiting a refined version of a flea market makes you wonder about the definition of value, about the difference between stuff and things.

Listening to bits and pieces of the Werkbund voices—interviews, public talks, spoken texts—available at the listen stations, you start interpreting objects based on the quality of their materials, their aesthetics, the importance of the person who made them, and the generally strict standards under which they were supposed to be produced in order to become permanent objects. If there is any difference between the two, apart from the lexical one, this should be the line that separates objects from things.

What the visitor seems to look at is shape, function and material. These are addressed by the book—at one point, "object of the month" in the *Museum der Dinge—Publication Lessons on Objects* by Elizabeth Mayo. Her book was inspired by the practice of the Swiss education reformist Johann Pestalozzi (1746—1827) who thought that experience and direct interaction with objects beyond their names should serve as basis for children's education. For the one hundred object descriptions that can be found in this book, Mayo used everyday items exclusively: things are talked about using comparisons, they are talked about as setting boundaries, from rough to refined, from texture to weight, lessons on objects from observations to deliberations, created to enhance and train the intuition of children. In thirty years, twenty editions of the book were published (Museum der Dinge 2018) and circulated.

The Werkbund itself developed educational programs, boxes with teaching materials for kids, for a while in the 1950s and 1960s. Everyday products were presented to children as being the "good" things. Such an initiative, as illustrated by the perfect miniature dinner table, for example, was not only supportive of good design but of the good family. It should be noted that in the *Museum der Dinge* the word "good" is always used between quotation marks.

"These are arranged by shape, because they are all cute."

Interactions beyond interactivity: spotted. In an interview for a German TV channel, the curator of the *Museum der Dinge*, Renate Flagmeier (2014) explains that, by appointment, people can bring objects to the museum to have them historically and critically assessed. By appointment only the museum provides an expert examination of things and they can tell you who and when made the object and how much it is worth; every third Saturday visitors are invited to design their own objects using various methods and techniques; on the first Monday of the month, the museum hosts a jour fixe for discussions with the staff, the public, and other guests (Museum der Dinge 2018).

"That's a chair, now that's a chair."

Let's imagine for a second that the *Museum der Dinge* belongs to only one person. As the anthropologist Marilyn Strathern says, the objects that a person uses are that person's agency that continues to have effects independently from the person's body (qtd in Gosden and Marshall 1999: 173). Things can be like people. And if we imagine that Germany over the last two hundred years is that person, then the *Museum der Dinge* is to some extent Germany.

Inhabiting a space is strongly connected with the interactions with objects; and new everyday objects are built to be disposed of as soon as possible, so new ones can replace them.

Each visit to the *Museum der Dinge* is like visiting an old friend's place: the furniture is pretty much the same, only arranged differently. Ready to be discovered, this is a place where things seem to have a secret life of their own. The objects are igniting a controversial history of convenience fetishism: Wärmflasche, kettles, ventilators. As we know, convenience has become the norm and "has the ability to make other options unthinkable" (Wu 2018).

"There is always a subcategory to every category."

The temporary exhibitions are spicing up the place in an unusual, delightful manner. FOTO | ALBUM Private and Anonymous Photography from the Collection of Werkbundarchiv—*Museum der Dinge* was a show on display until the end of February 2018, containing photographs from snapshots, to vernacular photography, to object-images arranged by subject, and delving into the role of photography in an attempt to read the plurality of pasts. With categories such as cars, symmetry, flowers, kisses, etc., the exhibit forms a long tapestry of everyday life occupying half of the last room. The captions are a support for the method, allowing the visitor to reflect on the avalanche of vernacular images in the absence of social media. In their almost metaphysical materiality, these kinds of images are now overwhelmingly available on social media platforms, easily blurred by hashtags, stored on servers all over the planet.

Throughout the duration of this show, the museum organized workshops with children, teenagers and families, in collaboration with another institution—in this case Jugend im Museum e.V. (Youth in the Museum), which collaborates with museums and mediates cultural education with fun and games. And this brings us to another important point of this article: the social function of the museum is emphasized through experiments, its constantly changing approaches and collaborations with other institutions in Berlin as it displays without discrimination the good, the bad and the innocent of twenty-first century design.

"Everything here is instagrammable."

"We are not super modern" was the one-sentence answer to my request for an audio guide. Opposing conventional forms of display, interactives (electronic communication) are not, however, the only way to interactivity (Witcomb 2006). And interactivity is not the only component of progress.

The *Museum der Dinge* is nothing like, for instance, The Exploratorium with its inquiry-based learning—through questioning and not simply presenting facts—that changed museum strategies all over the world, or the hyper-instagrammed and always sold-out Museum of Ice Cream, incidentally both located in San Francisco. Indeed, today's museums "appeal to entertainment as much as education and owe as much to the theme park as the modernist canon" (Prior 2006: 531). Not modern in that sense, the *Museum der Dinge* remains unbearably progressive, accessible, thoughtful, knowledgeable and interactive, without the screens, the 3D models, the holograms, and other wireless objects. The institution's autonomy becomes apparent in the way it challenges the rigours of what the Werkbund deemed beautiful. The *Museum der Dinge* does not raise the question of beauty, instead it presents both the rulers and the plebs who interact and are equally represented in an apparently abstract set-up.

"These are colonial objects."

The "aura" of these objects is complicated. The curator and the staff advise people not to donate to the museum the things that they no longer need, but to reconsider a possible connection with the collection. Given as a gift, the thing carries the qualities of both the giver and the receiver, Marcel Mauss famously argued. The gesture is eventually solidifying a relationship (Appadurai 2006). In the case of an appropriate donation, if the object will never be displayed, it might not acquire the quality of the receiver and thus there will be no relationship to solidify.

Most objects in the *Museum der Dinge*, even though not art for sale, are objects that lack singularity—to use Appadurai's term (2006). A question for the universal visitor: can we look at these objects without imagining there are many others that look just the same? A moment of silence in the warmth of an orange wooden floor: These objects are ambassadors of the world of things, arrested to perform for people that are looking for vernacular testimonies of the past.

"Babies and religion"

The non-German-speaking cultural worker, who started out equipped with visual recognition as her main tool, is neither an ideal nor an average visitor. Yet she has a "critical museum visitor" (Lindauer 2006). Engagement with commodities on the simple maps of memory was supported by an unexpected display arrangement, wich triggered mundane shivers.

To speculate, the Werkbund is indirectly looking into ways to underline the difference between objects and things. But the *Museum der Dinge* is making these objects communicate just the way they communicate outside of the museum world, in the world people unavoidably inhabit and have to deal with in their everyday lives. All together being stuff.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adorno, Theodor W. 1967. *Prisms*. London: Valery Proust Museum.

Appadurai, Arjun. 2006. "The Thing Itself." *Public Culture*. 18 (1; January): 15-22.

Carlin, George. 2007. "A place for my stuff." YouTube video, 5:10. Published Dec. 9 by gymmybhoy. [Available online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLoge6QzcGY; accessed 20 Febr. 2018]

Mayo, Elizabeth. 1840. *Lessons on Objects: As Given to Children Between the Ages of Six and Eight in a Pestalozzian School, At Cheam, Surrey* [Available online at: http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1256880/lessons-on-objects-as-given-book-mayo-elizabeth/; accessed 20 Febr. 2018].

Dillenburg, Eugene. 2011. "What, if Anything, Is a Museum?" *Exhibitionist*. 30 (1; Spring): 8-13.

Encyclopedia Britannica. 2015. s.v. "Deutscher Werkbund." Last modified June 20, 2015 [Available online at: https://www.britannica.com/topic/Deutscher-Werkbund; accessed Febr. 20, 2018].

Gosden, Chris and Yvonne Marshall.1999. "The Cultural Biography of Objects." *World Archaeology*. 31 (2; October): 169-178.

Jordanova, Ludmilla. 1989. "Object of Knowledge, a Historical Perspective on Museums." In *New Museology*, ed. Peter Vergo, 22-41. London: Reaktion Books.

Margulis, Elizabeth Hellmuth. 2014. "One more time." *Aeon*. Apr. 7 [Available online at: https://aeon.co/users/elizabeth-hellmuth-margulis].

Museum der Dinge. "Permanent Collection - Open Storage." [Available online at: http://www.museumderdinge.org/exhibitions/permanent-collection-open-storage; accessed 20 Febr. 2018].

Museum der Dinge. "About the Institution." [Available online at: http://www.museumderdinge.org/institution/about-institution; Accessed Febr. 20, 2018].

Museum der Dinge. "Thing of the month January 2017 Elizabeth Mayo: Lessons on Objects" [Available online at: http://www.museumderdinge.org; accessed 20 Febr. 2018].

Prior, Nick. 2006. "Postmodern Restructurings." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald, 509-524. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Vergo, Peter. *The New Museology*. Islington: Reaktion Books, 1989, 22-40.

Witcomb, Andrea. 2006. "Interactivity." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald, 169-178. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Wu, Tim. 2018. "The Tyranny of Convenience." *New York Times*, Febr. 16 [Available online at: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/16/opinion/sunday/tyranny-convenience.html].

MARTOR

Title: *Elephants, Cuckoos, Horses and Me. A Different Exhibition About Toys*

Authors: Irina Hasnaș Hubbard, Iulia Iordan

How to cite this article: Hasnaș Hubbard, Irina, and Iulia Iordan. 2018. "Elephants, Cuckoos, Horses and Me. A Different Exhibition About Toys." *Martor* 23: 209-222.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Ţăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/martor-23-2018/

Martor (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Journal) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. **Martor Journal** is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Interdisciplinary and international in scope, it provides a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for academic and non-academic readership. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

Martor (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue **Martor** est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

Martor is indexed by:

CEEOL, EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Anthropological Index Online (AIO), MLA International Bibliography.

Elephants, Cuckoos, Horses, and Me
A Different Exhibition About Toys

Irina Hasnaș Hubbard
Visual artist and museum specialist, Bucharest
irina.hasnas.hubbard@gmail.com

Iulia Iordan
Writer and museum educator at Da' De Ce *Association, Bucharest*
qsimiq@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Elephants, Cuckoos, Horses, and Me (*Elefanți, cuci, cai și eu*) is an exhibit made in Romania in 2017 to draw attention to the absence of a children's museum in the country. This article is a subjective account of the creation and development of this exhibition, written by two of its curators. It aims to give an example of curatorial and educational museum practices involving the young public's interaction with artefacts in exhibitions or museums.
The Iosif Herțea[1] toy collection was donated recently to the Romanian non-governmental organization *Asociația Da' De Ce*[2] (I Wonder Why? Association). The result was an exhibition of original artefacts dedicated to children and their careers. The article traces the evolution of the exhibition concept: adapting the design and wayfinding to different locations; addressing different categories of public; and adding or subtracting artefacts and stories. The exhibition *Elephants, Cuckoos, Horses, and Me* was displayed in Romania in three different cultural spaces for six months in 2017 and visited by almost 4000 children and adults.

KEYWORDS

Children's museum, Iosif Herțea, museum exhibition, heritage, toys.

Introduction. Theoretical background

Since the 1980's, museum education and visitor research studies have seen considerable growth in Western countries. One result was the development of children's museums and increased interest on the part of traditional museums in offering special exhibits and programs to children, mostly living history museums, art and natural history. In Romania, after 2000, we see well trained specialists opening the way to informal education and museum pedagogy. More recently, some Romanian museums have become committed to their young public as they include not just in their missions, but also in their practices, the development of programs and exhibitions for them. Step by step, these museums are becoming children friendly by: setting up a permanent exhibition or workshop room; training or hiring specialists in early learning; researching the collection to make it accessible to kids; purchasing new artefacts; creating new exhibitions and graphic design; working together with and becoming involved in the community.

Some characteristics of children's museums:

- They address young patrons up to 12 years old and provide contextual and interactive exhibits that are intended to stimulate educational experiences for children and families. “Many maintain permanent early-childhood exhibits that are appropriate for infants and toddlers” (Colbert 2011: 606).[3]

---

[1] Romanian composer and ethnomusicologist.

[2] *Asociația Da' De Ce* is based in Bucharest and is known for the cultural projects it carries out in Romanian museums to coordinate youth activities in traditional exhibition spaces. Their goal is to bring the museum closer to its youngest visitors through programs and installations.

- They are part of strategies of cultural development for urban revitalization. A survey by the Association of Children’s Museums concluded that 33 percent identify themselves as flagships in downtown revitalization projects (Colbert 2011: 606).
- They are complex “playgrounds.” They focus traditionally on play as a means of supporting children’s learning and development. For these institutions, play is a very serious thing. It has a learning value.[4] Children’s museums don’t share the same definition of play and how it connects to learning and this is one reason why children’s museums are so diverse (some have play at their core, some not).
- They carry out research focusing on exploring the role of adults in these early learning experiences. As a result, we see the support given to adults accompanying children in museums: indoor or outdoor, during planned educational activities for families or during free access in the museum environment (Wolf & Wood 2012: 5).[5]
- In general, they “seek to demystify the adult world, to help children acquire or shape special skills, attitudes and knowledge concerning the world around them. Children’s museums strive to meet these goals by immersing young patrons in a unique, leisure/learning environment filled with multisensory, participatory exhibits. Here, the child assumes the role of keeper of the keys, master of the locks. The child is in complete control” (Judd and Kraft 1997: 22).

In some traditional museums, we see a transition from hands-off to hands-on displays, from non-tactile to interactive displays. There are exhibition areas with “please touch” labels. Museums launch scavenger hunts or open their “treasure chests” for their most curious audience: the children. We associate this also with a change in the way otherwise restricted areas in the urban environment are approached. Open houses in various institutions, schools, archives or museum storage rooms, or open kitchens in restaurants, are all aimed to provide access to the “laboratory,” the mystery zone where secrets are kept. We understand this openness as a social tendency to soften the isolation, the alienation or even the obstinate search for privacy of the urban dweller.

• • • • • • • •

The exhibition

We consider *Elephants, Cuckoos, Horses, and Me* to be a different exhibition about toys as it brings together familiar, culturally shared objects and novel objects. The elephants, cuckoos and horses in the title are familiar animals from the child’s world, but the last name in the list, “Me,” introduces an element of ambiguity and childish language: it could be *me* as in anyone who reads it, or it could be some new entity. In the exhibition, the visitor discovers many more animals than the title would let on, and that “Me” is a novel creature from the story *Little I-am-me* (*Das kleine Ich bin ich*) by Mira Lobe. Finally, everyone can build a toy that didn’t exist before.

There are children’s museums which exhibit toys as a representation of childhood, and others where toys are the museum’s props. Our exhibition is different because it shows all types of toys together: handmade and mass-produced, old and new, toys belonging to both Romanian and international folklore, some with a name, some from a game, some made by children, some made of plastic and others environmentally-friendly, some damaged and others very fragile, etc. This apparent hodgepodge invites the visitors to differentiate among the toys, by sorting them, using them or inventing stories, according to their age group.

---

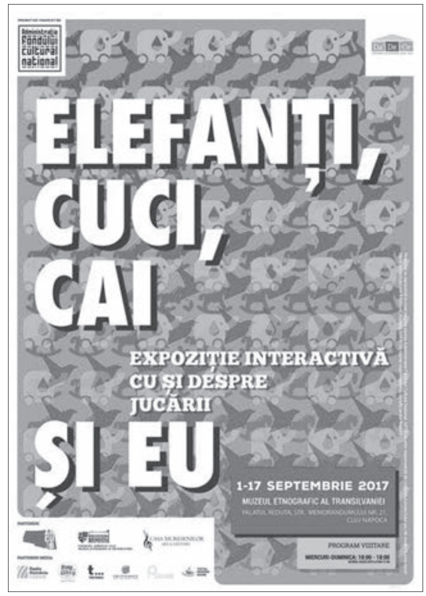
[3] Definition provided by the Association of Children’s Museums (ACM).

[4] Please Touch Museum in Philadelphia, U.S.A. opened in 1978 and, having undergone a long process of self-improvement, it can now claim to be “internationally recognized as a leader in ‘purposeful play’.”

[5] One example is the Children’s Museum of Indianapolis, which has developed and refined its family learning initiatives and strategies and become a case study.

The project brings something new to the Association's portfolio and also to the museum field. First, as far as we know, there were few such donations made in Romania in recent years. Further, *Elephants, Cuckoos, Horses, and Me* is the first Romanian exhibition featuring heritage objects geared towards and available to children, as well as exhibition material to support adults accompanying children.

Second, some of our team members are interested in researching children's views of their museum experiences and more precisely, in what experiments they found most engaging (Piscitelli 2001: 271).



Exhibition Poster. Graphic design by Gheorghe Iosif.

Third, knowing that Romanian exhibitions in general make little use of technology despite the big demand in this sense from the young audience, the exhibition dares to rely on the intrinsic complexity of the toy as a type of object and on the scarcity of multimedia. There are no ostentatious means of display, few museum props, and some art installations, and there is little contextualization.

Finally, from our adult perspective, we believe that we placed the public in a familiar setting, allowing them to reflect on, understand and distinguish between the different displays, as well as grasp the heritage aspect of the everyday objects.

One of the adult visitors commented:

> In the first place, being an interactive exhibition for children on a cultural subject, it is an opportunity to familiarize children with this type of manifestation in preparation for, the organizers hope, the future opening of a children's museum. Further, it is an occasion to familiarize children with the idea of old toys—especially the care of old toys, and the care of all that is old, but also the care of new toys as they have the chance to make their own, inspired by the ones on display.[6]

The exhibition *Elephants, Cuckoos, Horses, and Me* was shown at ARCUB, Hanul Gabroveni in Bucharest (8-30 June 2017), 717 visitors (352 children and 365 adults) and four educational programs; The Ethnographic Museum of Transylvania in Cluj-Napoca (1-17 September 2017), 999 visitors, five educational programs; and The Mureșianu House Museum–Ștefan Baciu Memorial House *[Muzeul Casa Mureșenilor–Casa Ștefan Baciu]* (26 September – 7 December 2017), 2,253 visitors, of which approximately 400 participated in the twenty-two educational programs.

In 2018, the exhibition was displayed in one of the most prestigious cultural centres for children in Europe, the Galerie Hrou (Gallery to Play) in Sladovna Písek, in the Czech Republic. The centre is famous among its young visitors as a place for them to master. Therefore, all exhibitions are interactive and dismantled as soon as they become obsolete and unsafe for children. Our exhibition, titled *Sloni, kukačky, koně a JÁ* in Czech, had to adapt to these conditions. The exhibition design was consequently upgraded.[7] The fragile toys could be looked at through glass panes by opening drawers. One exhibition prop aimed to be the introduction and to embody the title: a rotating cube with the four compartments for horses, elephants, cuckoos, and me, a showcase designed to symbolically frame the toys. We unified the graphic design and created a new informational package: the intro panel, the topic panels for each station, the stories, and

---

6) Andrei Manea, "Bucuria MEA, bucuria LUI… Bucuria TURUROR!" (My joy, his joy… everyone's joy!), *Artistu* (blog), 2017, June 7, http://www.artistu.ro/jurnale/jurnal-de-tatic/bucuria-mea-bucuria-lui-bucuria-tururor/.

7) Raluca Bem Neamu and Irina Hasnaş Hubbard, team members, collaborated with Sorin Chirică from Nod Maker Space workshop in Bucharest to create new props and furniture. Nod Maker Space is a dynamic ecosystem that welcomes designers, artists, engineers, inventors, freelancers and entrepreneurs.

signage. Financial aid was provided by the Romanian Cultural Institute and Da' De Ce Association. Around 17,000 people visited the gallery over a period of three months, and most of them have seen and played in our exhibition.

About the team

Under the title START: Children's Museum! (*START: Muzeul Copilului!*), the Association carried out a project involving acquisition, registration and conservation work regarding the toy collection donated to us by Iosif Herţea, culminating with the presentation of a selection of the collection to the public.

To manage this toy collection, the members of the Association built a team of specialists from different fields: curators, museum educators, researchers, historians, custodians, cultural managers, anthropologists, communications specialists, writers, directors and actors, psychologists, and, last but not least, volunteers.[8]

> In my opinion, this exhibition is a model of good practice for specialist and amateur collectors; a demonstration of what is meant by a collection, how it can be utilized to maximum effect, how and to what extent it must be preserved, and how it can be promoted. (...) I admire the way in which all of the participants in the project worked side by side, according to the abilities of each, but lending a hand wherever necessary, which seems to me a rare thing, considering that it was a one-time collaboration on a fixed schedule, imposed by the needs of the project.[9]

The toy collection

Iosif Herţea spent over half a century assembling his toy collection.[10] He describes in depth the chronology and the challenges he faced in his endeavour to collect traditional toys in the chapter "The Seriousness of Toys:"

> Working in the music field, I found myself, like it or not, unavoidably immersed in a much larger field: of toys in general. I had come to appreciate its importance through my readings in other languages. I struggled, then, to gather, carrying around large cardboard boxes, as many toys as possible, dolls and toys of all kinds from all of the regions in which I had had the opportunity to carry out research. Preserving and exhibiting them continues to be a challenge. One early success was the display of several sound toys at the inaugural exhibition of the collection of traditional instruments at the Brukenthaal Museum in Sibiu (…) (Herţea 2015: 160).

Toys from the collection. Photo credit: Iulia Iordan.

In 2016 he donated his toy collection[11] to *Da' De Ce* Association. The choice of recipient was based on the organisation's capacity to bring the collection not just to a museum, but to many museums. Herţea believed that the Association could be the ideal mediator between his collection and the public. Furthermore, he added the clear request that the objects should not be displayed only in cases, but placed within the visitors' reach to observe them closely, study or even handle them. This became the starting point for the curatorial concept.

The curatorial concept

At the heart of the exhibition was Iosif Herţea's wish to allow the children to play

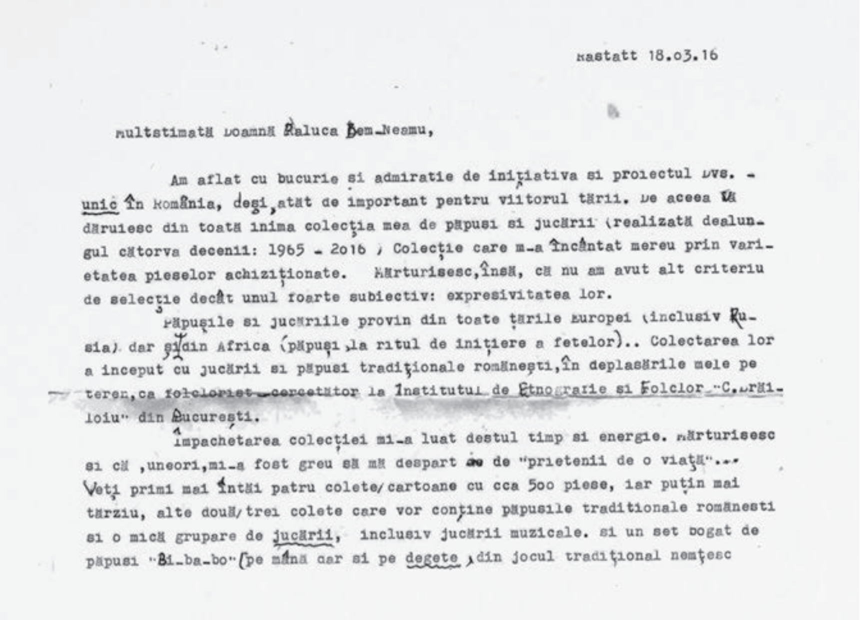
---

[8] Project team: Alexandra Zbuchea (project manager), Raluca Bem Neamu (PR specialist), Ioana Popescu (researcher), Cristina Dumitrescu (custodian), Iulia Iordan (curator), Irina Haşnaş Hubbard (curator, exhibition designer), Daniela Mişcov (cultural activities organizer), Bruno Mastan (puppeteer), Ozana Niţulescu (cultural activities organizer), Marinela Barna (museographer), Flavia Stoica (museographer), Cristina Toma (museographer), Ramona Caramelea (researcher), Silviu Anghel (researcher), Gheorghe Iosif (visual designer), Maria Ghegu (assistant). Volunteers: Marius Andrieş, Alice Csizmadi, Teodora Dumitrescu.

[9] Ioana Popescu, team member, comment in the guestbook, June 2017.

[10] According to Daniela Mişcov, team member, Iosif Herţea searched for toys during field trips in Romania and later abroad in the (flea) markets. In the 1970s, he made donations to a theater and a museum in Hungary. He participated in exhibitions of musical instruments and toys, collaborating with puppet theatre specialists, sometimes he completed the exhibitions with his own collection.

[11] Consisting of over one thousand pieces, the collection includes seemingly unrelated objects, with diverse backgrounds, albeit largely Romanian and German: ▶



Rastatt 18.03.16

Multstimată Doamnă Raluca Bem-Neamu,

Am aflat cu bucurie și admiratie de inițiativa si proiectul Dvs. - unic în România, deși, atât de important pentru viitorul tării. De aceea vă dăruiesc din toată inima colecția mea de păpusi si jucării (realizată dealungul câtorva decenii: 1965 - 2016). Colecție care m-a încântat mereu prin varietatea pieselor achiziționate. Mărturisesc, însă, că nu am avut alt criteriu de selecție decât unul foarte subiectiv: expresivitatea lor.

Păpușile si jucăriile provin din toate țările Europei (inclusiv Rusia) dar și din Africa (păpuși, la ritul de inițiere a fetelor).. Colectarea lor a inceput cu jucării si păpusi tradiționale românești, în deplasările mele pe teren, ca folclorist - cercetător la Institutul de Etnografie si Folclor "C. Brăiloiu" din București.

Împachetarea colecției mi-a luat destul timp si energie. Mărturisesc si că, uneori, mi-a fost greu să mă despart de "prietenii de o viață"... Veți primi mai întâi patru colete/cartoane cu cca 500 piese, iar puțin mai târziu, alte două/trei colete care vor conține păpusile traditionale românesti si o mică grupare de jucării, inclusiv jucării muzicale. si un set bogat de păpusi "Bi-ba-bo" (pe mână dar si pe degete), din jocul tradițional nemțesc

Fragment from the letter sent by Iosif Hertea to Raluca Bem Neamu.

with the toys. But his wish fitted very well with the vision of the team members as they imagined a space in which children would play and communicate using toys, their favourite objects, while learning how to take care of a toy collection and their own toys.

The stated mission of the exhibition was to stimulate children to interact with a toy collection and to show them how to handle toys that are heritage items. We wanted to address both the museum specialists and the visitors with an aim to promote interactivity and co-creation in museum environments, to familiarize the audience with such spaces, and to encourage the adults to regularly look for programs aimed at families and school groups, coordinated by museums, school educators, and artists.

To help visitors explore the exhibition, we created a wayfinding system: signage, stories, interactive spaces, exhibition design.

The team imagined a conceptual framework, where five toys were selected to be the *icons*—the central artefacts—of the exhibition and to inspire the team to explore the great potential of these small artefacts. The idea behind this was to segment the exhibition into five themes and five stations inspired by the selected artefacts and, moreover, to create five stories to be included in the exhibition as written texts and audio, further stimulating the public to create stories about new toys to be later included in the exhibition. The five stories were launched on air by the Itsy Bitsy Radio[12] as advertisements for the exhibition.

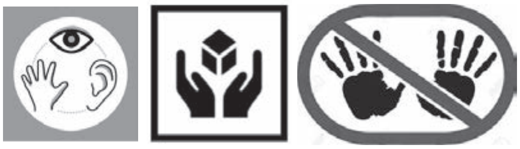
We also took into consideration the way young children would move in the exhibition space, how they would zigzag between objects we perceived as familiar to them. We wanted the young to be able to make sense of what they see and so reserved one station for them to explore. Here we expected to see the children using multimodal communication, which involved fast and complex movements between several modes: walking along the path, running, stopping, retracing steps, etc. (Hackett 2011: 8).

Under these circumstances, the team's main challenge was to preserve the collection while inviting the young public to interact with it. Additional challenges were: to bring adults to the exhibition and to make them stay; to persuade the young audience to handle the objects with care; to design an interactive space for individual and group activities; to prevent the loss of toys; to assure maintenance of the exhibition room; and to

▸ 11) artisan toys crafted by village children in the 1970's, mass-produced plastic toys, priceless limited-edition toys from various renowned European makers, decorative objects made from materials unique to Asia and Africa, miniature musical instruments created by traditional artists, theater props, etc.

12) Itsi Bitsi Radio is the only Romanian radio station for children and families. It broadcasts in many cities across the country

renew the educational materials. To prevent the risk of damage to objects, the entire team agreed on a signage system to emphasize three categories of objects: those that are not to be touched; those that may be handled carefully; and those that the children can play with to emit sounds or that they can temporarily remove as they move around the exhibition area. To this end, pictograms and texts were prepared to inform the public about the concept of the exhibition, the collection, and ways to approach it. Tags were placed next to the objects ("handle and experience," "handle with care," and "do not touch"). Next, a maintenance schedule was established to preserve the concept and aesthetic of the exhibition, to keep the space tidy, and to make sure that the visitors did not to interfere with each other.



Pictograms used in the exhibition: "Discover: touch, move, experience, play!", "Fragile: handle with care!", "Don't touch: no direct interaction, just look".

Pictograms used in the exhibition: "Discover: touch, move, experience, play!" (green), "Fragile: handle with care!" (yellow), "Don't touch: no direct interaction, just look" (red).

The children were given handouts with the rules of the exhibition, that is, the signs that indicated whether an object could be handled with care or only looked at, and identified objects that they could play with. They were the most agreeable and carefully followed rules! "It was like a game! We had to look for the signs and check what they meant!" And they did this on their own, responsibly![13]

Our two-fold vision to have the public both interact with and preserve the toy collection generated a constant debate among us about what the young visitors would do in the exhibition, whether accompanied or not by a guide or carer. We often argued about the possibility that the visitors might miss the opportunities we had prepared for them. In the end, we reached consensus that the conceptual framework would indeed encourage the public to go beyond discovering and using the given artefacts and information toward transforming them by means of their own creativity: they would make up stories, role-playing, or create new associations between the displayed objects.

What held the team together and on the same track throughout the project was our understanding of the paradigmatic change in the role of the museum, where the visitors are no longer passive subjects to be educated as part of a museum strategy, but active learners who want to make sense of the world. The entire team was well informed about this educational turn, which overtook the Western museum at the turn of the century, and about a new perspective on the definition of learning. In 2004, the British Museum Libraries and Archives Council launched a project "Inspiring Learning for All" where learning was defined "as a process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do when they want to make sense of the world. As such learning includes development of skills, knowledge, understanding, values, ideas or feelings" (Van Mensch and Meijer van Mensch 2011: 36). Regarding the exhibition visitors, Lynda Kelly wrote in *Learning in the 21st Century Museum* that "they will make their own meaning and construct their own narratives based on their experiences and interest. They want choice and control over their museum experience and their learning through providing multiple pathways and a variety of interpretative experiences suitable for both individual and groups" (2011: 5). According to these new ideas about learning, it is more important to analyse the action of the learner than to probe the nature of the subject to be learned (Hein 1995: 2). Since this is a constructivist theory, the central concern is not what we intend to teach, but what people actually learn. "What does the visitor (learner) make of our museum exhibit? What does she understand?" (Hein 1995: 3) What does a painted wooden horse, a miniature marble elephant, a ceramic bird, a baby doll, etc. actually mean to the visitor?

---

[13] Haşegan, Despina. 2017. "Elefanţi, cuci, cai şi EU aliniaţi la Start! Muzeul copilului" [Elephants, Cuckoos, Horses, and I at the start line. The Children's Museum]. *Roata Mare* (blog), June 21 [available online at: https://roatamare.com/2017/06/21/elefanti-cuci-cai-si-eu-aliniati-la-start-muzeul-copilului/].

Another important component of the constructivist theory is that "there is no necessary connection between learning and teaching." "We cannot predict what meaning the learners will make from the experiences we provide for them. The more we construct a situation that allows and encourage learning, the more likely we are to construct something that is open, ambiguous and able to be manipulated in a variety of ways by the learner; thus the less likely we are to be able to predict precisely what has been learned" (Hein 1995: 3).

George Hein mapped out four types of museums, and the one that interested us was the Constructivist museum: where the knowledge is constructed by the learner—the opposite being the traditional museum or the Systematic museum where the knowledge exists independent of the learner and where the learner becomes familiar with the knowledge bit by bit (Van Mensch and Meijer van Mensch 2011: 37).

The entire team embraced the constructivist theory. In the exhibition, the objects were to be displayed without labels, so the visitor could imagine their names and purposes and observe or check their textures, weights and sizes, etc. By observing the public, we noticed that some of the toys had lost their original meaning or use, and become instead fictional characters of stories invented by children.

Creating new stories about museum objects is bringing fiction into museums. Fiction can be a curatorial method, an educational tool, or a means of artistic expression to help the visitor deal with a historical truth or a real story. A recent example of a fictional museum is The Museum of Innocence, maybe the first museum designed after a novel. The writer Orhan Pamuk claims to have conceived the novel and the museum together. "This is not Orhan Pamuk's museum. Very little of me is here, and if it is, it's hidden. It's like fiction" (Kennedy 2012).

Another concept adopted by the team was the one of participatory public and participatory museum. Behind this concept, there is an endeavour to make cultural institutions more dynamic, relevant places, to change the museum's programs and mission. In the Preface to her work *Participatory Museum*, Nina Simon (2010, n.p.) claims that her aim is to

> define a participatory cultural institution as a place where visitors can create, share, and connect with each other around content. *Create* means that visitors contribute their own ideas, objects, and creative expression to the institution and to each other. *Share* means that people discuss, take home, remix, and redistribute both what they see and what they make during their visit. *Connect* means that visitors socialize with other people—staff and visitors—who share their particular interests. *Around content* means that visitors' conversations and creations focus on the evidence, objects, and ideas most important to the institution in question.

The authors of *Enhancing Young Children's Museum Experiences: A Manual for Museum Staff* suggest that adults should guide children in museums following some

> learning-teaching principles. The process should be: 1. child-centered (the adult finds out what learners know and builds on their existing knowledge base), 2. developmentally appropriate (children's cultural background, age and individual differences are taken into consideration), 3. responsive (teaching-learning encounters are characterized by dynamic, two-way, respectful exchanges between adults and kids), 4. flexible (multiple entry levels into teaching-learning dialogues and situations allow for children of all ability and skill levels to take part in some way), 5. play-based (kids are encourage to engage in hand-on, minds-on, self-directed, enjoyable play situations), and 6. empowering (opportunities are provided for children to

EU SUNT CÂRPĂ
Dă-mi o formă şi o poţi înfăşura!

Bucharest 2017. Photo credit: Iulia Iordan.

> make choices and be agents of their own learning) (Piscitelli *et al.* 2003: 12).

We imagined a design where the child would discover the environment in her own way: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, linguistic, or naturalistic. We eventually noticed that the public approached the artefacts in both inter- and intrapersonal ways. Researchers in the museum field talk about three main interactivity types for facilitating strategies and activities in children's learning: child-adults/peers; child-technology; and child-environment (Andre 2017: 47). The toys elicited different reactions from different visitor groups, according to their interests and expectations: parents and grandparents relived their childhood, triggered by a single toy or a game; groups of children experimented with toys, make-believe, and creating objects; not to mention the organizers' own subjectivity which was reflected in the whole exhibition.

It is one of our aims to further encourage parents' contributions within the play frame of toy exhibitions and other exhibitions for children. We believe this will enhance the time spent together between parents and children, encourage the young ones to communicate their thoughts, and allow children to be on equal footing with parents (Shyne and Accosta 2000: 45).

The Exhibition Stations

Elephants, Cuckoos, Horses, and Me was built on several levels: 1. the familiar—some toys were put in open boxes or simply on the floor, as they would be at home; 2. the studio—making musical instruments and dolls, tinkering, story writing, sensory exploration of textures, the puppet theatre, etc.; 3. the teaching place—sounds, technical information, multimedia; 4. the museum—the restoration laboratory, with tools and instructions how to heal the "sick" toys, as well as the three pictograms with visiting rules.

Each station was attributed a name, its *icon* toy and accompanying story, and several categories of artefacts. Each hosted specific activities and addressed a certain type of public. Following the activities proposed by the curators and educators, the visitors were able to fashion their own objects, which they could then take home or display in the room, next to the heritage objects.

The stories used as teasers for the exhibition were recorded professionally and broadcast on Itsy Bitsy FM, and are now available on the Association's website. As the project progressed, the objects that inspired the stories no longer corresponded with the stations; they were instead reassigned to other groups of toys, as the *stars* of other installations in the show—such as the Wooden Elephant or the Doll in the Cradle. Gradually, a sixth station began to take shape and took on a central role: the one dedicated to the collector Iosif Herțea himself.

All stations had to provide free access to toys. The fragile ones had to be placed on a higher level or fixed on a board or protected with transparent sheets.

Five team members were chosen to be each "in charge" with one of the five stations: the Cuckoos station was designed by Ozana Nițulescu; the Laboratory – Toy Hospital station by Alexandra Zbuchea; the Stick, Cloth, Plastic station by Iulia Iordan; The Kasperl Theater station by Bruno Mastan; and the Small Toys aimed at young children by Daniela Mișcov; all integrated in a single coherent concept by the curators.

The space of the Arch Room (Sala Arcelor) at ARCUB Hanul Gabroveni, which hosted the first exhibition, was the one that shaped the curatorial concept and the design solutions. As the exhibition had to be visible from the street as well, some pieces were displayed in the window frames. Thin plastic sheets, polyethylene tubes and tracing paper created a visual rhyme with the translucent light fixtures hanging from the ceiling, contrasting with the brick

Bucharest 2017, Opening. Photo credit: Iulia Iordan.

walls. Small toys—the elephants, horses and cuckoos (suggested by the title) were to be found throughout the exhibition space.

The Cuckoos Station

Including the most representative musical toys from the Herțea collection, it was displayed near the entrance to attract passers-by through visual (silhouettes of birds hung in the window) as well as auditory means (the sounds from the musical instruments in the exhibition). The station was assembled from objects hanging in the air or displayed low enough to permit observation but high enough to be out of reach, due to their fragility, but also to create a magical atmosphere as only flying objects can. There were musical instruments mounted on a fixed tether within children's reach that the visitors could try out, accompanied by a brief description about how they were made. On a digital screen, visitors could listen to the five stories or follow the short movie with demos of the cuckoo sounds made by the fragile objects they were not allowed to touch. At a small table in the midst of these diverse activities, visitors could build their own harmonicas, with materials and instructions provided by the organizers.

The Laboratory–Toy Hospital Station

The goal of this station was to introduce children to the restricted areas of a museum: the storage rooms and the restoration workshops, and to teach them about the collector's role and his responsibility towards his collection. Of all the stations, this one became the pivotal point, without being labelled as such, because here children could think and ask themselves about what a museum and heritage are, as it was intended to stimulate reflection.

They were invited to sit down at a desk, analyse the objects brought to them, fill out a museum card, repair toys (or pretend to using specific tools), or create a personal collection according to their own criteria.

Bucharest 2017, The Laboratory. Photo credit: Iulia Iordan.

The Stick, Cloth, Plastic Station

Still on the path that took the visitors around the exhibition space, there was the Stick, Cloth, Plastic Station. Using both the width and height of the space, this station, characterized by contrasts, consisted of a highly diverse range of toys: handmade, limited edition or mass-produced, made of plastic, wood, or cloth.

Three flat human silhouettes were displayed on the wall. One was labelled "I am Plastic. Give me a shape, and I will fill it!"; another "I am Cloth. Give me a shape, and I will wrap around it!"; and the last "I am Stick. Give me a shape, and I will fix it!" Visitors were invited to approach and fashion toys with their own hands at the worktables. Children could ultimately attach their creations to the silhouettes. The aim of this station was to encourage the visitors to ask questions about the history of toys, to ask themselves about their own qualities as consumers, the qualities of traditional or handmade toys *vs.* mass-produced toys, etc.

The fact that the *materials* themselves became *characters* owes to their very different backgrounds and means of display. While the plastic toys were displayed as a dense rain falling from a cloud of transparent sheets (next to a box where visitors were invited to leave broken toys to be recycled), traditional toys were displayed in dioramas, and their stories were attached to them on handmade labels.

The Kasperl's Theatre Station

Moving on, we advanced further into the world of stories through the medium of theatre, at the Kasperl's Theatre station. The leaflets included a short description of Kasperl's Theatre and its characters. As the Herțea collection contained a huge number of puppets used in this traditional German puppet theatre, we decided to integrate a small stage on which stories and role-plays could be imagined. The success of this space was obvious from the opening of the first exhibition, thanks to the convenient placement of the puppets, the colourful rug for kneeling and sitting, and the pieces of fabric that could be operated as cloaks or curtains. Children engaged with passion in creating hand puppets—by drawing faces on gloves and then using them as theatre puppets.

Small Toys

The theatre was followed by the Sensory Station aimed at the youngest visitors. Considering the target age, a large and safe surface was chosen, with toys that were very different in texture, form, and weight, multifunctional and appropriate for small children to play with. The space was filled with an array of tubes and balls, jingling toys, a tent with puppets, in which visitors could stay and draw, large sheets of paper and crayons, hiding places, a collection of stories that could be read to children in a comfortable chair, and dioramas crafted from objects that could constitute excellent materials for imagining new stories.

The Collector's Station

The path ended with a presentation of the collector. Next to a piece of fabric with his name hand-sewn on it, which had hung on his office door for many years, was a screen playing an interview with Iosif Herțea conducted by children, using their own questions: "When did you start to collect toys? Which was the first toy? Do you have any funny stories about the purchase of any of the toys?"

Bucharest 2017, The Kasperl's Theater. Photo credit: Iulia Iordan.

Teatrul lui Kasperl

Itinerary

Another curatorial challenge was to maintain curatorial coherence while adapting the display to fit the architecture and devices of several exhibition spaces. In this consideration, in Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca the display was similar. When we took the exhibition to Brașov, at the Ștefan Baciu Memorial House *(Casa Ștefan Baciu,* administered by *Casa Mureșenilor Museum)*, the concept of the exhibition had to be adapted to the specifications of the space. The toys were integrated into the space of the memorial house, and the original arrangement of the furniture and other interior objects and the spirit of the early twentieth century were kept intact. The exhibition allowed for several interpretations. One was an invasion of the toys as in a game animated by the children's imagination. For Valer Rus, the head of *Casa Mureșenilor* Museum, the "curatorial and exhibition concept" meant removing all the toys from bags or boxes, lining them all up, as in an attempt to play with all of them at the same time. The several open old suitcases displayed in the room were meant to give another perspective on the collections—the toys had made a voyage through time and space and landed in the house of a man who himself had travelled around the world. This was an experiment to make the Baciu and Herțea collections talk to each other, to move the focus back and forth from one subject (the house) to another (the toys).

Brasov 2017. Photo credit: Roxana Cornea.

Conclusions

One of the visitors wrote in the guestbook: "No, this is no menagerie, but a solution project that I, for one, have long been waiting for. It comes from an association that is impossible not to love. Named "Da' De Ce" (I Wonder Why), it chases many rabbits, but it stands a good chance of actually catching them. Under the general goal of bringing kids closer to their heritage, we see many colourful, impeccably documented ideas."[14]

One of the outcomes of our exhibition building process was the confirmation that very good interactive exhibitions can indeed be created in Romania; that places willing to host such events exist, as well as the audiences to engage in the activities and use their potential in a creative way. At the end of our exhibitions, we gathered stories and objects made by children, names of possible future donors and partners, and new ideas about ways to further explore the collection.

The positive public reception of this exhibition is a strong reason for hope. It also encourages the design of new exhibitions to make heritage accessible, to show it in new contexts that stimulate visitors to interact with objects, not only cognitively and affectively, but also creatively. "But if you can go deeper, you can go further. If you can be relevant to how people define themselves in their hearts, you can open more doors" (Simon 2016: 56).

We can summarize that, in each of the four locations, the target public and the marketing were different. In Cluj there were programs developed by the host museum, in Brașov most of the visitors came as school groups, and in Bucharest there were educational programs organized by team members Daniela Mișcov and Bruno

14) Raluca Sofian, visitor, comment in the guestbook, June 2017.

VYZKOUŠEJ
HUDEBNÍ
NÁSTROJE

Písek 2018. Photo credit: Petr Bruha.

Mastan and several embassies. In Pisek the majority of the visitors were very young.

The team believes that *Elephants, Cuckoos, Horses, and Me* sends a message to museums to create spaces, programs and collections dedicated to the young and very young public—to search their collections for objects suitable for children; to hold objects besides heritage particularly for this purpose; and to include, in temporary and permanent exhibitions, principles and elements adapted to the needs of young people.

Da' De Ce Association is open to taking the exhibition *Elephants, Cuckoos, Horses, and Me* on the road again and is looking for institutions interested to participate in this work-in-progress project.

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of the collector Iosif Herțea (March 2018, Germany). Fortunately, he knew that his collection was in safe hands, and that many toys had already been exhibited for children, which brought him great satisfaction.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Andre, Lucija, Tracy Durksen, and Monica L. Volman. 2017. "Museums as avenues of learning for children: A decade of research." *Learning Environments Research*. 20 (1): 47-76. [available online at: 10.1007/s10984-016-9222-9], University of Amsterdam (UvA-DARE Digital Academic Repository).

Colbert, Rebeca. 2011. "Children's museums as cultural development strategies for urban revitalization." *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. Vol. 17 (5, November): 605-625.

Hackett, Abigail. 2014. "Zigging and zooming all over the place: Young children's meaning making and movement in the museum." *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, Sage Journals. 14 (1): 5-27.

Hein, George E. 1995. "Evaluating Teaching and Learning in Museums". In *Museum: Media: Message*, ed. E. Hooper-Greenhill, 189-203. London: Routledge.

Herțea, Iosif. 2015. *De la unealtă la instrument muzical. Câteva însemnări* [From Tools to Folk Instruments: Some Notes on Traditional Musical Instruments and Romanian Folklore]. Bucharest: Editura Etnologică.

Herțea, Iosif. 1974. *Preliminarii la studierea sistemului educațional al tradiției folclorice aplicat muzicii instrumentale* [Preliminaries to the Research of the Educational System of Traditional Life]. *Revista Folclorică.* 19 (1): 179-188.

Heumann Gurian, Elaine. 2017. Review of the book The Participatory Museum. Cited online on the website: http://www.participatorymuseum.org/, section: "About" (n.p.).

Kennedy, Michael J. 2012. "Turkish Writer Opens Museum Based on Novel," *New York Times*, April 29 [available online at: https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/30/books/orhan-pamuk-opens-museum-based-on-his-novel-in-istanbul.html].

Judd Mark K., and James B. Kracht. 1997. "The world at their fingertips. Children in museums," ERIC Institute of Education Sciences [available online at: https://eric.ed.gov].

Piscitelli, Barbara, Michelle Everett, and Katrina Weier. 2003. *Enhancing Young Children's Museum Experiences: A Manual for Museum Staff*. Brisbane QUT.

Piscitelli Barbara, and David Anderson. 2001. "Young children's Perspectives of Museums Settings and Experiences." *Museum Management and Curatorship*, September, Pergamon. 19 (3): 269-282.

Simon, Nina. 2016. *The Art of Relevance*. Museum 2.0. California.

Simon, Nina. 2010. *Participatory Museum*, "Preface." [available online at: http://www.participatorymuseum.org/preface/].

Shine, Stephanie, and Teresa Y. Acosta. 2000, "Parent and Child Social Play in a Children's Museum." *Family Relations,* January. 49 (1): 45-52.

Van Mensch Peter and Meijer van Mensch Leontine. 2011, *New Trends in Museology*, Museum of Recent History Celje.

Wolf, Barbara, and Elizabeth Wood. 2012. "Integrating scaffolding experiences for the youngest visitors in museums." *Journal of Museum Education.* 37(1): 29-38 [available online at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10598650.2012.11510715].

MARTOR

Title: *Janet Marstine,* Critical Practice: Artists, Museums, Ethics*, New York: Routledge, 2017, 212 pp.*

Author: Martin Hullebroeck

How to cite this article: Hullebroeck, Martin. 2018. "Janet Marstine, *Critical Practice: Artists, Museums, Ethics*, New York: Routledge, 2017, 212 pp." *Martor* 23: 225-229.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Ţăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/martor-23-2018/

Martor (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Journal) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. ***Martor Journal*** is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Interdisciplinary and international in scope, it provides a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for academic and non-academic readership. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

Martor (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue ***Martor*** est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

Martor is indexed by:

CEEOL, EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Anthropological Index Online (AIO), MLA International Bibliography.

Exit Through the Bookshop

Janet Marstine, *Critical Practice: Artists, Museums, Ethics*, New York: Routledge, 2017, 212 pp.

Recensé par Martin Hullebroeck
Doctorant en histoire de l'art et philosophie, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne / Université Libre de Bruxelles, membre du Groupe de travail en histoire du patrimoine et des musées — HIPAM.
m.hullebroeck@gmail.com

Pour s'intéresse aux développements contemporains de la question éthique en rapport avec l'institution muséale, Janet Marstine n'est pas une figure inconnue puisqu'on lui doit déjà la direction et co-direction de deux ouvrages collectifs sur le sujet (Marstine 2011, Marstine *et al.* 2013) et qu'elle fondait en 2007 l'Institute of Museum Ethics (IME) à la Seton Hall University. Avec *Critical Practice: Artists, Museums, Ethics* publié l'année dernière, Marstine travaille à nouveau dans le cadre d'une compréhension éthique du musée comme promoteur de changement social, mais son objet de recherche est l'examen de l'apport muséologique d'interventions artistiques qualifiées de « pratiques critiques » (*critical practices*) dans la transformation structurelle des pratiques et discours des musées. Il s'agit ainsi de saisir, au travers de cinq chapitres, différents aspects des processus de réconciliation d'un musée avec ses publics, processus qui caractérisent le musée dit « discursif » (*discursive museum*).

Quoique pour part introductif, le premier chapitre, *Critical practice as reconciliation*, vise à fonder la possibilité d'une analyse muséologique de ce que Marstine nomme des « pratiques critiques » (*critical practices*) et à étudier leur apport pour les processus de réconciliation entre les musées et les publics (19). Ces processus, envisagés dans la perspective des *reconciliation studies*, concrétisent autant qu'ils permettent la transition théorique et pratique vers le « musée discursif » avec lequel Marstine établit la complète conjonction dans le dernier chapitre de l'ouvrage (157 *sqq.* ; voir également Noever 2001).

Pour l'autrice, les pratiques critiques naissent de la rencontre des différentes vagues de la critique institutionnelle depuis les années 1960 et du courant de l'art social (*social practice*). Leurs projets respectifs doivent cependant être légitimés à nouveaux frais en informant leur étude par une conception à la fois relationnelle et critique de l'institution. La dimension relationnelle s'inspire de la nouvelle muséologie et de l'esthétique relationnelle de Nicolas Bourriaud selon laquelle l'institution muséale ne peut être comprise de manière insulaire et unitaire. Elle doit au contraire être envisagée comme un champ de relations et pratiques sociales, avec ses particularités, certes, mais intégrée de manière plus large à l'ensemble de la société. C'est cette même approche relationnelle de l'institution qui lui permettait de développer dans un précédent ouvrage un modèle éthique caractérisé par sa contingence et de se détacher d'une approche purement technique et légaliste de l'éthique muséale (Marstine 2011). La dimension critique s'inscrit, elle, dans le cadre de l'interrogation critique comme geste éthique, développé à la fois par Judith Butler et Maria Lind dans la lignée de Foucault. Marstine met ainsi l'accent sur la dimension *réflexive* de la critique institutionnelle plutôt que sur sa seule fonction de *dévoilement*, conception réduite de la critique qui lui retirerait sa légitimité dans un monde de l'art qui, selon ses détracteurs, l'aurait intégrée. De même, Marstine relativise la critique de la réduction de l'art social à une simple valeur instrumentale de politique d'action culturelle et de réinsertion, pour souligner ses « possibilités interrogatives » et éthiques (18). Cette double dimension réflexive et interrogative des pratiques critiques permet d'en justifier la dimension éthique et leur intégration, du moins de droit, dans les processus de *réconciliation* des musées avec leurs publics.

Dans le second chapitre, *Changing hands: ethical stewardship of collections*, l'autrice prend exemple de l'intervention artistique de Michael Rakowitz *Spoils* (2011) à New York pour exposer la notion d'administration éthique des collections (*ethical stewardship*) basée sur une conception relationnelle de ces dernières, tant dans leurs collectes passées et futures que dans leur gestion. L'administration des collections repose dès lors sur une tutelle partagée (*shared guardianship*, 46) où les relations générées à travers les objets ont plus d'importance que la propriété des artefacts.

Au travers de l'analyse de deux autres projets artistiques fondés sur une approche relationnelle des collections, Marstine montre que ce genre de pratique critique rend légitime la participation des publics aux prises de décisions qui concernent les collections. La confiance placée dans la parole et l'éthique « ordinaire » (*ordinary ethics*, 78) des publics par les institutions permet *a fortiori* de renouveler la relation qu'elles entretiennent avec leurs publics. Les deux exemples abordés (projets *Recycle LACMA* de Robert Fontenot en 2009-2010 et *Manchester Hermit* de Ansuman Biswas en 2009) traitent des questions de l'aliénation (*deaccession*), la réutilisation ou le recyclage, et la potentielle destruction d'artefacts.

Dans le troisième chapitre, *Temple swaping: hybridity and social justice*, l'autrice entérine tout d'abord l'usage de l'hybridité comme outil méthodologique anti-hégémonique à la fois révélateur de la complexité d'enchevêtrements des identités et des franchissements de frontières, et moteur de justice transformative (*transformative justice*, 87). Cette dernière, comme méthode de réconciliation dans une optique de justice sociale, a pour objet de favoriser la création de nouvelles communautés politiques inclusives par l'adoption d'une approche inconditionnelle de l'hospitalité (*unconditional hospitality*, 102), opposée à une hospitalité condi-tionnelle, telle que problématisée par Jacques Derrida. Dans le cadre des musées, nous pouvons parler à la suite de l'artiste Theaster Gates d'une hospitalité radicale (*radical hospitality*, 104) qui a pour but de favoriser la mise en place d'une communauté décisionnelle basée sur une « autorité partagée, de la réciprocité et de la confiance mutuelle » (87). La suite du chapitre examine, à travers des œuvres et projets de Fred Wilson, Matt Smith et Theaster Gates, différents exemples d'usages de l'hybridité pour interroger l'autorité institutionnelle par le biais du rapport entre la vérité et la fiction, ou les minorités marginalisées comme les LGBT, ou l'hospitalité.

Le quatrième chapitre, *Platforms: negotiating and renegotiating the terms of democracy*, s'ouvre sur l'examen de la notion de plateforme (*platform*, 119 *sqq.*) à partir des interventions artistiques de Liam Gillick. Inspiré par les écrits de Jacques Rancière sur la notion de *dissensus*, Gillick critique l'idéal de la valeur intrinsèque de la participation dans le processus démocratique représentatif. La plateforme est ainsi conçue comme espaces destinés à l'énonciation de discours critiques et réflexifs sur des modalités démocratiques qui valorisent et légitiment la parole minoritaire (125). Pour Marstine, ce sont ces moments d'examen réflexif des conditions de participation au débat et l'émergence de formes démocratiques avec des relations de pouvoir plus équitables (où la matrice majoritaire est remplacée par celle du conflit productif) qui permettent d'engager des processus de réconciliation (150). L'installation et projet *The Nature of the Beast* (2009) de Goshka Macuga à la Whitechapel Gallery de Londres est longuement analysée par l'autrice afin d'en mettre en évidence les nombreux aspects réflexifs, principalement autour d'un questionnement sur l'efficacité de la démocratie néolibérale à résister à la censure et la propagande lors de la prise de certaines décisions comme l'invasion de l'Irak en 2003 par les États-Unis.

Le dernier chapitre de l'ouvrage, *Reconciliation and the discursive museum*, se tourne vers la caractérisation du musée discursif (*discursive museum*, 157 *sqq.*). À sa conception initiale développée dans les années 1990 dans le sillage du nouvel institutionnalisme (*new institutionalism*, 157 *sqq.*) et centrée sur les pratiques autoréflexives, Marstine adjoint l'intégration de la notion de réconciliation. Cependant, il ne s'agit pas de la réconciliation habermasienne dont le consensus constitue la pierre angulaire. Au contraire, il s'agit d'une réconciliation fondée sur l'éthique critique du *care* de Fiona Robinson (*critical ethics of care*, 159). Cette approche implique, d'une part, un intérêt pour la manière dont les institutions participent à la construction et au maintien des relations entre individus et, d'autre part, à la définition par Chantal Mouffe de l'agonisme comme conflit productif. L'intégration de cette réconciliation par les musées discursifs implique l'établissement d'espaces discursifs pour rééquilibrer la balance de l'agentivité des publics par rapport à celle des institutions muséales. Pour ce faire, il faut renoncer à penser les expositions comme l'*alpha* et l'*omega* des médiations entre le musée, les collections et les publics. C'est pourquoi ces institutions se sont attachées à se constituer des publics, c'est-à-dire développer des stratégies d'émancipation des publics dans lesquelles interviennent entre autres des moments de conflits constructifs. Tirant les conséquences d'une approche relationnelle des collections et de l'institution, le musée discursif a aussi tendance à se « disperser », à se penser dans la multiplicité de ses sites potentiels, de même qu'il considère ses collections sous l'angle d'outils génératifs (177) pour produire de nouveaux arrangements réflexifs ou de réconciliation.

Sous un abord très structuré, cet ouvrage de Janet Marstine ne se laisse pas facilement appréhender, ni même juger. Sa lecture suscite différentes questions et réflexions, comme celle sur la place et la tentation d'une conception exceptionnaliste de l'artiste et de ses interventions dans les processus de réconciliation. On peut ici songer à d'autres approches qui s'inscrivent elles aussi dans l'horizon de la postcolonialité et d'une conception exceptionnaliste des artistes, comme celle défendue par Clémentine Deliss. Selon cette dernière, les artistes contemporains seraient les plus aptes à guérir (*heal*) les blessures produites par le colonialisme et ses conséquences (voir, notamment, Deliss 2012, Deliss et Keck 2016). Cette approche n'est cependant pas celle de Marstine pour qui les processus de réconciliation au sens de ceux de la Commission de la vérité et de la réconciliation en Afrique du Sud, par exemple, ont montré leurs limites en tant que processus de *pacification*, d'apaisement et de pardon. De plus, il faut saisir – et c'est un des points forts de la démarche de l'autrice – que l'enjeu n'est pas tant celui de la remédiation des collections ou d'un passé et présent difficiles, que celui de la structure fonctionnelle du musée par le biais de ses acteurs et leur capacité à y inscrire durablement l'aptitude à produire des plateformes de débat. Ce changement de focale, qui entraîne un décentrement relatif de l'objet de collection, est le développement logique d'une approche relationnelle qui puise dans la conception de l'esthétique relationnelle de Bourriaud pour s'emparer d'une éthique qui s'étend aux institutions.

Cet ancrage dans l'esthétique bourriaudienne ne manque d'ailleurs pas de poser question, en particulier en ce que Marstine articule étroitement les pratiques critiques à une perspective de production d'espaces de dissensus. Cette configuration est troublante : Rancière ne mettait-il pas en effet en évidence, dans *Le spectateur émancipé*, le fait que loin de sortir de la logique représentationnelle, l'esthétique relationnelle la rejouait au risque de devenir la parodie de sa propre efficacité sociale lorsqu'elle se dispersait dans la pluralité des rapports sociaux (Rancière 2008, 77-81) ? Avec la notion de pratique critique, nous avons la mise en pratique l'un de ses concepts méthodologiques centraux de cet ouvrage, à savoir l'hybridité. En effet, dans une perspective muséologique, l'hybridité se caractérise par ses dimensions relationnelles et réflexives. La pratique critique, elle, se configure dans ces deux dimensions, de par l'articulation de la critique institutionnelle à l'art social. Délicate, cette configuration n'en est pas moins opératoire et performative : l'apport de l'esthétique relationnelle empêche la réduction de la pratique critique au geste de dévoilement critique. De même, la pratique critique ne peut plus se réduire à la production de rapports au monde et aux autres, elle redevient productrice « d'objets à voir », ne fut-ce qu'en creux. L'hybride que constitue la *critical practice* allie ainsi de manière complémentaire le relationnel et la réflexivité pour ouvrir d'intéressantes perspectives pour une conception du musée engagé pour la justice sociale.

Les cas d'études examinés par Marstine sont eux-mêmes des hybrides, jamais tout à fait compris dans l'institution muséale, ne serait-ce que parce qu'ils sont le fait d'artistes extérieurs aux institutions, ou qu'ils sont commandés par des galeries ou des institutions sans collections, mais ils en sortent pour mieux s'y retrouver : objets patrimoniaux qui interrogent la question du rapatriement avant de réintégrer un musée pour l'intervention de Michael Rakowitz *Spoils* (2011), recyclage de tissus aliénés par le LACMA et possibles futures acquisitions par le même musée pour les « Teddy Bears » du projet *Recycle LACMA* (2009-2010) de Robert Fontenot, archives LGBT introduites dans les galeries de l'Université de Leeds aux côtés d'archives de la bibliothèque universitaire dans *Other Stories: Queering the University Art Collection* (2012) de Matt Smith, etc.

L'ouvrage de Janet Marstine a aussi des défauts. Il partage ainsi cette difficulté qu'ont les projets qui manient l'interdisciplinarité, à exposer des concepts sortis de leur champ d'application initial, difficulté d'autant plus grande que l'on établit de nouveaux ponts. Ainsi, on peut regretter que les conceptions de certains auteurs qui fondent le discours au cœur de l'ouvrage ne soient pas plus discutées et situées. Même s'ils sont des passages quasi obligés dans leurs champs respectifs, on aurait par exemple aimé approfondir l'articulation théorique entre la conception de la critique chez Butler, celle de réconciliation chez Kymlicka et celle du dissensus chez Rancière. Un examen plus direct et explicite et non pas en creux (quelques lignes pour Butler et un paragraphe et quelques mentions pour Kymlicka et Rancière) et dispersé dans l'ensemble des chapitres, aurait sans doute contribué à déployer complètement l'intérêt du propos pour des lecteurs et lectrices profanes, en même temps que permettre une plus grande prise à la discussion de certains arguments.

Il est vrai que l'ouvrage déclare d'emblée son attachement à l'études des pratiques et projets artistiques qui peuvent avoir un impact sur celles des institutions, et qu'il était nécessaire de conserver une place conséquente à leur exposition et leur analyse. Après tout, l'ouvrage mobilise déjà de nombreux auteurs et est agrémenté d'un bon nombre de photographies qui accompagnent justement un examen précis et fouillé des dimensions muséologiques des œuvres abordées. Une exégèse des concepts destinée à un lectorat très spécialisé peut bien attendre. En conclusion, les anicroches identifiées n'enlèvent rien aux propositions de Janet Marstine pour réfléchir une articulation entre l'art contemporain et la gestion des politiques de l'identité et de la représentation. Dans une optique de caractérisation éthique des musées et de leur transformation en faveur d'un engagement démocratique qui ne se limite pas à celui de la médiation culturelle et des publics, le lecteur trouvera ici bonne matière à réflexion et interrogations.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Delisse, Clémentine, ed. 2012. *Object Atlas, Fieldwork in the Museum*. Bielefeld, Berlin and Frankfurt am Main: Kerber Verlag and Weltkulturen Museum.

Deliss, Clémentine, and Frédéric Keck. 2016. "Occupy Collections!* Clémentine Deliss in conversation with Frédéric Keck on access, circulation, and interdisciplinary experimentation, or the urgency of remediating ethnographic collections (before it is really too late)." *South as a State of Mind* 7 [documenta 14 #2]; [available online at: http://www.documenta14.de/en/south/456_occupy_collections_clementine_deliss_in_conversation_with_frederic_keck_on_access_circulation_and_interdisciplinary_experimentation_or_the_urgency_of_remediating_ethnographic_collections_before_it_is_really_too_late].

Marstine, Janet, ed. 2011. *Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics: Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First Century Museum*. London and New York: Routledge.

Marstine, Janet, Alexander Bauer et Chelsea Haines, eds. 2013. *New Directions in Museum Ethics*. London and New York: Routledge.

Noever, Peter, ed. 2001. *The Discursive Museum*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz.

Rancière, Jacques. 2008. *Le spectateur émancipé*. Paris: La Fabrique.

MARTOR

Title: *Fiona Candlin,* Micromuseology. An Analysis of Small Independent Museums*, London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016, 224 pp.*

Author: Anca-Maria Pănoiu

How to cite this article: Pănoiu, Anca-Maria. 2018. “Fiona Candlin, *Micromuseology. An Analysis of Small Independent Museums,* London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016, 224 pp.” *Martor* 23: 233-236.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Ţăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/martor-23-2018/

Martor (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Journal) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. ***Martor Journal*** is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Interdisciplinary and international in scope, it provides a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for academic and non-academic readership. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

Martor (Revue d’Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l’anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l’ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue ***Martor*** est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l’accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l’auteur.

Martor is indexed by:

CEEOL, EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Anthropological Index Online (AIO), MLA International Bibliography.

Fiona Candlin, *Micromuseology. An Analysis of Small Independent Museums*, London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016, 224 pp.

Reviewed by Anca-Maria Pãnoiu
MA, book editor and translator, Bucharest

Fiona Candlin's book on small independent museums is as inspiring as its well-defined yet unassuming title suggests. It provides a theoretical and methodological framework, as well as a conceptual and analytical device for tackling a genuine, emergent and increasingly visible form of museum. Although the scholars that bring it up in their academic discourse are few and far between, its inherent heterogeneity has led to a proliferation of names for it.

A cartography of the concepts, and, consequently, the approaches, aimed to untangle the intricacies of this topic in the specific literature would include: “personal museums” (Mateescu 2009), “local” or “grassroots museums” (Mihăilescu 2009), “wild museums” (Jannelli 2012), “unofficial” or “family museums” (Klimaszewski and Nyce 2014), “vernacular museums” (Mikula 2015), “amateur museums” (Moncunill-Piñas 2017) or “naïve museums” (Pănoiu 2017), each of them striving to capture its fluidity by selectively depicting the features that most resonated with the researcher's background, fields of interest or pursuits (for an elaborate account of this terminology in context see Cheryl Klimaszewski's article at pages 121-140).

While cautiously avoiding metaphorical blurriness—as the accuracy of her approach stands out in both form and content—but all the while keeping a taste for the plasticity and sense of humour intrinsic to her topic, Fiona Candlin chooses to call these entities “micromuseums,” which are distinctively “small” and “‘independent.” This particular choice proves to be as effective as it is moderate, for it soon becomes clear that the specificity of the topic—upon which the author elaborates her framework—lies in the interstice between these museums and the “major” or “mainstream” ones, with their complex and sometimes rigid requirements.

So, keeping an eye on established museums helps Candlin articulate her approach and elaborate a highly creative account, given that the movements between the personal and the institutional provide the utmost challenge of her experiment: “to see whether the study of micromuseums can revolutionize the ‘museum philosophy’ and if so, how” and “to show how the study of these small venues can impact upon the international sphere of museology; to bring the apparently ‘limited’ or ‘local’ character of micromuseums into question.” Leaning on more than two decades of expertise in museum studies, as well as on several years of research on the topic and fieldwork carried out in more than sixty micromuseums all over the United Kingdom, Fiona Candlin brilliantly succeeds to do so.

But in cutting such a path, the first challenge is to demarcate—which is to name—the particular features of micromuseums, and the second to find the appropriate means to insert them in the academic discourse. The two endeavours, to name and to design the methods, go hand in hand given that these museums, otherwise a heterogeneous category, share a non-standardized relationship to academic disciplines. Striving to find a valid place for micromuseums in scholarly discourses, Candlin overcomes the challenges by resorting to Clifford Geertz's urge to "draw large conclusions from small but very densely textured facts" (1975: 27), in what can only be a dialogue between small facts and big issues.

The specific features of the researched micromuseums thus come together to form a broader image, which might also function as a definition of the phenomenon:

> […] small, independent, single-subject museums can more precisely be described as collections that are variously run by trusts, businesses, special interest groups, and private individuals that fall outside the traditional academic compass, occupy a low level in the hierarchy of traditional academic classificatory tables or that take a non-scholarly approach to subjects that could be encompassed by academe; and finally, are small insofar as they have relatively low visitor numbers and /or modest incomes and /or occupy a physically limited space (12).

Fiona Candlin rightly outlines that micromuseums have in common specific means of operating within a nexus of related conditions consisting of low income, few staff members, and relatively limited physical space, all of which determine their improvised and ad hoc character. Together, these specificities make it so that micromuseums mostly resist to detailed, historical analysis, as well as to critical examinations of professional practice.

Given these facts, two questions arise that are essential to this work. The first one is related to the content of the topic: How do owners of micromuseums manage precarity as an intrinsic trait of their creation, and, further, how do they creatively convert this challenge into a distinctive privilege, if so? The second one concerns the strategies employed to extract some possible answers: Which methods to rely on in order to be responsive to the specific characteristics of micromuseums? The structure of the book is provided by the author's choice to look at the settings, the landscapes, the accommodation, the collections, the forms of display, the exhibits and the ways of arranging them, and how she accomplished that.

In the first chapter, Fiona Candlin starts by questioning the public character of micromuseums in terms of reliance on public funding, placement outside the home, and thus access to the population at large, and whether they provide a non-governmental area where dialogue between citizens can develop. The fact that they are museums of independent means, i.e., they do not render services on behalf of the state and they are not supported by taxpayer money, seems to exclude micromuseums from the public sphere. Consequent to the scantiness of funds there is the constraint to function mostly on private properties, which further determines an intermingling of domestic environments with the exhibition spaces and blurs the borders between the private and the public realms.

But a case study visit at the Vintage Wireless Museum in Dulwich, London helps circumscribe micromuseums as different public spaces. Located in a private home (which means that every available space is crowded with exhibits), this determines a particular dynamics of the visit: the owner is more a host than a professional museum curator; the visitors are his guests (whose levels of access are limited by the owner's preferences and the appointment system); the storytelling is bi-directional, collaborative and varying according to identity, interests, and knowledge of the individuals concerned; and the visitors play their own precise part in adapting the exhibition narrative. Therefore, whilst lacking any public involvement in the institutional sense of the term, micromuseums still provide the stimulus for conversation and the means to attract visitors, thus operating as public spheres—even if all this takes place in the kitchen.

The second chapter focuses on the life and death of objects situated in museum contexts or, to put it more accurately, on their degrees of vitality after they were removed from their original situations and transferred to artificial ones, thus sacrificing their organic character for the sake of preserving certain formal features. While it is agreed that outside a pagan or animist world-view, the idea of living or dying artefacts is a conceit, it is still acknowledged that certain exhibition practices, some more than others, tend to sideline the original functions of the objects and the associated responses in favour of scholarly and aesthetic ones. Micromuseums such as the Museum of Witchcraft in Boscastle, Cornwall, however, refrain from killing the artefacts and, instead, show the collections within a context which, while it may not be the genuine one, is still congruent with their original use. This leads the author to the sensible conclusion that, rather than "live" or "dead" artefacts, there are actually degrees and combinations of both, which in turn lead to their understanding in particular contexts and highlight once again the interstitial area between major museums and micromuseums.

The third chapter puts forward the issue of politically and socially partisan exhibitions. Here, the contrast is established between such biased endeavours and those generally advertised as multi-perspectival and thus present the viewpoints of diverse and opposing groups. Taking into account the lack of political engagement of micromuseums and in this respect, their distance from any governmental or national agenda, the author outlines their penchant for being partisan and discusses the case of the Lurgan History Museum. Discussing balance and self-censorship, Candlin concludes that multi-perspectivalism is not necessarily equidistant or adequate, which to a certain extent reverses forces of legitimacy in favour of micromuseums.

The next two chapters both deal with the issue of object storage, but in different ways. In the fourth chapter, a collection is presented as an array of artefacts (mostly donations and gifts, as in the British in India Museum) likely to encapsulate the memory of close relatives and ancestors to the extent of becoming object-persons cared for in order to guarantee strategies for managing mortality and oblivion. The fifth chapter deals with the mere abundance of objects (as in the Bakelite Museum, Williton, Somerset), which despite its peculiarities in juxtapositions and an inherent stuffiness, provides the visitors with the pleasures of exploration and a certain sense of "holiday surrealism." Both models of object storage differentiate micromuseums from mainstream institutions in that the former afford more personal and less rigid approaches, on a human scale rather than based on academic requirements.

Accurately circumscribed discussions of each of the features that I have only sketched above lead Fiona Candlin to the sixth chapter, the heart of her entire undertaking. Her conclusion is as vivid as the path which leads her there, highlighting the otherness of micromuseums while stressing their complementarity with major institutions and, last but not least, suggesting a possible shift in approaching them.

The otherness of micromuseums is underpinned by several distinctive traits which stand for criteria: the way in which micromuseums are shaped by and shape their locations and the plurality of possible narratives which stem from such dynamics; the fact that in contrast with mainstream institutions, micromuseums are embedded in their environment and thus not immediately recognizable, somehow contiguous with other buildings in the landscape, all the while preserving the narrative of their accommodation; the deeply personal dimension of the encounter between curators and visitors, which determines embodied knowledge, experience and authorship, a bi-directional flow of information, continuously emerging narratives, adaptative strategies and, overall, a certain level of transparency not common to major institutions; and finally, artefacts and ways of displaying them which seldom follow the criteria of uniqueness, singularity or educative contexts specific to institutional museums, but rather tend to organically organize themselves in holistic sequences based on intrinsic and subjective logics.

Beyond the important issues it discusses and the methods employed to tackle them, one cannot read Candlin's book without getting a feeling of how it was written as the accuracy of the analysis is well complemented by the author's penchant for sensoriality. In her book, Fiona Candlin carries out ethnography at its purest in that she describes the beauty of the encounter pure and simple and the joy of simply being *there*. In some of *her* micromuseums, cats purr and rub against the legs of elderly wireless aficionados who gather in the kitchen-museum to discuss their lifelong hobby; in others, engines with odd numbers of cylinders make a sweet and syncopated sound, just like listening to jazz. Beyond any epistemic concerns, Candlin herself admits that her interest in micromuseums is mostly due to their human scale. Rewardingly enough, the subjectivity of the topic thus matches the subjectivity of the approach, enriching it with a certain epistemic empathy.

Radically rethinking key concepts and debates within museum studies, Fiona Candlin's book is important because it gives legitimacy to a topic which, despite its richness, has been overall neglected until her contribution. In outlining the particular traits of this marginal entity, and thus building a solid analytical apparatus, she courageously argues that it is possible to conceive of a micromuseology of major museums, which would prove enriching and rewarding. Further, the book is inspiring in that it provides an in-depth account of a topic whose heterogeneity would require an extensive approach. Fiona Candlin has produced a playfully academic work, which daringly depicts an emerging topic with rigour, honesty, empathy and something more.

* * *

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Geertz, Clifford. 1975. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. London: Hutchinson.

Jannelli, Angela. 2012. *Wilde Museen: Zur Museologie Des Amateurmuseums*. Berlin: Transcript Verlag.

Klimaszewski, Cheryl, and James M. Nyce. 2014. "Towards a Study of 'Unofficial' Museums." In *Annual Review of Cultural Heritage Informatics*, edited by S.K. Hastings, 179-89. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.

Mateescu, Oana. 2009. "Evidence in the Museum: Subjects, Objects and Memories in Vrancea." *Sociologie Românească*. 7 (3): 51-71.

Mihăilescu, Vintilă. 2009. "Local Museums? Village Collections in Recent Romania." *Martor*. 14: 11-18.

Mikula, Maja. 2015. "Vernacular Museum: Communal Bonding and Ritual Memory Transfer among Displaced Communities." *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 21 (8): 757-72. [Available online at: https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2015.1020961]

Moncunill-Piñas, Mariona. 2017. "The Practice of Everyday Museum Making: Naturalization and Empowerment in the Amateur Consumption of Museographic Language." *European Journal of Cultural Studies*. September, 1-19. [Available online at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549417722113]

Pănoiu, Anca-Maria. 2017. "A Sense of the Past: Usages of Objects in Naïve Museology." *Martor*. 22: 149–64.